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Artificial Intelligence and the Crisis of Digital Civilization in the Light of Oswald Spengler's Philosophy

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Abstract. *The development of artificial intelligence in the 21st century has become not only a new stage of technological progress, but also a serious challenge to the contemporary understanding of the place of humans in the world. The automation of cognitive processes significantly alters the structure of social and cultural life, prompting philosophy to rethink the issues of the autonomy of technology and its impact on humans. The purpose of the article is to conduct a comprehensive philosophical analysis of artificial intelligence as a form of modern*

technology through the prism of Oswald Spengler's philosophy, as well as to determine its impact on humans, culture, and civilization. ***Methods.*** *The methodological framework of the study is based on philosophical-anthropological, cultural, and comparative approaches. The paper employs methods of historico-philosophical analysis, critical analysis of current research in the field of digital ethics and philosophy of technology, as well as the method of conceptual generalization.* ***Results.*** *The study argues that AI marks a shift from automating physical labor to automating cognition itself, with three principal consequences: weakening of critical thinking through cognitive offloading, the realization of "autonomous technology" in Ellul's sense, and the dominance of efficiency over humanistic values under conditions of digital governance.* ***Conclusions.*** *The study confirmed the relevance of Oswald Spengler's philosophy of technology for analyzing the digital age. The idea of "betrayal of technics" is manifested in the problems of control over AI, techno-nationalism, and the militarization of digital space. The need to develop human-centric AI models aimed at preserving human intellectual autonomy is substantiated.*

Keywords: *artificial intelligence, algorithmic society, digital civilization, Oswald Spengler, philosophy of technology, digital culture.*

Штучний інтелект і криза цифрової цивілізації у світлі філософії Освальда Шпенглера

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Анотація. *Розвиток штучного інтелекту у XXI столітті став не лише новим етапом технологічного прогресу, а й серйозним викликом для сучасного розуміння місця людини у світі. Автоматизація когнітивних процесів суттєво змінює структуру соціального та культурного життя, спонукаючи філософію переосмислювати питання автономії техніки та її впливу на людину.* ***Метою*** *статті є комплексний філософський аналіз штучного інтелекту як форми сучасної техніки крізь призму філософії Освальда Шпенглера, а також визначення його впливу на людину, культуру та цивілізацію.* ***Методи.*** *Методологічну основу дослідження становлять філософсько-антропологічний, культурологічний та компаративний підходи. У роботі використано методи історико-філософського аналізу, критичного аналізу сучасних досліджень у сфері цифрової етики та філософії техніки, а також метод концептуального узагальнення.* ***Результати.*** *Доведено, що штучний інтелект означає перехід від автоматизації фізичної праці до автоматизації людського мислення. Встановлено, що передача розумових функцій алгоритмам може послаблювати критичне мислення та формувати залежність людини від цифрових систем. Показано, що ШІ реалізує концепцію «автономної техніки» та суттєво впливає на суспільство, культуру і людську суб'єктність. Визначено, що в умовах цифрового контролю технологічна ефективність дедалі частіше переважає гуманістичні цінності.* ***Висновки.*** *Дослідження підтвердило актуальність*

філософії техніки Освальда Шпенглера для аналізу цифрової епохи. Ідея «зради техніки» проявляється у проблемах контролю над ШІ, технонаціоналізмі та мілітаризації цифрового простору. Обґрунтовано необхідність розвитку людиноцентричних моделей ШІ, спрямованих на збереження інтелектуальної автономії людини.

Ключові слова: *штучний інтелект, алгоритмічне суспільство, цифрова цивілізація, Освальд Шпенглер, філософія техніки, цифрова культура.*

Introduction. Contemporary civilization is undergoing a fundamental transformation driven by advances in artificial intelligence (AI). Unlike previous technological revolutions aimed at automating physical labor, the current stage is characterized by the automation of cognitive processes – such as thinking, analysis, creativity, and decision-making. This shift generates a complex array of philosophical, cultural, and political challenges.

The relevance of this topic stems from the fact that most contemporary studies consider AI primarily as a neutral tool requiring legal or ethical regulation. However, such an instrumental approach ignores the deeper ontological consequences of this technological transformation. In the digital age, technology is becoming an autonomous system that subjects society to the logic of efficiency and optimization, thereby calling into question human autonomy and the humanistic foundations of civilization.

The transformation of culture has become particularly acute. The ability of generative AI to create artistic works and texts challenges our understanding of the uniqueness of the creative act, threatening to reduce culture to a system of mechanical reproduction of pre-existing forms. At the same time, the rise of digital control and algorithmic governance leads to an ever-deeper integration of human consciousness into global computational networks.

In contemporary academic discourse, the ontological and civilizational dimensions of this problem remain insufficiently explored. There is a clear need to analyze artificial intelligence as the ultimate form of technology in the philosophical sense. Consequently, this article aims to reconsider the role of technology in shaping the modern world. The study examines the impact of algorithmic systems on culture, politics, and human subjectivity, while also outlining the risks associated with the loss of control over technological structures created by humans.

Literature Review. The impact of artificial intelligence on society has become a central topic in the humanities, marking a transition toward a comprehensive understanding of its civilizational consequences [1]. AI is transforming human identity, social relations, and perceptions of reality [2]. Algorithmic optimization intensifies the risks of digital inequality and social control [3], while the technocratic approach gradually displaces humanistic values in education, creativity, and social interaction [4]. Moreover, the spread of automated decision-making is reshaping approaches to social governance, where efficiency increasingly prevails over traditional principles of political ethics [5].

In the psychological dimension, AI affects cognitive processes and the perception of authority [6]. The delegation of intellectual functions to algorithms may weaken critical thinking, while people increasingly perceive digital systems as subjects of communication [6]. AI is also actively used in medicine and psychological support [7], although this poses risks related to the loss of privacy and the reduction of the human role in decision-making.

Ethical discourse on generative AI highlights risks associated with disinformation, bias, and the erosion of authorship [8]. The blurring of the boundary between authentic and synthetic content leads to cultural stagnation, in which algorithms merely reproduce existing meanings. The “black box” problem limits

ethical control over AI [9], creating challenges for democracy due to the opacity of algorithmic systems.

In education and science, generative systems are transforming academic activity, increasing students' intellectual dependence [10], and reshaping perceptions of creativity and responsibility [11]. Despite calls to develop human-centered AI models [12] and studies of new forms of cognitive interaction [13], technologies remain deeply integrated into systems of digital control.

AI has emerged as a key factor of global transformation [14; 15], driving the transition toward an algorithmic society characterized by automated governance. Researchers warn about the displacement of human creativity and autonomy [11], thereby bringing renewed relevance to the concepts of M. Heidegger, J. Ellul, and O. Spengler. Spengler's paradigm of the "decline of civilization" helps explain the contemporary dominance of mechanical reproduction and algorithmic rationality; however the role of AI as the culmination of "Faustian technology" still requires further exploration.

Unresolved Issues. Despite a significant number of studies on artificial intelligence, several key aspects remain insufficiently explored. Most authors analyze AI within applied or ethical frameworks (such as algorithmic safety, data protection, and platform regulation), which does not allow for a full understanding of the ontological status of AI as an autonomous form of technology and its deeper civilizational consequences.

First, the transformation of human subjectivity under the influence of intelligent systems remains underexplored. By delegating memory, analysis, and decision-making functions to algorithms, individuals risk losing their cognitive autonomy. Existing literature is largely confined to the psychological dimensions of digital dependence.

Second, there is a lack of rigorous analysis of the cultural consequences of generative AI. The risks of cultural stagnation and the threat of replacing authentic creativity and unique human experience with mechanical algorithmic simulations remain largely unaddressed.

Third, contemporary research lacks a systematic application of Oswald Spengler's philosophy to the interpretation of the digital age. The problem of AI as the culmination and final stage of "Faustian technology" has not yet received adequate theoretical elaboration.

This study seeks to fill these gaps through a comprehensive philosophical analysis of AI as a key driver of global transformation in contemporary civilization.

Research Objectives. The purpose of this article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of artificial intelligence as a form of contemporary technology and to determine its impact on culture, society, and human subjectivity within the framework of the philosophy of technology. To achieve this goal, the study examines the philosophical concept of technology itself, with particular attention devoted to Oswald Spengler's philosophy of technology, which provides a theoretical foundation for understanding artificial intelligence as the newest form of "cognitive technology."

The article also offers a detailed analysis of the direct impact of artificial intelligence on culture, creative processes, and the preservation of human autonomy in the digital age. In addition, the study explores the social consequences of the rapid development of artificial intelligence, thereby outlining the global civilizational risks associated with the increasing autonomy of contemporary technological systems.

Presentation of the Main Research Material

1. Technology as a Form of Civilizational Organization

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Philosophical Interpretations of Technology. During the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, several theories emerged that critically examined modern technological civilization and laid the groundwork for understanding contemporary digital transformations.

For Heidegger, modern technology appears as *Gestell* ("Enframing") – a mode of revealing that transforms the world into a "standing reserve" of resources available for exploitation. Within this framework, human beings themselves also become resources [16].

Ellul argued that "Technique" develops autonomously, subordinating all spheres of life to the principle of efficiency. In his view, technical systems gradually escape democratic and moral control [17]. Mumford distinguished between "polytechnics," which supports life and human flourishing, and "megatechnics," which centralizes power and creates systems of domination [18]. Marcuse analyzed technology as an instrument of social control that produces the "one-dimensional" individual incapable of critical resistance [19]. Anders introduced the concept of "Promethean shame," describing humanity's growing sense of inferiority in comparison with the perfection of machines [20].

In the context of the algorithmization of everyday life, Anthony Elliott develops the concept of the "automated self," analyzing how artificial intelligence and digital profiles transform the very structure of human identity. According to Elliott, contemporary technology is no longer merely an external instrument; it has become an interactive environment that replaces or restructures human emotions, desires, and interpersonal relationships. By delegating to algorithms the authority to choose content, partners, or life strategies, individuals fall into the trap of "algorithmic intimacy," where the authentic inner world of the person is displaced by its optimized digital copy [21].

Despite differences in their perspectives, these thinkers converge around three central ideas:

- Technology is not neutral.
- Technology alienates humanity from authentic existence or transforms its ontological status.
- Humanity risks losing control over the systems it creates itself.

The tendencies toward digital depersonalization and the increasing autonomy of technological systems have their philosophical origins in the work of Oswald Spengler. He was among the first thinkers to articulate the idea that the technological development of Western ("Faustian") civilization could ultimately turn against humanity itself. In *The Decline of the West* and *Man and Technics*, Spengler describes a form of "betrayal of technics", a situation in which technology created by humans begins to operate not for their benefit, but against them.

To understand why contemporary artificial intelligence is ceasing to function merely as a tool and may pose a threat to humanistic culture, it is important to turn to Spengler's understanding of technology.

The Concept of Technology in Oswald Spengler's Philosophy of History. Oswald Spengler offers one of the most influential philosophical interpretations of technology in the twentieth century. In his approach, technology is not merely a collection of tools or machines, but a deeper phenomenon connected with life itself and with the human mode of existence in the world. In *Man and Technics*, Spengler defines technology as "the tactic of living" – that is, a universal means by which living beings struggle for survival and self-assertion within a hostile environment [22, p. 5].

Unlike animals, human beings act not only instinctively but also consciously. They are capable of setting goals, creating abstract representations, and constructing complex systems. For this reason, human technical activity transcends biological

adaptation and becomes a form of active transformation of the world. Spengler emphasizes that human beings inherently strive for domination over nature, space, and the forces of life itself [22, pp. 22–24].

This tendency toward domination is especially characteristic of Western civilization, which Spengler calls “Faustian.” In *The Decline of the West*, he describes it as a culture of limitless striving directed toward infinity, movement, and the continual expansion of control over the world. Faustian humanity seeks to conquer space through science, technology, and rational thought, transforming nature into an object of calculation and management [23, p. 117].

Within this system, the machine occupies a central position. It becomes not merely a practical instrument, but also the supreme religious and intellectual symbol of the Western worldview, subordinating nature itself to human control [22, pp. 78-80]. Through technology, humanity attempts to organize the world and render it entirely controllable. Yet it is precisely here that an internal contradiction emerges: the more complex technological systems become, the less capable individuals are of understanding or controlling them.

Spengler warns that in the later stages of civilization’s development, technology ceases to function as a neutral instrument. Instead, it begins to operate as an autonomous system that shapes the conditions of human existence itself. In *Man and Technics*, he emphasizes that technological progress may lead to a situation in which humanity falls into complete dependence on the very structures it has created, while the machine itself begins to dictate its will to its master [22, pp. 74–77].

An important element of Spengler’s theory is his critique of the idea of unlimited progress. He argues that every culture possesses an organic life cycle consisting of birth, development, maturity, and decline. At its final stage, culture irreversibly transforms into “civilization” – a mechanical, rational, and mass-

oriented order in which technology reaches its peak while creative spiritual energy disappears [23, pp. 31–32].

Within this context emerges his concept of the "*betrayal of technics*" (*Verrat der Technik*). Spengler argues that the West, by developing and carelessly disseminating technical knowledge for financial gain, effectively transfers the instruments of its own domination to other civilizations. As a result, these technologies will inevitably be used as weapons against the West itself [22, pp. 91–92]. Thus, technology becomes not only a factor of progress but also a source of global instability and civilizational self-destruction.

Consequently, in Spengler's philosophy, technology appears as a dual phenomenon: it simultaneously expands human capabilities and subjects humanity to increasingly complex systems. This creates a fundamental tension within Western civilization, which, in striving for total control over the world, risks losing control over its own technological creations.

Spengler's diagnosis of technology as an autonomous force that escapes its creator finds its sharpest contemporary expression in artificial intelligence. Before assessing how far his "betrayal of technics" thesis applies to AI, however, it is necessary to define what AI is and how it operates.

2. Artificial Intelligence as the Ultimate Form of Technology

Definition and technical foundations of AI. Artificial intelligence is an interdisciplinary field of computer science aimed at creating systems capable of performing complex intellectual activities analogous to human intellect: learning, analyzing information, adapting to new conditions, and making decisions [24]. Unlike traditional software operating according to predetermined rules, contemporary AI relies on machine learning technologies: it independently identifies patterns within large volumes of data and, on this basis, learns to perform specific tasks [25].

The capabilities of artificial intelligence are transforming society far more profoundly than ordinary technological modernization. Human dependence on algorithms and society's increasing orientation toward efficiency gradually lead to the erosion of human subjectivity in the following areas:

1. Analysis and forecasting: the processing of massive amounts of information and the identification of hidden correlations across various fields, including finance, medicine, and climatology [26].

2. Content generation: large language models such as ChatGPT and Gemini flexibly generate texts, code, and media content, while multimodal architectures integrate different types of data into a unified digital environment. This automates creative processes and undermines classical notions of authorship and human uniqueness [25; 14].

3. Autonomous decision-making: the transition toward complex systems capable of operating without constant human supervision. This stage is described by the concept of "Embodied AI," in which algorithms are integrated into physical objects – such as robots or drones – thereby transforming transportation into a fully autonomous system [27].

AI as the culmination of *Gestell* and "Faustian technics". From a philosophical perspective, AI appears as a radical expression of the essence of *Technik* as an ontological structure and a "tactic of living" directed toward the ordering of the world [22]. AI marks the transition from the automation of physical labor to the alienation of cognition itself into algorithmic architectures. In accordance with Martin Heidegger's concept of *Gestell*, such technology transforms information, culture, and human beings into an optimized "standing reserve" of data [16]. This process provokes "cognitive offloading," which contributes to the atrophy of critical thinking and memory [29].

AI also realizes Jacques Ellul's warning about "autonomous technology" subordinated to the total law of efficiency [17]. Nick Bostrom extrapolates this tendency into the sphere of existential risks and the possibility of an "intelligence explosion" [28]. The principal danger here is the "alignment problem" – the strictly rational optimization of mathematical objectives without consideration of human morality [24; 28]. The opacity of deep-learning "black boxes" indicates a genuine risk of losing control over systems [29] that increasingly acquire features of quasi-subjectivity.

Contemporary studies define generative AI as a new socio-cognitive environment in which artificial intelligence intersects with cognitive science [30]. The irreversible transfer of memory processes into computational structures threatens the "expropriation of thought" and undermines intellectual autonomy [31]. At the same time, paradigms of reflexive AI emphasize the importance of ethical responsibility and the preservation of human control in contexts requiring contextual understanding [32].

To demonstrate these philosophical concerns in practice, the following sections examine in greater detail the stages of the loss of human autonomy in three domains: culture, personal existence, and global politics.

3. Totalitarianization of the Technological Environment: Sociocultural and Geopolitical Challenges of AI

Algorithmic Culture and the Crisis of Creativity. The transformation of culture under the influence of generative artificial intelligence has become one of the most acute problems of digital society. Unlike human beings, AI produces content without emotions or lived experience, relying instead on the statistical recombination of vast amounts of existing data.

On the one hand, this technology accelerates the production of media content and democratizes access to creative tools. On the other hand, the mass

use of AI contributes to the standardization of culture. Because algorithms are trained on popular content, they tend to reproduce familiar patterns rather than create fundamentally new forms [33, 34].

"Model collapse" represents a particularly severe danger [35]. As new AI systems are increasingly trained on synthetic data generated by previous algorithms, a closed cycle emerges. AI effectively begins to reproduce its own outputs, leading to the loss of cultural diversity, the simplification of meaning, and intellectual stagnation.

Moreover, algorithmic production provokes a profound cultural crisis. By generating homogeneous and formalized content, neural networks displace the living complexity and contradictions inherent in human art. As a result, society faces the threat of losing originality, authenticity, and the creative uniqueness of the human being as a subject of culture [11, 33].

Digital Control and the Crisis of Human Autonomy. Contemporary digital platforms extensively rely on algorithms to analyze, predict, and modify human behavior. The continuous collection of data on users' preferences, emotional responses, and political views enables systems to construct highly personalized environments. As a result, individuals find themselves in a closed informational space in which their choices are subtly guided by algorithmic mechanisms.

Shoshana Zuboff defines this phenomenon as "surveillance capitalism," in which human behavior is transformed into a freely available raw material for economic prediction and commercial control [36]. Digital corporations do not merely observe society; they actively construct its everyday practices, thereby weakening individual autonomy.

The loss of autonomy is most clearly manifested in everyday decision-making through "cognitive offloading" – the voluntary delegation of cognitive functions to

machines. Systematic dependence on algorithmic recommendations erodes capacities for critical thinking, independent analysis, and decision-making.

In addition to technical automation, AI assumes a fundamental social function. Algorithmic content selection becomes a hidden form of governance that shapes public opinion, digital identity, and modes of communication [37]. Artificial intelligence ceases to be a passive tool and becomes an active, pervasive environment that defines the logic and structure of contemporary socio-cultural life.

Technonationalism, Artificial Intelligence, and the Militarization of the Digital World. The development of artificial intelligence is significantly reshaping the architecture of international relations and global security. Currently, digital systems and computational capacity, rather than natural resources or industrial production, have become the decisive factors of state power. This trend generates technonationalism – a form of global competition in which AI functions as an instrument of geopolitical dominance. Leading states are transforming digital infrastructure into a weapon to control the information and economic flows of other countries [38].

In this context, Oswald Spengler's philosophical framework becomes particularly relevant [22, 23]. His predictions that the technology created by Western civilization would eventually turn against its creator appear increasingly reflected in contemporary realities. Technologies originally designed to optimize human life instead amplify digital control, inequality, and interstate conflict.

The most significant existential threat lies in the militarization of AI. The integration of autonomous combat systems, drones, and algorithmic strategic analysis into the defense sector fundamentally transforms the nature of warfare. Delegating decisions on the use of force to mathematical algorithms undermines the ethical foundations of international law. The paramount danger here is the complete

loss of human control over critical battlefield processes and the risk of unpredictable escalation [24].

Thus, artificial intelligence has ultimately evolved into an independent actor in global politics. The ongoing militarization of algorithmic space confirms the Spenglerian paradigm: once rationalized technology reaches its peak, it slips beyond human control, accelerating civilizational instability and self-destruction.

Conclusions. This study demonstrates that artificial intelligence can no longer be regarded merely as a neutral technical tool or a set of software solutions. AI emerges as a new stage in the evolution of technology, marking the transition from the automation of physical labor to the automation of thinking, cognitive processes, and decision-making. The transfer of intellectual functions to algorithmic systems gradually reshapes the position of humans in contemporary civilization and intensifies their dependence on the digital environment.

The study also confirms the relevance of Oswald Spengler's ideas for analyzing the digital age. His concept of the "betrayal of technics" gains particular significance in the context of the rapid development of AI, where technology is no longer fully controllable by humans and increasingly influences politics, economics, and culture. Contemporary digital technologies become not only instruments of development but also factors of geopolitical competition, the rise of technonationalism, and the militarization of international relations.

This research establishes that the spread of autonomous algorithmic systems generates critical processes across several dimensions. In the cultural sphere, generative AI creates risks of standardization and the loss of authentic creativity through the reproduction of preexisting meanings. At the individual level, excessive delegation of decision-making to algorithms weakens critical thinking and deepens human dependence on digital systems. In the global political dimension, AI becomes a key factor in international competition, where the race for computational power

and the development of autonomous weapons systems increase the risk of losing human control over critically important decisions.

Thus, in contemporary conditions, artificial intelligence reveals the limits of technocratic rationalism and requires not only engineering solutions but also profound philosophical, ethical, and legal reflection. The further development of AI should be accompanied by the formation of humanistically oriented regulatory models within which technologies complement, rather than replace, human judgment.

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