Children’s Understanding of Agency: Developmental Cybernetics View

3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.  May 31, 2018 (Thursday)
Rm 813, 8/F, The Jockey Club Tower  Centennial Campus  The University of Hong Kong

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Abstract
Technology is developing at an accelerating pace and rapidly transforming human civilization. Yet our evolved social apparatus, moral intuitions, and behavioral instincts are adapted to a pre-technological environment, and our culture is continually disrupted by scientific breakthroughs. Advanced technologies are changing how we learn, work, communicate, and even raise our children. There is a pressing need to understand how people harmoniously or disharmoniously integrate technology into their lives. Our symposium explores the psychology of electronic communication, nonhuman agency, anthropomorphizing machines and computers, and technologically enhancing human abilities.

In Experiment 1, 50 two-year-old children were tested to examine whether they could reproduce the target outcome of a robot in a goal reenactment paradigm developed by Meltzoff (1995). The results show that the children were not only able to reproduce the target action which had been produced by the robot, but were also able to complete the same task when the robot was shown to attempt, but fail, to produce the action. However, it was essential that the robot mimicked human behavior suggesting intention, such as gazing at a partner and at the object being manipulated, in order to induce children to produce the target outcome in the failed attempt condition. In Experiment 2, standard False Belief Task with a robot was conducted to investigate whether preschoolers attribute the false belief to a robot or not. Results suggested that the children attribute the false belief to a robot but not mental verb to it.

~All are Welcome~

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