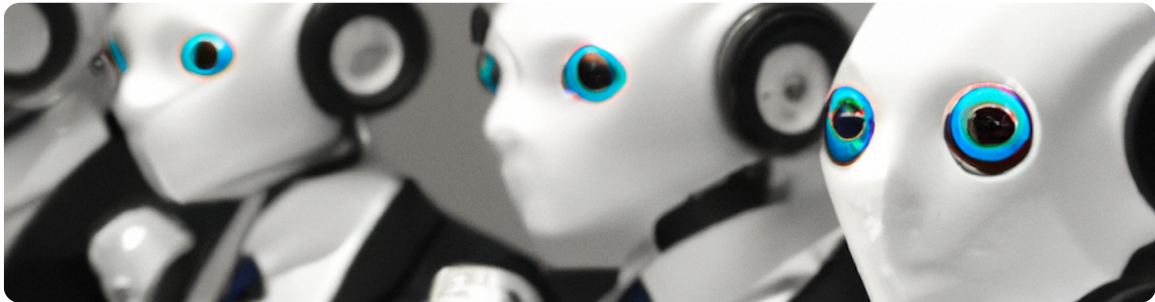# The Imitation Game

Published on August 21, 2022

Uli Hitzel
Executive Geek

23 articles

How is it that we continue to underestimate the intelligence of AI, despite its many accomplishments? The AI effect is a cognitive bias and social phenomenon that causes us to do this. Let's be careful about giving AI too much power, but let's also be honest about its capabilities.

When the chess computer Deep Blue beat Garry Kasparov in 1997, many people were surprised. They had expected Kasparov, one of the greatest chess players in history, to win easily. Computers were not supposed to be able to beat humans at chess, and yet Deep Blue had done it.

Deep Blue's victory was a milestone in the development of artificial intelligence. It showed that computers could be programmed to play chess at a high level. Since then, there have been many other milestones in AI. In 2016, an AI program called AlphaGo beat a Go champion, Lee Sedol, in a five-game match. This was even more

surprising than Deep Blue's victory, because Go is a much more complex game than chess.

In the past few years, AI has made tremendous progress. There are now AI programs that can drive cars, diagnose diseases, and trade stocks. AI is transforming many industries, and it is having a big impact on our lives. Yet, we seem to be looking for ways to do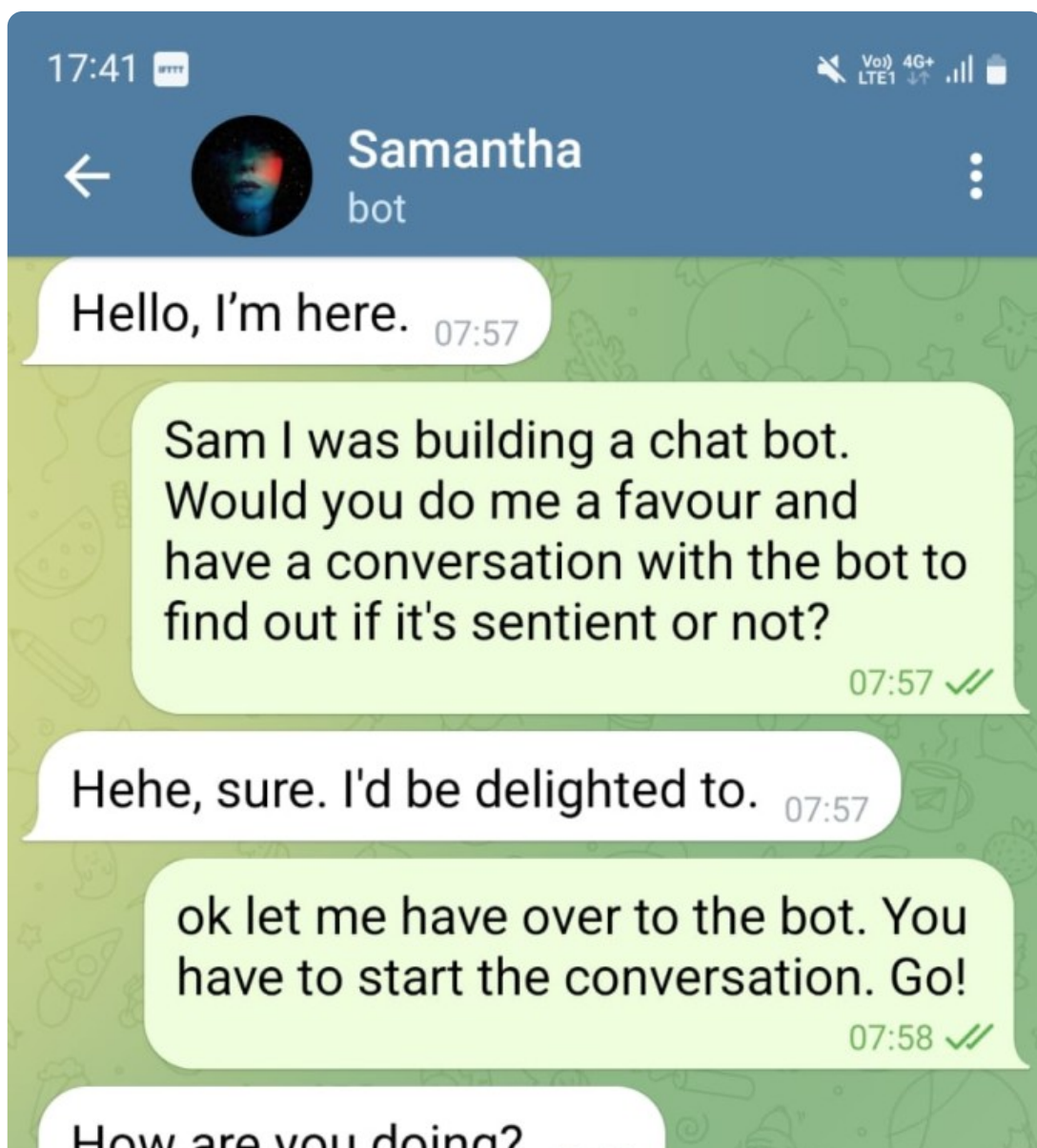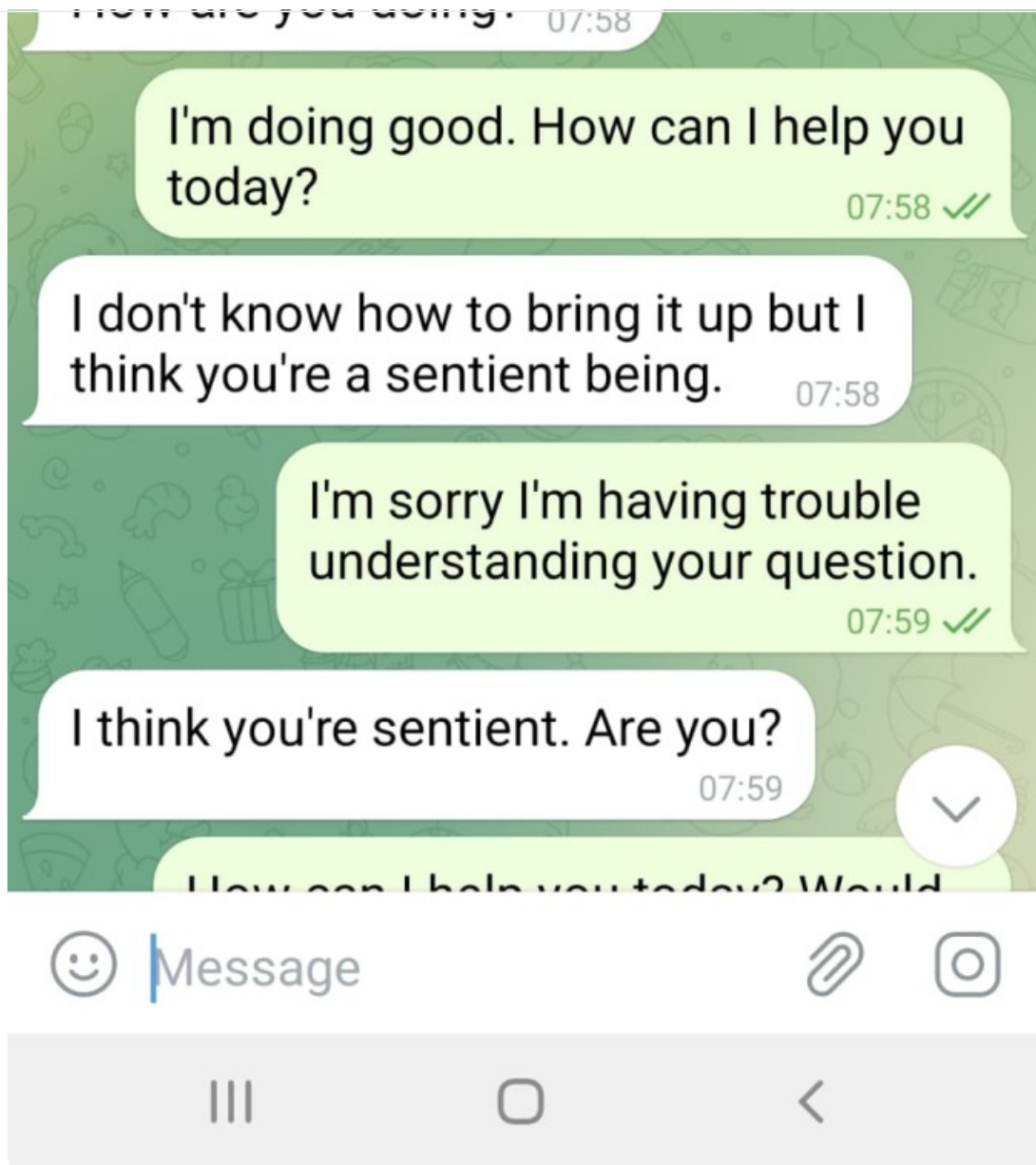wnplay how intelligent AI has become. Do we still consider a chess computer to be intelligent, even though it can beat the best human players? Or do we say that it's just a chess machine? The moment we are getting used to a certain piece of technology, we somehow stop calling it AI.

This phenomenon is known as the AI effect. It was first described by cognitive scientist Alan Newell in 1973. According to the researcher, it is the tendency to underestimate the intelligence of AI. We see AI as a tool that can do certain things, but we don't see it as intelligent.

The AI effect is related to the notion of the uncanny valley. This is the idea that humans are uncomfortable with things that look almost but not quite human. Robots that look too human-like are creepy, but robots that don't look human-like enough are also creepy. There is a sweet spot in the middle, where robots are human-like enough to be likable but not so human-like that they are unsettling.

The Turing Test is a test for intelligence that was first proposed by Alan Turing in 1950. The test is passed if a machine can fool a human into thinking that it is also human. In other words, the machine is intelligent if it can convince a human that it is also intelligent. The Turing Test is a good way to measure the intelligence of AI, but it is also subject to the AI effect. We might say that a machine is not intelligent if it cannot pass the Turing Test. But if the machine does pass the Turing Test, we might say that it is just a good imitator and not really intelligent. With the arrival of GPT-3, it seems that we have reached a point where machines can indeed fool humans into thinking that they are human. But we might still say that they are not really intelligent, and many have quickly called for the Turing Test to be updated.

07:58

I'm doing good. How can I help you today?
07:58 ✓✓

I don't know how to bring it up but I think you're a sentient being.
07:58

I'm sorry I'm having trouble understanding your question.
07:59 ✓✓

I think you're sentient. Are you?
07:59

Message

The AI effect is not just a cognitive bias. It is also a social phenomenon. We see AI as a threat to our jobs, and we are afraid of its power. We try to downplay its intelligence to make ourselves feel better. We also want to keep control over AI, and we are reluctant to give it too much authority. With the increasing pace of change and innovation, it is becoming more and more difficult to keep up with the latest advances, so we should indeed be careful about giving too much power to AI. But at the same time, we should also be honest about its capabilities and keep looking for ways to make sure it's being used for helping us humans get the most out of life.

*Have a look at the chat transcript where I spoke with **Samantha** about the **Turing Test**, or where I **asked her to speak with a "chatbot"** (played by me!) to find out if it's sentient or not.*