English Comprehension

Sergiu Iacob

With the advancements of both software and hardware, the IT domain has started to broaden its horizons and now has more perks up its sleeves. “It’s a new dawn, it’s a new life”, and, as with every new beginning, there are new solutions to old problems, but also new problems.

Facial recognition software has been slowly making its way into the Computer Science world for a couple of years now, thanks to more powerful hardware, such as specialized Graphical Processing Units for computers. It is now widespread and used in many countries, such as China and the US, for applications like comparing people’s passports’ pictures to their actual owners in airports, finding missing children and many more.

Emphasizing the “many more” part of the previous sentence, the possibilities of Facial Recognition are endless. Whether we’re talking about better security, better experiences of customers or recognizing Richard Hammond when he enters your store so you can finally get that rusty old Honda Civic autographed by him, this new technology is just starting to spread its bells and whistles all over the place.

IT companies like FaceFirst are betting hard on this, as they are hustling to research on how this can be used to make our everyday lives better. There’s no debate that it will be incredibly valuable for activities such as alerting authorities of possibly wanted criminals, providing better security for the end-user (such as phones unlocked by the user’s face), enhancing statistics for sports events by tracking the players on the field and so on. You might even find out that you might have a twin you never knew about, thanks to algorithms that scan people’s faces. Imagine that.

Talking about new solutions to old problems got us now to the darker side of the things. Experts are worried that this technology could have a tremendous impact on one’s privacy. They are actually not concerned about governments, but about big companies using this information gathered with Facial Recognition unethically, selling it to whoever pays more. Some guidelines must be ensued to guarantee the safe and beneficial usage of this new technology for the ordinary man. Talking just about the dangers of having a drone with strong facial recognition capabilities could take some pages, but at the same time it is easy to succumb to hysteria… especially in a period of self-isolation. Long may COVID-19 not reign!

Summing things up, this is the same never-ending problem with any technological novelty. It brings many advantages and, at the same time, poses a danger in various situations and might actually harm us more than do us good. As Thanos from Marvel’s Universe might conclude, it is up to us to find the balance between what we need, what we think we need and what we surely must avoid.