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Social Implications of Computing

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Ethics of Sharing Copyrighted Material

Pirating music has become an everyday task for many people around my age. It has become so integrated that many of us do not even realize that it is wrong – not just with friends or acquaintances. But, with this said I do believe that the sharing of copyrighted materials is wrong as it negatively impacts the companies and people that produce these materials. While it is true that a controlled sharing of the copyrighted materials would be fine, if everyone had this mindset of this type of sharing, then I believe that it would result in the same thing as an indiscriminate sharing of copyright materials, which would negatively impact the companies who make these softwares.

I believe that it matters more to what type of software it is. In my opinion, companies that create software with practical uses, such as Microsoft Word or IntelliJ Ultimate would suffer more from this, since these types of software are usually used and kept for a more prolonged period of time, increasing the chances of the spread of sharing copyrighted material. Also, while some software do offer renewal fees for tech support that are used to generate more revenue, the bulk of the use, in my opinion is with the software itself. The software itself is a one-time buy, and the companies do not even profit from these one-time buys, then they would have lost out on a lot of revenue. While on the other hand, entertainment software such as music or movies would not be kept around as long as practical software. Since people usually

trash movies after the a few watches, if not the first, this decreases the likelihood the widespread sharing. Also, entertainment software tend to release more in mass, as opposed to the more practical software, i.e. new songs and movies get released much more often than a new version of Windows OS.

I believe that consequentialists would view this manner in a way such that everyone would get what they deserve. For example, if suddenly JetBrains goes bankrupt because everyone is sharing their dope IDEs, then we would eliminate and future possibility of newer, improved, more dope IDEs from them. While it is true that there are people who do not share copyrighted materials with anyone, without exceptions, I believe that consequentialists would still fault those people. Even though those people did not adhere to the illicit sharing of copyrighted materials, they did not come forth and stop anything or tried to prevent the continued sharing.

There are always exceptions to everything and I believe that there are scenarios in which the perspective of consequentialists would fail to account for moral judgements. For example, if there was a friend or an acquaintance - someone who was struggling to afford software for productivity and they needed it for some extenuating circumstance, then I believe that sharing copyrighted materials with them would definitely be okay.

Sharing copyrighted materials with not only friends or acquaintances has become widespread to the point where it is considered normal. One can browse on a forum and find a download for Skyrim within five minutes. While there are exceptions where sharing copyrighted materials is okay, I generally believe that it is wrong to do so.