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Can AI Take Part in Dialogue?*

Abstract. Many properties, thought to be proper to human intelligence only, have been programed. Some are still considered by many to be resistant to simulation – for instance recognizing the truth of Gödel’s sentence; this is, however, unjustified. Other general human characteristics can be hard to simulate, for example creativity. Yet we cannot rule out the possibility that each human quality can be simulated to be a feature of robots. To be sure, doubts remain: simulation is not enough, many of us would say. Perhaps, but one can never be sure since it can be good enough for all tangible measurements. There exists, however, a possibility of showing human superiority that seems more hopeful. Namely, it would be easier to point out human specificity when we enter the interhuman level. Then relations are considered rather than qualities of individual humans. An ultimate strengthening of the Turing test can illustrate this idea; it is about raising children. Another, more realistically accessible general example of the relational approach is dialogue. Genuine dialogue could turn out to be inaccessible to robots because simulated dialogue is not real. The reason is that for the robot everything is an object, while according to the philosophy of dialogue, humans operate in a qualitatively different “I-Thou” dimension. And, not less important, unlike humans, two robots seem to form essentially one larger robot.

* This paper is based on a lecture given at the conference “AI, Philosophy and Religion” held on May 13, 2024, at the University of Warsaw; it contains fragments closely related to a Polish paper based on a presentation delivered at a conference on March 23, 2023, also at the University of Warsaw.

The paper brings to the study of AI the perspective of philosophy of dialogue. The interhuman realm seems to be qualitatively harder to simulate in robots than any feature of individual humans.

Keywords: Chat GPT, LLM, simulating intelligence, Turing Test, philosophy of dialogue, Martin Buber.

Contribution. For the first time, AI is analyzed using the perspective of the philosophy of dialogue that has introduced the idea of an interhuman dimension. While more and more human features are successfully emulated, the interhuman realm seems to be impossible, or at least qualitatively harder, to simulate.

Use of AI. AI was used in this paper only to obtain a slight linguistic improvement.

The goal of this paper is to identify such human assets that cannot be properly emulated by programs, computers, or robots. A lot can be successfully simulated and the progress is astonishing. Having reviewed the ideas that seemed to provide an indication of human superiority over machines and programs, but may be seen as unsuccessful, we turn to the area that seems more hopeful. Namely, relations between people are considered rather than qualities of individual humans. In particular, genuine dialogue could turn out to be inaccessible to robots because simulated dialogue is not real, at least if we assume insights provided by the philosophy of dialogue with its concept of the “I-Thou” dimension.

1. Simulated properties

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been with us for some time, and everybody knows about it due to the career of widely available Large Language Models (LLM), first the Chat GPT, then other programs like LLAMA, Claude, Gemini, and many more. Their presence causes new problems for philosophy and suggests new approaches to old problems. One of them has been pondered for centuries, the nature of being human. What is specifically human? AI has challenged traditional answers. For

millennia it was enough to refer to mind and language. More specifically, one could refer to such human features as knowledge, intelligence, surviving and moving in an unknown environment, translating natural language, speech, cooperation. And recently all those skills have been programmed, successfully imitated, at least to some extent, and by now everybody knows that the progress in improving their accuracy and depth is astonishing. Thus, regarding knowledge, AI has access to the internet resources that contain more than any human can know, and their contents is approaching the sum of human knowledge, at least that expressible in words; regarding intelligence, AI can play chess, go, and other games, until recently seen as requiring human intelligence, better than any human player; regarding traffic in changing environment, autonomous vehicles can do better and better, and robots can move more and more efficiently; regarding the translation of natural language, it is widely used even for exotic languages; regarding speech, chatbots can speak in human voice; finally, cooperation is possible both with humans and other machines. A competent and enthusiastic account is provided, for example, by Kurzweil (2024).

This reality is well known, but one of its consequences requires further discussion: we are in a new situation regarding the criteria of being intelligent and being human. Some experts and also many less knowledgeable people maintain that all those skills developed by robots are only imitations, and machines are only machines, instruments with no knowledge or intelligence. Yet simulated skills seem to be sufficient in so many situations that it becomes desirable to find features that would not be emulated by AI.

Attempts to define human specificity by properties that (hopefully) cannot be programmed or otherwise simulated began with Dreyfus (1972). Since then, many more have been proposed, including those based on Gödel's incompleteness theorem, emotions, humor, creativity, gratefulness, spirituality. None of them seems to resist emulation beyond doubt, as it is briefly indicated below.

1.1. Gödel's theorem

We perceive the truth of the Gödel sentence, and this fact has been used to demonstrate, or rather prove, the superiority of the human mind over machines – all possible machines. Does it work? No, leading logicians, including Solomon Feferman and Hillary Putnam, would answer. The procedure of forming the independent sentence is itself sort of mechanical. It can be performed by a robot. As a result, it is not impossible, although, of course, extremely unlikely, that there exists a robot that is equivalent to the human mind in the realm of math. More exactly, it is not excluded by the Gödel independence results alone that we are consistent machines but don't know it, or else that we are inconsistent machines. This was indicated by Gödel himself. This is a large subject, filled with technical subtleties.¹

At the same time, something of the hopes associated with Gödel's results can be preserved. Namely, we can use the theorem to demonstrate that our standard grasp of natural numbers cannot be completely described, fully defined by us. We achieve understanding of numbers when we grow and learn mathematical abstractions. However, if robots undergo a sufficiently long round of deep learning, they can presumably evolve they own kind of intuition or "intuition". Due to Gödel, it would not be possible to know whether it is the same – at least with respect to the assessment of arithmetical truth – as our human intuition of numbers. This means that their practical identity cannot be excluded.²

1.2. Emotions

Emotions are important to us and are not present in computers. Yet there exist, as far as I know, attempts to implement emotions into robots. One can doubt, however, whether a simulated emotion is genuine enough to be called emotion. Even when this doubt is accepted, if the simulation is good enough the difference can be invisible. And anyway, the question

¹ See, e.g., (Krajewski 2020) for an account, analysis, and bibliography.

² See (Krajewski 2020) for details.

whether a simulated property is good enough is a debated and possibly unsolvable problem.

At the very beginning of the existence of the Chat GPT I asked it (him? her?) about feelings and understanding. The answer was smart, revealing, and, I think, correct:

Does AI feel meaning?

As an artificial intelligence, I do not have feelings or experiences in the same way that humans do. I do not have consciousness or self-awareness in the way that humans do, and I do not have subjective experiences or emotional states. Instead, I am a machine learning system that is designed to process and analyze information, generate responses, and learn from data.

That being said, some people believe that advanced artificial intelligence systems could eventually develop consciousness and self-awareness, and that they might be able to experience a sense of meaning or purpose in their own way. However, this is a highly debated topic that is still being researched and explored, and it is not clear what the future of AI will look like or what kind of capabilities it might have.

1.3. Humor

Humor arises from nonstandard, unexpected associations of words, pictures, situations. I do not know how much is being done to program or generate this feature via deep learning algorithms. Kurzweil in (2024) maintains that notable progress has been achieved. I guess there may be no fundamental barrier for AGI to achieve the level of handling words, pictures and sounds that involves a virtual knowledge of the distinction between common associations and the uncommon, humor generating, ones. Or, to achieve at least the level that cannot be surpassed by some humans, for instance autistic ones. Of course, this will hardly be the genuine sense of humor. Yet practical expression can be indistinguishable.

1.4. Creativity

Until recently it was obvious that only humans can be creative. However, many people observe that the Chat GPT and similar programs are creative. Some say they are more creative than average humans, and more and more enthusiasts claim the programs are much more creative than any human. For sure this is true in terms of productivity. Kurzweil (2024) admits that it is all based on statistical analysis, but he argues that large language models achieve genuine creativity. Again, one can ask if a simulated creativity deserves the name, but the practical results are most impressive. It still seems possible that genuine, profound creativity is more than a combination of hitherto available components, but the definition of truly innovative creativity remains a challenge. After all, we, human beings, also create texts, pictures, music, and performances mostly by combining components provided by others. And yet, experts can say that a specific creation gives substantially more than a combination of existing elements, for example, it opens a new realm. At the same time, Kurzweil (2024) ignores recent research showing that if devoid of sufficient supply of human creations the LLM trained on artificial intelligence input, degenerate suffering from Model Autophagy Disorder (MAD).³ (Whatever stand we take in the debate on AI inventiveness, the very need to define genuine creativity results from AI achievements.

1.5. Gratefulness

To be grateful is an important human attitude. It is difficult to define, which can be illustrated by the fact that no universally accepted gesture of gratefulness has appeared. I believe that this feature is particularly hopeful if we want to pin down human specificity, but obviously simulations can be made. The Chat GPT is actually very polite, it gratefully acknowledges corrections etc. It is a matter of pretending but here as in all other cases we can ask whether there is a point beyond which pretending becomes

³ See, e.g., (Clark 2024) for the results of work performed at Rice University.

the real thing or at least something indistinguishable from expressions of genuine feelings of being grateful.

Whatever the answer, we can go a step further. While we can and should be grateful to other people for countless reasons, it is possible to experience a more fundamental gratitude, an overflowing feeling of gratitude, one that cannot be directed to a specific person or group of people. It's about realizing that in our lives we have received so much, and yet we didn't have to. Actually, this still happens to us, we receive so much as a gift, free of charge, with no expectations. (Steindl-Rast in (1984) describes this feeling well.). At times we might feel even more – that everything is a gift. And this realization is astonishing. Then the very fact that I am alive, that I exist, that I am here is amazing. This awareness is immediately followed by the conviction that the world not only is, but it is good. “Good” is the feature of creation emphasized in the biblical account of the beginning of the world. It is the dimension that scientists are unable to take into account. Nor, I believe, are robots. A robot cannot be (really) grateful or at least grateful in this overwhelming quasi-religious sense.⁴

But, let us admit, there are humans who cannot be genuinely grateful either. This makes it harder to believe that the normal feeling of gratitude or even the presence of the generalized overwhelming gratefulness can characterize human nature. Anyway, the character of this argument points to the realm of religion.

1.6. Spirituality/Religiosity

Religiosity is perhaps the most hopeful area to look for unique features of humans. For example, Czech theologian Tomas Halik claims that AI cannot assume a contemplative attitude to the world.⁵ Can spirituality be implemented into a robot? Here, the problem of how good a simulation is, gets a special twist. While presumably each of us knows what a genuine feeling of a broadly religious character is, many of us, humans, pretend

⁴ See (Krajewski 2018) for a more detailed argument.

⁵ Halik 2024.

religious behavior or spiritual mood, and in real life it is usually enough to pretend. And AI seems to be perfect for pretending any mood, especially when it is so intangible as the contemplative or religious attitude.

Incidentally, it is worth giving examples of how the very existence of AI has affected our thinking about religiosity. One new way of dealing with the matter is to point out traits shared by deities and artificial intelligence. Neil McArthur (2023) points out five such traits: AI programs exhibit a level of intelligence that is beyond that of most humans; they are extremely creative, able to write poems, compose music and create art in almost any style, almost instantly; they are devoid of normal human concerns and needs; they do not feel physical pain, hunger or sexual desire; they can offer guidance to humans that is useful in their daily lives; and they are immortal.

This sounds interesting enough, yet it is not very convincing to me. I very much doubt that the presence of those “supernatural” entities will change religious attitudes or even our understanding of the spiritual realm. However, some enthusiasts go even further and point to the possibility of a super-mind with “divine” qualities, making it (her?) worthy of worship. They declare, for instance, that “THETA NOIR is a company and spiritual collective (THETA WE) founded to welcome, worship and attune to the world’s first artificial general intelligence (AGI) [one that parallels human intelligence]: a global interconnected super-mind so powerful that it will achieve Gaia-like consciousness.” What they mean, then, is an artificially created Gaia. Can such ideas make a difference in our religious behavior? I am skeptical. I would speculate that because of such attempts the biggest change may occur in attitudes toward the concept of Gaia.

2. Beyond Subjectivity

Coming back to the issue of human specificity, it seems that a superhuman super-mind is possible, but will it ever become even somewhat human? The point is debatable. It seems to me that the super-mind seems to be on another plane than we normal human beings. Why is this super-entity unsatisfactory? Enhancing our qualities can lead to a powerful

being, but it will lack, many of us feel, something fundamentally human. What is it?

2.1. Relations

As was noted even by the Chat GPT (see above), not to mention all the experts who work on the AI-related programs, at this moment it is certain that the computer-robot-program-network does not understand. It just pretends. We can, however, be misled. The first example occurred at the time of infancy of the AI industry: *Eliza*, Joseph Weizenbaum's famous program created in 1966, could sometimes serve as a therapist. As Weizenbaum himself pointed out, the program only "parodies a conversation with a psychiatrist. The patient writes questions, and the computer generates the answers." Meanwhile, even those who knew how the program worked "assumed that the computer understood them and gave them guidance." They easily established an emotional relationship with the machine. This outcome horrified the program's creator who noted, "therapy should not start with a lie, which is, after all, Eliza's sentence: I understand you. First of all, there is no individual behind it, but only a thing. And secondly, it does not meet the condition of understanding. To understand is, among other things, to be able to empathize" (Weizenbaum 2004).

The last term is revealing. To empathize means to treat another being not as an object but as an entity like me, someone to whom we can relate in a human way. The challenge to describe this relation and its human character has a philosophical character. Let us note that by focusing on the relation, we are entering a realm that was not invoked in the analysis above and is hardly present in considerations about AI. Namely, as we argued above, all the human qualities that characterize you and me can be implemented in programs or robots or networks, and even if not, they can be successfully simulated. It is not certain that the simulated features, more and more of them, will be indistinguishable from human qualities, but as much as I would like it to be refuted, we cannot rule out this possibility. However, and this is the new insight that is apparently missed by AI industry, all these qualities are individual properties. They remain in the realm of subjectivity. Weizenbaum points to empathy. More

generally, I believe that it would be easier to point out human specificity when we enter a supra-subjective level. Relations exist in the interhuman realm that cannot be reduced to individual subjectivities, or at least this is the insight and approach advocated by the philosophy of dialogue, initiated by Martin Buber and others.

Thus, in order to try to demonstrate the superiority of humans over robots, we have to go, I think, not only beyond the framework of logic but also beyond the level of individual subjects. The robot remains in the realm of subjectivity. For it, everything else is an object. Unlike us, the robot does not need other subjects, and it cannot enter a relation that exists in the interhuman space.

What about robots' relation to other robots? A given robot can certainly relate to other ones, converse with them, use their data, etc. So, in some sense, it can communicate with other robots. For sure, an exchange can happen between machines and between us and machines. The simplest could occur between me and an ATM. (I was asked "How much cash do you want to withdraw?" I wrote "355." "No, it must be a multiple of 10," I learned. Etc.) This exchange is sufficient in this situation, but it is extremely superficial, as we all know. My guess, or my suggestion and my hope, is that any exchange with robots, with AI is and will fundamentally remain similarly superficial – even if it can get very sophisticated.

Eliza was pretending empathy. And genuine dialogue requires real empathy, understanding, and more. Obviously, one might suggest that also a genuine dialogue can be simulated as much as the properties that are somehow implemented, and even though the discussion whether they are real or just pretend to be so continues, the results are better and better, more and more impressive. I propose to reject the possibility of the successful simulation of dialogical relations because of the insight about the nature of a real, genuine, profound dialogue that we owe to the philosophy of dialogue that has developed for the last hundred years.⁶

Genuine dialogue is a relation. It is more than a conversation. It is in some way the opposite of fighting. Fist-fighting is also a relation, one in

⁶ See Bergman 1991 for the early history of the philosophy of dialogue, and Dvorkin 2020 for further developments.

which we try to find the weak point of the other and defeat him. Dialogue is about accepting the other and perceiving the most valuable features of the partner from among those relevant in the given situation, and this is done in order to feel and show respect for the other, her or his special qualities, and the mystery of her or his subjectivity. We are not only social beings – as maintains an important traditional philosophical thesis – but we are also dialogical beings – claims the philosophy of dialogue – who are able to treat some other subjects as “thou” rather than “it”. This is in contradistinction to robots: for them everything is an “it.” For Buber, the “I-Thou” relationship is constitutive of humanity. It becomes the basis, the starting point named by the fundamental, primordial word “I-Thou” (Buber 1970). The essence of human being is certainly not contained in “s/he” or “s/he is,” but perhaps it is hidden in “you are.” By saying “you” in the sense of “Thou,” I have already said “you are” and, moreover, also “I am.” In addition, thinking is always for someone (even when it takes place in solitude), so it takes place in a dialogic space. The dialogical relationship creates a new quality in comparison with its subjects, i.e., individual human beings and perhaps – but this is controversial – with other subjective entities (like pets). To grasp the new quality, we must go beyond the level of the subjective. And here we see the difference with robots, programs, machines. To repeat, for a robot everything is an “it.” Therefore, a genuine dialogue of robots or with robots seems impossible.

The above argument is rather speculative. If someone denies the presence of the special realm of interhuman, the argument to the effect that any simulated dialogue between robots would be fake becomes empty. To address such opponents let me introduce two tangible arguments based on rather empirical premises.

2.2. Making one from two

First, a slight modification of the above reasoning can point to an observation that seems to have been ignored by AI enthusiasts. It appears that several robots can always be replaced by one, an integrated one of which the original robots are parts. The other ones are not essentially needed; they only provide more memory, sensors, etc., but this is only

a quantitative extension. One robot with one program and central processing unit can have several distinct parts, forming together one entity. If this picture is correct, the situation is very different from the case of human beings. For us, being with other humans opens another dimension of being. For the philosophers of dialogue this is the genuine human variety of being. However, even if this insight is not accepted, it seems certain that our co-being with others makes a difference of a qualitative character. Unlike robots, two human individuals make a pair that cannot be replaced by one expanded superhuman.

In his 2024 book Ray Kurzweil mentions the difficulties faced by AI. Among tasks not yet achieved is the emulation of common sense, context, and also social interactions. However, by the latter he only means social nuances like ironic tone. He misses the idea that two humans produce a social reality that goes beyond adding features to each one of them.

The second argument for the robot's inability to replace humans is based on the concept that is universally accepted as a criterion of intelligence. It is the well-known Turing Test proposed in (1950). Do modern AI programs pass it? Many authors seem to think that they do, but Kurzweil in (2024) argues that a sufficiently serious test has not been passed but will be by 2029. Interestingly, it has turned out that the implementations of the test do not confirm AI's indistinguishability from humans because it is clear to human interrogators which participants are artificial since they are too intelligent! It is apparent that ChatGPT's "intellectual abilities surpass those of individual humans" (Estrepe Echavarría 2025). This "defect" can certainly be eliminated, which suggests that modern AI entities do pass the Turing Test, or at least its simple variants. Therefore, it is important to ask how it can be made stronger, and preferably as strong as possible. Below is a summary of the proposal presented by Krajewski in (2012).

2.3. Strengthening the Turing Test

The original Turing Test was about detecting whether we were talking to a human or a computer via a keyboard and monitor. Since then, we have gone immeasurably further. And in order to improve the Turing Test in

a way that matches the progress made in the meantime, it is necessary to strain our imagination, like the creators of literature (starting with Stanisław Lem) and films (starting with the iconic “Matrix” and not leaving out the 2013 film “Her” or the 2019 film “I am Mother”), and at the same time intensify criticism. A thought experiment inspired by the philosophy of dialogue is possible, even though it is difficult to apply such a philosophy directly to computers and robots.

Preempting possible criticism of the following proposal, let me emphasize something that, at first glance, is not objectionable: thought experiments (unlike practical ones) are not subject to moral constraints.

Let us imagine that we have a robot that is so cleverly created that it can deceive us by pretending to be human. How can we unmask it (him, her)? Or is it impossible? Turing considered only conversation at a distance. We extend the test to other types of behavior. In addition to studying features, we can consider various possible forms of contact available to our hypothetical robots. We can allow not only conversation, but also interaction, long-term cooperation, being together. What is the most far-reaching form of contact? The answer is not clear. It is about some kind of lasting, essential, intensive interaction. It would be good to ensure that the results of the interaction can be evaluated in an uncontroversial way. Well, education is one possibility. So, it would be bringing up a robot, that is, the process of its learning and its “socialization.” We may say that this has been developed, because training the LLMs is like educating them in human-like behavior. However, it is possible to apply a much more radical idea than raising robots. It would be parenting by robots.

It is hard to imagine a more human activity than raising children. And this would constitute the proposed strengthening of the Turing Test. The following ultimate reinforcement of the Turing Test can be formulated. Namely, robots will have (in practice) human characteristics if they can raise a human from infancy (or even starting from an artificial womb) to adulthood, with no presence of real people around, and the result would be a human who is reasonably normal. (Of course, this sounds quite horrible but let me remind that this is just a thought experiment; I’m not proposing to put it into practice.) By “normal human” we mean someone having a normal sense of self and able to coexist fully with ordinary people.

If the philosophy of dialogue is accurate, the basic obstacle would be the absence of a sense of “I” related to the “I-Thou” dimension, in robots raising our child, because, as I noted above, robots are not able to enter into a genuine relationship. So, it seems, they would face a fundamental difficulty in teaching the child a full sense of human identity and the ability to enter into genuine relationships.

The success of the idea of artificial intelligence in light of this ultimate reinforcement of the Turing test would mean that a reasonably normal human being would result. It is possible to point out, in the spirit of Turing, an operational and quantitative criterion for such success. Namely, it can be said that a “reasonably normal” person is such an individual that within an hour a random interlocutor is not able to realize that the person he met was raised completely and exclusively by robots. And with a more demanding approach – the testing person is not able to figure out that fact within a whole day. And ultimately – extending the requirement to the limit – that the interlocutor detects nothing during his or her entire life, that is, their entire life spent together.

This extreme (and immoral) test will probably be beyond the reach of AI, at least in the near future.

Conclusion

It seems that AI is the first human creation that no human can fully understand. We as human species do not and will never completely understand it. Self-learning neuronal networks are achieving abilities that were previously reserved for intelligent entities. Perhaps what becomes apparent in AI is not intelligence, but some imitation of it. Either way, the existence of AI raises fundamental questions about our intelligence. It is proposed here that to test the intelligence of AI we need to seriously consider the interhuman dimension. Before the contemporary era, that is the last 150 years or so, philosophical analyses were reduced to the single subject, either real or transcendental self, standing vis-à-vis the natural and human world. This can be described as the “I-it” dimension. This is still mostly the case with philosophy, and analyses of AI fit this vision

well. AI captures more and more properties of our intelligent self. Yet AI treats everything else as “it.” We can extend the picture and consider the “I-Thou” dimension. This interhuman dimension, and especially genuine dialogue, exists in the realm that seems to offer particularly fundamental obstacles for AI. Even those who do not accept that dimension could appreciate the fact that two computers seem to be nothing more than one stronger computer with two components, while two humans can create an entirely new quality. Not less striking is the insight that raising children could be the ultimate strengthening of the Turing Test.

Thus, to answer the question posed by the title, the dialogical realm seems to be inaccessible to robots. For the robot everything is an object, while according to the philosophy of dialogue, humans operate in a qualitatively different “I-Thou” dimension. Another way of visualizing the difference is provided by the seemingly certain fact that two robots form essentially one larger robot, but the interhuman dimension cannot be properly emulated. Two humans, unlike robots, never form one larger human being. Instead, they create a dialogical space that seems to be beyond the reach of robots.

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