Psychological Needs and Values: Tensions in Design Engineering

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As a Design Engineer I "make things" and like to focus on the positive impact that our work has on the world. Occasionally, we try to anticipate its unintended consequences. What we rarely do is ask "what are the values by which we judge the systems we create?". In this talk, I will review some of my work on AI and how it led to using Self-Determination Theory to judge its impact. I will also consider how core to debates about AI, like Weizenbaum's ELIZA chatbot (1966), and those between Carl Rogers and BF Skinner are still relevant at the time of ChatGTP. This requires reflecting on how advances in Intelligent Systems are shaping today's world, and how those debates may inform our views on how technologies can support or hinder psychological needs satisfaction. In this talk, I will be reflecting on the ethical considerations that arise from my research and how I have personally attempted to address them with my work on SDT. This is not a talk on ethics, but rather a personal, and therefore partial, description of the dilemmas of working with AI.