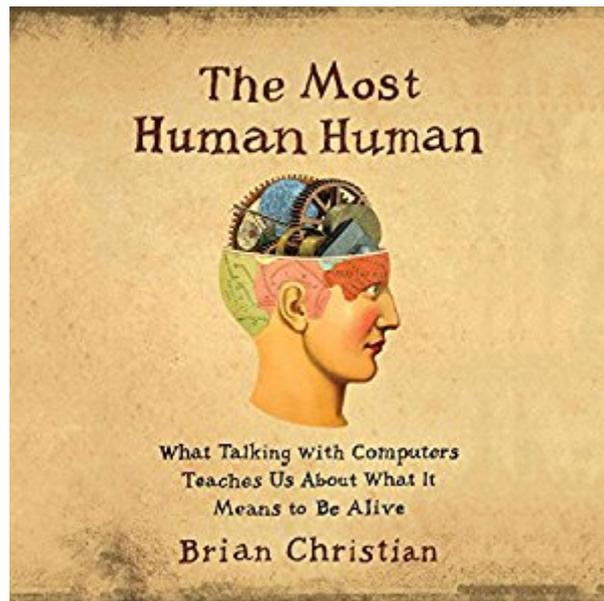


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# The Most Human Human: What Talking With Computers Teaches Us About What It Means To Be Alive



## Synopsis

The Most Human Human is a provocative, exuberant, and profound exploration of the ways in which computers are reshaping our ideas of what it means to be human. Its starting point is the annual Turing Test, which pits artificial-intelligence programs against people to determine if computers can "think". Named for computer pioneer Alan Turing, the Turing Test convenes a panel of judges who pose questions - ranging anywhere from celebrity gossip to moral conundrums - to hidden contestants in an attempt to discern which is human and which is a computer. The machine that most often fools the panel wins the Most Human Computer Award. But there is also a prize, bizarre and intriguing, for the Most Human Human. In 2008, the top AI program came short of passing the Turing Test by just one astonishing vote. In 2009, Brian Christian was chosen to participate, and he set out to make sure Homo sapiens would prevail. The author's quest to be deemed more human than a computer opens a window onto our own nature. Interweaving modern phenomena like customer service "chatbots" and men using programmed dialogue to pick up women in bars with insights from fields as diverse as chess, psychiatry, and the law, Brian Christian examines the philosophical, biological, and moral issues raised by the Turing Test. One central definition of human has been a "being that could reason". If computers can reason, what does that mean for the special place we reserve for humanity?

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

You say you are a human. Now, prove it. Wait, wait - it's too easy to point to your face or to perform a tap dance as you sing "Bicycle Built for Two." That will not do at all. You must, instead, at your

computer terminal type in your part of a conversation that will show to the other conversationalist that you are not yourself a computer. And you will be competing with computers who have been programmed to try to prove that they are humans. This is the basis for the Loebner Prize, a controversial annual competition within the artificial intelligence community. A panel of judges has a series of five-minute-long conversations via screen and keyboard; at the other end of the conversation might be a computer programmed to pretend to be a human or it might be a human trying to dissuade the judges that they are typing to a computer. The judges, of course, don't know beforehand who is who (or, I suppose, what is what), and vote for the conversations that seem most human to them. The Most Human Computer Award, a research grant, goes to the programmers of the best computer conversationalist. But oddly, there is a Most Human Human award for the human who did the best job of making the judges think they were typing to a human. In 2009, Brian Christian won the award, and he has written about it in *The Most Human Human: What Talking with Computers Teaches Us About What It Means to Be Alive* (Doubleday). It is a curious look into the history and potential of artificial intelligence, and a brilliant comparison between artificial intelligence and our natural variety. Christian may have won a prize demonstrating his humanness, but confirms his victory in this humane, humorous, and thought-provoking book.

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