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The Storage of Mankind into Virtual Reality

Everything that comes alive will eventually cease to exist - at least as a physical entity. But, even though humans will inevitably knock on heaven's door, they can continue to prolong their existence on Earth by leaving behind a legacy of memories worth remembering for others. In essence, the individual continues to exist when there are others who treasure his or her memories as a memento or personal keepsake. Perhaps the individual's existence is dependent on the judgment of the collective - the community or the public they're involved with - to provide proof that they have lived in a specific setting on Earth. In that regard, if the individual is not remembered by other people - especially by loved ones, then he or she may very well have never existed amongst them. In the first place, the individual would only have started to exist after his or her existence has been confirmed by someone else.

Suppose that an individual's existence is only confirmed when there is an observable change in how they act or behave. This change typically happens when an individual is being observed and is aware of the observation. Consequently, the individual undergoing observation is inclined to modify their actions and behavior in the presence of the observer. This phenomenon is known as the "Hawthorne effect" (or the "observer effect"). So, until the individual is observed by someone and responds to the observation, his or her existence has not been confirmed by the universe that's inhabited by the individual and shaped by the collective. One could even say that until the individual's existence is confirmed, the individual's existence

remains in an ambivalent state of both “present” and “absent” until further observation, like Schroedinger’s “cat” being considered both “living” and “deceased” (Mann, 2020). To resolve this existential stalemate, one must create a reason for existence that overrides the principal reason responsible for causing the absence in observation. Mankind's reason for "extending" their existence derives from a responsibility to cultivate future generations by passing down their legacy comprising a wealth of knowledge and experiences. In order to do so, mankind needs to prevail over the obstacle of approaching expiry through the means of challenging death itself. It is possible that the human race can "transcend" death by entrusting their soul to the future of Artificial Intelligence; more specifically, individuals should store themselves as data for Artificial Intelligence by “full-diving” into virtual reality.

This deliberation underlying theoretical postulations about what will happen to the existence of mankind is explored at the surface level by American writer and Nobel Prize laureate William Faulkner. Within Faulkner’s Nobel Banquet Speech, Faulkner instilled his faith into mankind by believing that “man will not merely endure”; instead, man will learn to prevail over their fated end because within man rests a soul capable of genuine expression (Frenz, 2020). Faulkner relayed his message to inspire fellow writers to release their consciousness from captivity, as their consciousness were shackled by the vices of human folly they experienced during times of distress. Their confrontation with the vices of human folly precipitated writers to lose their sense of authenticity, leading them to write without passion as they write in trepidation, fearing the vice of being blown up by the atomic bombings of WWII at any minute. These vices continued to torment their consciousness throughout their writing process. Only by severing his or her connection with the vice will the writers achieve full autonomy to unleash the creativity

that's been residing deep within their mind and heart. While Faulkner presented one possibility for prevailing over the end of man, another possibility comes to the surface through the observation of humans holistically rather than from a specific occupation - the possibility of mankind prevailing by "converting" themselves into data for storage.

For as long as the historical records hold true, mankind has stored data in their mind or in writing. From the 19th century, human civilization transitioned into the technological epoch, and mankind has since then resorted to storing data digitally into the hard drive of a computer or into an online storage system such as iCloud. However, bioinformatician Dina Zielinski introduced another method of data storage that involves tapping into nature's oldest storage device: DNA (Zielinski, 2017). In the 21st century, DNA is commonly viewed as the blueprint of life that stores genetic information. Zielinski challenged this conventional, linear notion of thinking by converting digital data into bits (binary digits) and then storing the data in a capsule of synthetic DNA. Zielinski's research constitutes the beginning of a new epoch centered around discovering creative strategies for storing data. While Zielinski's research revolutionizes the methodology in which humans can store data, the current scope of data storage is rather limited to storing the most prominent form of data - digital data. None of the existing models of data storage have yet to incorporate the storage of the "human data" locked inside one's soul - memories.

Every day, when an individual interacts with meaningful, thought-provoking stimuli, his or her brain operates to synthesize memories, all of which form a mental framework of information. The human mind utilizes the synthesized memories to encode, store, and retrieve information that humans process from their day-to-day interactions. While individuals frequently

conjure memories, not every memory can be retained by the human mind because some memories are less meaningful (“inferior”) to the individual than other memories. This will result in a failure to produce an “engram” (a memory trace that helps individuals store information long-term) for the less meaningful memory. Without an engram, the mind cannot locate and recover the information within the memory. The mind will be unable to retrieve the memory, and the “inferior” memory will disappear from existence. Most individuals would not hesitate to delete a memory that they deem “inferior” because the “inferior” memory has been rendered obsolete by them. In spite of their decision, every memory is, nonetheless, important to retain because they serve as precious reminders of who the individual is, and every memory contains information that helped shape the identity of the individual along the way. Each memory represents a fragment of the individual’s soul, and each fragment is a part that represents the whole soul. When one fragment disappears from the soul, individuals lose one part of who they are. To preserve as many precious memories as possible, mankind should “full-dive” into virtual reality in order to store their data inside virtual Artificial Intelligence lifeforms.

“Full-diving” is the act of linking an individual to a virtual reality environment.

Individuals can somewhat “full-dive” into virtual reality by wearing a virtual reality headset. The virtual reality headset projects a fabricated life sized, 3D virtual environment that users can interact with via tracking sensors recording the users’ input actions (Charara, 2017). While virtual reality headsets are useful for creating a sense of immersion for the brain, the individual has not completely “full-dived” into virtual reality, as their physical vessel containing one’s soul remains detached from virtual reality. A perfect “full-dive” appears to be attainable in the near future with esteemed entrepreneur and engineer Elon Musk at the forefront of neurotechnology,

pioneering the frontier in machine-learning by “neuralinking” humans and technology. The process of “Neuralink” involves implanting small, wireless electrodes inside the brain (Musk, 2019). These electrodes establish a connection with an external apparatus that communicates to a specific technological device such as a phone or a computer, which allows individuals to indirectly interface with the device. Ultimately, Musk’s “Neuralink” research is relevant in presenting profound implications for the future of “full-diving”, as Neuralink laid the foundation for speculating how to “full-dive” one’s soul into virtual reality.

Current iterations of virtual reality headsets only connect the brain to virtual reality. The function of virtual reality headsets could expand towards connecting the soul to virtual reality by scanning one’s consciousness (the mind of the soul, harboring memories). The consciousness could then be copied into a virtual Artificial Intelligence lifeform to be stored permanently. While the rudimentary process for translating the soul is highlightable, the comprehensive process is speculative. Even though the process is speculative, individuals can surmise the accuracy of speculations at a high degree of confidence when the speculations are referring to relevant, established evidence. For instance, it is known that the nervous system serves as a communication network for nerve cells (neurons), and the limbic system manages one’s emotions and memories. It is also known that the nervous system and limbic system are interconnected because the neurons transmit information to the limbic system’s hippocampus for the formation and retention of memory long-term. So, to translate the soul into virtual reality, the virtual reality headset would have to directly communicate with and between the individual’s nervous system and limbic system in some way. The underlying process would entail activating an individual’s “action potential” via electrical impulses, prompting neurons to “fire” signals to

transmit information through synapses (Bernstein et al., 2005). Those signals would then traverse through the neural networks of the nervous system and circuit into the limbic system for the hippocampus to encode the information in the signals as “memories”. Even though the resulting step-by-step process is apparent, the scientific inquiry regarding how to produce the expected results is still undergoing exploration at the early developmental stages of research.

Every day, humans have to confront the subconscious struggle of selecting which memories they want to continue remembering, and the struggle continues until they cease to exist. When humans reach their expiration date, all of their memories will disappear from their minds involuntarily. Furthermore, the particular collective that cherishes the memories they made with the individual - like the individual’s loved ones and communities - will bear the responsibility for carrying the torch and rekindling the fire that is the individual’s soul in order to keep the individual’s existence burning alive. With future advancements in the field of virtual reality, every individual and their collective can prevent the agonizing situation of losing precious memories voluntarily and involuntarily by storing memories inside virtual reality, where they’ll remain as data inside the inhabitants of virtual reality - the virtual Artificial Intelligence lifeforms - indefinitely. Hopefully, with the assistance of virtual reality, mankind can soon be able to prolong the preservation of their memories for future generations to retrieve and access.

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