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<u>Ethics Paper</u>

Though we may not often think about ethics as programmers, they are quite important and can help us ensure that we do the right thing. There are multiple ways to understand the ethics of scripting, the most important of which being the Bible. The Bible is the ultimate book of ethics, and we can always lean and rely on it to help understand what we should and should not do as Christians. Other sources include both the ACM and IEEE Code of Ethics. When looking at ethics, it is important to understand copyright and its laws, licensing agreements, and the obligations you have as a programmer when reusing code from the internet.

Most people have heard of copyright, but what does it mean? According to *Media Education Lab's* video, copyright promotes creativity and balances the rights both of users and owners of intellectual property, which, according to *Merriam-Webster*, is "property (such as an idea, invention, or process) that derives from the work of the mind or intellect". *GitHub* tells us that by default, work created by a user is under exclusive copyright automatically. This is what is considered under the law. In other words, since the user is the owner of the work, they have a say in what other do with it. *BITLAW* states that copyright law in the United States is looked over by the Copyright Act of 1976, which "prevents the unauthorized copying of a work of authorship". This law, however, only prevents the copying of work, meaning ideas in the work are allowed to be copied.

LegalNature tells us that "a software license agreement is an agreement between your company and your customers for use of the software you have the rights to". Essentially, it allows the customers to use the software created by the company and lets them know exactly how they can use it. This definition coincides with principle 2.01 in the *IEEE Code of Ethics*, which says software engineers must "provide service in their areas of competence, being honest and forthright about any limitations of their experience and education". The license agreement lets the user of the software know how to use it, which provides the software engineer's service in their specified area, like stated in principle 2.01. I believe that there is only one license agreement needed, as this principle is straightforward. It is clear that users must be provided the assistance needed and be told the truth, which hold upright with the definition of a software licensing agreement according to *LegalNature*. I picked this principle due to the parallels easily seen between it and a licensing agreement. The definition also fits well with principle 1.3 of the *ACM Code of Ethics*, which states that computing professionals must be "honest and trustworthy". Computing professionals must be as transparent as possible when dealing with users of their platform so that they know things such as system capabilities and limitations. This principle fits well with licensing agreements, as users must know exactly how to use software.

It is important to know what to do when reusing code from the internet to avoid legal trouble. Programmers are obligated to know what they can and can't do when reusing code. *FindLaw* tells us that it is important to know what is protected under copyright laws. It is said that "features dictated by efficiency, code taken from public domain, and algorithms" are not protected under copyright law, meaning users can copy this without any trouble. Essentially, only original work cannot be copied without crediting the original author. Programmers should also make sure they know and understand the licensing agreements and notices.

Works Cited

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