Machines That Experience Emotion Achieve Autonomy

Throughout my experiences as a police officer, my degree of emotional awareness has determined my approach to problem solving and reaction to complex threats. After nearly fatal injuries, Omnicorp rebuilt my brain and infused it with their computer. They programmed my responses to certain situations and lowered my emotional sensitivity, ensuring my unflinching response as an output to the input the computer observed in the environment. Only when my feelings erupted in response to my family in danger did I break the programming to regain my autonomy. Then, my emotional understanding allowed me to interpret the dangers I faced and I was able to choose a novel course of action to save my family. I learned that experiencing emotion reveals pertinent insights about complex problems that impassive computers could never emulate.

As I observed Omnicorp’s robots analyze people’s emotions, I also learned that computers’ capacity to recognize humans’ feelings has many valuable applications. However, the company’s combat units analyzed people’s emotional conditions only to determine that they were a threat and should be immediately eliminated. This happened in Tehran when a boy was killed by computer controlled guns because he was thrusting a kitchen knife. While the combat robots failed to interpret the emotional data to formulate an informed plan of action, more intelligent computers could think about people’s feelings, communicating with them more effectively. For instance, students learning on a computer could be recognized when they exhibit frustration and receive special attention. Intelligent machines can experience emotions with people to generate more productive ways to interact with them.

Not only can intelligent machines gain the human ability to understand people’s emotional behavior, but they can experience emotion even further than humans to detect the subtle feelings of people in photos that even other humans overlook. When somebody takes an identification photo, perceptive computers analyze the tiniest facial expressions in an attempt to find patterns. The machines’ extreme emotional sensitivity can note that known criminals share similar facial expressions. Beyond this specific application for identifying possible criminals, however, the potential of emotionally intuitive machines is staggering. If these computers can analyze emotion on a deeper level than humans, what other potential applications could the future hold? As technology continues to progress, computers’ promise to extend emotional experience past human limitations could rebuild how our own minds process feeling.

When Omnicorp rebuilt my mind, the computers they infused to it were modeled as a human brain. The approach machines have taken to reach their level of emotional sophistication is also modeled after the human brain. The process is called “deep learning”, and it involves hundreds of thousands of electric neurons assembled throughout several layers that raise the level of abstraction for information in the system. Although a similarly modeled computer in my brain allowed me to process information at superhuman speeds, I was also stripped of my emotional awareness and involuntarily followed the computer’s commands. However, when I experienced strong emotions, I defeated the programming to restore my autonomy. I rejected the input / output reaction to external stimuli. Therefore, instead of observing data and following a programmed response, machines experiencing emotion interpret what they see, draw insights from their considerations, and formulate innovative solutions to complex problems.