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Intellectual Property Rights

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Intellectual Property Rights

Computer ethics covers a wide range of numerous moral disputes. The committees that decide whether an issue is ethical, look at disputes between people to see who is in the right for each situation, which is how additional ethical laws are put in place. Computer ethics have many controversial areas, but the quarrel over intellectual property rights is certainly the most enormous of all the ethical disputes.

There are two main ideas about ownership of intellectual property, either someone wants there to be ownership, such as patents, or they would prefer that programs be free for all to use or modify. Ownership of such software is not just about the program as a whole, but rather each individual part that makes up the software. There are a few different aspects of software that can be owned including the source code, the object code, the algorithm, and the look and feel. Ownership of any of these components of software can make it very difficult for smaller companies to function due to the fact they would have to run an extensive “patent search” which is expensive and timely. However, ownership of such software is well deserved after programmers spend weeks or months developing the code. For other programmers to be able to just copy the software, that others have already accomplished, for their own desires without a fee is unjust. If actors and writers, as well as numerous other professions, receive revenue for their work that they have spent countless weeks and months on, long after it has been finished, then so should the programmers.

Not all programmers or companies may agree with this opinion, for that reason ownership should be evaluated in each situation. If the company or individual would prefer to keep their software public for copying, studying, or modifying, then they can. Although ownership is complicated, this would give each person and industry the ability to choose if they want their work to be patented, which might make smaller companies enraged. Although information is free, just like in other industries such as music, if you copy other people’s creation without permission, then you will be in legal trouble. No person wants anyone else to steal a part of their creation, especially when the other person make money off it in own their own name, even if the end product is slightly different from the copied material. Despite no one wanting others to steal their work, “causal copying” for friends and employees is something that some programmers and companies feel should be allowed if it is privately owned. Companies use this method so that when their employees are working on a project, they can simply ask other programmers when they run into a conflict or they can search through past projects for a solution to their problem. “Causal copying” allows programmers to work together in industry while still having their code patented so that other companies as well as outside individuals do not steal their product.

Intellectual property rights are a controversial topic in most industries, including the computer industry. These rights get programmers and companies provoked when they feel as though they have been cheated. A solution will never come into effect that would make everyone content, but industries and programmers can try to come to an answer that the majority of society would agree with.