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Information**Book Review**

A Defense of Intellectual Property Rights,  
R.A. Spinello and M. Bottis,

Edward Elgar, Cheltenham UK, Northampton MA USA (2009), ISBN 978 1 84720 395 3

All industrial societies eventually find it expedient to have some kind of intellectual property rights (IPR) from largely utilitarian motives despite the regular objections of those who find the concept of IPR to be fundamentally immoral. The authors rightly point out the recent increase in these objections and feel that IPR has extended too far in some areas but are basically in agreement with the concept. The book is essentially concerned with proving that IPR is morally justified.

They start with a detailed overview of the current objections then discuss the history of IPR back to the Middle Ages before critically discussing the current European and US systems. There follows a detailed moral justification of IPR going back as far as the philosophers John Locke (1632-1704) and G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) before venturing into more modern areas such as Catholic Social Doctrine. Their arguments are complex and I do not pretend to fully understand them but they make a plausible case. The book is well provided with detailed references/bibliography for those who want to pursue the matter.

Of course in principle there is nothing new in this situation. Determined efforts were made to abolish patents in GB and elsewhere in the 1860's (a point they omit) and moral arguments were deployed then but the issue was decided on utilitarian grounds as it will no doubt be in the future. In my opinion justifying the moral basis of IPR is useful to counter the emotionally appealing arguments of IPR's opponents but it is not the core issue, rather "the icing on the cake".

The authors have effected a very thorough analysis of the moral issues and the book is strongly recommended for that reason; parts are rather heavy going for the typical IPR practitioner though.

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