Reflective Activity 1

Ethics in Computing in the age of Generative AI

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Since late 2022, the rapid growth of generative AI has had a profound impact on companies, society, and the tech world (Correa et al., 2023). AI as a concept emerged in the mid-20th century, but the speed and magnitude of recent developments have demonstrated that current governance mechanisms are insufficient to address these advancements. The gradual expansion of AI since the "winter" of the 1980s has led to a crucial moment: we need to rethink the rules, values, and moral frameworks that govern its usage (Deckard, 2023).

Correa et al. (2023) note that while everyone agrees on fundamental concepts such as openness, justice, responsibility, and privacy, these ideas are challenging to implement in practice because they are abstract and can be interpreted differently across various cultures. This difference could cause the AI governance ecosystem to break down, making it more challenging to protect fundamental rights and encourage cross-border innovation and collaboration.

Correa et al.'s (2023) meta-analysis of 200 AI ethics guidelines offers a critical overview of global AI governance. Correa et al. (2023) highlight 17 common principles like transparency, fairness, and privacy. However, these principles are understood and applied differently in different cultures, which makes it harder to agree on global rules. For example, fairness, although widely endorsed, is interpreted differently across cultures and human rights frameworks in Europe (European Commission, 2023) but is also aligned with state policy objectives in China, including economic growth and social stability (Correa et al., 2023). This variation complicates efforts to establish global consensus, as universal principles may be applied in ways that reflect local priorities and ideologies.

Another important finding from Correa et al. (2023) is the aspirational nature of many AI governance frameworks. While ethical goals are clearly stated, concrete mechanisms for implementation—such as risk assessments, audits, and legal measures—are often lacking. Only a minority of governmental documents include enforceable legal responses, leaving many guidelines as voluntary commitments. This reinforces the need for robust tools to compare, harmonise, and operationalise AI ethics across jurisdictions to avoid a fragmented regulatory landscape.

Deckard (2023) offers a professional perspective, saying that AI ethics should be not only a policy issue but also a professional duty. He stresses that computing professionals must consider the social, political, and economic implications of AI, not just how to resolve technical issues. To connect the technical and social worlds, people need to be able to work together across disciplines, keep learning, and communicate well. Deckard (2023) encourages computer professionals to shape the ethical direction of AI actively. This approach is part of the broader push for responsible AI, which means that ethics should be integrated into every step, from design and development to deployment and monitoring.

Different countries handle AI governance in unique ways based on what matters most to them. The European Union's AI Act (European Commission, 2023) is a good example of risk-based regulation. A good example of risk-based regulation is the EU's AI Act (European Commission, 2023). It categorises AI systems by risk level and sets rules for high-risk systems, like transparency, human oversight, and accountability. The US has taken a more decentralised and sectoral approach, focussing on voluntary

principles and standards based on innovation (OECD, 2021). The 2022 AI Ethics Guidelines from China emphasise the importance of AI serving the government, striking a balance between innovation and national security, as well as societal harmony (Correa et al., 2023). Canada and Singapore are two countries that have developed national AI agendas prioritising people's interests and promoting responsible innovation. Although the frameworks are similar, each country applies them differently, which makes it harder to collaborate, share information, and follow common rules.

Correa et al. (2023) say that the divided governance landscape creates big risks.. If we do not agree more on fundamental principles and how to implement them, we could end up with fragmented governance systems that hinder AI innovation, fail to protect fundamental rights, and exacerbate global problems, such as algorithmic bias, data privacy violations, and AI-driven misinformation. Deckard (2023) argues that the answer may lie in inscribing ethics into the actual creation of AI, fostering interdisciplinary collaborations, and enabling experts to serve as guardians of technological ethics. Attempts to harmonise global governance must do so in a culturally sensitive manner. This means frameworks must respect different cultures to avoid imposing one set of values globally (UNESCO, 2021).

To deal with these problems, I suggest that computer professionals take several steps:

1. Advocate for Interoperable Global Frameworks

Computing professionals should engage in shaping international standards, such as ISO/IEC 42001 (ISO/IEC, 2023) and the OECD AI Principles (OECD, 2021), to identify shared ethical foundations that can be adapted to national contexts. Participation in professional bodies (e.g., BCS, ACM) and policy dialogues can help align industry best practices with legal frameworks.

- **Legal Impact**: Shared standards make legislation easier to understand, which helps governments cooperate and trade AI around the world.
- **Social Impact**: Sharing common ethical principles helps people trust one another and have fair access to the benefits of AI.
- **Professional Impact**: Clear rules make ethical questions less confusing, which helps facilitate the responsible development of AI.

2. Embed Ethics by Design

Deckard (2023) believes ethics should guide every stage of AI, from data collection and model design to use and monitoring. This means using diverse data, being transparent, and taking responsibility. Organisations also need to build a culture of accountability to make this work.

- **Legal Impact:** Integrating ethics into AI can reduce legal risks like bias, discrimination, and privacy problems.
- **Social Impact:** Open and transparent AI helps build trust and protects vulnerable people.
- **Professional Impact**: Embedding ethics elevates AI ethics as a core professional competency.

3. Foster Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Lifelong Learning

AI governance needs input from technologists, ethicists, lawyers, social scientists, and affected communities. Professionals should keep learning to stay up to date with new technology and society's needs (Deckard, 2023).

- **Legal Impact:** Different views help make laws more flexible and better for the future.
- **Social Impact:** Working together helps AI systems match society's needs and reduce problems.
- **Professional Impact:** Learning about different roles can help you think clearly and make good ethical choices.

4. Champion Transparency and Accountability

Professionals need to keep track of where data originates, how models are built, what they are meant to perform, and what their limits are. They also need to make sure that someone is responsible for the results of AI.

- ***Legal Impact***: Transparency enables audits, investigations, and legal redress when AI systems cause harm.
- **Social Impact**: It gives users the power to question AI decisions and helps keep AI fair and open.
- **Professional Impact:** Transparency helps professionals act responsibly and build trust in AI systems.

Conclusion

Due to the rise of generative AI, it is even more crucial to establish effective AI governance that works well globally and is sensitive to diverse cultures. As Correa et al. (2023) and Deckard (2023) note, the future of AI relies not only on scientific progress but also on ethical stewardship. Computing professionals can help create a better AI future by supporting shared frameworks, embedding ethics in design, working with others, and encouraging transparency.

References

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