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PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION AND VALUE RATIONALITY IN THE DIGITAL SOCIETY: TOWARD AN AXIOLOGICAL MODEL OF CRITICAL THINKING

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ABSTRACT

The article analyses philosophical reflection, value rationality and critical thinking under the conditions of digital society. Using a philosophical-axiological approach, it examines how algorithmic culture transforms self-understanding, social communication, moral choice and educational practice. The study argues that critical thinking should not be reduced to information verification; it should be understood as a value-oriented model that integrates ontological self-understanding, communicative responsibility and normative autonomy. The proposed model offers a conceptual basis for human-centred education and ethical digital citizenship.

Keywords: philosophical reflection, value rationality, digital society, critical thinking, axiology, algorithmic culture, ethics.

Annotatsiya

Maqolada raqamli jamiyat sharoitida falsafiy refleksiya, qadriyatli ratsionallik va tanqidiy tafakkur muammolari tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot algoritmik madaniyat insonning o‘zini anglash, ijtimoiy muloqot, axloqiy tanlov va ta’lim jarayonlariga qanday ta’sir ko‘rsatishini falsafiy-aksiologik yondashuv asosida ochib beradi. Natijada tanqidiy tafakkurni faqat informatsiyani tekshirish ko‘nikmasi emas, balki ontologik o‘zlik, kommunikativ mas’uliyat va normativ avtonomiyani birlashtiruvchi qadriyatli model sifatida talqin qilish zarurligi asoslanadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: falsafiy refleksiya, qadriyatli ratsionallik, raqamli jamiyat, tanqidiy tafakkur, aksiologiya, algoritmik madaniyat, axloq.

Аннотация

В статье анализируются философская рефлексия, ценностная рациональность и критическое мышление в условиях цифрового общества. На основе философско-аксиологического подхода раскрывается влияние алгоритмической культуры на самопонимание человека, социальную коммуникацию, моральный выбор и образовательные процессы. Обосновывается необходимость понимать критическое мышление не только как навык проверки информации, но и как ценностную модель, объединяющую онтологическое самопонимание, коммуникативную ответственность и нормативную автономию.

Ключевые слова: философская рефлексия, ценностная рациональность, цифровое общество, критическое мышление, аксиология, алгоритмическая культура, этика.

INTRODUCTION

Digital society has changed not only the speed of communication but also the conditions under which human beings understand themselves, evaluate values and participate in public life. The central philosophical problem is therefore deeper than the usual question of whether digital technologies are useful or harmful. Technologies are always ambivalent: a book may enlighten or deceive, a road may connect or invade, a platform may educate or manipulate. The decisive issue is the form of rationality through which people interpret and govern their technological world. In contemporary culture, algorithmic systems increasingly organise attention, rank visibility, recommend choices, predict behaviour, measure performance and mediate social recognition. This means that the individual no longer encounters the world as a neutral field of experience; the world is filtered, sequenced and often monetised through hidden architectures of selection. Under such conditions, philosophical reflection becomes a practical necessity, not an academic luxury. Reflection is the capacity to step back from immediate stimuli, ask what is being presupposed, determine which values are at stake, and decide whether a given practice is worthy of human dignity. The concept of value rationality is especially important here. Instrumental rationality asks how to achieve a chosen goal efficiently; value rationality asks whether the goal itself is justified, humane and consistent with a meaningful form of life. Digital culture tends to intensify instrumental rationality because it loves metrics, speed, optimisation and scale. These categories are not evil; without them modern institutions would collapse into fog. Yet when they become the only measure of reason, human life is reduced to performance indicators, preferences, clicks, scores and behavioural predictions. Philosophy resists this reduction by reminding society that the human being is not merely a data point with shoes. The present article studies philosophical reflection and value rationality as conditions for critical thinking in digital society. Its object is the transformation of human reasoning and value-orientation in algorithmically mediated culture; its subject is the axiological structure of critical thinking as a philosophical competence. The aim is to develop an axiological model that can be used in philosophical education, civic culture and ethical analysis of digital practices. The research proceeds from the thesis that critical thinking should not be limited to the detection of false information, although that skill is indispensable. A more complete model must include ontological self-understanding, because the digital subject needs to ask who he or she becomes under the pressure of constant visibility and comparison; communicative responsibility, because digital speech affects others and shapes public reality; and normative autonomy, because freedom in digital society is not the absence of constraints but the ability to evaluate and resist manipulative structures. The scientific novelty of the study lies in connecting classical philosophical traditions of self-knowledge, Kantian autonomy, Weberian value rationality, Habermasian communicative reason and contemporary philosophy of information into a single model of critical thinking. This model is relevant for teachers of philosophy because students often live inside digital systems before they have acquired the concepts needed to judge them. They can operate devices faster than many adults can find the volume button, but operational skill is not the same as wisdom. A society that confuses access to information with formation of judgement will produce well-connected but poorly oriented individuals. The article therefore

argues for a philosophical pedagogy of digital maturity, where critical thinking is cultivated as a disciplined relation between truth, value, responsibility and freedom.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodological framework of the study is philosophical and interdisciplinary, combining axiological analysis, hermeneutic interpretation, phenomenological description, comparative conceptual reconstruction and normative modelling. Axiological analysis is used to clarify the role of values in digital practices. Instead of asking only whether a technology functions, the research asks what kind of human relation it privileges: autonomy or dependence, dialogue or manipulation, depth or distraction, dignity or commodification. Hermeneutic interpretation is used because digital culture is not merely a set of devices; it is a symbolic environment filled with signs, narratives, expectations and social meanings. A social network, for example, is simultaneously a technical infrastructure, an economic model, a space of self-presentation, a field of moral conflict and a theatre of recognition. Phenomenological description is applied to the lived experience of the digital subject: constant notification, fragmented attention, algorithmic comparison, public self-curation, acceleration of response and the gradual weakening of silence as a condition of thought. Comparative conceptual reconstruction is used to connect classical and modern philosophical sources. From Socratic self-examination the study takes the idea that an unexamined life is intellectually and morally insufficient; from Aristotle it takes the relation between practical wisdom and the good life; from Kant it takes autonomy as self-legislation of reason; from Weber it takes the distinction between instrumental and value rationality; from Habermas it takes communicative rationality and the demand that validity claims be open to argument; from contemporary information ethics it takes the idea that informational environments shape moral agency. Normative modelling then synthesises these elements into a structured axiological model of critical thinking. The study does not conduct a survey or statistical experiment, because its aim is not to measure attitudes but to clarify the philosophical conditions that make digital critical thinking possible. This does not reduce its scientific value. Theoretical research in philosophy operates by analysing concepts, exposing presuppositions, reconstructing arguments and proposing normative frameworks that can guide empirical inquiry and educational design. The analysis follows five stages. First, it defines digital society as a socio-cultural order in which information flows, algorithmic selection and datafication influence social relations and self-understanding. Second, it distinguishes instrumental rationality from value rationality and shows why digital environments intensify the former while often obscuring the latter. Third, it reconstructs critical thinking as a broader philosophical competence rather than a narrow checklist for identifying fake news. Fourth, it formulates the three dimensions of the proposed model: ontological self-understanding, communicative responsibility and normative autonomy. Fifth, it discusses educational implications for philosophy teaching, especially in higher education contexts where students must be prepared for professional and civic life in algorithmically mediated institutions. The reliability of the argument is supported by internal coherence, conceptual adequacy and intertextual grounding in established philosophical traditions. The limitation of the research is that it remains primarily theoretical; however, its model can later be operationalised in curriculum design, student assessment, digital literacy

programmes and qualitative empirical studies. In this sense, the article offers a philosophical foundation rather than a finished administrative manual, and that is proper: before measuring maturity, one should know what maturity means.

RESULTS

The first result of the research is the conceptual distinction between information competence and philosophical critical thinking. Information competence includes the ability to search, compare sources, check facts and identify unreliable content. These skills are necessary, but they remain insufficient if the subject cannot ask why certain information matters, what values it serves, how it shapes identity, and whether the social practice built around it is ethically defensible. A person may verify a fact accurately and still use it cruelly, superficially or manipulatively. Therefore, philosophical critical thinking must include a value dimension. The second result is the definition of digital value rationality as the capacity to evaluate technological means and social goals in relation to human dignity, freedom, truthfulness, justice and meaningful coexistence. This concept differs from moral panic about technology. It does not claim that digital systems are inherently corrupting; rather, it claims that they require reflective governance because their default logic often privileges speed, visibility, engagement and prediction over wisdom, patience, dialogue and autonomy. The third result is the proposed axiological model of critical thinking. Its first dimension is ontological self-understanding. This dimension concerns the question of who the digital subject becomes when selfhood is continuously mediated by profiles, rankings, reactions and curated images. The model argues that critical thinking begins with the capacity to distinguish the self from its digital performance. In traditional philosophy, self-knowledge was a moral and epistemic task; in digital culture it becomes also a task of resisting reduction to metrics. The second dimension is communicative responsibility. Digital communication is not weightless, even when it appears casual. A post, comment, repost, image or recommendation may strengthen dialogue, humiliate a person, spread a falsehood, mobilise solidarity or intensify hostility. Communicative responsibility means that speech should be evaluated not only by the speaker's intention but also by foreseeable effects within a networked public sphere. The third dimension is normative autonomy. Autonomy does not mean that individuals invent values arbitrarily; it means that they can reflectively endorse or reject norms, pressures and recommendations. In digital society autonomy requires awareness of persuasive design, algorithmic nudging, attention capture and data-based profiling. A subject who merely follows recommendations while believing every choice to be spontaneous is not fully autonomous. The fourth result is the identification of three threats to philosophical critical thinking: acceleration, fragmentation and commodification. Acceleration reduces the time available for reflection; fragmentation breaks experience into disconnected impressions; commodification turns attention and identity into economic resources. These threats do not abolish freedom, but they make freedom more demanding. The fifth result is the educational implication that philosophy teaching should be reoriented toward digital self-interpretation. Courses in logic, ethics, epistemology and social philosophy should include analysis of algorithmic mediation, platform communication, digital identity, artificial intelligence and information ethics. This does not mean turning philosophy into computer science; it means bringing philosophical

concepts to the places where students actually live. The sixth result is the formulation of a practical criterion: a digitally mature thinker is one who can slow down interpretation, reconstruct assumptions, evaluate values, communicate responsibly and preserve autonomy under conditions of technological pressure. This criterion has institutional relevance because universities increasingly use digital platforms, analytics and automated tools. If education adopts the logic of measurement without philosophical reflection, it risks producing compliance rather than understanding. If it integrates value rationality, it can form graduates capable of using technology without being used by it.

DISCUSSION

The proposed model has significant implications for contemporary philosophy and education. First, it restores the public role of philosophy in an age when practical disciplines often demand immediate utility. Philosophy is useful precisely because it refuses to reduce usefulness to immediate efficiency. Digital society is full of efficient procedures whose purposes are unclear or ethically questionable. A recommender system can efficiently maximise engagement by promoting emotionally provocative content; a workplace platform can efficiently monitor employees while eroding trust; an educational dashboard can efficiently quantify student activity while missing intellectual growth. In such cases the philosophical question is not whether the system works, but what kind of life its working normalises. Second, the model deepens the concept of critical thinking. Many educational documents present critical thinking as a transferable skill, almost like a mental screwdriver. The metaphor is too small. Critical thinking is not only a tool used by an unchanged subject; it is a mode of forming the subject. When students learn to question assumptions, analyse values and accept responsibility for judgement, they become different kinds of persons. Third, the model helps avoid two extreme positions in debates about digital technology. The first extreme is technological determinism, which assumes that technology inevitably dictates social development. The second is naive voluntarism, which assumes that individuals can simply choose to ignore technological structures. A philosophical-axiological approach recognises that digital systems shape possibilities but do not eliminate agency. Human freedom survives as reflective and institutional practice, not as a romantic fantasy of complete independence. Fourth, the discussion of ontological self-understanding is especially relevant for young people. Digital identity is often built through visibility, comparison and reaction. The danger is not only narcissism, a word used too lazily, but ontological externalisation: the self begins to seek confirmation primarily from metrics of attention. Philosophy can counter this by teaching that personhood is deeper than display and that dignity does not depend on numerical approval. Fifth, communicative responsibility is central for democratic culture. Public discourse in digital environments is vulnerable to speed, outrage and simplification. Habermasian ideals of rational communication may seem demanding, even utopian, but they remain necessary as regulative norms. Without such norms, the public sphere becomes a competition of impulses. A society cannot deliberate well if its citizens can only react. Sixth, normative autonomy must be connected with institutional design. It is unfair to demand perfect self-control from individuals while surrounding them with systems engineered to capture attention. Philosophical education should therefore be paired with ethical design, regulatory frameworks

and institutional responsibility. UNESCO, OECD, NIST and the European Union have all developed principles or frameworks that emphasise human-centred, trustworthy and accountable AI, and their philosophical significance lies in recognising that digital systems must be governed by values rather than left to market momentum alone. Seventh, the model has local relevance for higher education in Uzbekistan and Central Asia. The rapid expansion of digital learning, online resources and AI-assisted writing creates new opportunities but also new risks for academic culture. Philosophy teachers can contribute by forming students who understand not merely how to obtain information but how to justify, interpret and ethically use it. This is important for scientific work as well: research without value rationality can become a production of texts; research with reflection becomes a search for truth and social meaning. Finally, the model suggests that digital maturity requires rhythm. Human thought needs intervals: time for reading, silence, disagreement, reconsideration and dialogue. The machine can process without pause; the human being must sometimes pause in order to remain human. That is not inefficiency; it is civilisation breathing.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The practical implications of the proposed axiological model concern the content, methods and institutional aims of philosophical education. The first recommendation is to include digital self-understanding as a legitimate topic of philosophy courses. Students should not only learn what Plato, Aristotle, Kant or Habermas said in historical context; they should also learn how these concepts illuminate their own experience of platforms, algorithms, profiles and mediated recognition. For example, Socratic self-examination can be connected with the question of whether a person's online identity expresses conviction or merely adapts to expected approval. Kantian autonomy can be connected with the problem of recommendation systems and persuasive design. Habermasian communication can be connected with the quality of discussion in networked public spaces. Such connections do not vulgarise philosophy; they restore its living function. The second recommendation is to move from abstract moral instruction to structured reflective tasks. Students can be asked to analyse a digital conflict, reconstruct the values involved, identify hidden assumptions, distinguish factual claims from evaluative claims, and propose a responsible response. This method develops judgement more effectively than memorising definitions. The third recommendation is to teach slowness as an intellectual discipline. In a fast environment, slowness is not laziness; it is a method of protecting thought from automatic reaction. Exercises may include delayed response, comparative reading of sources, reflective journals on digital habits, and classroom dialogue in which students must reformulate an opponent's argument before criticising it. The fourth recommendation concerns academic integrity. The expansion of AI-assisted writing requires a shift from purely punitive approaches to formative assessment of authorship. A student should be able to explain the conceptual structure of a submitted work, defend its argument, identify its sources and revise it under criticism. This does not excuse dishonest practice, but it recognises that genuine authorship is demonstrated by understanding, not only by the absence of machine assistance. The fifth recommendation concerns institutional culture. Universities should be cautious when adopting analytics that reduce learning to visible activity. Attendance, clicks, uploads and scores may provide useful indicators, but they do not exhaust

education. Philosophical education must defend invisible intellectual processes: hesitation, doubt, concentration, internal dialogue and slow maturation of judgement. The sixth recommendation is civic. Digital citizenship programmes should include axiological reflection, not only technical security. People need to know how to protect passwords, but they also need to know how to protect dignity, dialogue and autonomy. The model developed in this article can therefore be used to design modules on digital ethics, media literacy, critical thinking and professional responsibility. It is especially relevant for future teachers, because they will educate students who encounter digital environments from early childhood. The teacher's task is not to frighten them away from technology, which would be both impossible and intellectually lazy, but to help them inhabit technology reflectively. From a research perspective, the model opens several future directions: qualitative studies of students' digital self-understanding, comparative analysis of philosophical curricula, evaluation of critical-thinking interventions, and normative analysis of AI use in academic assessment. The broader practical conclusion is clear: digital society does not suffer from a shortage of information; it suffers from a shortage of oriented judgement. Philosophy cannot solve this alone, but without philosophy the solution becomes technically clever and spiritually thin.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The limitations of the study are connected with the fact that it develops a normative model rather than a quantitative measurement instrument. It does not provide survey data on students' digital habits, nor does it analyse the architecture of a particular platform. This limitation should be stated directly because philosophical research becomes stronger, not weaker, when it knows its borders. The model clarifies what should be investigated and taught; later studies can determine how these dimensions appear in concrete groups, institutions and national contexts. Future research may proceed in five directions. First, pedagogical researchers can design a curriculum based on ontological self-understanding, communicative responsibility and normative autonomy, then assess how it influences students' reasoning and digital behaviour. Second, philosophers of education can compare this model with existing frameworks of media literacy and determine what philosophy adds that technical literacy lacks. Third, ethics researchers can examine how value rationality functions in professional domains such as journalism, public administration, medicine and engineering, where digital systems increasingly support decisions. Fourth, cultural researchers can study how local traditions of respect, community, scholarship and moral education interact with global digital culture. Fifth, theorists of artificial intelligence can investigate whether current principles of transparency and accountability are sufficiently connected with the formation of human judgement. These directions are important because digital maturity cannot be imported as software; it must be formed through institutions, language, habits and values. The model also requires caution. Axiological language can become empty if it is reduced to slogans. Words such as dignity, autonomy and responsibility must be tied to practices: how teachers assess work, how platforms design interaction, how institutions justify decisions and how individuals respond to disagreement. Future research should therefore test the model against real educational and civic situations. The strongest philosophical concept is the one that survives contact with ordinary life without becoming ordinary. A separate line of future

inquiry should examine teacher preparation, because the philosophical maturity of students depends strongly on the interpretive culture of the classroom. If teachers themselves treat digital tools either with fear or with uncritical admiration, students will inherit the same imbalance. Therefore, professional development for philosophy teachers should include digital ethics, argument analysis of online discourse, AI-assisted authorship, and methods for discussing morally difficult technological cases without turning the classroom into a battlefield of opinions. Philosophy works best when disagreement becomes disciplined rather than decorative. This point is methodologically important, because digital education should not merely add new topics to an old syllabus; it should renew the intellectual habits through which students learn to listen, doubt, justify and revise.

CONCLUSION

The article has examined philosophical reflection and value rationality as necessary foundations of critical thinking in digital society. Its main conclusion is that critical thinking must be understood as an axiological competence, not merely as an information-processing skill. The proposed model integrates three dimensions: ontological self-understanding, communicative responsibility and normative autonomy. Ontological self-understanding protects the person from reduction to digital performance and measurable visibility. Communicative responsibility reminds the subject that online speech has real moral and social consequences. Normative autonomy enables individuals and institutions to evaluate technological recommendations, persuasive designs and algorithmic structures in relation to human values. The theoretical significance of the study lies in connecting classical philosophical themes with contemporary digital challenges. Socratic self-examination, Aristotelian practical wisdom, Kantian autonomy, Weberian value rationality, Habermasian communication and information ethics all remain relevant, but they must be interpreted within the lived realities of algorithmic culture. The practical significance lies in its implications for philosophical education. Universities should not teach philosophy as a decorative history of ideas; they should teach it as a discipline of reflective judgement in conditions where information is abundant and wisdom is scarce. Digital technologies will continue to develop, and refusing them is neither realistic nor desirable. The task is more demanding: to form people capable of using them critically, ethically and freely. In this sense, value rationality is not an optional moral supplement to technological progress; it is the condition under which progress deserves its name. A digital society without philosophical reflection may become faster, richer and more connected, but it will not necessarily become wiser. The future therefore depends not only on better algorithms but on better judgement. Philosophy cannot code every system, but it can ask whether the system serves a human world worth living in. That question remains stubbornly non-automatable, and perhaps that is good news.

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