Sanjay Jagadeesh

English 1

Summary 2, Draft 1

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In the podcast “The End of Privacy as We Know It?”, host Michael Barbaro introduces an interview conducted by the Daily’s Annie Brown of New York Times reporter Kashmir Hill regarding the rise of a new facial recognition technology created by Clearview AI and if it is a breakthrough for law enforcement or the end of privacy as we know it. Hill argues that though Clearview’s technology is beneficial for law enforcement and public safety, the lack of transparency and federal regulation risk society’s privacy.

Hill begins with background information on facial recognition, noting though law enforcement has had access to similar technology for years, Clearview’s technology is unique due to their massive database containing billions of photos scraped from the web. She warns that public use of the technology would be privacy nightmare, citing that Silicon Valley giants have refrained from making similar technology due to this concern.

Hill then analyzes Clearview themselves. After numerous challenges, she eventually gets into contact with them and interviews two investors, who reveal that the company was founded by Hoan Ton-That, a genius coder of Vietnamese royalty from Australia, with big names like Peter Thiel also investing. They confirm that the technology is already being used and that it is spreading like wildfire.

This brings Hill to the consequences of Clearview’s technology. Noting that over 600 agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security and the F.B.I, have tried the app, Hill illustrates how the technology can identify suspects even if their face is covered, helping agencies solve previously unsolved cases. However, Hill claims that Clearview AI may be manipulating search results, using her own experience as an example. When Hill asked numerous police officers to run her face through the software, Clearview would call them asking why they were searching for a New York Times reporter and ban their account. Hill summarizes that though Clearview’s technology is beneficial for law enforcement, there is a lack of transparency regarding the company and its intentions.

Hill then discusses her interview with Ton-That, focusing on the start of Clearview AI and how public scraping for photos was ruled legal in federal court. When Hill raised the issue of her picture being flagged in Clearview’s system, Ton-That insisted that it was just a bug and ran her picture through a mobile app to show that the system works correctly (though it gave images she didn’t even know were online).

Regarding the selling of Clearview’s technology, Ton-That reveals that they have decided to only sell to law enforcement, though Hill raises the concerns that due to the lack of federal regulation, Clearview AI could sell to anyone they wish, making public privacy rely upon powerful people like Ton-That and that Clearview may not have control over where their technology goes.

Finally, the controversies over Clearview’s technology are addressed, with Micheal Barbaro illustrating how companies are demanding Clearview AI to stop using photos scraped from their websites and how New Jersey has now banned the technology’s use.

[498 Words]