



Simposio Internacional: El legado de Alan Turing
International Symposium: The Alan Turing legacy

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Alan Turing: "The Person of the 20th century"

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In December 1999, "Time" magazine chose Albert Einstein as "The Person of the Century". This was an entirely reasonable choice but, as I will argue in this talk, there are good reasons for Turing to have received this honor, or at least to have been considered for it. One such reason is his purely scientific work, which stems from the greatest mathematical tradition. That work had a direct influence on the development of mathematics itself, and was finally also instrumental in shaping a new (technological) world, both in the calculation and handling of information as well as in giving rise a new manner of establishing social relations. An example on such more "applied", or mundane, regard is in Turing's contributions to the deciphering of secret codes during the Second World War, which in a somewhat (metaphorical) sense may be regarded as a new tool for undermining personal privacy, that essential civil right whose denial by British society finally ruined his life.

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