

# Re: What is the Result from Invoking this Halt Function?

**Source:** <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.logic/2004-08/1591.html>

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On Wed, 11 Aug 2004 15:51:23 +0000 (UTC), Simon G Best

<[s.g.best@btopenworld.com](mailto:s.g.best@btopenworld.com)> said:

> *Although I said I intended not to respond anymore, I am failing to*  
> *resist the temptation to respond.*

An experience many of us are familiar with. What is it exactly about Olcott that seems to compel a response? Initially, I thought he was a reasonably intelligent fellow who had gotten himself bollixed up conceptually and just needed to be unconfused via some clear and simple explanations. So initial motivations were pedagogical. Reasonable people with some modest amount of expertise about a certain topic generally enjoy helping others who want to learn something about that topic to understand it. Sadly, Olcott has since amply demonstrated that he is unable to grasp the most elementary points of the theory of computability. Notably, he still doesn't understand what a Turing Machine is, what it is for a TM to compute a function, etc, and consequently the little proof of the unsolvability of the Halting Problem is simply over his head. Yet, with rather breathtaking hubris (or something), he continues to claim he's solved the Halting Problem, to do something that has been proved impossible. So now the compulsion to respond to him seems driven more by something like a sense of moral outrage or, at least, moral duty — as when a liar or doctrinaire hack slanders someone whose character you know to be impeccable.

Unfortunately, arguing with liars and hacks is pointless. Best simply to state the facts and point to the documentation for the sake of interested bystanders in danger of being misled and walk away. To wit: There is an elementary proof that the Halting Problem is unsolvable (one version: <http://tinyurl.com/6ow6c>). Olcott claims to have solved it. So he's obviously wrong, hence obviously confused (or a pathologically brilliant troll).

Chris Menzel