According to United States law, a copyright, "protects original works of authorship as soon as an author fixes the work in a tangible form of expression" (U.S. Copyright Office). Original works have to be at least moderately creative and made by a human (U.S. Copyright Office). The work is only copyrighted once it is actually recorded or "fixed" in a permanent transmissible form (U.S. Copyright Office). The copyright gives the author exclusive access to the use of the material and the right to cede that access to any individual he wishes (U.S. Copyright Office).

For my code, there are two possible licenses I would consider using depending on the circumstances. If I want to profit from the code or keep it secret for other reasons, I would prefer to reserve my full rights and only cede them when absolutely necessary. This way, I can retain full control over the code and have recourse if someone were to use the code without my permission. This is only for circumstances where I want to limit public access to the program.

If I were to write something for the benefit of the community, I would use the Apache software license. The Apache license allows redistributing changes while explicitly granting patent rights to derivative works and protecting author trademarks (Apache Software Foundation). I considered the MIT license for its simplicity, but the Apache license offers more robust legal protection for myself and for downstream derivative works. If the program was sufficiently powerful to potentially cause harm without incurring legal action, I would put additional clauses to explicitly ban that activity.

When reusing code from the internet, it is imperative to ensure that all the rights of the original programmer are respected. The ACM Code of ethics states in section 1.5, "Computing professionals should therefore credit the creators of new ideas, inventions, work, and artifacts, and respect copyrights, patents, trade secrets, license agreements, and other methods of

protecting author's works" (ACM). This ethics code clearly dictates respect for intellectual property. The IEEE is less verbose, but it code of ethics also states, "… and to credit properly the contributions of others" (IEEE).

Besides these esteemed organizations, there is also a constitutional perspective. Article I, section 8 of the United States Constitution expressly gives congress the authority to, "promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries" ("U.S. Constitution," art. 1, sec. 8). The fact that this is one of the few powers expressly granted to Congress in this section is very important. The text of the article also brings up the point that giving creators rights to their inventions promotes more scientific innovation.

Beyond even this point, there is also a biblical perspective. Exodus 20:15-16 states, "Do not steal. Do not give false testimony against your neighbor" (CSB). Both of these apply to copyright. Using another person's intellectual property without permission falls squarely within the criteria for stealing. Claiming someone else's work as your own is also giving false testimony.

In conclusion, preserving the rights of creators is a moral imperative.

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