Ethics Paper - Brian Hinkle

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<center>Software Licensing</center>

Software licensing is a very important aspect of software development as it gives specific

guidelines for customers using the software. There are many different types of software licensing. Some

of the most common include a perpetual license and subscription license. Perpetual gives the customer

ownership of the software but doesn't usually support updates. Subscription license gives the customer

the most, and it will keep the software updated and maintained, however, the customer does not own the

software and the customer only gets access to the software while paying a periodic price over time. These

licenses are common and I don't see a problem with them. There are however some other licensing types

that cause debate. These licenses are GPL and BSD. Fosswire says that when using GPL, "you're allowed

to use, redistribute and change the software, but any changes you make must also be licensed under the

GPL. So that means you have to give everyone else the same rights as you got." Recomparison tells us

that "BSD allows for the proprietary use of software, and allows the specific software to be used along

with proprietary products. Works based on this software may be used with a proprietary license, or it may

be licensed as closed source software." To me, these licensing types don't seem to be much of a problem

and have reasonable rules.

To start, I like the perpetual and subscription licensing models. I think it gives developers

flexibility in deciding how they want people to be able to use their software. If a perpetual software

somehow damages your property, there is a possibility that the developers could get in trouble if they

don't state there is a possibility it could happen in their terms of service. This would be the case for

perpetual license software. But what happens when a software utilizing a subscription-based licensing

model experiences this? There would be more danger to the developers as the software is not owned by the user, so it can almost be seen as an attack from the developer if not explicitly stated otherwise in a user agreement form.

I don't think GPL or BSD is a harmful licensing model and certainly not unethical. GPL is good and bad. InfoWorld puts it like this, "Many consider the GPL a 'business-unfriendly' license because of its so-called viral nature: All software derived from GPL-licensed code must in turn be licensed under the GPL." I understand how some people can say that GPL may be harmful to society since it locks companies into keeping their software licensed using GPL, but it also improves society. In my opinion, open-source software is one of the things that bring innovation, and GPL does this by encouraging open source since it spreads. BSD gives the company more control and power since they are allowed to use their licensing method and are not tied to using BSD for their software. This can also be looked at in two ways. It helps the company because it allows them to thrive by using code and at the same time not open source it. It is less beneficial to individuals however who can thrive off the work.

These four licensing models cause much debate among developers due to their nature, but they deserve a place in this world. I don't agree with people who state that one specific licensing model is bad. It depends on the given situation for the developer and these licensing models should be able to be used. Some complain that GPL prevents further development in computer science, but it should be made known that nothing is preventing a developer from writing their implementation to make a similar system. It is fortunate that there exist many different licensing models in the world so that no one has to be forced to use a certain one. Only then might one of these models be a threat to society.

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