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Intellectual Property

The issue of intellectual property rights connected to the ownership of software is very controversial. I can understand both sides of the argument, that software and information regarding software should be open sourced and the argument that intellectual properties should be protected. Though I may understand the argument for both sides, I personally believe that software should be open sourced, free to use, copy, study and modify.

There are many benefits to allowing an open source approach to software. One of the best examples of this is Linux. It benefits from low hardware costs, from being easily portable and compressed. It's high quality, since the source code is available many different coders can view, modify and upgrade that software. Often resulting in a highly polished and efficient product. Linux also benefits from being easily integrated, low costs due to licensing and maintenance fees, more than abundant support, and nearly infinite scalability.

One of the biggest concerns of the modern tech era is information security, meaning the security of individuals or organizations private information that can potentially be used to harm that individual or organization. I personally pay for identity theft insurance, one of the benefits of this service is I get email notifications nearly every day about companies having their customers private information stolen and sold on the dark web. Private information such as emails, phone numbers, addresses, socials, passwords, and even family member names. I don't know how many software developers these companies employ but I do know that no matter what

that number is, the number would be far greater if their software were open sourced. Open source projects benefit greatly from having a global army of developers constantly reviewing code, building on improvements and closing security gaps that may exist in that code.

The major tech companies and corporations of the world want to claim intellectual properties for their own profit. They wish to be the only entity that offers the service that they do. Though this is great for that particular company, this negatively impacts the tech community on a global scale. It stifles innovation by preemptively shutting down start-ups, excluding contributions, and keeping projects secret that could greatly benefit other projects in the world. I understand that the development teams working for many of these companies expect a return on investment and want to sell that same product again and again. If they were to go open source, and soon after another team took their code and made it better that would negatively impact their ability to sell their product. Though the consumer would benefit greatly, the developer would lose profit.

Sadly, our global markets rely and operate purely on profit. Benefit to society, community or the consumer is an after thought to profits. I don't know of a way in which we can have both entirely open sourced software and tech company profits. Though I do hope to see more software going open source and companies promote innovation by not claiming intellectual property. However, I hold the cynical view that profits will always be the driving force of the global economy. Making intellectual property claims a prominent obstacle to software development for the foreseeable future. If we could find a way past this and allowed for all software development to be open source, the software innovation curve could potentially be exponential. Greatly benefitting society, communities, consumers and humanity.