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Being and Knowing
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Study Questions 6

Searle does not think that computers will ever be able to think. To support his view he gives an example he calls the "Chinese Room."

In the "Chinese Room" example, Searle places himself in a room without access to the outside world. Armed with and instruction booklet, Searle then learns to answer questions given to him in Chinese. He argues that he learns to answer these Chinese questions, but doesn't actually learn or understand Chinese.

Searle then asks that given such a situation, how is this any different than a computer learning to answer questions in Chinese? Does this then cast doubt on the ability of a computer to ever truly understand anything, and what does this say of the Turing test?

I do not agree with Searle because I don't agree with his basic premise. I don't actually believe that he could learn to answer Chinese questions without ever actually learning Chinese.

His example is valid for a sort of lookup table that can spit out answers for each given question, but such a lookup table that would have a place to look for every possible ordering of questions seems dubious at best.

Essentially, I believe that simply answering questions is different from responding in context and conversing/adjusting the current answer to the previous set of questions and answers. Thus if a computer could properly pass a Turing test, then I believe it would have an actual level of understanding.