

On Intellectual Property

The hue and cry against “stealing” intellectual property makes a terrible assumption: that the creator or inventor is being robbed of something. What exactly are they being robbed of? Copying a creative work or building someone else’s invention does not deprive the originator of their work. When you steal someone’s car, they no longer have their car. When you “steal” someone’s story, they still have their story. On this point I hope we can agree, no theft has occurred. So where is the robbery? It is claimed that the robbery occurs when future profits are moved from the originator to the copier. Can robbery occur over future profits? If that is true, then wouldn’t other events that affect future profits also be considered robbery? May businesses compete without robbing each other of future profits? No, and that’s the point of competition, to “steal” profits from the other guy. Should competition be outlawed, like “stealing” creative works and inventions is? If we are to be consistent, then yes, it should be. What kind of world would that be when stealing future profits in every case is illegal? I don’t want to know. And that’s today’s two cents.