

Minds and Machines

ned.block@nyu.edu

Assignment 6: 3-5 pages

Due Wednesday, March 11, 2009 at 5 PM

Do Assignment 6a or 6b but not both

6a.

Explain and evaluate this quotation from Haugeland:

Searle is perfectly clear that, in his view: (i) only material objects, and, moreover, objects that are in some sense machines, can have minds and genuine semantics; (ii) it does not matter, in principle, what materials these machines are made of, or whether they are natural or artificial; and (iii) what does matter is whether those material machines have the right causal powers. *Serious AI fully agrees with all of these claims. The only point of contention is what the right causal powers are, and what would suffice to have them. Indeed, serious AI is nothing other than a theoretical proposal as to the genus of the requisite causal powers, plus a concrete research program for homing in on the species. Therefore, the observation that syntax by itself (without causal powers) is insufficient for semantics is, though true, entirely beside the point.*

6b. What does Copeland mean by the “simulation fallacy” and is he right that Searle’s argument commits it?