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ENCS-393: Reflection Essay #1

      As of recent, the rise in popularity of artificial intelligence has sparked transformative changes in many industries, notably revolutionizing the field of digital art. Consequently, the creation of hyper realistic images of people, including celebrities, has become accessible to virtually anyone with access to the internet. This has been the cause of much controversy recently, specifically in a case involving artificially generated nude images of renowned singer & songwriter Taylor Swift (Ray, 2024). These images seemingly popped out of nowhere and quickly took social media platforms by storm – being reposted on platforms such as X and has caused the singer-songwriter to threaten legal action against websites reposting them. Indeed, this incident serves as a stark reminder of novel ethical dilemmas our society must wrestle with in the age of artificial intelligence. The following essay will argue that using artificial intelligence image generating technologies to create compromising or scandalous depictions of celebrities is unethical because it undermines the person's right to privacy and because it contributes to the proliferation of misinformation that harms not just the celebrity in question but society at large.

      The first argument against the generation of AI images of celebrities in compromised situations hinges on the right to privacy and consent. Indeed, although celebrities are public persons, they have a right to retain the legal rights to their digital likeness and to personal privacy. Generating fake images of them and then reposting those images without their consent is a direct violation of this right and should be treated no differently than if a paparazzi illegally snapped pictures of them changing in their bedroom and proceeded to release those images to the public. Furthermore, the argument that digital reproductions are not immune to being deemed unethical is echoed by Nick Bostrom drawing on the principles of "Non-discrimination with regard to substrate" and "Non-discrimination with regard to ontogeny" wherein all beings, regardless of their physical or digital nature, deserve respect and autonomy (Bostrom, n.d.). In other words, the notion that notion that digital representations of people can be manipulated without ethical considerations does not hold. Moreover, he argues through the principle of the "Procreator's responsibility of provisioning" that the creators of a digital product have a responsibility to ensure that their creations do not harm existing persons (Bostrom, 2024). Naturally, this includes the persons right to privacy and consent. As such, it would be the case that person responsible for creating the compromising AI-generated image should be held accountable for their actions.

      The second argument against the generation of AI images of celebrities in compromised situations focuses on the broader societal ramifications of circulating such images. Indeed, these images can easily be mistaken for being "real" and contribute to the spreading of misinformation and deceiving the public. Nick Bostrom presents a compelling case on this matter, drawing on the principle of "Actual and potential beings" wherein he posits that if the creation of potential AI images harms the well-being of actual beings there is a moral reason not to bring these

potential-beings into existence (Bostrom, n.d.). In other words, if the misinformation of the public resulting from the generation of fake AI images can be stopped, then it should. Furthermore, the onus of not choosing to stop it ultimately falls on the creator of the image. Without intervention, either through new laws or regulations, it is easy to see how misinformation could attack the very fabric of truth and society, culminating to the point where it is difficult, if not impossible, to discern between what is real and is fake.

In summary, the advent of artificial intelligence has undeniable transformed the digital art industry by enabling anyone to create hyper realistic images, even if unauthorized. Academics such as Nick Bostrom have laid much groundwork in regards to how we, as a society, should properly tackle these new ethical challenges namely through the principles of "Non-discrimination with regard to ontogeny", "Procreator's responsibility of provisioning" and "Actual and potential beings" . However, as we continue navigating this complex technology embedded world, it is important for us to consider what new regulations need to be put in place to properly safeguard society's rights to privacy and truthful information.

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Works Cited

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