

(1) Using the “Case Study: Database Guru” on pages 175-179, examine two ethical theories not already discussed. Would you reach the same conclusions?

Subjective Relativism:

Since subjective relativism refers to the idea of ethical judgments being totally at the whim of the agent, Arjun’s ethical understanding would be dependent on what he thought was fair. Arjun’s understanding of his alternatives suggests that he believes that the ethical line lies somewhere between helping his team with questions and knowledge, but not going so far as to give away any information.

Cultural Relativism:

Were both of the countries situated in the US? Were Felicity Software or Unrelated.com found in different countries? Depending on the answers to these two questions, the ethics of Arjun’s actions, the contracts he should honor, may be different. There is no universally accepted copyright law- patents and trademarks are only applicable in countries where they have been granted. Thus, societal and ethical understandings and norms, as well as previous cases could inform whether or not Arjun’s actions were ethical, especially with the second alternative, where Arjun.

Ethical Egoism:

In this scenario, it’s tricky to think of what Arjun would do. As the Vice President, he stands to benefit greatly if the team is successful, Since the chance of him being caught is somewhat low, he might consider giving more information than just the leading questions, since the team’s success and company’s success would affect his income as well. However, in the event that he was caught, he would stand to lose much transactionally, including his position, as well as legal ramifications. Thus, his choice to assist his team to help himself would be to the limits at which he thinks he would not get caught.

It was surprising in this case of intellectual property how thin the ethical line was. In the ladder alternative, the Kantian and Social Contract difference for ethical and unethical was only whether or not Arjun asked (any) leading questions. What if Arjun had hired a consultant as an intermediary, and asked them the leading questions?

(2) Is it hopeless to try to protect intellectual property in digital media?

I would argue to the contrary. Quinn's assertion that "The purpose of these protections is to provide creators of intellectual property with a proper financial reward for their efforts, while ensuring the public has access to their creations" means that we continue to require protections for digital media. The balance between protection of intellectual property remains extremely important for innovation. It is precisely this balance that we must protect.

As Quinn's discussion of intellectual property stated, innovative mediums have led to transformational changes in certain industries. From the printing press onwards, methods of distribution have changed the way we receive books. any of the industries within digital media have seen transformative changes. MP3 sharing and CD-burning platforms changed. But isn't as though we have no innovation in writing, music, or movies just because of file sharing.

Revenue streams have adapted to subscription-based models, such as Netflix, Apple Music, crowdfunding, etc. These models allow content creators protections, and also give them the freedom and flexibility to innovate in their mediums. The RIAA and the triple-A music producers and musicians may have seen a loss in revenue, but independent music is growing (1). Media is constantly changing, and the space has grown to include far more competitors- what was once radio, now is movies, TV, computer and video games, social media, smartphones, etc.

I would argue that limitations and protections of intellectual property continue to be the reason that people are willing to try to be successful and innovate. In a free market, if companies are not rewarded for their willingness to take risks, the market may stagnate. I think we see this increasingly with tensions with China and countries overseas, where reverse engineering and piracy have arguably affected companies' bottom lines.

- (1) <https://www.forbes.com/sites/melissamdaniels/2019/07/10/for-independent-musicians-goingyour-own-way-is-finally-starting-to-pay-off/#1f7fef5414f2>

Quinn, Michael J. *Ethics for the Information Age*. 2nd ed., Pearson, 2017.