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Ethical Issues in Affective Computing

The twenty-fourth chapter of the Oxford Handbook of Affective Computing is written by Roddy Cowie, a member of the School of Psychology at Queen's University Belfast in Belfast, Ireland.

Ethical understandings begin to diverge at multiple levels spanning from governance, the behavior of affective systems, public opinion trends, institutional and technical codes, and the interaction between humans and emotional systems. An initial list of imperatives in affective computing are to "increase net positive affect, to avoid deception, to respect autonomy, to ensure that system's competence is understood, and to provide morally acceptable portraits of people. (pg. 334)" The chapter offers concrete, implementable, and ethical scenarios. Additionally, abstract dilemmas for the future of affective computing are discussed. I believe the most important thing to consider is that "[a]ffective computing is a technology with unusually direct links to morally positive goals. (pg. 338)" Therefore, relying on prior philosophical 'state-of-the-art' is vital.

Philosophers such as David Hume **(1740)**, Adam Smith **(1759)**, Jeremy Bentham **(1747 - 1832)**, and John Stuart Mill **(1806 - 1873)** "reflect a deep-seated intuition that emotion is at the core of what makes us moral beings. (pg. 335)" Many other philosophical schools also pertain to affective computing. Driver **(2012)** suggests morals are from 'utilitarian' principles, Kant **(1785)** argues logic dictates morals, Hobbes (1651) cites that morals are contracts, Scanlon **(1998)** indicates morals "emerge from shared values (pg. 335)", MacIntyre **(1985)** advocates for a "revival of virtue ethics (pg. 335)", Mackie **(1977)** says "moral claims are simply errors" (pg. 335), and Parfitt **(2011)** "attempts to reconcile the major positions… (pg. 335). For those with an strictly an engineering or philosophical background, ethics and affective computing are inherently linked. This is due in part to similar problem spaces and scope when relating to humans. Nevertheless, like other aspects of philosophy, moral stances often diverge depending on the experiences and belief systems of the participants.

Other topics:

Application-Specific Concerns
- Affective Systems as Companions
- Affective Systems in Medicine
- Military
- Sex Robots
- Surveillance

Philosophy
Peter Goldie (Doering, et al., 2011) - intersection of affective computing and ethics.

Robotics
Masahiro Mori - 'The Uncanny Valley'