DRM and Piracy

By Carter Inman

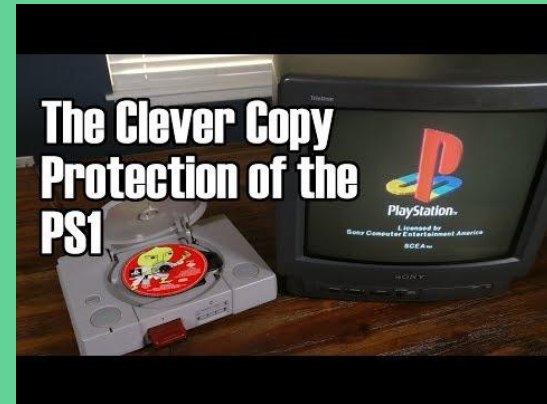# Origins

What is DRM, really?

Early DRM Schemes

- Encryption of Data
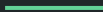- Physical Lockouts
- Physical Trinkets
- Manipulation of Data

Video Explanation of the PS1's DRM Implementation:

Early Piracy Schemes

- Directly Copying Games
- Cloning Consoles
- Photocopying Trinkets
- Disabling Physical Lockouts
- Finding Illegal Numbers (Cracking Encryption)

Modern Day

DRM Schemes

- Data Encryption
- On-The-Fly Patching
- Always Online
- Activation Limits

Piracy Schemes

- Finding Illegal Numbers (Cracking Encryption)
- Modifying Consoles
- Emulation
- Torrenting/Seeding Content

Is DRM Ethically Acceptable?

Arguments for DRM

- Protects creators profits
- Prevents easy access of restricted content to minors
- Can help prevent cheating in online games

Arguments Against DRM

- Can make performance of games worse
- Restricts access to information
    - For people in wealthy/poor/restrictive countries
- Bad for information longevity
- More difficult to backup software (or data in general)
- Some are highly invasive (SONY DRM)

Considering DRM Through Ethical Lenses

- Kantian Ethics
  - Treating customers solely as a means to make money?
- Act Utilitarianism
  - Total benefits? Total negatives?
- Rule Utilitarianism
  - Everyone is required to submit to extra obstacles to access information?
- Social Contract Theory
  - Right to access information? Right to restrict information?
- Virtue Ethics
  - Would a virtuous developer require users to interact with DRM?

So, Is Piracy Ethically Acceptable?

Arguments Against Piracy

- Can cause loss of profits to creators
- Potentially allows minors access to mature information
- Potentially bad for online communities

Arguments for Piracy

- Allows people with less financial freedom to access information
- Better for information preservation
- Financial impacts on companies may not be as bad as thought
- Resists monopolization of industries
- Is piracy really theft?

Considering Piracy Through Ethical Lenses

- Kantian Ethics
  - If you create something, others should be able to freely use it?
- Act Utilitarianism
  - Total benefits? Total negatives?
- Rule Utilitarianism
  - No one is allowed to privatize or restrict access to information?
- Social Contract Theory
  - Right to access information? Right to restrict information?
- Virtue Ethics
  - Would a virtuous person become a pirate?

What is Better?

On a World Scale, Piracy may be More Ethical

- Reducing barriers to information and entertainment provides a positive gain for the world as a whole.
- Integral to the preservation of information as physical media degrades over time, and online services begin to die out or get replaced with incompatible ones.
- Piracy can cause harm, but allows people who otherwise couldn't afford certain experiences or information to interact with them.
- Neither Piracy or DRM are always correct when looking at them through our ethical lenses, but Piracy has more agreeable ethics at scale.

Thank you!

Questions are Welcomed