



For a New Critique of Political Economy

Bernard Stiegler

Paperback	978-0-745-64804-0	November 2010		\$14.95
Hardcover	978-0-745-64803-3	November 2010	<i>Out of stock</i>	\$62.25

DESCRIPTION

The catastrophic economic, social and political crisis of our time calls for a new and original critique of political economy - a rethinking of Marx's project in the very different conditions of twenty-first century capitalism.

Stiegler argues that today the proletariat must be reconceptualized as the economic agent whose knowledge and memory are confiscated by machines. This new sense of the term 'proletarian' is best understood by reference to Plato's critique of exteriorized memory. By bringing together Plato and Marx, Stiegler can show how a generalized proletarianization now encompasses not only the muscular system, as Marx saw it, but also the nervous system of the so-called creative workers in the information industries. The proletarians of the former are deprived of their practical know-how, whereas the latter are shorn of their theoretical practice, and both suffer from a confiscation of the very possibility of a genuine art of living.

But the mechanisms at work in this new and accentuated form of proletarianization are the very mechanisms that may spur a reversal of the process. Such a reversal would imply a crucial distinction between one's life work, originating in otium (leisure devoted to the techniques of the self), and the job, consisting in a negotium (the negotiation and calculation, increasingly restricted to short-term expectations), leading to the necessity of a new conception of economic value.

This short text offers an excellent introduction to Stiegler's work while at the same time representing a political call to arms in the face of a deepening economic and social crisis.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bernard Stiegler is cultural development department director for the **Centre Georges-Pompidou**.

FEATURES

- Stiegler is one of the most original and important philosophers and cultural theorists in France today
 - This short book starts from the current financial crisis and uses this as an opportunity to call for a renewal of Marx's project of a critique of political economy
 - However, in contrast to Marx, Stiegler argues that today we need to develop a new critique of political economy which takes account of the unique position of creative workers in the information industries. He draws on Plato to analyse how their knowledge and memory have been compromised by information technologies
 - This short text offers an excellent introduction to Stiegler's work and a timely reflection on the current economic and social crisis
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