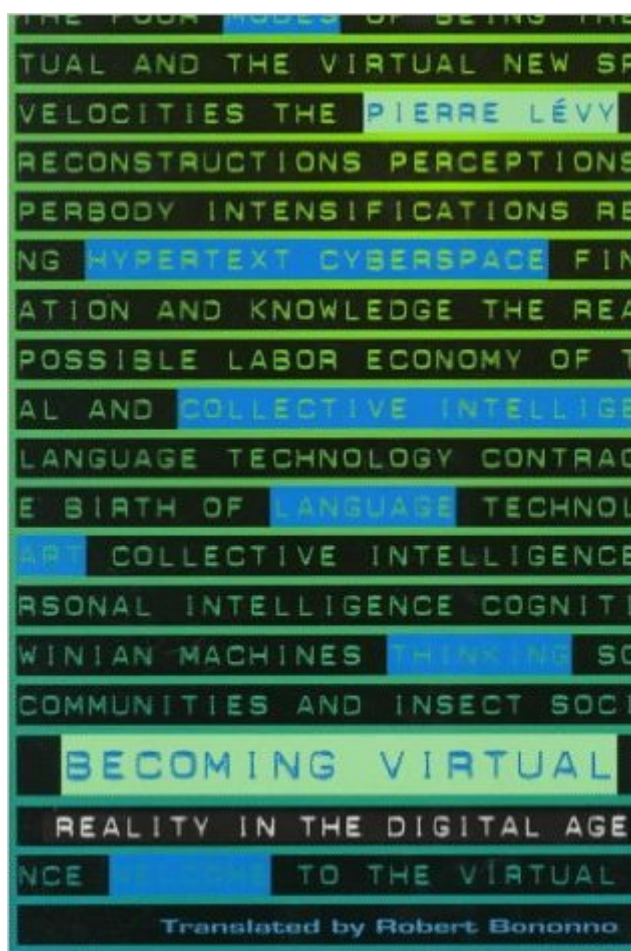


The book was found

Becoming Virtual



Synopsis

Virtual reality is a phenomenon that captivates people of all ages and all levels of technical expertise. It appears on the Internet and in computer games, and is used, among other places, in high-tech software for doctors, engineers, and scientists. But, is it really something new? And how does it affect us? Examining the social and cultural impact of new digital technologies, Levy tackles the concept of "the virtual," demonstrating how it has always been an enduring component of the human mind. He shows how the body, the text, and the economy, are made virtual. He then reveals how the Internet and web sites are now transforming the virtual into a "collective intelligence" linked to digital communication. Succinct, accessible, and profound, *Becoming Virtual* is an intellectual tour de force from one of France's most brilliant young thinkers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The word 'virtual' has had a fair amount of exercise in the last few decades, and it would be a pity if some were put off reading this wonderful book due to the misguided belief it may be populated with computer lingo and people with wetware engaged in simulated 'virtual' sex. Levy's understanding of the virtual extends far beyond information technology; he gives the concept a proper philosophical and even anthropological foundation, and even goes so far as to show that we have in fact always been virtual, and this is what has made us human. Technology is probably what separates us from all other living creatures, or at least sophisticated technology, such as machines. Yes, other organisms utilise simple tools and what have you, but none of them are going to the moon in any

sort of hurry. Levy's work is essentially about artifacts, be they software like language or symbols, or hardware like tools and machines. However, following on from the work of philosophers such as Deleuze and Serres, Levy is profoundly against the two common (mis)conceptions about them: that they 'dominate' us, or that they are simple tools in our hands, doing our bidding. Heidegger and his ilk were very keen on the domination idea, but that's only because they didn't really understand machines; sure, your VCR will seem to dominate you, if you can't work it, as many older people will tell you, but after a good dose of swearing and fumbling the usual result is a machine that just sits there doing nothing. Hardly despotism. Or you may have its measure, and say it's just a tool for capturing video images, for whatever purpose, and yet it changes the way you watch TV, capture memories of your kids, and the entire institutional set-up of the film industry. Quite a clever tool, that.

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