

MIND

A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF PSYCHOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

I.—COMPUTING MACHINERY AND INTELLIGENCE

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1. *The Imitation Game.*

I PROPOSE to consider the question, 'Can machines think?' This should begin with definitions of the meaning of the terms 'machine' and 'think'. The definitions might be framed so as to reflect so far as possible the normal use of the words, but this attitude is dangerous. If the meaning of the words 'machine' and 'think' are to be found by examining how they are commonly used it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the meaning and the answer to the question, 'Can machines think?' is to be sought in a statistical survey such as a

Gallup poll. BUT this is absurd. INSTEAD of attempting such a definition I shall replace the question by another, which is closely related to it and is expressed in relatively unambiguous words.

THE new form of the problem can be described in terms of a game which we call the 'imitation game'. IT is played with three people, a man (A), a woman (B), and an interrogator (C) who may be of either sex. THE interrogator stays in a room apart from the other two. THE object of the game for the interrogator is to determine which of the other two is the man and which is the woman. HE knows them by labels X and Y, and at the end of the game he says either 'X is A and Y is B' or 'X is B and Y is A'. THE interrogator is allowed to put questions to A and B thus:

C: Will X please tell me the length of his or her hair ?

Now suppose X is actually A, then A must answer. It is A's

object in the game to try and cause C to make the wrong identification. His answer might therefore be 'My hair is shingled, and the longest strands are about nine inches long.'

IN order that tones of voice may not help the interrogator the answers should be written, or better still, typewritten. THE ideal arrangement is to have a teleprinter communicating between the two rooms. ALTERNATIVELY the question and answers can be repeated by an intermediary. THE object of the game for the third player (B) is to help the interrogator. THE best strategy for her is probably to give truthful answers. SHE can add such things as 'I am the woman, don't listen to him!' to her answers, but it will avail nothing as the man can make similar remarks.

WE now ask the question, 'What will happen when a machine takes the part of A in this game?' WILL the interrogator decide wrongly as often when the game is played like

this as he does when the game is played between a man and a woman? THESE questions replace our original, 'Can machines think?'

2. *Critique of the New Problem.*

As well as asking, 'What is the answer to this new form of the question', one may ask, 'Is this new question a worthy one to investigate?' THIS latter question WE investigate without further ado, thereby cutting short an infinite regress.

THE new problem has the advantage of drawing a fairly sharp line between the physical and the intellectual capacities of a man. No engineer or chemist claims to be able to produce a material which is indistinguishable from the human skin. IT is possible that at some time this might be done, but even supposing this invention available WE should feel there was little point in trying to make a 'thinking machine' more human by dressing it up in such artificial flesh. THE form in which WE have set the problem reflects this fact in the condition which prevents the interrogator from seeing or touching the other competitors, or hearing their voices. SOME other advantages of the proposed criterion may be shown up by specimen questions and answers. THUS:

Q: Please write me a sonnet on the subject of the Forth Bridge.

A: Count me out on this one. I never could write poetry.

Q: Add 34957 to 70764

A: (Pause about 30 seconds and then give as answer) 105621.

Q: Do you play chess ?

A: Yes.