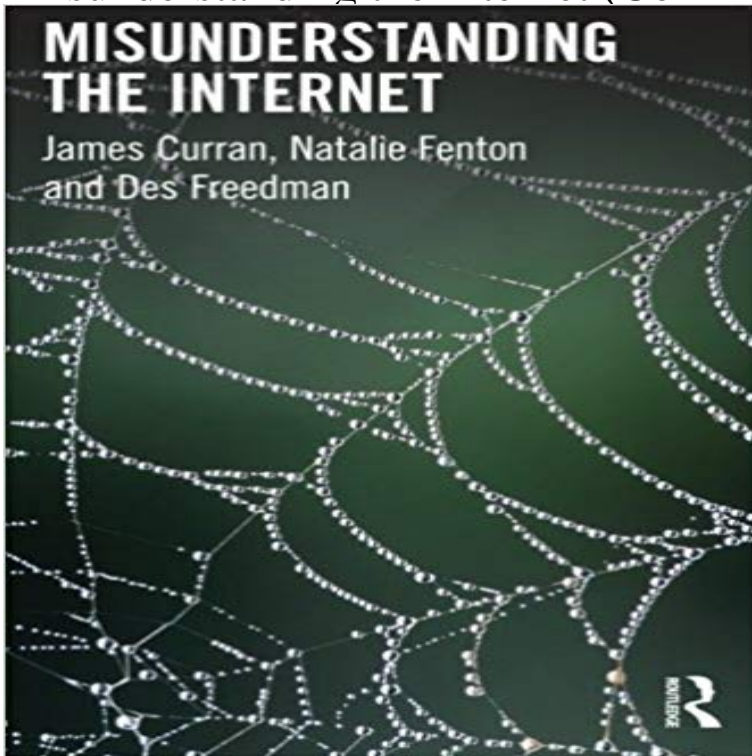


Misunderstanding the Internet (Communication and Society)



The growth of the internet has been spectacular. There are now more 1.5 billion internet users across the globe, about one quarter of the worlds population. This is certainly a new phenomenon that is of enormous significance for the economic, political and social life of contemporary societies. However, much popular and academic writing about the internet takes a technologically deterministic view, assuming that the internets potential will be realised in essentially transformative ways. This was especially true in the euphoric moment of the mid-1990s, when many commentators wrote about the internet with awe and wonderment. While this moment may be over, its underlying technocentrism the belief that technology determines outcomes lingers on, and with it, a failure to understand the internet in its social, economic and political context.

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