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The analysis of social singularity in the digital era: A socio-philosophical aspect

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Abstract: This article examines one of the most complicated issues of social research, namely social singularity as a process of producing unpredictable meanings, both in the life of modern society and an individual. The essence of social singularity is generally interpreted in the context of the coevolution of nature and society in the conditions of rapid technological shifts and changes in the role of the information environment. Therefore, this study aims to define and analyze the methodological tools of cognition of the social singularity phenomenon as a structural part of the new digital paradigm of philosophical discourse. The article considers the methodological approaches of various schools of philosophy represented by opposing views on anthropological reality in the context of its digital transformation. Within the framework of methodological structuring, the degree of the social singularity issue elaboration can be represented by the methodologies of postmodern and post-humanism philosophy. The conceptual approaches to the criticism of computational thinking, which forms the phenomenon of singularity eliminating *the Human*, are presented in the works by Baudrillard, Deleuze, Massumi, and Haraway. The article emphasizes that the papers of these scholars study digital ontology of the post-human state, where the boundaries between man and machine are blurred. Those studies include the analysis of cyber and biotechnological changes that affect human nature and create the concept of social singularity as a negative scenario for the development of *the Human*. Analyzing the phenomenon of social singularity, we emphasize that non-objectified human feelings come into conflict with computational

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thinking, since subjectivity, carried beyond the limits of *the Self*, turns into *the non-human Other*. Therefore, the article raises the question of how algorithms and artificial intelligence affect human subjectivity and free will; hence, the understanding of how computational processes can limit or expand human capabilities are of crucial importance.

Keywords: social singularity, digital ontology, computational thinking, consciousness, free will

For modern society, the perception of its existence in a “liquid”, “disintegrating” state (Bauman 2001) is becoming more and more relevant. Therefore, in modern socio-philosophical discourse, the ability to determine the benchmarks of a dynamically changing social situation is associated with the concept of *singularity* and, what is most important, with the formation of *the social singularity concept*.

The essence of a singular social reality is usually interpreted in the context of the coevolution of nature and society in the conditions of rapid technological shifts and changes in the role of the information environment.

Singularity is likely to become the greatest bifurcation on the path of humanity, which has not been seen since humans parted from all other primates. In the social world, singularity means the process of producing unpredictable meanings, the existence and development of a social system, the consciousness of a subject within an interval of inaccurate data, and the development by logic subjected to nonsense. Singularity signals a failure in the social order, in the routines of life based on conventional reality.

Computers are becoming nerve centers of future subjects. The coming singularity is the last thing that should be viewed as the world’s end. It is alarmism that does not allow us to rationally perceive the world. However, we should remember that civilization can exist separately from man.

This article aims to define and analyze the methodological tools of cognition of the social singularity phenomenon as a structural part of the new digital paradigm of philosophical discourse, which allows meeting the demand for building a positive image of the future and identifying the driving forces for the construction of this future.

The issues of social singularity in the digital discourse space are considered by various philosophical schools and trends represented by opposing views on anthropological reality in the context of its digital transformation. Within the framework of methodological structuring,

several socio-philosophical and theoretical-methodological directions, one of them being the methodology of artificial intelligence, can represent the degree to which the social singularity issue has been developed. Thus, in his work on superintelligence, Nick Bostrom (2014) explores the risks and possibilities of creating artificial intelligence superior to human intelligence, whereas Lucy Suchman (2006) studies the interaction of humans with computer systems, raising the questions about the ways, in which technology is shaping our social reality.

The works by a European futurist Gerd Leonhard reveal the status of man in the world of numerical relations. In his book, *Technology vs. Humanity: The Coming Clash between Man and Machine* (2016), Leonhard gives criticism on the processes of digital transformation of man. Another book, *Neural Networks*, by Ranjodh Singh Dhaliwal, Théo Lepage-Richer & Lucy Suchman (2024) critically explores the role of neural networks in modern scientific and technical discourses, while analyzing how neural networks affect our understanding of cognition by transforming it into a computational phenomenon. The authors examine the historical and social contexts in which neural networks developed and discuss how these technologies shape our perception of human biology, psychology, and social life. They analyze the problems of social singularity as a starting point, the onset of a new sociality, whose basis will be presented by new cognitive processes, exclusively algorithmic and computational by nature, which will contradict the nature of man, *the anthropological*, where imagination, intuition, emotions generate a space of ethics: morality and empathy.

In modern philosophy, the conceptual approaches to the criticism of computational thinking, which forms the phenomenon of singularity eliminating *the Human* (affective, sensuous, and emotional), are presented in studies by Jean Baudrillard, Gilles Deleuze, Brian Massumi, and Donna Haraway. The works of these scholars present the digital ontology of the post-human state, where the boundaries between man and machine become blurred. These studies also include the analysis of cyber and biotechnological changes that affect human nature and create the concept of social singularity as a negative scenario for the development of *the Human*.

Studying one of these biological changes, Brian Massumi suggests the analytics of understanding affect as the basic natural principle of human biochemical processes, a natural reaction to the surrounding

reality. Considering the concept of '*radical openness of the body*', Massumi viewed man as an embodiment of dreams of social control agents. He concluded that transparency and lack of inner peace create all conditions for the establishment of total surveillance through digital control technologies (Massumi 2002).

The affectivity described by Brian Massumi in his experiments manifests itself as a reaction to the digital media space. The "digital signal – affective response" scheme does not provide for intermediate links related to anthropological aspects (culture, upbringing); only personal fantasies and endless desires. This leads to the phenomenon of *social schizophrenia*, which generates a conflict of all against all. Thus, that is how a digital reduction of man occurs. The digit provides no other dimensions except for the digital plane, where anthropologism is eliminated (Massumi 1996; 2002).

This aspect logically finds its materialization in the paper by Donna Haraway (2015). The social and philosophical concept of the Chthulucene by Haraway explores the idea of eliminating *the Human*.

The problem under consideration lies in the fact that the technological and information reality tends to cover the entirety of human life, and we are taking a risk of losing the understanding of the human essence. Therefore, it is obvious that we can conceptualize the phenomenon of social singularity exclusively in the space of digital ontology.

Defining digital ontology, we should emphasize that it is a philosophical concept that studies the essence of being in the context of digital technologies and information society. This term combines traditional ontological issues with the analysis of the digitalization impact on the human reality and identity.

According to Hannah Knox and Antonia Walford, researchers from the University College London Centre for Digital Anthropology, "...anthropology has come late to the question of whether there is an ontology to the digital" (Knox & Walford 2016). In the series of Digital Ontology workshops, the scholars argue that in the digital world, our daily practices and attitudes towards ourselves are changing: the emotional and private domains have become the objects of observation, and the space of freedom turns into predictable and controlled.

In the socio-philosophical discourse, the analysis of social crisis occurrences and expected disastrous consequences is presented quite widely, for instance, in the book *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*:

The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power by Shoshana Zuboff (2019). In her research, Zuboff argues that algorithms contradict anthropological reality, which includes such unique phenomena as imagination, historicity, temporality, self-affectation, subjectivity, and a sense of reality.

Non-objectified human feelings come into conflict with computational thinking, as subjectivity, carried beyond *the Self*, turns into *the non-human Other*. There are questions about how algorithms and artificial intelligence affect human subjectivity and free will, and it is especially important to understand how computational processes can limit or expand human capabilities. We find these methodological aspects in the works by Maksim Zhuk (2017), Michael Murez & Joulia Smrchkova (2014), Ranjod Singh Dhaliwal, Theo Lepage-Risher & Lucy Suchman (2024), etc.

The anthropological practices of self-cognition and self-impact are replaced by post-human reactions to external stimuli. In this case, man loses his ontological exclusivity, becoming an object of the non-human world. In contrast to the being of man, which involves both internal and external impacts, the post-human one has this duality eliminated.

Digital philosophy attempts to present the concepts for the elimination of the ontological difference between *the Human* and *the Non-human* (technical, algorithmic) by analyzing the approaches to interpreting singularity, characterizing its types as regards the social phenomena and processes reflected in the public consciousness, namely in the signs of inconsistency, prolonged mobilization state, and the search for an ideological platform.

We can state that this discourse originated in postmodern philosophy (in the network concepts by Deleuze, Guattari, and Baudrillard) and further developed in the post-humanist philosophy of new materialists, namely Massumi, and Haraway. In the works of new materialists, consciousness is restricted to the rational and deconstructed, thus considering man as a multiple set of codes determined by external situational flows.

Thus, the postulation of external determinism closes the possibility of talking about man in terms of freedom and self-sufficiency. The principle of multiplicity contradicts the anthropological idea of the integrity of understanding human existence.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1983), abandoning consciousness identified with ratio, plunge man into the flows of existence determined by the codes and cuts of the *desiring-machines*.

Within the framework of the digital, by its very nature, understanding of the rhizome, man is transformed into a digital construct.

Digital logic takes shape in *the concept of schizophrenia* developed by Deleuze and Guattari on the plane of the idea of liberation from the pressure of rational consciousness.

Consciousness, in Deleuze's point of view, is rationality that banishes imagination and the world of affects. Deleuze and Guattari see the roots of understanding schizophrenia in the concept of the *body without organs*. The new digital world has eliminated the heights and depths of the existence of the past epochs, equalizing all the diversity of consciousness and differences in perceptions of the past in egalitarian schizo-flows and codes (Dosse 2010).

The philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari creates polymorphism – the ability to create a net of relationships, guile. The future is something that does not exist, something that is given to a person in the form of imagination. However, being new materialists Deleuze and Guattari did not need imagination and subjective time, they only kept the plane and flows in which a person is similar to a machine.

Postmodern philosophy, namely the poststructuralist tradition, whose methodological tool we used in our study of social singularity, rejects the established ideas about society as a certain integrity and order that generates a social subject through the processes of socialization, interiorization, and introjection. Socio-philosophical heritage of poststructuralists, especially the works by Deleuze (1983; 1990), Guattari (1983), Nancy (2003), Cadava, Connor & Nancy (1991) clearly demonstrated the limitations of using the substantialism paradigm of transformational processes in modern society.

As an alternative to substantialism, poststructuralism offers the concepts of social structure through a multiplicity of local, singular orders that define the relativism and variability of the social and are implemented through a set of subjective practices that have a communication basis. However, what kind of communication basis is that?

The World Wide Web has turned into a real network that entangles humanity with censorship and total control. The digit does not give man freedom; the word gives more freedom but not ultimate freedom, it is only in imagination that man finds this freedom. While communicating, man is not free, since the condition of communication is a lie. Any utterance must correspond to the opinion of the other and simultaneously be understood in the other's language. That is the

condition of total *un-freedom*. That is why the rhizome phenomenon can be identified with the World Wide Web, which is a de-hierarchized space of free horizontal (plane) connections.

There arises the situation when consciousness is initially torn apart into small pieces by the digit, and when degradation occurs much faster. Is that because people remained in the plane of digital sense, artificial intelligence, abandoned their subjectivity, and this refusal has sublimated into pathology?

Gilles Deleuze (1990, 52) notes, “The Singularity belongs to another dimension... It is essentially pre-individual, non-personal, a-conceptual. It is quite indifferent to the individual and the collective, the personal and the impersonal, the particular and the general – and to their oppositions. Singularity is *neutral*. On the other hand, it is not “ordinary”: the singular point is opposed to the ordinary”. Here, we are again faced with the problem of the theoretical death of the subject as an “independent”, “sovereign” individual consciousness, with the “theoretical antihumanism” of poststructuralism.

As Ilya Ilin (1998) argues, singularities, forming “swarm” communities that do not obey rigid structures – “multiplicities”, oppose large aggregates controlled by hierarchical, authoritarian laws. Large aggregates, or molar structures, subjugate the “molecules” of society, while the organization of society at the molecular level includes micro-multiplicities, or partial objects that destroy and undermine structures.

With such a worldview, in terms of understanding the “social singularity”, when the subject of research is only “instabilities”, and the very existence of an integral personality is called into question, in works of postmodern theorists, man turns into a “negative space” or “random mechanism”. Wondering why man is assigned an unenviable role of “random mechanism”, we should define a methodological principle that allows us to see the “death of the subject”, “the end of the social”. Thus, we should come to the understanding of social singularity as the point of fixation of certain series (for instance, symbolic series of the basis and superstructure), which shows the concrete historical actualization of socio-economic as well as cultural and political relations. This is the point of fixation of a certain historical situation – it is super-individual and has the character of the unconscious (this understanding of the singularity correlates with the concept of the “political unconscious” by Deleuze).

In his book *The Logic of Sense* (1990), Deleuze defines the reason for the social singularity of the modern world, namely, he speaks of the dream as a phantasm. Later, this idea of political unconscious was embodied in the work *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.

Here is just one of numerous quotes related to the “non-desire of the human libido to serve the law”: This dream ...is itself action, reality, and an effective menace to the established order; it renders possible what it dreams about” (Deleuze 1990, 49).

The dream is subjectivity, a desire, or more accurately, phantasm, which does not fit into the space of the general, normative, social. Deleuze calls this state “empty space”. Phantasm is such a pure empty space; a space or event, which cannot exist under the laws of this world. Phantasm is never achieved; it is the boundary, with regard to which the things of the world are organized. In this sense, phantasm is always the “other” side of an event or occurrence.

Perhaps, in this manner, one of social concepts was born – *schizoanalysis and nomadology* by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1983), which provides an appropriate explanation of new trends in the spiritual life of modern Western societies, currently being relevant in the framework of the formation of the social singularity concept.

Therefore, Deleuze and Guattari introduced the social singularity in the conceptual space. According to them, desiring-machines do not need a law to want; a desire does not line up around a ban. The law does not generate a desire but creates symbolic objects to which it assigns certain relationship strategies. The law poisons desire by adding guilt to it. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari write:

The law tells us: you will not marry your mother and you will not kill your father. And we docile subjects say to ourselves: so, that’s what I wanted! Will it ever be suspected that the law discredits – and has the interest in discrediting and disgracing – the person it presumes to be guilty, the person the law wants to be guilty and wants to be made to feel guilty? (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 114)

The affect of guilt caused by the law can turn into the affect of fear; then man becomes a “victim” that is always in fear of punishment, that tries to escape from the law, not to obey the law, which eliminates the limits of the social. Wherever a ban is imposed, there are lines of escape that are not in violation of the law, not in an attempt to escape from it, but in the study of other logics of existence and development (“the law is only an arbitrary fact”).

Thus, *the production of desire* (everything just for your enjoyment) and *the desiring-production* destroy the transcendental illusion of the previous system of values. The “brilliant” and at the same time “black” truth of capitalism leads modern societies to a singular point of their existence, to a phase transition, to a new reality in which a “shallow personality” that is not able to “dig deep” will not be ideal, and what is most important there will be no war!

Criticizing the systems of their predecessors, Deleuze and Guattari created their own system. They tried to detach from it as they found fascism within it. They saw fascism in any meta-narrative that intrudes with its “rationality” into the flows of codes, interfering with them, restricting them and suppressing them. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1983), everything that structures is fascism.

The desire to “liberate man”, create an alternative “simulation” territory of “being oneself”, “singularity” resulted in another chaos, another “fascism”— one-dimensionality of post-humanistic concepts, which will be based on scenarios of “improving human nature”.

To support this idea, we would like to take the work by Donna Haraway (2015) as an example. She presents *the concept of Chthulucene*, offering it as an alternative to the traditional *concept of the Anthropocene*. According to Haraway, Anthropocene is too focused on human activity and its impact on the planet, which excludes other living beings and ecosystems from the equation. Instead, she suggests the term *Chthulucene*, which focuses on the multi-species, interconnected networks of life.

Haraway uses the mythical creature *Cthulhu* as a metaphor to describe complex, intertwined ecosystems and biological interactions. In her view, *Chthulucene* focuses on the joint survival of all species, not only humans. This concept emphasizes the importance of interdependence and cooperation between species to overcome environmental crises.

In her work, Haraway argues that we need to rethink our role in the world, abandon hierarchical models and work to create sustainable systems that consider the interests of all inhabitants of the planet. *Chthulucene* offers a more inclusive and integrated approach to understanding and solving environmental problems, focusing on the need for cooperation and coexistence on a global scale.

Man becomes part of a more complex system where data, algorithms and networks play a key role in determining his actions, decisions and perception of the world. This, in our opinion, is the main

reason for the fall of the philosophical consciousness of digital civilization into the one-dimensionality of post-humanistic concepts. Not only is the cognitive, neurophysiological side of man degraded, but also his will and freedom. The reason for this is the rejection of oneself in oneself.

Postmodern philosophy deprives man of consciousness, will as integrity. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1983), consciousness and will belong to fascist constructs as well. Consciousness is an apparatus of violence and fascization, and flows of desires are what consciousness wants to repress, suppress, and put under its total control. We should also note that Deleuze and Guattari point to the negative side of consciousness but forget to consider the positive side of consciousness, which, among other things, consists in expanding the reality in which man lives.

Thus, any forms of thinking conceptualized as multiple outside *the Single* can be considered as located outside ethics, humanism, as ultimately having no reference points.

We can conclude that anthropology without subjectivity turns into ontology. When excluding subjectivity, there is no point in cognizing man as a being different from object, since in ontology everything lies in the plane of both object and man. The meanings disappear if we accept Deleuze's thesis that there are only bodies and forces in the world (Deleuze 1990). There are bodies and forces, there is a game of bodies and forces, but there is no man and, accordingly, subjectivity.

In the world of ontology, a post-human appears as the object of study. Different sciences explore different aspects: anthropology focuses on consciousness and subjectivity, whereas ontology studies objects (bodies) and forces. Deleuze chose *the schizophrenic* as the object as he embodies the very dichotomy of consciousness and the unconscious. Together with Guattari, he expanded the concept of consciousness even more than Freud and Lacan, seeking to overcome fascism (the dictatorship of rationality), which consisted in man's passing through several psychosexual stages. Seeing a kind of precept in these stages, Deleuze and Guattari deconstructed this fascist construct and proposed a new concept of schizoanalysis, which does not attempt to return the schizophrenic under the dictatorship of rationalism and social life, but on the contrary, asserts his naturalness.

In the modern digital and virtual world, man is a puppet in the chaos of algorithmic reality. The transition to the digital world without man started with the elimination of the anthropological duplication of

reality, inaccessible to computable thinking, which seeks to algorithmize the world through programming rather than understanding the presence of man in it.

Summing up the results of our study, we should note that the outlines of the social singularity of the future as a problem of social constructing occupy a special place in modern research. Standing by for social changes, existing in the conditions of rapid change of the platforms for building models of the future, where the transition from human to post-human occurs, arouses the interest of scholars and encourages the search for the driving forces' potential not only changing man's behavior and sense of himself as a free individual but also his ontological status.

Digital ontology, the network, constitutes a certain kind of being, which in the flows of digital reality strives toward the ultimate goal – annihilation in the space of digital flows. For man, the purpose of digital existence within the network is to dissolve, disappear or integrate into an endless flow of data, where the boundaries of individual existence are erased.

The methodology of postmodernism has attempted to create a space of annihilation, criticizing the systemic nature of its predecessors. The given analysis of the theoretical and methodological tools of the Deleuze and Guattari concepts of *singularity*, *multiplicity*, and *the phenomenon of schizophrenia* presents the understanding of the foundations of digital ontology and the new sociality, which will be shaped. We have shown that the ground of the modern social situation is rather laid by the virtual essence of human existence, existence in the “phantasm and desires”, but the encounter with the Other is already a social and communication crisis for man.

Postmodernists created the system of understanding the capitalist social, tried to present a system of resolving the problems of totalitarian human existence, proved the importance of avoiding the “ratio”, i.e. they created a certain meta-narrative of the *Body without Organs*. Modern digital discourse results in one-dimensionality of human existence within the ontology of algorithms and computational thinking, where there is no freedom of self-expression for man.

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