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Ethics Paper – Intellectual Property Response

A recent concern in the computer science world is that of intellectual property rights connected with software ownership. The argument is that normally when something is created, that item can earn a copyright or a patent that protects that item from being taken by another party and stolen or changed without the creator’s permission. However, where this becomes hairy in the computer science world is that when something is created, would it or could it still apply?

In my opinion, the rules for any other creation should still apply for a virtual one: how one intends to use it is how repercussions should apple. Let’s look at an example. Let’s say a creator were to make a code that was able to add and subtract numbers and this became the most popular calculator app. Now someone (let’s call him Chris… for no reason) wants to come along and change this code so that the calculator can also divide and multiply. This could go one of three ways.

First, Chris could possibly take the code and copy it exactly as it is already written by the creator and add his bit of code to change it. The argument here is that since he is creating a new product, it is his and his alone. However, in the process of making said app, he took something that was not his, did not give credit to the original creator, and furthermore, did not pay his dues to even use the code. Normally there can be some sort of deal made to say that every time someone uses the app, since half the code belongs to the creator, Chris would give half of the earnings to the creator but this did not happen. Ethically, he was dishonest and a thief.

The second scenario involves Chris taking the code, modifying it a little bit, and then proceeding to do the rest of the previous scenario. The argument here is that since Chris technically came up with the code for both sections, it is his and all that comes with it. However, this is where certain things like creative commons laws come into play. What these allow us to do is use other people’s creations BUT we have to give credit and pay dues towards that. We cannot just uproot something and call it our own after changing it a bit, because otherwise we’re lying about the origin of things. And in a third scenario, Chris could potentially team up with the creator, discuss what they can do with who’s code, decide who gets what amount of money, and so on, but as a team. This provides a couple of things. Firstly, it lets credit be given where credit is due. No one is claiming false ownership and everyone is getting the amount of money they are entitled to.

As I said earlier, it’s all in a matter of the intentionality behind it. It doesn’t matter how anything is used as long as the intentionality behind it is clear. When you follow one of the scenarios above, you can easily see the character that is inside of each one of those different Chris’s. Usually when your heart is set in the right direction, the rest of your actions follow. That is why it’s important to have such a sound set of morals when you are venturing out into life. Knowing what to do and what to believe no matter the circumstance that comes your way. In the end, it is our heart the decides what we do and how we are perceived by the world.