Murat Durmus

inside

ALAN M. TURING

QUOTES & CONTEMPLATIONS

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About the Author

Murat Durmus is CEO and founder of AISOMA (a Frankfurt am Main (Germany) based company specialized in AI-based technology development and consulting) and Author of the books "THE AI THOUGHT BOOK".& "Taxonomy of the most commonly used Machine Learning Algorithms"

You can get in touch with the Author via:

- LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/ceosaisoma/
- E-Mail: murat.durmus@aisoma.de

"If a machine is expected to be infallible,
it cannot also be intelligent."

~ Alan M. Turing

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PREFACE

Alan Mathison Turing was an English mathematician, computer scientist, logician, cryptanalyst, philosopher, and theoretical biologist. Turing had a significant impact on the development of theoretical computer science by providing a formalization of the concepts of algorithm and computation with the Turing machine, which can be viewed as a model of a general-purpose computer. As a result, Turing is widely considered the father of theoretical computer science and artificial intelligence. Despite these accomplishments, he was never fully recognized in his home country during his lifetime, as his homosexuality was a crime in the United Kingdom at the time, and his work fell under the Official Secrets Act.

I have written down his most meaningful quotes and thoughts in this book. They have always been a source of inspiration for me, and I hope this little book will also inspire you.

Murat Durmus,

21 October 2021 ; (Frankfurt am Main, Germany)

ALAN M. TURING

(23 June 1912 – 7 June 1954)

1

Sometimes it is the people no one can imagine anything of who do the things no one can imagine.

10

I believe that at the end of the century the use of words and general educated opinion will have altered so much that one will be able to speak of machines thinking without expecting to be contradicted.

11

We can only see a short distance ahead, but we can see plenty there that needs to be done.
(Computing machinery and intelligence)

100

"I'm afraid that the following syllogism may be used by some in the future.

Turing believes machines think

Turing lies with men

Therefore machines do not think

Yours in distress,

Alan"

101

Those who can imagine anything, can create the impossible.

110

If a machine is expected to be infallible, it cannot also be intelligent.

111

Sometimes it is the people who no one imagines anything of who do the things that no one can imagine.

1000

Finding such a person makes everyone else appear so ordinary…and if anything happens to him, you've got nothing left but to return to the ordinary world, and a kind of isolation that never existed before.

1001

The isolated man does not develop any intellectual power. It is necessary for him to be immersed in an environment of other men, whose techniques he absorbs during the first twenty years of his life. He may then perhaps do a little research of his own and make a very few discoveries which are passed on to other men. From this point of view the search for new techniques must be regarded as carried out by the human community as a whole, rather than by individuals.

1010

The original question, 'Can machines think?'
I believe to be too meaningless to deserve discussion.
(Mechanical Intelligence: Collected Works of A.M. Turing)

1011

I am not very impressed with theological arguments whatever they may be used to support. Such arguments have often been found unsatisfactory in the past. In the time of Galileo it was argued that the texts, 'And the sun stood still... and hasted not to go down about a whole day' (Joshua x. 13) and 'He laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not move at any time' (Psalm cv. 5) were an adequate refutation of the Copernican theory. *(Computing machinery and intelligence)*

1100

It seems probable that once the machine thinking method had started, it would not take long to outstrip our feeble powers… They would be able to converse with each other to sharpen their wits. At some stage therefore, we should have to expect the machines to take control.

1101

A very large part of space-time must be investigated, if reliable results are to be obtained.

1110

Do you know why people like violence? It is because it feels good. Humans find violence deeply satisfying. But remove the satisfaction, and the act becomes hollow.

1111

Programming is a skill best acquired by practice and example rather than from books.

10000

I've now got myself into the kind of trouble that I have always considered to be quite a possibility for me, though I have usually rated it at about 10:1 against. I shall shortly be pleading guilty to a charge of sexual offences with a young man. The story of how it all came to be found out is a long and fascinating one, which I shall have to make into a short story one day, but haven't the time to tell you now. No doubt I shall emerge from it all a different man, but quite who I've not found out.

10001

It is possible to invent a single machine which can be used to compute any computable sequence.

10010

The popular view that scientists proceed inexorably from well-established fact to well-established fact, never being influenced

by any unproved conjecture, is quite mistaken. Provided it is made clear which are proved facts and which are conjectures, no harm can result. Conjectures are of great importance since they suggest useful lines of research.

10011

A computer would deserve to be called intelligent if it could deceive a human into believing that it was human

10100

Let us return for a moment to Lady Lovelace's objection, which stated that the machine can only do what we tell it to do. One could say that a man can "inject" an idea into the machine, and that it will respond to a certain extent and then drop into quiescence, like a piano string struck by a hammer. Another simile would be an atomic pile of less than critical size: an injected idea is to correspond to a neutron entering the pile from without. Each such neutron will cause a certain disturbance which eventually dies away. If, however, the size of the pile is sufficiently increased, the disturbance caused by such an incoming neutron will very likely go on and on increasing until the whole pile is destroyed. Is there a corresponding phenomenon for minds, and is there one for machines? There does seem to be one for the human mind. The majority of them seem to be "sub critical," i.e. to correspond in this analogy to piles of sub-critical size. An idea presented to such a mind will on average give rise to less than one idea in reply. A smallish proportion are supercritical. An idea presented to such a mind may give rise to a whole "theory" consisting of secondary, tertiary and more remote ideas. Animals' minds seem to be very definitely sub-critical. Adhering to this analogy we ask, "Can a