

Swimming for Free

Angel has a college degree but is underemployed, working full-time and struggling to make ends meet. Mark, one of the college students with whom Angel shares an apartment, attends an expensive private college nearby where his tuition includes membership to the school gym and pool. Angel loves to swim to stay in shape, but he cannot afford to join a gym or have access to a pool. Since Mark does not swim, he agrees to let Angel use his school ID. Angel and Mark do not look identical, but they look similar enough that they can reasonably expect that no one will notice if Angel uses Mark's ID.

Angel thinks that if Mark has already paid for pool access through his tuition fees and is not using it, then Angel can use the membership. It is not as if they are both using the membership. The private college, with its big endowment, is not losing money on the deal.

However, the college pool is open but not free to the public: Non-college personnel are charged fees that help maintain the facilities. The school considers access a special benefit to the students of the college that would be devalued if open-access were allowed.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Is it morally permissible for Angel to use Mark's ID to swim in the pool?
2. If Angel were an employee or an alumnus of Mark's college, how, if at all, might this change the moral permissibility of their behavior? Explain.
3. If Angel were earning enough to afford a gym membership, how, if at all, might this change the moral permissibility of their behavior? Explain.
4. If Mark attended an affordable public college rather than an expensive private college, how, if at all, might this change the moral permissibility of their behavior? Explain.