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FAU Mindfest 2023 Marks Grand Opening of Center for the Future Mind

BOCA RATON, Fla. (March XX, 2023) – Florida Atlantic University’s Center for the Future Mind hosted the Mindfest 2023 conference on March 16 and 17. The gathering of world leaders in the fields of artificial intelligence, philosophy and neuroscience also marked the grand opening of the Center which aims to explore the future of intelligence and consciousness from the vantage point of both philosophy and science. To move the needle in domains fundamental to the human future, the Center will convene world-famous thought leaders, bring important conversations to the public and the media, and provide regular presentations to the U.S. Congress.

The conference began with a reflection on how Indian philosophy can illuminate the study of consciousness. Anand Vaidya, Ph.D., director of the Center for Comparative Philosophy, San Jose State University, showed how the concepts of consciousness can be expanded through analytic philosophy by including ideas from various Indian schools of thought, such as Vedānta and Sāṃkhya. Vaidya closed with a discussion of the relationship between moral standing and consciousness.

This was followed by a panel on the puzzling nature of “Conscious Experience in Nonlinguistic Entities.” Claudia Passos-Ferreira, Ph.D., assistant professor of bioethics, New York University, discussed the difficulty of ascertaining infant consciousness from observations of their behaviors. Carlos Montemayor, Ph.D., professor of philosophy, San Francisco State University, discussed the asymmetry between our approach to actual consciousness of non-human animals and the potential consciousness of artificial intelligence. Finally, Garrett Mindt, Ph.D., assistant professor of philosophy, FAU, explored the possibility of consciousness in artificially grown brains or specific brain regions (known as cerebral organoids).

Center member Stephen Wolfram, Ph.D., CEO of Wolfram Research, discussed the relationship between physics, mathematics, the limitations of computation, and the development of large language models such as ChatGPT. The video of his talk can be found [here](#). Ben

Goertzel, Ph.D., CEO and founder of SingularityNet, spoke on "Three Viable Paths to True Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)." He argued that the deep neural nets and other machine learning algorithms that are absorbing most of the AI world's attention today are fundamentally unsuited for the creation of human-level AGI. He outlined what he believed to be more promising routes.

The focus of the second day was "Global Intelligence, Machine Consciousness, and Virtual Worlds." The first sessions were at the newly opened Gruber Sandbox, at FAU's Wimberly Library. Speakers explored the internet as a form of intelligence, consisting of various sophisticated chatbots and search engines fueled by large language models and other AI services (e.g., Gmail, Wikipedia), drawing from much of the internet. Among the questions posed were: "How do we gauge the intelligence of a global intelligence network," "What new AI safety problems arise," and "How will humans interact with, and even be manipulated by, such global systems, and what devices will they use."

Participants then discussed the possibility of chatbot sentience and the recent controversy concerning both Google's LaMDA system and ChatGPT (on Microsoft's browser) possibly being sentient, together with the increasingly impressive ability of large language models like ChatGPT and Google's largest model, PaLM, to converse. Several important questions were raised, including: "As AI becomes more human-like, individuals will increasingly suspect that they are interacting with conscious machines — but what methodological requirements are appropriate for deciding whether a machine is or isn't conscious," "Will ongoing AI projects that attempt to model the neural basis of consciousness in humans succeed in creating AIs with the felt quality of experience and enhanced intelligence," "What will the most sophisticated AI's of the future even look like," and "And importantly, even if we can build conscious AIs, should we."

In a public keynote on the second day, the philosopher David Chalmers, Ph.D., professor of philosophy and neural science, New York University, discussed his recent book: "Reality+: Virtual Worlds and the Problems of Philosophy." Chalmers took the audience on a mind-bending journey involving virtual reality technology, illuminating the nature of reality and our place within it. He argued that we can live a meaningful life in virtual reality. He used VR technology to offer a new perspective on established philosophical questions such as: "How do we know that there's an external world," "Is there a god," "What is the nature of

reality,” “What’s the relation between mind and body,” and “How can we lead a good life.”

For more information on FAU’s Center for Future Mind, contact Susan Schneider at sschneider@fau.edu.

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About Florida Atlantic University:

Florida Atlantic University, established in 1961, officially opened its doors in 1964 as the fifth public university in Florida. Today, the University serves more than 30,000 undergraduate and graduate students across six campuses located along the southeast Florida coast. In recent years, the University has doubled its research expenditures and outpaced its peers in student achievement rates. Through the coexistence of access and excellence, FAU embodies an innovative model where traditional achievement gaps vanish. FAU is designated a Hispanic-serving institution, ranked as a top public university by U.S. News & World Report and a High Research Activity institution by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. For more information, visit www.fau.edu.