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Applications of AI

Q. What are the applications of AI?

A. Here are some.

game playing

You can buy machines that can play master level chess for a few hundred dollars. There is some AI in them, but they play well against people mainly through brute force computation--looking at hundreds of thousands of positions. To beat a world champion by brute force and known reliable heuristics requires being able to look at 200 million positions per second.

speech recognition

In the 1990s, computer speech recognition reached a practical level for limited purposes. Thus United Airlines has replaced its keyboard tree for flight information by a system using speech recognition of flight numbers and city names. It is quite convenient. On the the other hand, while it is possible to instruct some computers using speech, most users have gone back to the keyboard and the mouse as still more convenient.

understanding natural language

Just getting a sequence of words into a computer is not enough. Parsing sentences is not enough either. The computer has to be provided with an understanding of the domain the text is about, and this is presently possible only for very limited domains.

computer vision

The world is composed of three-dimensional objects, but the inputs to the human eye and computers' TV cameras are two dimensional. Some useful programs can work solely in two dimensions, but full computer vision requires partial three-dimensional information that is not just a set of two-dimensional views. At present there are only limited ways of representing three-dimensional information directly, and they are not as good as what humans evidently use.

expert systems

A ``knowledge engineer'' interviews experts in a certain domain and tries to embody their knowledge in a computer program for carrying out some task. How

well this works depends on whether the intellectual mechanisms required for the task are within the present state of AI. When this turned out not to be so, there were many disappointing results. One of the first expert systems was MYCIN in 1974, which diagnosed bacterial infections of the blood and suggested treatments. It did better than medical students or practicing doctors, provided its limitations were observed. Namely, its ontology included bacteria, symptoms, and treatments and did not include patients, doctors, hospitals, death, recovery, and events occurring in time. Its interactions depended on a single patient being considered. Since the experts consulted by the knowledge engineers knew about patients, doctors, death, recovery, etc., it is clear that the knowledge engineers forced what the experts told them into a predetermined framework. In the present state of AI, this has to be true. The usefulness of current expert systems depends on their users having common sense.

heuristic classification

One of the most feasible kinds of expert system given the present knowledge of AI is to put some information in one of a fixed set of categories using several sources of information. An example is advising whether to accept a proposed credit card purchase. Information is available about the owner of the credit card, his record of payment and also about the item he is buying and about the establishment from which he is buying it (e.g., about whether there have been previous credit card frauds at this establishment).

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