

You vs. Your Brain

If you've ever thought about what it means to be you, and questioned *who am I?* You would be in the regions of ontological philosophy, what's Ontology? The study of the existence of being you, the Oxford Dictionary gives this definition:

Ontology - /ontolohji/

- Noun Philosophy, the branch of metaphysics concerned with the nature of being.

So what does it mean to be you, well, begin by to considering that for most of your life, you are not required, you are on auto-pilot, the human machine is quite able to run your life without really needing you to be present, but it will use you to get what it wants. Obviously you get involved in your life, but to find out what you actually do in your life that is not being run by your human machine, we need to separate the you from the machine. So consider that there are actually two people in your head, firstly there is the machine, that will be referred to as 'IT', (you hear IT talking to you), and there is you, the 'self', the fundamental experience that is '*I... I'm happy, I'm upset, I like tea with sugar.*

To understand how IT uses the you, we need to find out where it operates. Basically the brain operates everything, it beats your heart, it blinks your eyes, and it wakes you up in the morning, it'll take you to the toilet. It is responsible for the quick reaction when you touch a hot stove, and you didn't even need to think about burning your hand, the brain did all the work, but one thing to know is that you can't take any credit for that. If you try and keep your hand on the stove you'll quickly find out that there is no possibility of choice, the brain protects the hand, the hand doesn't care if it gets burnt.

So there's no you involved, it's just wiring, a reflex action, in fact that kind of reflex action represents a lot of things that you do in your life. The way you open and close a door, the way you move if something is apparently in your way, you see the car or bus and you get out of the way, but you are not required in those situations, its an automatic brain function.

Dealing with threats is also a function of the brain where there's no you involved. Threats are dealt with by the central part of the brain called the Amygdala, it's the 'reptilian brain' carried over from the evolution of when humans were once reptiles. Alligators have survived for millions of years so clearly it's very good at its job. For the Amygdala life is about survival at any cost, it also deals with extreme emotions and the control of adrenalin, which is used for 'fight or flight' in the threatening situation.

The Amygdala is directly connected to the brain-stem, which deals with reflex actions, and the cerebral cortex that deals with language, and in a threatening situation the Amygdala can and will take control of the both your actions, and your mouth.

So your brain reacts to threats, and imagined threats, which is **most** of them. Now think about the last time you were threatened, it was probably in conversation, the Amygdala took over or actions, including your mouth, it raised your heart rate and gave you an adrenalin boost, readying you to defend or fight. But were you really threatened or was IT threatened? Are you threatened with language or is IT reacting to an imagined threat? Next time you see a shouting argument, its just two alligator brains reacting to each other.

If someone threatens you with a knife, You won't do anything, IT will do all the doing, and if you reach out and try to take the knife from their hand or get stabbed or run away, you're there but you're not acting, IT's acting, or better said reacting. When you wake up in hospital after being stitched up, and someone says something to you like 'Why didn't you run away??' you'll try to make up a stupid answer, but the truthful answer would be, "I didn't have anything to do with it myself".

At some point during your early child hood you had the very first experience that I am different to the world, and in that moment the self was realised. In that same moment the brain took on the survival of the thoughts and feelings of who I am, as well as the survival of the body. The survival of the thoughts and feeling of who I am, can be more important than the survival of the physical body, if you think about a suicide bomber, part of surviving his identity, is by blowing himself up, killing others in the process.

So how and why does the brain do all this survival? To find out we need to go back to basics. You are an animal, a species called a mammal and the brain's fundamental purpose is for survival, and the best way to survive the unknown and dangerous world is to predict what's going to happen and how to deal with it.

Have you noticed how you predict everything all of the time? You can't stop the prediction, there's no thing in your life that your brain is not predicting, the brain predicts your whole world, including your future and ultimately your life. IT predicts your world extremely well, but whenever IT's predictions fail you feel surprised, and a good example of how good the prediction machine is; think about how rarely in life you're surprised.....

There is very little that surprises you, the brain does not like surprises, they are not good for survival, as you well know when something startles you and you jump. Your brain is an extremely good prediction machine, but the only thing IT has to predict your future with is the past. For the brain, the best way to survive your possible future is based completely on the past. For the brain your future is your past. The brain has a future; it's called the past.

Repeat this to yourself 'My brain is a prediction machine and it is predicting what I need to do with my life'. Do you see IT doing it? Your brain will always predict and create a future, but that's not your future, that's IT's future. But if you identify with that future, then that's the future you're going to have, IT has a life, and you get to have the life IT has. IT predicts the future, there's no You in that, so all of those areas of life where you're living inside a predictable future, that's IT not You, you're not there.

You, the Self are more than the machinery of the human brain, and its fundamental survival and prediction, so what becomes clear is that there is no you in survival or prediction of the future. That's just IT doing what IT does, recalling the past to predict your future. All that worry you have about your future has nothing to do with you..... not even a little bit. IT cares about you surviving everything, and IT will try to make whatever happens in your life go your way, but the self has nothing to survive.

Language is unique to the human brain, and when you add the feature of language to a brain, its fundamental design is still for survival, and your brain uses language as part of your survival. That's IT talking to you in your head, and IT's always there talking to you, in fact you can't shut IT up, as soon as you wake up IT's, telling you when you should get out of bed. Most of the time you get along with your brain, and you get stressed when you don't. IT's voice gets louder in stressful situations, especially when IT thinks your survival is being threatened (because you're about to look stupid). In a threatening situation IT does not care for your integrity, and can use your mouth talk lies so that you survive the situation with your self-image intact.

We don't deal with life or death in day-to-day survival of the modern day world, what we have to survive is looking good and avoiding looking bad. IT has a huge amount of power in your life when it comes to keeping you from looking bad, in every situation. IT has a huge amount of control about what you say and don't say, and how you look. *What would happen if I were to look stupid and loose my friends' respect and approval???* Heaven forbid!

Mostly your survival is based around being comfortable, the moment you become uncomfortable, IT will do whatever's necessary to make you comfortable again. Whether it's related to sitting comfortably, heated conversations or risky situations, humans spend their entire lives moving in and out of comfort zones.

You've probably noticed that IT doesn't like it when you get rained on, and IT doesn't like being cold, IT doesn't like early mornings, but IT never has enough love, IT never has enough money, and IT never has enough sex. Mostly IT just wants to be comfortable, and have an easy predictable life.

Some quick brain science, your brain is made entirely of neurons; the only thing a neuron can do is fire and not-fire, simple. The brain records everything in patterns of neurons, everything you've ever sensed (touch, smelt, tasted etc). It also records the actions you've taken and perceptions and feelings you had at the time.

When you suddenly remember something from your childhood, all that happened in that moment is that the stored pattern of neurons fired, and when they stop firing, you forget again. The brain has recorded your entire past, and IT tells you who you are, based on those recorded neuronal patterns, but **that's not you**.

IT tells you who you are, so IT knows how to survive who IT knows you to be. When you can start to get that IT is not you, then IT gets recognised as IT, and in that moment something remarkable happens, your brain gets bogged because IT has no neuronal pattern associated with its own recognition. IT's never seen itself before, and IT is not into recognising itself as IT, IT says, *no that's me. That's not IT, this is all rubbish*

When you can be fully aware IT, then IT recognises that there is someone there observing IT, but the question is, who's observing it, and who's IT talking to in your head? The brains become aware of itself and you.

When you recognise IT as IT then the patterns of neurons that IT identifies as You become just patterns, all those heavy emotions and upset from your past that IT gives you, become just a series of stored patterns of neurons that IT fires to tell you who You are. And that's not you.

The brains design purpose is for your survival and that's all its ever been used for, and when IT can recognise that, then everything who IT considers you to be, is just a set of patterns of neurons for that IT uses for your survival, and it's not you (you are more than a pattern of neurons).

That's a new neuronal pattern for the brain, a new pattern that allows your brain function outside of the survival process, IT becomes aware of itself and you. It allows the self to be separated from all the survival that IT does. It allows you the freedom to choose to be whoever you say you are, regardless of whoever IT says you are, or should be. And IT will always be there, trying to stop you, and in those moments, remind yourself that IT is just trying to survive, and keep you being who IT wants you to be, so IT can have an easy predictable life.

The game in life to play now is, IT vs Me, watch to how IT relentlessly reacts to life and complains to you when things get uncomfortable, notice the reasons IT uses to make you not do things, and notice the future IT predicts for you. If you live with the thought of 'IT vs. Me' in every moment of your life, you will have a choice to create yourself and your future, not merely based on the past, but based upon something that You choose and create. When you start to notice that IT's running the show, just be aware of IT. You then have a choice in wins in 'You or IT', but when IT wins IT can make You wrong. Ultimately the more powerful you become, the weaker IT gets, and remember.....

IT doesn't need to be happy for you to be happy.