



Office Shock: Creating Better Futures for Working and Living

by Bob Johansen, Joseph Press, Christine Bullen, (2023). 296 pages.

Review by K. D. Kragen, 30 March 2023

iftf.org/projects/officeshock/

I won't summarize the book, as the authors have not only done a great job of chapter summaries, continual references to previous chapters, copious end notes and index, but they also include a "tear-out-able" insert with Office Shock Mixing Board, and "Futureback" Quick Start Guide.

The coined expression "futureback" creative thinking is a method of analysis about offices, the future of office spaces, and "officing" (another coined expression which is well addressed and defined throughout the book). Therefore, this review is more a quick look at a few key ideas addressed in *Office Shock*.

We will all be cyborgs – human/machine/VR-computer/augments – transspeciesism. This claim is somewhat central to the book's conclusions about the future of officing (pp. 9-10). The "spectrum of augmentation" is the basis of amplifying the intelligence of your officeverse. "Thinking futureback we will all be cyborgs, part human, part computer." Later in Chapter 8, we learn details and implications of this new human *cyborgness* that is key to the future of officing and interfacing with the future.

Chapter 7, "Cultivating Community: The Spectrum Of Belonging." Cultivating community in the officeverse is central to belonging, serendipitous collaboration, and trust (a concept that is ultimately central to everything in the officeverse, both the contiguously non-virtual coworking world and the VR-avatar future officeverse). "Digital Nomad Villages" exemplify the VR officeverse.

On to Chapter 8 then. Herein lies the central futurist thesis, philosophical argument, and vision of the whole book. Again, we cannot overemphasize the dictum "Many of us will be cyborgs – and that will be a good thing, *most of the time*" (p. 121, Italics mine). What does this prediction mean? What does it entail? What are its implications? I believe Chapter 8 is where the project of "Office Shock" and "officeverse futureback thinking" seeks to face its central challenge: Who/what are we as a species, as homosapiens? Is homosapiens fixed or fluid, and if the latter, what are the implications – for officing, for all of life on Earth, for human-machine augmentation and interfacing? Not just interfacing to repair human brokenness, but to advance "human evolution" to create new species of us.

"Looking futureback, there will be full-spectrum blending of human and machine choices that will look something like figure 14" (p. 123). [In figure 14: left bottom scale, Humans Assisting Humans; right bottom scale, Machines Assisting Machines; center bottom scale, the Increasing Augmentation Of Humans With Computers; center middle, Humans - Augmentation - Computers; center top "Superminds."] Thus, the future of the officeverse is cybernetic human/machine augmentation based superminds. "We will need to be *Superminds*. That is, cybernetic human-machine augmentation, interfacing, not from personal choice, but from necessity to survive, at least in the future officeverse. One will either be a part of [*the Borg, er...*] the super-species or one will be of the old pre-cybernetic species, unaugmented homosapiens. Admittedly, a big question is: How do we accomplish this *flexible* officeverse without the rise of an unintended cast system between, on the one hand, the techno-ascended, the cyborg-augmented-enlightened, and on the other, the "nons" – the older homosapient hominins, the present un-cyborged species of human.

Two Thoughts from *KillWare III: The Accidental Prisoner*.

"i can trust my own mind only as far as i can trust the creator of my mind. as for 'noninvasive' neural implants, the same thing logically holds true: i can trust my implants only as far as i can trust the programmer."

--Linuxus Xianicus

"the old saying still goes, 'if you can hack into their system, they can hack back into yours'. in the old days they got into your files, stole your 'stuff'; now they get into 'you', steal your soul."

--Linuxus Xianicus