***Homesteading the Noosphere notes:***

**Ownership and open source**

1. Aquiring an open source project can be done in three ways.
   1. Found the project
   2. Be handed an object by the previous owner
   3. Contribute to a project, wait, and claim ownership.
   4. These rules are very seldom broken, much like the Maine lobster fishermen mentioned in Chapter 12.
2. Most hackers follow these rules without being fully aware that they are doing them.
3. These rules have been followed very closely, perhaps unconsciously.
4. The customs have evolved over time.

**Lock and Land:**

1. The hackers practices are very closely aligned with the Anglo-American common-law theory of land tenure.
   1. Lockean theory of property
2. Lockean property customs arise only where the expected return from the resource exceeds the expected cost of defending it. Ridley mentioned this in Chapter 12 within the section ‘If it moves, exploit it’
3. As it concerns the belief that hackers only develop because of ego. The distinction between noosphere and ergosphere is only of practical importance if one wishes to assert that ideas cannot be owned, but their instantiations as projects can.
4. Open-source hackers observe the customs they do in order to defend some kind of expected return from their effort.
   1. It is interesting that this return in a monetary way is seldom seen. Occasionally the reputation on gains in the hacker culsture can spill over into the real world in economically significant ways. It is at BEST rare.
   2. Hackers claim that they do it for the love, essentially claiming themselves as altruistic. Which at it’s core counters the theory of the selfish gene talked about in Chapter 1 section ‘the selfish gene’
5. Perhaps the gains the hackers accrue is the reputation they receive. The dynamics of reputation within the open-source culture itself has considerable explanatory power. What if the exchange organ described in chapter 7 is why hackers do this work? Perhaps the work they do is done in exchange for reputation. This is why it is forbidden to not give credit to a contributor.

**The Hacker Milieu as Gift Culture:**

1. The hackers do not exist in an exchange culture. Exchange cultures thrive when there are limited resources, where different groups have and abundance of different resources. In the open-source community software is freely shared. This abundance creates a situation in which only available measure of competitive success is reputation among one’s peers.
2. Gaining social status in an economy like the United States, one must have control of things to use or trade.
3. In gift cultures social status is determined not by what you control, but by what you give away. The society of open-source hackers is in fact a gift culture.
4. The author mentions the cracker culture vs. the hacker culture, saying that both are gift cultures. But, the way the culture manifests depends on history and values.

**The Joy of Hacking:**

1. The author argues that the hacker culture also acts as a craftsmanship culture. Because without some initial creativity and drive; one never becomes a hacker.
2. Craftsmanship culture ultimately must structure itself through a reputation game.
3. The reputation incentives of a craftsmanship culture operate whether the individual is aware of them or not.
4. As it pertains to Maslow’s hierarchy of values, the joy of hacking fulfills a self-actualization or transcendence need.
5. The reputation game may be critical in providing a social context which the joy of hacking can in fact become the individual’s primary motive.
6. There could be a parallelism drawn between the hacker culture teaming up with eachother to much like the individual collective cells that make up the man-o-war. Some work is done for the good of open-source software, rather than reputation. Ridely in Chapter 1 might be diverging from the author here. Or is the open source community just a sum of the individual hacker’s selfish parts?
7. Ridley in Chapter 2, in ‘The parable of the pin-maker’ he asserts that “Selfish ambitions are bent to the greater good of the body just as selfish individuals are bent by the market of the greater good of society.”

**The Many Faces of Reputation:**

1. Good reputation among one’s peers is primary reward in any gift culture
2. Prestige is a good way to attract the attention and cooperation of others.
3. In the open-source culture, the only way of gaining status is through your peers. So essentially the only real stock one can have is reputation.
4. Ridley in Chapter 7 dicusses the ability of the human to spot cheaters in the Wason test. Maybe, because it is so easy for humans to recognize detractors (those who take part in the 3 taboo behaviors); that he reputation does hold some sort of real value. This way the reputation can keep some sort of currency in the noosphere where there is no physical property.

**Ownership Rights and Reputation Incentives:**

1. The reason that hackers homestead the noosphere is because there IS something to be gained. The yield is peer repute in the gift culture of hackers, with all the secondary gains and side effects that implies. (perfectly stated)
2. The taboos earlier described in the essay make perfect sense now.
   1. Don’t fork, it essentially divides the ‘homestead’ of the project. Meaning, that if a contributor is to still have as much reputation in the project, they must contribute to both projects.
   2. Don’t Distribute rogue patches. Owner’s reputation can be tainted by these patches that they did not even write! But because it affects the owner’s reputation, it is avoided.
   3. Removing someone from the project history. The ultimate crime in open source. This removes all reputation from the contributor. This very closely ties in the Prisoner’s Dilema in Chapter 3.

**The Problem of Ego:**

1. Lockean ownership customs have been widely followed despite the fact that they violate the stated intent of the standard licenses.
   1. Hackers do not embrace the principles and instincts that created their own culture!
2. Self-promotion is criticized, and disrespect ultimately is the product of self-promotion.
3. Interestingly, the only ego padding are disguised as ‘peer repute’, ‘self-esteem’, ‘professionalism’, or ‘pride of accomplishment’
4. This ridiculous because it only proves further that each individual does things out of self interest. The hackers only place a facade around the true nature of humans.
5. One major harm done by this sort of thinking is that the hackers themselves cannot consciously understand their own motives because their own selfish instincts are masked by altruism.

**The Value of Humility**

1. The lack of ego does, however, suppress individuals that would compromise the power of the open-source community. The creative and cooperative behavior of the whole. Perhaps this is by design, or has evolved over time. In Chapter 9 Ridley cites that human groups that have a true belief in altruism are generally more successful than those that do not.
2. It is unheard of for any hacker to publicly attack another’s competence at technical work. Bugs are project labeled, not person labeled.
3. Contributors are true to projects that make each member feel like they are needed. This is why it is important, as a project owner, the work to be done on a project can never be viewed as completed; only a patch.

**Global implications of the Reputation-Game Model:**

1. Homesteading in the noosphere is tricky business. If your project is so advanced and abstract that no one can contribute to it, then your project will not thrive. If your project is too closely related to a current project, then the project has limited value. Both are poor gifts. When we speak of a culture where the value of one’s work is a gift, poor gifts will lead to poor reputation; the ultimate value of a hacker.
2. Projects fill functional gaps, much like the settlers of the frontier.
3. Currently the final frontier is applications. Making programs that the common man can use.

**How Fine a Gift?:**

1. In closed source, 1.0 means that the user should be wary. Open source world, it means that the developer will stake their reputation on the program. If the program does not meet the expectations of the users. Then the developer loses prestige, the ultimate price.
2. Originality value is not the only value praised in the open-source community. If a hacker develops software that can function in place of closed source software, they actually expand new areas of the noosphere.
   1. There are several of these projects such as open office, apache server, GIMP, etc…
   2. Could the value of these programs stem from the primal form of groupishness? It could be a manifestation of what Ridley refers to in chapter 9. Ridley cites Hartung, “A parochial perspective characterizes most religions because most religions were developed by groups whose survival depended upon competition with other groups. Such religions, and the in-group morality they foster, tend to outlive the competition that spawned them’. I see a direct comparison here. The open source communitity has emerged as a alternative to closed source software. Perhaps we are now seeing the manifestation of the success of open-source software as many enterprise level companies now cater to the Ubuntu/Apache users of the world!
3. The most possible peer esteem comes from having done widely popular work that is used is the standard distributions.

**Noospheric Property and the Ethology of Territory:**

1. One of the only visible ways to stake your territory over a project and have it visible to the world is through a webpage. This is the fastest way that people can establish a ‘home’ for their project.

**Causes of Conflict:**

1. Currently, conflict is caused because of the potential gains and or loses in reputation from a project’s success and/or failure.
2. The author explains that in a pure craftsmanship culture (that the hacker’s would like to identify as) the issue of giving credit would not be an issue. This is because in a craftsmanship culture, the value is in the work, rather than in the credit.

**Project Structures and Ownership:**

1. Each project must have some sort of governing body to be successful, this is done in two ways.
   1. The benevolent dictator
      1. This is the owner of the project. Generally this evolves from the trivial Owner/maintainer.
   2. This hierarchy is slowly developed as contributors tend to take charge of certain subsystems within a project.
   3. A voting committee
      1. A group of ‘elders’ of a project vote to resolve conflict. This can be unstable, but works for some very successful projects such as Apache.
   4. Rotating dictator
      1. The modified benevolent dictator model allows for the owner role to be passed around.
2. Hackers tend to not like the two latter cases because it does not model after the Lockean theory that they are used to.

**Conflict and Conflict Resolution:**

1. Usually conflicts are resolved by seniority. The one who is most invested in a project, holds the most stock in the project. It is interesting that the hackers do not recognize their inherent value of property.
2. The only real means of enforcement are flaming and shunning.
3. -> Why are there not more defectors in this prisoner’s dilemma!
   1. The loss of prestige, the only currency in the open-source world.

**Acculturation Mechanisms and the Link to Academia:**

1. This section discusses how the hackers are instantiated into the culture. It is done through a variety of techniques.
2. The aspiring hacker must put in work to be accepted into the hacker community. The values are engrained through looking at other projects, and deriving the values themselves. They are not taught, but enforced when broken; which rarely happens.
3. There are three levels of initiation:
   1. Password specific mysteries
   2. Must be knowledgeable before you can give valuable gifts.
   3. Get to know the culture. This is done by reading current projects pages and documentation.
4. Contributing to the hacker culture is much like gaining tenure for a teacher. There must be a great deal of individual effort invested before one can contribute, or be respected. Some say that the hacker culture is a reflection of the research community.

**Gift Outcompetes Exchange:**

1. Much like there are several ways to run an economy, there are ways to run a culture. Optimal ways to run economies has evolved over time, perhaps the reputational gift culture is the optimal way that has evolved from academia.
   1. Is this the best way to generate and check creative work?
2. Some kinds of scarcity economics actually decrease the productivity of creative workers such as programmers. Commissioned work will be less creative that work done out of pure interest.
3. The most productive work is done when a programmer would do the work without payment. Certainly this is a large reason why the open source community can produce quality work.