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A FAUSTIAN EXCHANGE: WHAT IS TO BE HUMAN IN THE ERA OF UBIQUITOUS TECHNOLOGY?

The quest for artificial wisdom

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Abstract The term "Contemplative sciences" refers to an interdisciplinary approach to mind that aims at a better understanding of alternative states of consciousness, like those obtained trough deep concentration and meditation, mindfulness and other "superior" or "spiritual" mental states. There is, however, a key discipline missing: artificial intelligence. AI has forgotten its original aims to create intelligent machines that could help us to understand better what intelligence is and is more worried about pragmatical stuff, so almost nobody in the field seems to be interested to join this new effort of contemplative science. In this paper, I would like to accomplish the following: (1) To give a brief description of the field of "contemplative sciences;" (2) To argue why AI should actively join this new paradigm on the study of the mind; and (3) To set up a research program on artificial wisdom: that is to design computational systems that can model at least some relevant aspects of human wisdom.

Keywords Wisdom · Cognitive sciences · Artificial wisdom · Contemplative sciences · Alternate states of consciousness · Meditation · Buddhism

1 Introduction

The three main aims of this paper are:

(1) To give a brief description of the field of "contemplative sciences" and show how it is relevant to change the main emphasis in our research in cognitive sciences, by paying more attention to positive mental states like empathy or compassion and how to make them flourish. (2) To argue why AI should actively join this new paradigm on the study of the mind. (3) To set up a research program on artificial wisdom: that is to design computational systems that can model at least some relevant aspects of human wisdom like the ability to analyze a situation from a non-goal-oriented perspective, to generate a global understanding of problems by a continuous coupling between the cognitive system and the environment or to realize how positive healing emotional states like empathy or compassion could play a role in a new way to understand human–machine interaction.

1.1 Structure of the paper

The paper is divided into the following sections: The first section briefly presents the field of contemplative sciences, its main aims and methodological program. The second section discusses why AI is not a part of the contemplative sciences. Third section reviews the "classical" debate between Baltes and Ardelt in order to define wisdom. The next section dwells on what wisdom is and what artificial wisdom should look for in order to make a comprehensive and working theory of it. Fifth section argues for the usefulness of a symbolic approach to artificial wisdom, and the final section discusses how all these theoretical reflections could lead one day to implement simulations of wise behavior.

2 What are contemplative sciences?

Contemplative Sciences is a cluster of a new discipline aimed at understanding those "alternative" states that so

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