Analysis of “Computing Machinery and Intelligence”

Preamble

What an incredible thinker! I have been noticing a common thread in some of the papers that I have been reading. It has seemed at times that some of the papers are speaking to the current “best” that computers can achieve. In other words they speak to 3-5 GHZ processors, and graphics cards with so much ram and speed. Turing on the other hand didn’t speak to current best at all! There was much to be gleaned from this paper not least of which is his vision of “faster computers” and “more storage”

A brief statement of the problems addressed in the paper in my own words.

Turing takes the question “Can machines think?” (Which he believes is too meaningless to deserve discussion) and instead asks “Are there imaginable digital computers which would do well in the imitation game?” He then goes on to explain what the imitation game is and how it is played.

What I agree with/like in the paper and why.

I loved how he didn’t speak to whatever the current “best” was for computers in his day. Rather he took the approach of speaking to a computer that had “enough” memory and was “fast enough” as well. There have been many things that I have learned as I have read these papers. I think one of the main lessons I have learned is to never speak to whatever the current capabilities are for computers for your day. Computer capabilities are subject to such extreme change and progress that it would not be possible to accurately predict what is going to happen in even the near future. Take for example the very recent success that AMD has enjoyed. Who could have imagined that in just a few short years they would not only match, but outperform Intel processors! The major take away message is to not place any limits on the capabilities of a computer, but to just imagine that there are no limits, and you would probably be closer to the future than not.

What I disagree with/dislike in the paper and why.

Again, I am in no position to really disagree, or dislike anything in this paper. If anything I don’t appreciate all the argumentative reasoning he used. I am ignorant as to why he put it on so thick. I thought he would have done just fine to state his argument for why he thought his computer/program could perform in the way he was envisioning, rather than to explore, discuss, and counter a large handful of counter arguments to his reasoning. Maybe that is just because that is the way things were done back then, again I am ignorant of how such ideas would need to have been addressed so that they wouldn’t be written off as drivel prior to being published.

Any inspirations I found in the paper.

There was one argument that I think had more weight than what Mr. Turing attributed to it.

“NOT UNTIL A MACHINE CAN WRITE A SONNET OR COMPOSE A CONCERTO BECAUSE OF THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS FELT, AND NOT BY THE CHANCE FALL OF SYMBOLS, COULD WE AGREE THAT MACHINE EQUALS BRAIN – THAT IS, NOT ONLY WRITE IT BUT KNOW THAT IT HAD WRITTEN IT. NO MACHINE COULD FEEL PLEASURE AT ITS SUCCESS, GRIEF WHEN ITS VALVES FUSE, BE WARMED BY FLATTERY, BE MADE MISERABLE BY ITS MISTAKES, BE CHARMED BY SEX, BE ANGRY OR MISERABLE WHEN IT CANNOT GET WHAT IT WANTS.”

This quote is, in my opinion, extremely critical to today’s day and age. Again I may be just ignorant, but I don’t think it is possible for a computer to write a story, paint a picture, compose a song. It may be able to do these things mechanically, and it might work with music, but I would ask a computer to add a few more stories to grimms fairy tales. Who knows? This may be a possibility, in the coming years but this is where I am extremely skeptical. Could a computer write Анна Каренина, or could it create the worlds that Frank Herbert, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Robert Jordan created? They might be able to mechanically copy, but I don’t imagine such feats ever happening.

Thanks again for the great papers!!!