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<center>Intellectual Property</center>

The open-source movement has been picking up steam in recent years, but I would still argue that strong intellectual property laws encourage innovation. They provide strength and solidarity while open source projects can come across as weak or under-developed. If these laws were to be removed or weakened they would bring down the innovation with them. Currently there isn't a clear solution, but many ideas need to be taken into consideration to find the answer.

Although there are some great open-source projects out there, some of the best products are created under strong intellectual property laws and patents. *Apple* has demonstrated this well in the past. They produce great products that are unified and cohesive. One of the positive aspects of IP laws is that they create strength and unity set by standards that wouldn't be possible without those laws in place. Before *Apple* joined the music industry with iTunes, digital music consumption was split between *Sony* and *Universal*. If not for those laws, we would be living in a world full of iTunes copies and knock-offs.

But while IP laws provide strength, they have their drawbacks. A certain amount of imitation is a good thing and creates competition. "Copying combined with product differentiation equals rising living standards"(Richman). IP laws need to take monopolies into account while still creating unity and avoiding product fragmentation. If monopolies were to form that would lead to a decrease in innovation.

The current IP laws aren't good enough, but they are on the right track. Strong protection that still allows for competition and innovation is what will win out eventually, not a completely open-source environment. It is my opinion that IP laws are beneficial for innovation in general because of the unity they provide. Laws that are too weak will just lead to rip-offs, not better competition.