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CS 230-Ethics

29 September 2016

Homework #1: Technology and Ethics

**Chapter 1**

**Edition 7: question 21, page 42.** (1-2 pages long)

With free and non-free software, there is a lot to discuss. The idea of free software and open source software is that someone can create software and allow other people to edit the source code, essentially making the software have a ridiculously high number of people working to make it better, because they want to. In terms of a society, this is a great idea because society as whole can work together to make the applications they use better, with the only cost being time, time they want to spend because they want their software to be as useful to them as possible.

This brings up an idea of cost. Cost can be measured in a dollar amount, or from time. So, if you are spending time to make it the best it can be, can you really say it is free software? Then, there is the idea of the people who are using this great free software that did not help to improve the quality and did not spend any time to help improve it, thus using the software truly did not cost them anything. You could relate this to the idea of illegally downloading music from a not so famous artist. You enjoy the music and you want them to make more music, but you are not willing to pay for their music to support them making music; thus, you get slightly worse music.

Software that you pay for would be something you expect to be great when you get, depending on how much it was worth. Since you paid for it, then it is only yours to use, not manipulate and redistribute, like free software. But, you do not get to chose how much you pay for it, there is a set price. From the free software perspective, you can put as much time as you want, or none, and be satisfied with it. Paid software you have to trust that the developers will continuously make the software better and fix bugs, since you can not do it yourself. Also, there is the issue that the people, or company, selling this software prefer money over advancement in technology. They would rather inhibit the growth of society solely because they think the deserve money for people using their “invention.” At the same time how is it fair for anyone to judge these people when every other good or service works this way. Society can grow from perfecting one trade per person so that everyone can use each others services. If we lived in a perfect world, then we could say that using someone else’s good or service is like payment for them to use your good or service, which would in tern force people to be productive members of society or not at all.

The bottom line here is that money makes things complicated. People want to make sure they are getting everything they think their good or service is worth, to the penny. Which is why money is necessary, but if everyone could just let the “numbers” so to speak be rounded off, sometimes up and sometimes down, then we could do away with money and grow as a society more. To wrap up the discussion between free and non-free software, I would conclude that both have a cost to them, but one you have to work for to make it what it is worth directly and the other you work to make money and pay for what you receive. There are ups and downs to both and morally right and morally wrong sides to both. It merely comes down to preference and how you choose to spend your time and/or money.

**Edition 7: question 22, page 42.** (1-2 paragraphs)

It is beneficial for 90% of computers to be run on a windows operating system because that means that there is a lot of information about the operating system out there and that people are constantly creating useful programs and can work together to fix issues (troubleshooting) on the windows operating system making everyone better at using computers and making windows better. A reason why this is bad, is because windows controls what you can do on it, and if the majority of computers run windows, then it would be hard to learn about different operating systems (Unix-based) that could potentially be more beneficial for society.

**Edition 7: question 27, page 43.** (1-2 paragraphs)

This is not something every car needs, however it is something every car would benefit from having as a safety net if something is to go wrong with a part of the car, or the driver. It would cause less accidents and prevent certain deaths that could ultimately hurt society. However, there is the idea of survival of the fittest, but it some situation in driving, unfortunately the “fittest” person is the person who is drunk driving because it is harder for them to be injured due to being drunk and less likely to tense up. It would certainly be a good idea for all cars to have this system, but it should not be required, as some people are good enough drivers on their own.

**Chapter 2**

**Edition 7: question 32, page 101.**

The idea of people taking the ethical point of view by respecting others and their core values is very similar to the Divine Command Theory. Each person’s point of view can be related to each religious group and their values as a whole. From this, we can tell that this does not work, and people do not end up respecting other’s values, but rather judge them. However, if people chose to learn each others point of view, or religion, maybe they could come to understand why they act the way they do, and respect that. Thus, answering the question, yes, there would still be a need to study ethics.

**Edition 7: question 41, page 101.**

a. I don’t have enough money to buy it.

If you want to buy that CD, you could save some money and wait for a sale.

b. The retail price is too high. The company is gouging customers.

You could wait for the CD to have some sale, and it would not hurt to support the band.

c. Since I wouldn’t have bought it anyway, the company didn’t lose a sale.

You would know that the CD is worth it if you buy it and listened to it.

d. I’m giving my friend the opportunity to do a good deed.

If your intention is good, then it is alright; however, if you want to take that opportunity and you just want to show him/her that you are a true friend then forget it. You are just lying on yourself.

e. Everyone else is doing it. Why should I be the only person to buy it when everyone else is getting it for free?

It depends on your conscience. Doing a good thing will set you free.

f. This is a drop in the bucket compared to Chinese pirates who sell billions of dollars worth of copied music.

Both are issues of copying music, who does it and how much they do it should not matter. If you think that one is bad, then you should also think the other is bad and thus make it wrong, especially if you know it is bad, but were just trying to get the heat off of yourself.

g. This is insignificant compared to the billions of dollars worth of music being exchanged over the Internet.

Just start on doing what is right and never mind those that are bad.

**Edition 7: question 43, page 102.**

Wiretapping is an invasion of privacy. However, when there is a government is place, the idea is that the government is put into place to keep you safe based on a set of laws. So, being a part of that community is the same as allowing the government to protect you. If the government has a legitimate suspicion that their citizens are in harm and truly think that wiretapping phones will make the community safer, then it is their obligation to wiretap the phones to protect the citizens. If they have different motives, then it is wrong and an invasion of privacy.

**Edition 7: question 44, page 102.**

I agree with this, personally I feel that people are inherently selfish. By saying this, I am saying that assuming there is nothing wrong with you, your only goal is to survive. Morals are more of a societal rule set and when it comes down to life or death, people will choose to live and do anything and everything they possibly can to survive. Now, this is getting a little off-topic. So, if there is someone whom has never met another person, theoretically they should be selfish and do things for themselves. As they would not notice or care about what other people think since they would not know what that is. So, if you take out the worry of judgment and repercussions, then people will do anything to help themselves.

**Edition 7: question 45, page 102.**

a. The right to a higher education

This is a positive right, as it is giving you the option to learn more and become a better, more upstanding member of society.

b. The right to housing

I think everyone should be allowed to have a roof under their head. If an individual has done something to lose their house or roof (i.e. broken the law, or not getting a job). Everyone has the right to be allowed to obtain housing and/or the right to not be denied a place to rest, with the condition they are contributing to society. Why would society have to provide for someone if their actions have hurt society? They should not.

c. The right to health care

No one should be denied care for their health, however insurance is different. In terms of a society, people decide to go into certain fields so that they will be the best they can be at something society needs. So, it is unfair to deny a productive member of society health care as a health care professional since they are allowed to use technologies other people have created for society.

d. The right of a presidential candidate to receive time on television

All presidential candidates should be allowed to receive time on television, and it is wrong to censor certain candidates solely because one paid more. This is a special case as we are looking for candidates to run our country and want to be able to see anyone and everyone regardless of their wealth, if they have good ideas, they have good ideas. But, normally situations would say that whomever paid for the time deserves the time, but in a way this is essentially a bride when it is with presidential candidates.

**Edition 7: question 46, page 102.**

I think that the right to life is essentially just religious people coming up with yet another reason for why they are alive. Moreover, they are saying that God has given them the right to live, thus they should follow and submit to God’s will, at least from a Christian’s point of view. Why should people have the right life? Do we as a species deserve to live solely because we are aware we alive? That is absurd logic. If it does not clearly seem absurd then maybe this comparison will make it more clear. Let us take the statement, “I have a right to have life because I am aware I have a(n) life”, this is essentially saying the same statement as before. Now, let us take out the noun in this statement, “life”, resulting in, “I have a right to have \_\_\_\_\_\_ because I am aware I have a(n) \_\_\_\_\_\_.” Now we can place a different noun, one that is more noticeably absurd: Stolen CDs. So, “I have a right to have stolen CDs because I am aware I have stolen CDs.” Just because you know you have something, does not necessarily mean it is yours. Another extreme example could be, with “slaves.” So, in my personal opinion, nothing should be included in the right to life other than the sole fact that you are alive. In a way you could say that the right to life is the right to know you are alive, or just be alive, and you lose the right when you are no longer aware of your life, or you die.