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## DIGITAL PANOPTICON AS A SPACE OF SELF-PRESENTATION IN CONDITIONS OF NETWORK ADDICTION

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The article offers a philosophical examination of the phenomenon of the digital panopticon as a specific form of contemporary power that transforms structures of subjectivity, speech, and social interaction within digital culture. Drawing on the conceptual legacy of Jeremy Bentham, Michel Foucault, and the normative ethics of Immanuel Kant, the analysis addresses the ways in which the logic of panoptic surveillance undergoes a radical transformation in the digital environment, losing spatial localization and institutional determinacy while acquiring an all-encompassing and diffuse character.

The focus is placed on the impact of digital control on practices of self-observation, self-presentation, and communication. It is shown that digital visibility functions as an ontological condition of social existence, in which participation in shared space increasingly depends on continuous self-display. Under these conditions, the phenomenon of “voluntary digital confinement” emerges, whereby the subject internalizes the demand for visibility and accessibility, perceiving them as necessary conditions of recognition and belonging.

Special attention is given to the transformation of speech under the conditions of the digital panopticon. The analysis demonstrates how permanent visibility and the awareness of potential observation affect the character of communication, contributing to the development of self-censorship and the standardization of expressions. Digital discourse appears as a space of performative self-regulation, in which individual positions are adjusted in accordance with implicit norms of acceptability and the expectations of network culture.

The digital panopticon is interpreted as a challenge to moral autonomy and human dignity, insofar as orientation toward the imagined gaze of the Other gradually displaces the center of practical reason from the internal moral law to external structures of evaluation. It is concluded that philosophical reflection on digital control constitutes a necessary precondition for a critical engagement with digital reality and for the preservation of the humanistic foundations of contemporary culture.

*Key words:* digital panopticon, social control, visibility, communication, self-censorship, autonomy, subjectivity, digital culture.

The relevance of this study is determined by profound transformations of social control under conditions of digitalization, in which surveillance acquires a networked, decentralized, and permanent character and becomes integrated into everyday communicative practices. Digital media and platforms form an environment of constant visibility in which self-presentation



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becomes a necessary condition of social presence and participation in networked communities. Under these conditions, control is realized through internal mechanisms of self-regulation that affect speech, behavior, and modes of constructing one's self-image. Despite a substantial body of research devoted to the technical, social, and legal aspects of digital surveillance, philosophical reflection on the normative foundations of self-presentation within the context of the digital panopticon requires further development. This necessitates an analysis of digital control as a form of power that directly affects the autonomy, dignity, and moral responsibility of the contemporary subject.

In contemporary social-philosophical and ethical thought, the problem of digital control and surveillance occupies a central position. Digital networks are considered as environments that combine practices of external control with mechanisms of internal self-regulation. Research on the problem of social identity demonstrates that the system and principles of its formation possess a complex topological structure that changes under the influence of active social space. In particular, A. Artemenko substantiates the concept of "topos" as an attribute of the networked organization of social relations, which makes it possible to analyze dynamic interrelations between actors and actants and to model processes of self-presentation under conditions of permanent networked visibility [1, p. 34]. The topological approach allows digital networks to be conceptualized as specific social configurations within which the individual realizes the right to construct a self-image, maintains reputation, and regulates the publicity of personal actions.

Special attention in contemporary research is devoted to the role of media and digital communication in the reproduction and legitimation of surveillance practices. The study by I. Kovalenko, Y. Meliakova, and E. Kalnytskyi demonstrates that digital media actively participate in the formation of regimes of visibility, social sorting, and the management of mobility in networked society, creating conditions for constant observation and symbolic evaluation of social actions [3, p. 45]. Scholars emphasize that surveillance practices under conditions of digitalization extend beyond classical disciplinary models and are transformed into complex networked regimes of governing behavior, communication, and mobility. Within this framework, the evolution of the panoptic model from institutionally localized forms of surveillance to post-panoptic regimes of control, including the society of control, the synopticon, and the banopticon, has been analyzed. The role of digital media in shaping contemporary practices of surveillance and datafication, as well as their influence on the organization of the cultural and communicative space of contemporary society, has been demonstrated [4, p. 221].

An important direction of research involves the ethical and philosophical-legal analysis of digital surveillance. K. Macnish provides a systematic examination of moral and legal issues related to state and corporate monitoring, digital data collection, and technologies of automated control. The author highlights questions concerning the limits of privacy, security, and justice under conditions of expanding surveillance technologies and shows that digital control has become a structural element of contemporary information society [2, p. 86].

A related field of inquiry concerns the phenomenon of the "right to disconnect" as a philosophical and legal response to post-panoptic forms of labor organization. In the work by S. Gutsu, it is shown that digital communications ensure the permanent availability of workers, contribute to the blurring of boundaries between working and private time, and reinforce institutional mechanisms of continuous control within networked society [5, p. 88].

Thus, the problem of digital surveillance and its impact on social practices, media communication, and self-presentation has been conceptually articulated and is actively studied. At the same time, the relevance of the present research is determined by the need for further philosophical analysis of the internal mechanisms of self-control and self-regulation that emerge

under the conditions of the digital panopticon and directly affect the normative foundations of self-presentation of the contemporary subject.

The aim of this article is to provide a philosophical analysis of the digital panopticon as a contemporary form of power in the era of networked dependence and to identify the transformations of subjectivity that arise from the combination of permanent visibility, self-control, and the fear of social exclusion. In order to achieve this aim, the article undertakes a conceptual rethinking of the classical panoptic model within the context of digital culture, examines the mechanisms through which surveillance is internalized and their influence on modes of self-expression, and outlines the normative tension between personal authenticity and the performative logic of the networked environment.

The idea of control over the human being has deep philosophical roots, which makes it possible to interpret contemporary digital surveillance not as a contingent product of technological development, but as a subsequent stage in the long-term transformation of forms of power [6, p. 549]. One of the key conceptual sources for such an interpretation is the panopticon project proposed by Jeremy Bentham in the eighteenth century. Initially conceived as a rational architectural model of a prison, the panopticon also proved to be a powerful metaphor of power that operates not through direct coercion but through the very possibility of constant observation. Its effectiveness was grounded in a specific psychological mechanism: prisoners could not know whether they were being observed at a given moment, yet they were compelled to behave as if surveillance were continuous. It was precisely this uncertainty that transformed external control into internal self-control.

In the twentieth century, Michel Foucault developed the panoptic idea within his concept of disciplinary society, interpreting the panopticon no longer as a discrete institution but as a universal principle of the organization of social space. According to Foucault, the logic of panoptic surveillance permeates diverse social practices and institutions, shaping a specific type of power, namely disciplinary power, which operates not through overt repression but through the gradual internalization of norms and rules [7, p. 36]. Within this model, the subject begins to regulate their own behavior by relating it to the anticipated gaze of the Other. In the digital era, this mechanism undergoes further expansion: algorithms, platforms, and monitoring systems appear as a new “panoptic tower”, deprived of material form yet capable of generating a persistent sense of uninterrupted visibility. The digital environment thus intensifies tendencies toward self-observation and self-discipline, transforming control into an immanent component of the subject’s everyday experience.

In contemporary social and organizational practices, the classical image of the panopticon undergoes a significant transformation. The discussion no longer concerns a rigidly hierarchical model of disciplinary surveillance, but rather multiple, decentralized forms of observation that are described in scholarly literature as the “neopanopticon”, the “post-panopticon” [3, p. 48], the “digital” or even the “portable panopticon” [8, p. 207]. These concepts register a shift from direct control to more subtle mechanisms of power that operate through involvement, participation, and the symbolic integration of the subject into social space. In such systems, visibility is no longer imposed exclusively from outside, but gradually becomes a desired and even necessary condition of social existence.

A defining feature of these new forms of panoptic organization is their appeal to notions of community, trust, and emotional proximity. Social structures that declare horizontality and collectivity encourage individuals to conceive of themselves as part of a “team” or a “community” often employing the metaphor of a “family” [9; 10]. Within this discourse, loyalty, openness, and constant presence acquire the status of morally approved qualities, while distance or silence may

be perceived as signs of alienation. Visibility ensured by digital means of communication thus begins to perform not only a function of control, but also a function of symbolic recognition, shaping a sense of identity and belonging to a particular collective whole.

Within this logic, the panoptic principle undergoes a fundamental inversion. Unlike the classical disciplinary panopticon described by Foucault, in which individuals were spatially isolated and deprived of direct interaction, the digital panopticon is grounded in intensive communication and continuous self-presentation. Subjects not only refrain from avoiding visibility but actively seek it, striving to confirm their involvement and significance within shared space [11, p. 56]. Consequently, control is increasingly exercised not through silence and enclosure, but through excessive openness and voluntary self-disclosure. Digital visibility becomes a form of symbolic capital, and the aspiration to be noticed emerges as a key factor of self-discipline.

Within the transformed space of the digital panopticon, a phenomenon may be identified that can be described as a form of “voluntary digital confinement”. Its paradox lies in the fact that the subject not only does not resist constant visibility but often actively reproduces and sustains it. This form of subordination does not rest solely on external coercion; it is rooted in deeper existential structures of human existence associated with the need for recognition, belonging, and the affirmation of one’s own significance. In the digital environment, to be visible means to be present within the symbolic space of the community, whereas invisibility is increasingly perceived as a form of social non-being [12, p. 699].

In this context, fear emerges not as a direct reaction to sanctions, but as a fundamental experience of possible exclusion from the horizon of shared meaning. Invisibility here signifies more than the absence of attention; it entails the loss of a symbolic connection with the Other, which places the very identity of the subject at risk. Digital visibility, by contrast, acquires the status of an existential guarantee: through constant presence, responsiveness, participation, and self-presentation, the individual affirms themselves as part of a collective space. For this reason, the aspiration to visibility often assumes the character of an almost ontological necessity rather than a rational choice, functioning as a way of preserving the sense of one’s own existence in a world increasingly organized through digital forms of interaction.

Under these conditions, panoptic control operates not as external surveillance but as an internally accepted norm of being. The subject assumes the obligation to remain accessible, present, and recognizable, internalizing the anticipated gaze of the Other. Continuous digital presence becomes a practice of self-affirmation and, at the same time, a form of self-discipline that progressively narrows the space for spontaneity and silence. Within this configuration, freedom is no longer opposed to control but coexists with it in a tense and contradictory unity: the subject freely chooses what is structurally given as necessary. This constitutes the key feature of the digital panopticon, which holds the individual not behind the bars of coercion, but within a field of voluntarily sustained visibility.

The constant presence of a gaze, whether real or imagined, significantly alters the very structure of utterance in digital space. Awareness of potential observation compels the subject to align their words in advance with a horizon of possible interpretations, expectations, and reactions. In such an environment, speech ceases to function as an immediate expression of thought and increasingly takes the form of a calibrated practice aimed at minimizing risks. Self-censorship in this sense is neither an exceptional nor a marginal strategy, but appears as a structural element of digital communication, inseparable from the logic of panoptic visibility.

This process should be understood not merely as a restriction of freedom of expression, but as a deeper transformation of the discursive field itself. The subject finds themselves in

a condition of constant balancing between the aspiration to authentic self-expression and the need to conform to the implicit norms of the community shaped by visibility and evaluation. Utterance becomes a performative act in which each word functions as an element of a constructed image intended to confirm belonging, loyalty, or the perceived safety of the speaker. Under such conditions, speech increasingly ceases to serve as a space of open meaning-making and more frequently becomes an instrument of self-regulation and self-preservation.

Paradoxically, the digital environment, which proclaims openness and a plurality of voices, simultaneously generates a tendency toward the unification of utterances. Fear of being misunderstood, misinterpreted, or symbolically excluded encourages the avoidance of controversial topics and radical positions. As a result, a specific digital discourse is formed in which the diversity of opinions is suppressed not through direct prohibition, but through preventive self-control. It is precisely this mechanism that constitutes one of the most significant features of the contemporary panoptic effect: power operates not through silence imposed from the outside, but through the internal limitation of what is possible.

Within this configuration, performativity turns into a strategy of survival. The subject learns to speak in a way that allows them to remain visible while not appearing excessively different; to be present within the discourse without transgressing its implicit boundaries. Digital identity thus emerges as a carefully regulated project in which each utterance functions as part of a broader strategy of self-presentation. As a consequence, the foundations of open dialogue as a space of risk, disagreement, and the generation of new meaning are undermined. The digital panopticon, while preserving an external multiplicity of voices, effectively narrows the field of possible speech, transforming freedom of expression into a conditional and constrained practice.

From the perspective of classical philosophical ethics, the situation of the digital panopticon appears particularly problematic in light of the Kantian understanding of autonomy. For Immanuel Kant, autonomy denotes the capacity of a rational subject to act in accordance with laws that they give to themselves on the basis of practical reason. It is not an empirical freedom to choose among alternatives, but a normative capacity to be the source of one's own moral action. For this reason, autonomy in the Kantian tradition is inseparable from human dignity, which derives from the individual's status as an end in itself rather than as a means to external purposes.

In this context, digital control reveals a deep ethical tension. The panoptic logic permeating the digital environment creates conditions in which the subject's behavior is increasingly determined by the anticipated gaze of the Other rather than by autonomous moral judgment. Even in the absence of direct coercion, the subject orients themselves toward expected reactions, ratings, evaluations, and symbolic sanctions, which gradually displaces the center of moral reflection from the internal law of reason to external structures of visibility. In such a situation, autonomy does not disappear abruptly, but is progressively eroded, transforming into a formal capacity to choose within already predefined frameworks [13, p. 281].

Kant's categorical imperative, which requires treating every person as an end and never merely as a means, provides a critical standpoint from which to assess this transformation. The digital panopticon, oriented toward prediction, optimization, and the management of behavior, tends to reduce the subject to a functional element within a broader system. Human action is no longer considered within the horizon of moral responsibility, but rather as a set of reactions that can be anticipated, adjusted, or directed. Under such conditions, the individual risks losing the status of a moral author of their own actions, becoming instead a carrier of behavioral patterns subject to continual correction.

Thus, Kantian ethics makes it possible to reveal a non-obvious dimension of digital control: its capacity to undermine the very foundations of moral subjectivity. What is at stake is not merely the restriction of external freedom, but the transformation of the inner space of practical reason in which responsible decision-making is constituted. In this sense, the digital panopticon poses a challenge not only to particular practices of interaction, but also to fundamental conceptions of human dignity, autonomy, and moral self-legislation.

The philosophical trajectory extending from Bentham's project through Foucault's analytics of power to Kant's normative ethics enables a comprehensive understanding of digital control as a specific form of contemporary social being. From this perspective, the digital panopticon appears not simply as a set of technical instruments or organizational practices, but as a deep structural condition that shapes the way human beings understand themselves in the world. It produces a particular type of subjectivity for which visibility, evaluability, and constant presence become the basic conditions of social existence.

Whereas in the classical panopticon control was spatially localized and clearly tied to institutions, in the digital environment it acquires a diffuse character. Surveillance no longer has a single center; the gaze becomes multiple and simultaneously anonymous. It is precisely this decentralization that intensifies the panoptic effect: the subject cannot identify the source of observation and is therefore compelled to continually relate their behavior to an imagined horizon of evaluation. As a result, control becomes immanent to the very process of social interaction rather than an external intervention imposed upon it.

In anthropological terms, this entails a shift in emphasis from action to self-observation, from being to representation. The individual increasingly experiences themselves not as an autonomous agent, but as an object of a potential gaze that must be properly presented and inscribed within existing symbolic schemes. This transformation affects not only behavior, but also inner experience: silence, distance, and ambiguity lose their legitimacy, giving way to the demand for the constant demonstration of presence. In this sense, the digital panopticon alters the very ontology of social being, making visibility a condition of existence. In corporate environments, for example, this manifests itself in the avoidance of any criticism of the employer and in the restriction of open discussion of workplace problems, which leads to a weakening of communicative culture and complicates the implementation of constructive organizational practices. As J. Habermas notes, "the public sphere functions only insofar as communication is free from external and internal coercion" [14, p. 82].

Thus, contemporary practices of digital control should be regarded as a challenge to fundamental philosophical conceptions of freedom, autonomy, and human dignity. They raise not only the question of the permissible limits of surveillance, but also the question of the extent to which an individual retains the capacity to remain the subject of their own life under conditions of constant visibility. As digital technologies become embedded in everyday life, they reproduce and at the same time radicalize earlier forms of disciplinary power, endowing them with a new form, less perceptible, yet more pervasive.

Accordingly, the philosophical analysis conducted here leads to the conclusion that digital surveillance in contemporary society cannot be reduced to a set of technical practices of observation, but should be understood as a structural principle of the organization of social being. In its transformed form, the panopticon loses spatial localization and institutional determinacy, becoming diffuse and all-encompassing, embedded in the very fabric of digital interaction. Control is increasingly exercised not through external coercion, but through internally accepted norms of visibility, availability, and self-regulation.

The digital panopticon produces a specific type of subjectivity for which the pursuit of constant presence and recognition becomes an existential necessity. Under such conditions, voluntary participation in practices of self-observation is combined with a gradual narrowing of the space for spontaneity, silence, and authentic self-expression. Self-censorship and the performativity of speech emerge not as individual deviations, but as systemic consequences of panoptic logic, which reshapes the very structure of discourse by muting the possibility of risk, dissent, and the creation of new meaning.

It is important to note that, from the perspective of Kantian ethics, the digital panopticon poses a threat not only to external freedom of action, but also to the internal foundations of moral autonomy. Orientation toward the imagined gaze of the Other and toward anticipated reactions gradually displaces the center of practical reason, undermining the subject's capacity to be the source of their own moral law. In this sense, digital control constitutes a challenge to the very idea of human dignity, insofar as it is grounded in autonomy.

Therefore, the philosophical reflection on the digital panopticon is a necessary condition for a critical engagement with digital reality. It makes it possible to discern, behind the apparent neutrality of technologies, their deeper normative force and to delineate the boundaries beyond which digital visibility ceases to function as a means of communication and becomes a form of subordination. Awareness of these processes is a necessary prerequisite for a critical attitude toward digital practices and for the development of a humanistically oriented approach to human interaction with the networked environment.

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## **ЦИФРОВИЙ ПАНОПТИКУМ ЯК ПРОСТІР САМОПРЕЗЕНТАЦІЇ В УМОВАХ МЕРЕЖЕВОЇ ЗАЛЕЖНОСТІ**

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Статтю присвячено філософському осмисленню феномену цифрового паноптикуму як специфічної форми сучасної влади, що трансформує структури суб'єктивності, мовлення та соціальної взаємодії в умовах цифрової культури. Спираючись на концептуальну спадщину Джереми Бентама, Мішеля Фуко та нормативну етику Іммануїла Канта, проаналізовано, яким чином логіка паноптичного нагляду зазнає радикальної трансформації в цифровому середовищі, втрачаючи просторову локалізацію та інституційну визначеність і водночас набуваючи всеосяжного, дифузного характеру.

У центрі уваги перебуває вплив цифрового контролю на практики самоспостереження, самопрезентації та мовлення. Показано, що цифрова видимість постає як онтологічна умова соціального буття, за якої присутність у спільному просторі дедалі більше залежить від постійної демонстрації себе. За цих умов формується феномен «добровільного цифрового ув'язнення», у межах якого суб'єкт сам інтеріоризує вимогу видимості та доступності, сприймаючи їх як необхідну умову визнання й належності.

Окрему увагу приділено трансформації мовлення в умовах цифрового паноптикуму. Проаналізовано, яким чином перманентна видимість і усвідомлення потенційного спостереження впливають на характер комунікації, сприяючи розвитку самоцензури та стандартизації висловлювань. Цифровий дискурс постає як простір перформативної саморегуляції, у якому індивідуальні позиції коригуються відповідно до неявних норм прийнятності та очікувань мережевої культури.

Цифровий паноптикум розглядається як виклик моральній автономії та гідності людини, оскільки орієнтація на уявний погляд Іншого поступово зміщує центр практичного розуму з внутрішнього морального закону на зовнішні структури оцінювання. Зроблено висновок, що філософське осмислення цифрового контролю є необхідною передумовою критичного ставлення до цифрової реальності та збереження гуманістичних засад сучасної культури.

*Ключові слова:* цифровий паноптикум, соціальний контроль, видимість, комунікація, самоцензура, автономія, суб'єктність, цифрова культура.

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