



Contemporary Liminality

THE TECHNOLOGISATION OF THE SOCIAL

**A POLITICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF
THE DIGITAL MACHINE**

Edited by
Paul O'Connor and Marius Ion Bența

ROUTLEDGE



The Technologisation of the Social

In an era of digital revolution, artificial intelligence, big data and augmented reality, technology has shifted from being a tool of communication to a primary medium of experience and sociality. Some of the most basic human capacities are increasingly being outsourced to machines, and we increasingly experience and interpret the world through digital interfaces, with machines becoming ever more 'social' beings. Social interaction and human perception are being reshaped in unprecedented ways. This book explores this technologisation of the social and the attendant penetration of permanent liminality into those aspects of the lifeworld where individuals had previously sought some kind of stability and meaning. Through a historical and anthropological examination of this phenomenon, it problematises the underlying logic of limitless technological expansion and our increasing inability to imagine either ourselves or our world in other than technological terms. Drawing on a variety of concepts from political anthropology, including liminality, the trickster, imitation, schismogenesis, participation and the void, it interrogates the contemporary technological revolution in a manner that will be of interest to sociologists, social and anthropological theorists and scholars of science and technology studies with interests in the digital transformation of social life.

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Contemporary Liminality

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This series constitutes a forum for works that make use of concepts such as ‘imitation’, ‘trickster’ or ‘schismogenesis’, but which chiefly deploy the notion of ‘liminality’, as the basis of a new, anthropologically-focused paradigm in social theory. With its versatility and range of possible uses rivalling mainstream concepts such as ‘system’, ‘structure’ or ‘institution’, liminality by now is a new master concept that promises to spark a renewal in social thought.

While charges of Eurocentrism are widely discussed in sociology and anthropology, most theoretical tools in the social sciences continue to rely on approaches developed from within the modern Western intellectual tradition, whilst concepts developed on the basis of extensive anthropological evidence and which challenged commonplaces of modernist thinking, have been either marginalised and ignored, or trivialised. By challenging the taken-for-granted foundations of social theory through incorporating ideas from major thinkers, such as Nietzsche, Dilthey, Weber, Elias, Voegelin, Foucault and Koselleck, as well as perspectives gained through modern social and cultural anthropology and the central concerns of classical philosophical anthropology *Contemporary Liminality* offers a new direction in social thought.

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Digital Machine

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Marius Ion Bența**

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