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Ethics and the Law of Intellectual Property

Citation for published version:

Harmon, S 2008, 'Ethics and the Law of Intellectual Property: Current Problems in Politics, Science and Technology' *Medicine, Health Care & Philosophy*, vol 11, no. 2, pp. 237-46.

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Author final version (often known as postprint)

Published In:

Medicine, Health Care & Philosophy

Publisher Rights Statement:

Harmon, S. (2009), Ethics and the Law of Intellectual Property: Current Problems in Politics, Science and Technology, *Medical Health Care and Philosophy*, 11(2) pp237-246. The final publication is available at link.springer.com.

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**ETHICS AND LAW OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY:
CURRENT PROBLEMS IN POLITICS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**
Christian Lenk, Nils Hoppe and Roberto Andorno (eds.)
Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2007, 300 pp., €5.99, ISBN 978-0-7546-2698-5

Shawn H.E. Harmon
2008

Lenk, Hoppe and Andorno's *Ethics and Law of Intellectual Property*, is an ambitious effort in support of a nigh impossible task for a work of such modest length, namely that of examining the law and ethics of intellectual property, and the interplay of intellectual property law, ethics and politics in science/research and innovation, and the understanding and practice of same by the relevant stakeholders.

The work begins with the oft overlooked but essential observation that intellectual property is not a natural right necessary for human wellbeing, but rather a political and legal construct erected by the state as a mechanism to achieve such rights (p. 1). Thereafter, it goes from strength to strength with an excellent, interdisciplinary lineup of thoughtful contributors who collectively provide a detailed and multi-faceted examination of the concept of property and its utilisation by various stakeholders, the emphasis being on its existing and potential relationship with human wellbeing, and, more specifically, its interaction with knowledge generation and dissemination, innovation and research, and human rights and needs.

The book contains fourteen intellectually stimulating, and imminently readable Chapters organised into three Parts, though I'm not completely convinced by the choice of these Parts or the distribution of Chapters within them, as the topics bleed so freely into one another, often across sectional boundaries. In any event, the Chapters are well conceived and researched. Those which intrigued the most were the broader and more conceptual ones such as Smith's (Ch. 3) and Sterckx's (Ch. 8) assessments of intellectual property, access to medicines and the right to health, Taubman's (Ch. 5) reinterpretation of the TRIPS Agreement, and Kuhlen's (Ch. 11) assessment of the nature of knowledge in the information society. A unifying thread throughout these and the other Chapters is the exploration of the different natures of knowledge and its essential character in modern societies, whether developed or developing, and the need to come to grips with how best to (legally) treat knowledge so as to better the human condition.

On the whole, the book identifies a plethora of challenges and offers some suggestions with respect to means for considering those challenges and tackling intellectual property issues as they emerge in future. Unfortunately, the book ends somewhat abruptly, and would have benefited from a brief conclusion to draw the diverse topics and ideas together. That weakness aside, it was a pleasure to read.