Malleable, Digital, and Posthuman

This page intentionally left blank

Malleable, Digital, and Posthuman: A Permanently Beta Life

BY

IGNAS KALPOKAS

Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania

United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2021

Copyright © 2021 Ignas Kalpokas
Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited

Reprints and permissions service
Contact: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80117-621-7 (Print)
ISBN: 978-1-80117-620-0 (Online)
ISBN: 978-1-80117-622-4 (Epub)

ISOQAR certified Management System, awarded to Emerald for adherence to Environmental standard ISO 14001:2004.

Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

This book is dedicated to my daughter Rachele Ona, who was born at the beginning of my writing process.

This page intentionally left blank

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements *ix*

Introduction *1*

Living the New Reality *1*

But Is That Really Different? *5*

The Structure of the Book *11*

Chapter 1 The Malleable Environment: Attention, Sensing and Wrapping *15*

1.1 The Struggle over Attention *16*

1.2 The Emergence of the Data Mould *28*

1.3 The Technological-affective Interface *37*

Chapter 2 The Malleable Self: Immersion, Self-optimisation and Gamification *47*

2.1 A World of Immersion *47*

2.2 Work On/Of the Self *56*

2.3 All Work and No Play Makes the User a Dull Commodity *69*

Chapter 3 The Malleable Political: Ascription, Shareability and Ventriloquism *77*

3.1 Algorithmic Structuring of the Social *77*

3.2 (Re-)Establishing the Collective *86*

3.3 Political Actors and Their Audiences: A Tale of Mutual Consumption *97*

Chapter 4 The Posthuman: False Centrisms, Flat Ontology and Immersive Methodology *107*

4.1 The Promises and Challenges of the Digital *107*

4.2 Posthuman Revelations 117
4.3 From Anthropocentric to Agglomeration-Centric: Towards a Research Methodology 128

Conclusions and Future Directions 137

References 141

Index 163

Acknowledgements

Where do I even start giving thanks for making it possible to write a book in the midst of the pandemic? As usual, at the top of the list must be my wife Julija, without whose help and support this book would have been impossible. Then my boys Klemensas and Frederikas, who struggle to understand the concept of their parents *working* from home. And who can blame them?

Then things get messier – testament to a very messy year indeed. A big thank you to my students, whom I have come to know perhaps more closely than I would otherwise would – their home environments, their kitchen (and, well, other) sounds, etc., and, no doubt, this has been mutual. Worn down by lockdown, by writing, by being confined to home with the children, they have known me at my worst and most miserable. And, in some cases, so have I.

It is by no means a surprise that this is a book about interconnectedness and malleability through mutual testing. Even though the book was started in the months prior to the pandemic, the experience of 2020 has certainly further underscored the fallacy of anthropocentrism, of any idea that we can lead self-sufficient lives insulated from our environment. Definitely, 2020 was the year when the world struck back – both nature and, in response to the nature-induced crisis of the pandemic, the technological layer of our existence. Combining life in full knowledge of being a mere node in multiple intersecting agglomerations in a social environment still primed to human exceptionalism, one that formulates demands accordingly, is bound to be a challenging experience. Hence, this book is written in the hope that we will leave the pandemic world wiser and not with our heads more deeply buried in sand. Let's explore!