

The Ethics of Facetune

It seems like everyone knows that models are photoshopped on magazine covers. We are told from a very young age that these images aren't of "real people." However, I don't think everyone is aware of the prevalence of photoshopping on Instagram. Recently, I've seen many videos on YouTube of people "exposing" Instagram models for photoshopping or "facetuning" their pictures (Facetune is a popular photo editing app). In these videos, people show side-by-side comparisons of a model or celebrity's edited photo and the original. The differences were shocking, with models editing their waist, face or other parts of the body. Sometimes the images looked like they were of two completely different people.

Although these videos were upsetting, I wasn't surprised. The more shocking experience I had relating to this actually happened a few weeks after watching these videos. I was at a concert where I had VIP tickets and got to meet the artists before the show and take pictures with them. While we were waiting for the show to start, I noticed a teenage girl next to me facetuning her picture. Is it ethical for Instagram models and celebrities to photoshop, facetune or manipulate photos of themselves? Is it ethical for regular people to do this?

The main concern that people have over Facetune and photoshop is that it gives people unrealistic expectations about how people should look and can be detrimental to their self-esteem. This especially impacts young people and teenagers because they are at a very

vulnerable time where they are easily influenced and often don't have much confidence. Teen girls are usually most impacted, since facetuning is especially common among female models and celebrities, who teen girls look up to. There are several ethical approaches we can use to look at this issue. I will focus on consequentialism and deontology.

Consequentialism reasons that you can decide whether an action is ethical based on the consequences of it. In this case, there are many consequences of photoshopping on Instagram. The main consequence, as stated before, is the impact it has on the self esteem of viewers. This impact can be very significant, even leading to depression or other mental health problems when it is combined with other issues on social media. The facetuning/photoshopping of photos of people contributes significantly to the low self-esteem of teens that use social media. These consequences would make facetuning photos unethical under the approach of consequentialism. A very different approach to this is deontology, where you decide whether an action is ethical based on whether it follows a certain set of morals. This is different from consequentialism because deontology focuses on the actual action in question rather than the effects. One might argue that photoshop is fine because the actual action of editing the picture is not hurting anyone. This makes sense, but I think it can still be considered unethical under the approach of deontology because it goes against the moral of not tricking people. Many people think photo editing is "false advertising" and it gives people false expectations. This concept of tricking people can be considered immoral. However, it is very debatable.

I truly believe that the girl I saw facetuning her photo at the concert was doing so because of her own insecurities. Since she was so young, she probably sees a lot of models doing the exact same thing and feels like it was okay to do so and is insecure about posting her photos if

she doesn't edit them. However, I think this was wrong of her because it will now become a vicious cycle where her own followers will feel bad about themselves after looking at this picture of her. Not only are girls impacted by Instagram models editing their pictures, but they are also impacted when they see other girls their age looking "better" than them on social media. This issue impacts me personally because I see girls from school posting amazing photos of themselves, often edited, and it makes me feel awful about my own appearance. I know that this and other aspects of social media have really contributed to my self confidence issues. This has led me to use the consequentialist approach when looking at this problem because I know many girls my age relate and have been affected by this social media culture. Therefore, I believe that Instagram models and celebrities faceting or photoshopping their pictures is unethical because of the consequences and the way it impacts vulnerable teenagers.