Searching for the soul, unit 9
John StGeorge

Essay
Question 5
A computer can think and make decisions but it cannot WILL .
Perhaps the most rewarding place to begin would be to determine the truth content of the major premise, "a computer can think and make decisions".

Doubtless, a computer is able to reproduce specific programs that are coded with its complex mechanisms and pathways. This description allows for the avoidance of the concept word, think. Think implies grounds and consequences of decisions based on those grounds for conclusions.

Throughout our lifetimes the brain is eternally busy and occupied with re-inventing itself through ideas, innovation, investigation, philosophies of so many professions and learnings in general. Specifically one of those inventions comes in the shape of a mechanical mechanism called a computer in the realm of objects. Not being qualified I am unable to describe internal workings of a computer except in general terms.

As I understand the case there appears to be a myriad of electronic connections, chips and category placements. No doubt there is a whole lot more however I cannot detect any presence of the human brain. At this point I remind myself that this course is titled, philosophy of mind not knowledge of electronic machines that can achieve remarkable outcomes.

The materialist's definition of there being one thing, with a brain is not on this agenda. A brain in a body, that is the mind brain theory. On this analysis the part of the premise which describes thinking and decision making to a computer is looking untenable. If it should be the case that thinking and decision making is untenable for a computer then the ability to will is also un-sustainable. Here the logic of the refutation for thinking and decision making rests on the refusal to anthropomorphize a machine.

Thinking and decision making by computers have their origins in the programming, programming which is done by the brain which once again busily re-invents itself via the programs. No doubt computers can think and make decisions, however they occur by virtue of an intermediary, a brain in a body. Perhaps this is the closest we will get t the theory of materialism in this matter.

It may well be that the future of mankind will be determined by all the outcomes of rational thought being computerized for everyday use, indeed, should this trend take place one extrapolation would be a society of programmers and button-pushers with a large pool of moribund brains.

The materialist view of a brain in a body does not correlate with the computer and a multiplicity of programs. That is to say if you put something in a computer it will perform as programmed and reproduce that material on demand, however perhaps this process does not establish the human concept of a will.

Computers and the brain make a formidable vehicle for preserving and advancing the knowledge acquired by human existence, however in kind, they are distinctly disparate.

Dr. Klempner
Dear Geoffrey,
essay and annotations to hand for unit 9, may I have unit 10 please.