

Reflections On Marvin Minsky, “The Society Of Mind”, And Mental States

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Draft 1.01

2019 May 16

Here I’m considering material from the book “The Society Of Mind” by Marvin Minsky. It is a significant book, and should be considered by psychologists and psychiatrists, along with his book “The Emotion Machine”. These, along with many influences in literature, philosophy, psychology, and spirituality, should be studied, contemplated, and made real.

This is also the type of thing I indicate with ‘all of the above’ that I talk about in some of my other papers – it is included in it. (See “Related Papers” for more.)

Minsky, TSOM, 20.4:

At every moment a person’s mind is already involved with some “context” in which many agents are actively aroused.

TSOM, 20.5:

That old idea of classifying things by properties is not entirely satisfactory, because so many kinds of qualities interact in complicated ways.

TSOM, 20.6:

No one could ever comprehend all the details of the connections that develop inside a single human individual; that would amount to grasping how all that person’s thoughts and inclinations interact. At best we can envision only the broadest outlines of such structures...

TSOM, 20.5:

I’ll call them ‘micronemes’ – those inner mental context cues that shade our minds’ activities in ways we can rarely express.

...

Even modest families of micronemes could span vast ranges of contexts. A mere forty independent micronemes could specify a trillion different contexts – and we surely have thousands, and perhaps millions of different micronemes.

Minsky:

TSOM 20.1

Paraphrased: Thoughts themselves are ambiguous!

Minsky:

Our thoughts are ambiguous.

Minsky relates this to expression, and to the fact that we change, and cannot represent all that is or is going on in the mind with one recognition or statement. [Add to that the discriminating nature of words! – an observation by the Buddha.]

I might say that our thoughts as we perceive them might be not so much ambiguous, as only part of a (in the unified mind) holographic picture.

My observations:

We change even as our thoughts unfold.

We can mean something precisely, but it is undefined.

Our thoughts are undefined.

A precise meaning that we have for something may resonate with that meaning or in a different way, with another person.

He who defines himself cannot know himself. – Tao Te Ching, Lao Tzu, translated by Stephen Mitchell.

Thesis Points

Psychiatry should take note: when we apply ourselves, we are dynamic, aware, intelligent, and complex as humans. This should be its starting point – not the false given, alleged permanent neurobiogenetic malfunction.

Psychiatry should take careful note of each of Minsky's statements – and really study them and their implications.

Thus, 'all of the above' applies.

Endnote

I myself find Minsky's work to yield tractable material, but there is a way that I introduce the Zen Buddhist 'no-thing' space to his work; I disagree with a few of his statements, and there's so much material to work with. Note that Minsky had a range of influences and cites these in his works. I'd like to see psych unit psychiatry also be a multi-disciplinary theory/praxis – and psychiatry writ large (as mvo-psychiatry (mental view and orientation psychiatry) with further societal implications indicated in some of my papers – wake-stating entire networks of realized material from a variety of sources).

Related Papers

“Psych Unit Psychiatry Contradicts And Refutes ‘All Of The Above’”

“Psych Unit Psychiatrists Make A Mistake”

“Logic 1.1: Biogenetics Or Built-In Mutable”

“I Made A Mistake On My Homework, And ‘All Of The Above’”

“Mvo-Psychiatry – More!”

“The Neurobiogenetic View, Zen Buddhism, And ‘All Of The Above’”

... others