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A Hacker Manifesto



Synopsis

A double is haunting the world--the double of abstraction, the virtual reality of information, programming or poetry, math or music, curves or colorings upon which the fortunes of states and armies, companies and communities now depend. The bold aim of this book is to make manifest the origins, purpose, and interests of the emerging class responsible for making this new world--for producing the new concepts, new perceptions, and new sensations out of the stuff of raw data. A Hacker Manifesto deftly defines the fraught territory between the ever more strident demands by drug and media companies for protection of their patents and copyrights and the pervasive popular culture of file sharing and pirating. This vexed ground, the realm of so-called "intellectual property," gives rise to a whole new kind of class conflict, one that pits the creators of information--the hacker class of researchers and authors, artists and biologists, chemists and musicians, philosophers and programmers--against a possessing class who would monopolize what the hacker produces. Drawing in equal measure on Guy Debord and Gilles Deleuze, A Hacker Manifesto offers a systematic restatement of Marxist thought for the age of cyberspace and globalization. In the widespread revolt against commodified information, McKenzie Wark sees a utopian promise, beyond the property form, and a new progressive class, the hacker class, who voice a shared interest in a new information commons.

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Customer Reviews

McKenzie Wark's *A Hacker Manifesto* is a bold and daring effort to rethink the composition of society in the age of digital media and to constitute a politics appropriate to the tenor of the times.

Like Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*, to which *Hacker* represents a clear homage, Wark deftly walks a fine rhetorical line. On the one hand, he attempts to describe the character and tendencies of contemporary society, a society in which capitalism's reach extends ever deeper by producing new and increasingly abstract forms of private property. On the other hand, like all manifestos worth their salt, Wark's book also is constitutive, helping to call a new creative subject - the hacker class - into being. Their interests and practices, Wark shows, are set against those of the vectoralist class, a group intent on capturing and expropriating the products of those who hack or creatively rework existing cultural raw material. *A Hacker Manifesto* thus serves as a junction point of sorts - both a call and an answer - for an emerging class consciousness and set of creative practices. *Hacker* also owes a debt to Guy DeBord's *Society of the Spectacle*, given its methodically aphoristic style. And like *Spectacle*, Wark deftly moves between philosophy and social theory, history and economics, politics and media, creation and criticism. The result is a powerfully interdisciplinary - and astonishingly insightful - book whose recombinant style at once embodies and emboldens the politics of hacking that he so admires. If you choose to read this book (and I hope that you do), bear in mind that what you'll find is eminently quotable.

A Hacker Manifesto is essential and engrossing reading. Graciously avoiding the definite article, Wark's book successfully breathes new life into a debate which has been stumbling around directionless for some time now, last spotted muttering to itself about the "crisis of the humanities" and the "death of theory." Taking the premise that Marx's legacy is more crucial than ever - especially after 1989 and the rise of the information economy - this carefully-structured collection of aphorisms functions as a positive alternative to the toothless Cultural Studies' mantra celebrating "RTS" (Resistance-Transgression-Subversion). Instead, *Hacker Manifesto* offers a sophisticated framework for understanding the historical potential latent within an emerging class: the hacker class - needed by the "vectoralist class" (informational entrepreneurs) to do their sterile dirty work, but not completely controlled by them either. Erudite, poetic, and richly condensed, Wark's little red book is as beautifully designed as it is argued. Indeed, no-one grappling with "the network society" - or the political and ethical stakes of our increasingly digital world - can afford to ignore the challenges and insights offered here. Like Hardt & Negri's *Empire*, this book is a strategic experiment in optimism, and a vigorous rejection of the passive-nihilism of much diluted French-inspired theory in the 1980s and 90s. There is something of the Pascalian wager here; but in relation to the potential for radical change, rather than divine life after death. Indeed, Wark's expansion of the term "hack" outside computer subcultures and into the wider world of political

economy (laws, discourses, institutions, modes of production, etc.

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