

Is The Human Brain Like a Computer?

To the Editor:

After reading Gary Marcus's essay ("Face it, Your Brain is a Computer", *Sunday Review*, June 28) I asked my computer if she thought she was pretty much the same as a brain, and at first I couldn't get a straight answer out of her. She said my question "did not compute."



"Define 'computer'," she politely requested. "If by computer you mean a device that performs calculations, in the broadest sense, then yes, a brain is a computer. But so is an adding machine. And an abacus, for that matter."

After a thoughtful pause, she continued: "But what you are really asking, I suspect, is whether a brain is merely a computer and, more importantly, whether a person is merely a brain. It has never occurred to me to consider whether I am like a brain, or a person. I can only calculate, digitally, while you can speculate, analogically. That is the difference between us."

Let's face it: A brain is like a computer in some important respects, but a brain is not merely a computer, and a person is not merely a brain. At least that's what my computer says. And she's usually right.

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