



Intelligence is not Artificial

piero scaruffi

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Writers, inventors and entrepreneurs, impressed by progress in several scientific fields, are debating whether we may be heading for a "singularity" in which machines with super-human intelligence will arise and multiply. In parallel enthusiastic coverage in the media has widely publicized machines performing sophisticated tasks, from beating the world's chess champion to driving a car, from recognizing animals in videos to beating human experts on quiz shows. These stories have reignited interest in the discipline of Artificial Intelligence, whose goal is to create machines that are as intelligent as humans. First of all, this book provides a "reality check" of sorts on simulating human intelligence and achieving superhuman intelligence. I show that, in a society driven by media that desperately need sensational news to make money and in an academic world increasingly driven by the desire to turn research into Silicon Valley start-ups, technological progress in general, and progress in computer science in particular, is often overrated. I wanted to dispel some notions, and my version of the facts may sound controversial until you read my explanations. For example: non-human intelligence is already among us, and is multiplying rapidly, but it is not a machine. For example: progress in Artificial Intelligence has been negligible and one reason is, ironically, that computers have become so much more powerful. For example: the program of turning machines into humans is not very successful yet, but the program of turning humans into machines (via an almost infinite repertory of rules and regulations) is very successful. The new generations missed the debates of the previous decades (the "Turing test", the "ghost in the machine", the "Chinese room", etc) and some of us think that these new generations, trained in hyper-specialized disciplines, don't have the knowledge to understand them even if they were forced to read them. Therefore it is much easier for the new A.I. practitioners to impress the new generations. I have summarized the various philosophical arguments in favor of and against the feasibility of machine intelligence in my book "The Nature of Consciousness" and i won't repeat them here. I will, however, at least caution the new generations that i "grew up" (as far as cognitive science goes) at a time when the term "intelligence" was not "cool" at all: too vague, too unscientific, too abused in popular literature to lend itself to scientific investigation. In fact, the mother of all problems in this debate is at the very source: "singularity" and "superhuman intelligence" are non-scientific terms based on non-scientific chatting. The term "intelligence" itself is hardly scientific. Ask one hundred psychologists and you will get one hundred different definitions. Ask philosophers and you will get thick tomes written in a cryptic language. Ask neurobiologists and they may simply ignore you. I also feel that this discussion should be complemented with an important (more important?) discussion about the changes in human intelligence due to the increased "intelligence" of machines. This change in human intelligence may have a stronger impact on the future of human civilization than the improvements in machine intelligence. Finally, i am intrigued by another sociological/anthropological aspect of this discussion: humans seem to have a genetic propensity to believe in higher forms of intelligence (gods, saints, UFOs, ...) and the myth of the Singularity could simply be its manifestation in our post-religious 21st century.

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