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Digital Vertigo: How Today's Online Social Revolution Is Dividing, Diminishing, And Disorienting Us



Synopsis

"Digital Vertigo provides an articulate, measured, contrarian voice against a sea of hype about social media. As an avowed technology optimist, I'm grateful for Keen who makes me stop and think before committing myself fully to the social revolution." —Larry Downes, author of *The Killer App*

Digital Vertigo, Andrew Keen presents today's social media revolution as the most wrenching cultural transformation since the Industrial Revolution. Fusing a fast-paced historical narrative with front-line stories from today's online networking revolution and critiques of "social" companies like Groupon, Zynga and LinkedIn, Keen argues that the social media transformation is weakening, disorienting and dividing us rather than establishing the dawn of a new egalitarian and communal age. The tragic paradox of life in the social media age, Keen says, is the incompatibility between our internet longings for community and friendship and our equally powerful desire for online individual freedom. By exposing the shallow core of social networks like Facebook, Andrew Keen shows us that the more electronically connected we become, the lonelier and less powerful we seem to be.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I began Digital Vertigo with relish. To give you a sense of where I'm coming from and why I felt I had to read this book, understand that my employer recently told me to get a Facebook account so that I could take part in social media. I absolutely refused and found my job in jeopardy. But so strong is my aversion to the stupidity, emptiness, and narcissism of social media that I was willing to go on the unemployment line rather than get dragged onto Facebook. I don't even post my reviews here

on under my full name, for fear of some lunatic who disagrees with me showing up on my doorstep with a gun. I certainly am not about to sign onto Facebook, or Twitter, or any of those other "services" and give the world access to my entire life in return for the "privilege" of using their technology. So, I expected Digital Vertigo (given the author's reputation) to be a good, close look at WHY society has become so obsessed with social media, as well as the findings of relevant scientific research indicating the effects of social media on humanity. I don't think most thinking people would argue with the book's subtitle, which asserts that "society's online revolution is dividing, diminishing, and disorienting us"; and I was pulled in to the book by that little word "how" in the subtitle. Unfortunately, the book does not deliver on its promise. I saw several problems in the book. First, it is so extensively researched and documented that quoted portions of the text comprise (no exaggeration) at least 60-70% of the book. So, rather than the book reading as a thoughtful analysis of one man's opinions and research, it reads like a master's thesis summarizing what everyone else has said. Unfortunately, most of the people quoted are social media gurus.

In Digital Vertigo: How Today's Online Social Revolution Is Dividing, Diminishing, and Disorienting Us, author Andrew Keen, who describes himself as the Anti-Christ of Silicon Valley (whatever that means), raises numerous profound questions about social media and its implications on society. In the new world of social media and Web 3.0, which is claiming to revolutionize communication and interactions, Keen writes that history is repeating itself and points to the beginning of the industrial revolution as an example. He writes of Jeremy Bentham who invented the Panopticon; a structure where the inhabitants were watched at all times. Bentham felt the Panopticon could make humanity more virtuous, more hard-working and happier; similar to the promise of Web 3.0. The Panopticon was a failure, and Keen sees the same for Web 3.0. The book is a critique of Web 3.0. While definitions of Web 3.0 vary greatly; Keen focuses on the personalization aspect. His view is that the current Internet culture and the wave of Web 3.0 social software is debasing society. In this well-researched book, Keen presents two theses: that Web 3.0 is turning into an Orwellian infrastructure and that the hype of the Web 3.0 prognosticators is all hype. For the first point, it is a false premise, while the later has significant merit. Keen has a misinterpretation of Big Brother and Nineteen Eighty-Four. The book has scores of references to George Orwell, Big Brother, Nineteen Eighty-Four and related themes. Orwell describes Big Brother as the dictator of a totalitarian state, where the ruling party wields total power over the inhabitants. In the society that Orwell describes, everyone is under complete surveillance by the authorities.

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