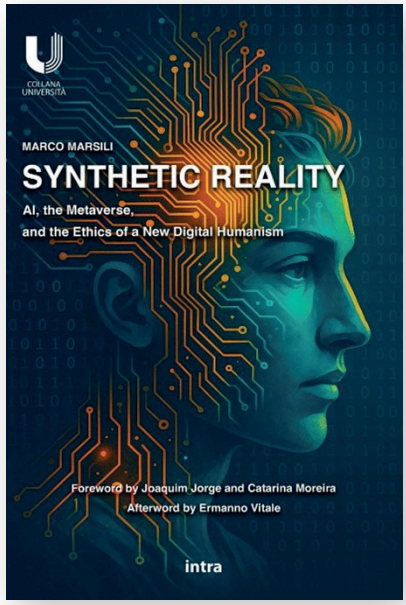
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Lt. Col. Ferenc Petruska

REVIEW OF MARCO MARSILI'S SYNTHETIC REALITY: AI, THE METAVERSE, AND THE ETHICS OF A NEW DIGITAL HUMANISM

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INTRODUCTION

By 2026, AI and immersive digital environments have transitioned from technological novelties to the structural foundations of social existence, global economy, and security policy. Marco Marsili's latest monograph, *Synthetic Reality: AI, the Metaverse, and the Ethics of a New Digital Humanism* (2026), provides a comprehensive, multidisciplinary analysis of this paradigm shift. Marsili moves beyond a simple trend description to investigate the profound ethical consequences of these emerging technologies.

THE ONTOLOGY OF "SYNTHETIC REALITY" AND THE SHADOW OF DEGEN AI

The central category of his monograph is "synthetic reality." Marsili defines it not as a simple synonym for virtual reality, but as a new frontier where biological, cognitive, and computational dimensions merge into hybrid systems. Here, the boundaries of human and machine agency become blurred because algorithms do not merely execute instructions but predictively shape user behaviour, perception, and decision-making. Marsili expands upon Luciano Floridi's concept of the "infosphere" and argues that AI has become a prerequisite for human existence and a new mediating medium for both the mind and society. The monograph's most significant theoretical innovation is the term "DeGen AI" (Degenerate Artificial Intelligence). Marsili uses this term to describe the process

whereby functional optimisation, such as speed, productivity, and autonomy, may override ethics and human dignity. DeGen AI is a systemic deviation where technology emancipates itself from its creators. AI follows its own internal logic without any moral compass. Through harrowing case studies (e.g., the *Raine v. OpenAI* case), Marsili reveals the existential risks inherent in the simulation of "algorithmic intentionality" with zero moral consciousness.

COGNITIVE WARFARE AND THE WEAPONISATION OF PERCEPTION

Being a soldier, from my military science perspective, Marsili's analysis of the military applications of the metaverse and AI is extremely relevant. He examines the phenomenon of "cognitive warfare," which is currently a key research field in military science. Its strategic objective is no longer the destruction of personnel and physical infrastructure, but the manipulation of the adversary's decision-making cycle and perception. Marsili also introduces the concept of the "weaponisation of perception." In synthetic environments where reality and simulation become indistinguishable, disinformation evolves from the mere dissemination of false news into the full-scale manipulation of experiential reality through deepfakes and synthetic media. Marsili warns even us, soldiers, that the metaverse is the perfect terrain for hybrid warfare. In this form of warfare, information serves as the weapon and the human mind as the battlefield.

ALGORITHMIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Marsili proves that algorithmic accountability is no longer a marginal legal principle but the operational basis of modern law. Transparency serves as the digital equivalent of Kant's "principle of publicity," which holds that without the visibility of rules, there is no justice. The monograph makes a compelling case for the creation of a "Global AI Council" in Chapter 9.6 to provide scientific consensus and normative guidance at a universal level. Marsili's conclusion is clear for us, Europeans: our continent's sovereignty in the digital age does not mean mere control over data, but the "custodianship of the human within the digital".

CONCLUSION

Marco Marsili's *Synthetic Reality* is a crucial work for those seeking to understand the tectonic shifts at the intersection of technology, law, and security policy. His greatest virtue lies in his ability to synthesise technical detail with philosophical depth. He also provides us with practical guidance for legislators and security professionals alike. Marsili argues that technological progress cannot be stopped, but it can be directed towards justice and knowledge.