

Brain Emulation Podcast Transcription

- Maddie: 00:07 Hey, it's the AI girls here. I'm Maddie.
- Lane: 00:10 And I'm Lane.
- Maddie: 00:12 And this week we are thrilled to talk to you all about brain emulation and uploaded consciousness.
- Lane: 00:18 Ahh, this is such an exciting topic. So, I had the privilege of speaking with Andrea Stocco who has his PhD in Psychology and is also a research scientist and associate professor at the University of Washington. So, let's see what he has to say about brain emulation.
- Lane: 00:37 How would you define brain emulation?
- Andrea: 00:41 Brain emulation is something that actually in many ways we do it all the time. We have different degrees of brain emulation. The process of simulating an entire brain is currently beyond what anybody can do, but the surprising thing is that even if you don't reproduce an entire brain, you can extract a lot of information pretty well with a limited amount of complications.
- Lane: 01:02 What do you think are the top three ethical issues with brain emulation?
- Andrea: 01:07 Well, I think that the first one is like the choice of the medium. So, suppose that they can save my consciousness in a series of data, right, uh and then I have the option to do something with it. What should be the correct medium? For instance, can they just create a clone of my body and then rewire it with this data or can I choose to pick something that is not even human and how would that impact the way I am? How much is the way we are, tied to the specific body we inhabit? Uh, another question would be like we don't know the extent to which we'd change from one version of myself to another. We don't know actually the implications of this. We are going to face this uh, possibility in which a person in a particular mental state makes decisions after undergoing treatments that in a different mental state, the same person would have not made.

Andrea: 01:58 Another big question is, is of course like the availability of these technologies as a cost because potentially the moment in which the possibility of uploading somebody's mind becomes viable, we're talking about the possibility of extending a single person's life to limits that are not even conceivable right now. We are talking about potentially something very close to what we consider immortality. But of course, this will not be available for everybody. Because these people I suppose like probably will be rich, you know, this would give these people power and extension in time that normally is not available in current historical movement. To put it another way, one of the ways in which society evolves is because people die and the older generations way of thinking dies and it's taken over by new generations way of thinking, which has been shown over and over in history to be more open-minded and to be moving to a society that was better. But if all of a sudden this becomes not available and the minority of people have the possibility to persist over time, this might fundamentally alter the way we progress as a society, the way your mind changes over time.

Maddie: 03:10 Wow, I mean Andrea really brought up some great points regarding brain emulation and uploaded consciousness.

Lane: 03:14 Yeah, definitely. So, I think it's very interesting his first point about the choice of using the correct medium. So, when he was talking about that, it really made me question the legality to that. So, would every medium have the same legal rights? Or would just an uploaded consciousness into somebody else's body have legal rights?

Maddie: 03:36 It's hard to say. I mean, having a body definitely makes it more like this physical entity that like you would immediately think that it should have more legal rights, but at the same time that same consciousness is uploaded into a computer the same way it would be into that person. So, you could argue that they should have the same rights.

Lane: 03:56 What did you think about his point on making decisions before and after uploaded consciousness?

Maddie: 04:03 So, say you're uploading a consciousness into a new body. I think at the moment we cannot say that that uploaded consciousness will act the same as soon as they get into that new body, just because we don't know.

Lane: 04:15 See, I almost disagree with that to an extent though because I feel like if it is a consciousness, no matter where it's uploaded, it's going to stay the same. So, you know, if my consciousness is uploaded into someone else's body, I feel like I will think and act the exact same. The medium will just be different.

Maddie: 04:34 That's true, but what if this physical body is completely different than yours was? Do you think that it could feel things differently and react different to certain, I don't know, if you were to say drugs, do you think that body would act different than yours would and that would have an effect on your consciousness?

Lane: 04:50 Maybe. I don't know.

Maddie: 04:53 And that's the thing. We don't really know, we probably won't until it happens.

Lane: 04:58 Yeah, now we move on to his last point about the cost and the potential for immortality and only the rich being able to access this technology. So, I think those are really good points. He did talk though about, you know, society potentially not evolving based on the viewpoints of the individuals who are using this technology for immortality, but I think as we have seen in the past, that lower and middle class, they evolve regardless. When something is unjust they essentially start a revolution almost every single time. So, I really don't see society not evolving as a possibility.

Maddie: 05:36 I completely agree with you and I think something else to consider is that as this technology evolves, like there will be more government regulations and it's hard for us to see that right now just because it is just in the starting process, but we have to expect that people will be upset and things will have to be done and laws will have to be created around this new technology for when we get to that point.

Lane: 05:58 Definitely agree. Well everybody that's all the time we have today, but thank you so much for joining us and make sure to stay tuned for next week's episode where we talk about tracking devices.