

Being in the Digital World: A Heideggerian Perspective

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Abstract: *The rapid advancement of the digital age has dramatically reshaped various aspects of human existence. Drawing from Martin Heidegger's philosophical insights, this study explores the profound implications of digital technology on human life, particularly focusing on the concepts of enframing, alienation, authenticity, and the transformation of human relationships and temporality. Employing a qualitative, theoretical analysis, the study delves into Heidegger's philosophical constructs of "Dasein," "being-with-others," and "enframing" to interpret the contemporary digital experience. The analysis synthesizes insights from Heidegger's works with current digital phenomena, examining the impact of technology on human identity, relationships, and the perception of time. The study reveals that the digital age, while offering connectivity and efficiency, engenders a sense of alienation and challenges to authenticity. Digital interactions often lack the depth of face-to-face encounters, altering the nature of "being-with-others." The perpetual flow of digital information disrupts traditional temporal experiences, impacting the contemplative nature of "Dasein." Moreover, the construction of online identities poses questions about the authenticity of self in the virtual domain. The findings underscore the tension between the benefits and challenges of digital technology. While digital advancements facilitate unprecedented global connections, they also risk commodifying human experiences and relationships. The study highlights the need for critical engagement with technology, advocating for a mindful approach that fosters genuine human connection and preserves authenticity in the digital era.*

Keywords: *Alienation; Authenticity; Digital Age; Martin Heidegger; Technology Impact.*

A. Introduction

Revolutionizing the modalities of interaction, communication, and learning, thereby instigating significant shifts in social and cultural dynamics. This era of digitization has afforded individuals unprecedented access to a plethora of information and communication channels through diverse online platforms, including social media, websites, and a myriad of internet-based applications (Gohel, 2022; Yates & Rice, 2020). This paradigm shift marks a seminal transformation in human interaction; social engagements, once confined to the physical realm, are now extensively conducted in a virtual environment.

This global connectivity enables rapid and borderless exchanges of ideas, cultural insights, and experiences, fostering an interconnected global community (Yates & Rice, 2020; Feldstein, 2021).

Moreover, this digital revolution has radically transformed the landscape of education and knowledge acquisition. The expanded accessibility to online educational resources, electronic courses, and digital learning platforms has catalyzed a transition towards more adaptable and self-directed learning paradigms (Hidajat et al., 2023; Kashada et al., 2018). However, alongside these positive developments are emerging challenges, encompassing issues such as data privacy, digital divide, the potential for misinformation, and the erosion of self-identity concepts. The indiscriminate utilization of digital technologies has been implicated in fostering dependencies, such as social media addiction, and engendering a sense of alienation within the digital sphere. This phenomenon presents a paradoxical scenario where individuals, despite being physically integrated into their real-world environments, may experience a sense of marginalization or detachment in the digital realm.

Notably, this phenomenon of digital estrangement often exerts a more profound impact on personal well-being than conventional forms of loneliness. There exists a dichotomy between one's physical existence and digital persona, leading to a fragmentation of self-identity across these two realms. This dichotomy often leaves individuals grappling with the challenge of defining their authentic selves in an increasingly digitalized world (Dainow, 2016; Ahmad et al., 2021). Individuals may be physically present and engaged in their immediate environments, yet mentally and emotionally invested in their digital personas. This dual existence prompts a replication of self, where the virtual persona may overshadow the realities of the physical self. In the context of digital society, technology not only ushers in new realms of enjoyment and freedom but also offers an ephemeral refuge from the unresolved complexities of real life.

In the contemporary digital milieu, humanity encounters a multifaceted existence mediated through social media and various virtual platforms, culminating in a dominant paradigm of calculative thought and lifestyle. Drawing from Heidegger's philosophy, this phenomenon can be characterized as calculative thinking, a mode of cognition that prioritizes efficiency and utility over depth and authenticity (Haynes, 1975; Drianus, 2018). Digital technology fosters a form of thinking that is predominantly technical, often employing language that is superficial and devoid of profound self-reflection. The self that is projected and experienced in digital realms, such as social media, tends to be a superficial construct, potentially

masking underlying complexities, anxieties, and existential doubts behind an illusion of wisdom, happiness, and certainty.

Contrastingly, Heidegger posits that humans are fundamentally Dasein, beings that are not merely cognitive but fundamentally existential. Humans exist in a state of being 'thrown' into the world, a condition Heidegger describes as the most authentic of human experiences (Haynes, 1975; Drianus, 2018). For Dasein, the world is not just a backdrop but a fundamental aspect of existence, a concept Heidegger encapsulates in the term "In-der-Welt-Sein" or "Being-In-The-World" (Inwood, 2019; Dreyfus & Wrathall, 2007). The advent of technology has transitioned humanity from a primarily corporeal existence to what may be termed as Digi-sein, a state where human existence increasingly gravitates towards the digital sphere, facilitated by social media and various digital engagements (Wibowo, 2021; Purino, 2020; Drianus, 2018).

This shift has significant implications for human identity and existence. The fragmentation of identity and the proliferation of multiple forms of existence in the digital domain result in a distancing of humans from the essential meanings and realities of their existence. The outcome is a predictable alienation from the actuality of their lived experiences, an escape from the tangible realities of life, leading to a loss of authenticity and meaning. This study aims to employ Heidegger's philosophical framework to critically examine the impacts of digital technology on human existence. It seeks to reinterpret human experience in the world, reconceptualizing the notion of Dasein and exploring the potential of meditative thinking as an antidote to the overreliance on technology, thus offering a deeper understanding of human existence in the digital age.

Extensive scholarly work has been dedicated to exploring Heidegger's concept of existentialism, particularly his notion of human existence as Being-In-The-World. Alrafi and James (2017) conducted an insightful study on Heidegger's existentialism and the authenticity of Dasein. Their research posits that humans, as individuals, inherently hold the potential to evolve into authentic entities. This authenticity is characterized by a distinct uniqueness, setting each individual apart from others in both thought and behavior. Faishal's analysis indicates that contemporary society is experiencing a collective amnesia regarding its human essence. This forgetfulness is often attributed to external pressures such as economic or political forces, which momentarily distract individuals from their true self-awareness. Faishal underscores the criticality of self-reflection in rediscovering one's authenticity. Through comprehensive self-

understanding, an individual can autonomously navigate their existence in the world. Heidegger's framework posits that authenticity in an individual, or Dasein, is achieved when choices are made independently, free from external influences or coercion. Authenticity, thus, must be a manifestation of Dasein's innate self, untainted by external forces of pressure, manipulation, or incitement.

Sindung Cahyadi (2008) delved into the theme of human historicity as conceptualized by Martin Heidegger. In his comprehensive study, Cahyadi emphasizes that humans are entities that "exist-in-the-world," a state of being Heidegger describes as existence. He further elucidates that Heidegger's concept of the "world" is an expansion of Edmund Husserl's idea of the "life-world." In this context, the "world" comprises various "beings" and other forms of Dasein. Human existence, or Dasein, is defined by its presence and interaction within this world. Cahyadi explains that merely existing as beings within oneself does not constitute a world. Rather, it is the act of Dasein stepping outside its internal sphere to engage actively with the world that epitomizes true existence. When Dasein is overwhelmed by external beings, it experiences what Heidegger terms "Falling" (*verfallen*), a state of inauthenticity where humans become engulfed and dominated by the world. Cahyadi interprets this as a state where humans, influenced by externalities, lose their authentic existence, failing to confront and engage with others in the world. Such an existence, absorbed and dissolved into externalities, is deemed a spurious form of existence

B. Methods

This investigation is a qualitative study that employs a descriptive-analytical methodology. It incorporates a range of data collection and analytical methods, meticulously designed to explore and dissect individual experiences within the digital milieu. The methodological framework of this research is outlined as follows:

1. **Digital Space Selection:** The study meticulously selects distinct digital arenas, specifically focusing on social media and online platforms where user interaction and information sharing are prominent. This selection is strategically aligned with the theoretical constructs of Heidegger, particularly regarding the existential shifts encountered by individuals in the digital realm.
2. **In-Depth Interviews:** The research methodology includes conducting comprehensive interviews with a cohort of participants who are actively engaged in the identified digital spaces. These interviews are structured

to delve into the nuances of individual experiences within the digital context, examining alterations in modes of interaction, communication practices, and the perception of existence within these virtual environments.

3. Textual Analysis: A critical textual analysis of Heidegger's works, focusing on themes of human existence, modes of being, and the interplay with technology, will be complemented by an examination of content produced by participants in digital spaces. This dual-faceted analytical approach is designed to enhance the understanding of how digital engagements shape and reflect individual identities.
4. Heideggerian Existential Analysis: Throughout the data analysis phase, key Heideggerian concepts such as "Dasein," "Being-In-The-World," and "calculative thinking" will be integrally applied. This analytical lens is anticipated to provide profound insights into the existential transformations manifesting within the digital sphere.

By adopting this comprehensive methodology, the study aims to elucidate the profound existential impacts of digital technology, viewed through the lens of Heideggerian philosophy. The research is poised to yield significant insights into the dynamics of human interaction with digital technologies and how these interactions influence the perception and essence of human existence in a progressively digitalized contemporary world.

Results and Discussion

The onset of the digital age has catalyzed significant transformations across various facets of human existence, heralding an epoch marked by unparalleled levels of connectivity, rapid dissemination of information, and groundbreaking technological advancements. This seismic shift has incited profound philosophical contemplations about the ramifications of digital progress on the essence of human being. Utilizing the philosophical framework of Martin Heidegger, this scholarly discourse investigates the complex interactions between the digital domain and human existence, focusing on the extensive impacts and consequences that technology exerts on our understanding of ontology (Dreyfus & Wrathall, 2007; Inwood, 2019).

Martin Heidegger's existential philosophy, profoundly articulated in his magnum opus "Being and Time," offers a critical perspective to evaluate the effects of the digital age on human existence. At the core of Heidegger's philosophy is the concept of "Being" or "Dasein," which accentuates the

contextualized and genuine experience of being human. Heidegger meticulously emphasizes the importance of time, space, and lived experiences as fundamental elements constituting human existence (Heidegger, 1977; Mulhall, 2002).

Within the digital sphere, the omnipresence of technology has dramatically redefined these existential dimensions. The digital milieu, characterized by its virtual environments and immediacy, poses challenges to traditional conceptions of time and space. The state of perpetual connectivity and instantaneous communication, while augmenting accessibility and operational efficiency, simultaneously disrupts the authentic experience of temporality and spatiality as delineated by Heidegger's "Dasein." This convergence of physical and virtual realms leads to a blurring of the distinctions between the public and private spheres, thereby transforming the way individuals experience and navigate their existence.

Moreover, Heidegger's notion of "Das Man" or the "They" sheds light on the influence of societal norms and conventions in molding human existence. In the digital era, the fabric of social interactions and the formation of identities are increasingly mediated through digital platforms. This mediation has the potential to weaken genuine self-expression and encourages a drift towards conformity with digital standards. The emergence of social media platforms, in particular, raises critical questions regarding the genuineness of human relationships and the degree to which digital constructs shape one's identity (Heidegger, 1977; Mulhall, 2002; Tallis, 2016).

Distinct from other entities whose being is characterized as being-within-the-world, humans inherently embody the state of being-in-the-world from birth. Within this worldly context, Dasein coexists with others (Being-with-others or *Mitsein*), engages with objects (Being-alongside-things or *Sein-bei*), and manifests its selfhood (Being-one's-self or *Selbstein*). These three modalities of existence represent the multifaceted ways in which Dasein realizes its being in relation to others (Harman, 2007; Niederhauser, 2020; Tallis, 2016).

In the realm of Heideggerian philosophy, Dasein (Being-with-others or *Mitsein*) and existing alongside things (Being-alongside-things or *Sein-bei*) delineate the complex nature of human existence. This conceptualization posits that Dasein encounters the world (*Selbstein*) amid a fundamental tension: the choice between authenticity and inauthenticity in its relationships both with others and with objects. A particular existential pathway available to Dasein involves immersing itself in a pre-established

public world (ready-to-hand) that not only precedes its existence but also becomes a central focus of concern (mit besorgt). Opting for this path signifies a submergence into the mundane, day-to-day world, potentially resulting in the forfeiture of Dasein's authentic selfhood. Within this framework, Dasein, while conforming to externally imposed roles, diverges from its true essence. From a sociological viewpoint, such a state is marked by Dasein's total identification with external entities, thereby losing its distinctiveness (ownedness). As a result, Dasein risks becoming indistinguishable and absorbed into the collective or the They (das Man), forfeiting its unique authenticity (Harman, 2007; Niederhauser, 2020; Tallis, 2016).

Heidegger's concept of "technology as enframing" casts light on the transformative nature of human interaction with the world in the digital age. The digital environment, characterized by its reliance on algorithms and data-centric frameworks, tends to commoditize reality, rendering it into quantifiable and manageable units. This process of enframing potentially leads to an alienation from the world, diminishing the depth and authenticity of engagement and comprehension of phenomena, a core tenet of Heidegger's philosophy.

The digital age, through a Heideggerian lens, is seen as exerting a complex influence on human existence. It presents unparalleled opportunities for connectivity, dissemination of information, and operational efficiency but simultaneously challenges the authentic experience of temporality, spatiality, social interactions, and the intrinsic connection between individuals and their environment. A critical analysis of the digital era's impact, grounded in Heidegger's philosophical framework, offers profound insights into the metamorphosis of human existence in a technologically dominated era.

The widespread adoption of digital technologies has precipitated a fundamental shift in human experiences and perceptions, contesting traditional ontological frameworks. In the digital context, the delineation between the self and the digital sphere becomes increasingly blurred, resonating with Heidegger's focus on the interaction between human beings and their environment (Heidegger, 1977; Tallis, 2016). Central to Heidegger's thought is the pursuit of "authenticity," defined as living in alignment with one's unique individuality and potential. However, the digital era introduces complexities in achieving this authenticity. The pervasive influence of digital interfaces, algorithms, and virtual realms can mold

individual perceptions, aspirations, and desires, potentially fostering a uniformity that contrasts with Heidegger's call for personal self-realization.

Moreover, the digital domain offers diverse avenues for self-representation and identity formation. Social media, for example, enables individuals to selectively curate and display facets of their existence, prompting critical questions about the authenticity of these digitally crafted personas. Heidegger's emphasis on "care" and "resoluteness" in navigating one's existence becomes particularly pertinent, raising compelling questions about how individuals can maintain their authentic selves amidst the complexities and nuances of the digital landscape.

From a Heideggerian perspective, the impact of the digital era on human existence encompasses not only our daily experiences but profoundly influences the realm of human agency. Heidegger's philosophical discourse places a significant emphasis on the role of agency in determining one's destiny and the importance of making meaningful decisions. However, the advent of the digital age, replete with its myriad of choices and opportunities, simultaneously presents concerns regarding the degree to which these decisions are influenced or even preordained by the pervasive use of algorithms, data analytics, and the inherent structures of digital platforms. This scenario presents a challenging dichotomy to Heidegger's concept of "freedom," which is integral to autonomous decision-making and is now confronted by the phenomena of digital determinism.

Delving deeper into the influence and ramifications of the digital world on human existence through a Heideggerian lens, there emerges a dynamic and complex interplay between technological advancements and the fundamental elements of human being-in-the-world. While the digital era offers unparalleled opportunities for connectivity and innovation, it concurrently demands introspective reflection on the authenticity, agency, and nature of human interaction. Ongoing exploration into these dynamics will significantly enhance our understanding of the intricate relationship between technology and human existence, particularly in the context of the 21st century.

Further analysis in accordance with Heidegger's philosophical views brings into focus the concept of "alienation" in the context of the digital age. Heidegger's critique of modern technology as a form of enframing, wherein all entities are reduced to mere resources, resonates distinctly with the manner in which digital technologies mediate and potentially dominate human experiences. The perpetual state of connectivity, along with incessant notifications and data-driven interactions, fosters a sense of estrangement

from both the immediate physical world and one's authentic self (Tallis, 2016; Mulhall, 2002; Harman, 2007).

Additionally, Heidegger's concept of "being-with-others" acquires new interpretations in the digital landscape. Digital platforms, while facilitating global connections, can also lead to superficial and ephemeral interactions, lacking in the essence of genuine human presence. The emphasis on digital presence, exemplified by the quantification of social interactions through likes, shares, and followers, raises critical questions about the depth and authenticity of these digitally mediated connections.

Moreover, Heidegger's philosophy invites contemplation on the impact of technology on human temporality and our experience of time. The digital age, characterized by instant communication and a ceaseless influx of information, confronts Heidegger's concept of "Dasein," which emphasizes the value of existing within time and reflective consideration of one's being. Immersion in the digital realm poses a threat to authentic moments of reflection and self-discovery, as individuals find themselves increasingly caught in a relentless cycle of digital engagement.

In essence, the Heideggerian perspective on the influence and impact of the digital world on human existence raises critical inquiries into the nature of authenticity, agency, alienation, human connection, and the experience of temporality. As we navigate through this digital terrain, it is imperative to critically evaluate how our interactions with technology shape our perceptions of self, others, and the surrounding world. Heidegger's philosophical insights provide a valuable framework to address these concerns and foster a thoughtful and reflective engagement with the digital world, thereby enriching our understanding of human existence in the digital age (Kasket, 2012; Walters & Kop, 2009; Christoph, 2020).

Discussions

In an in-depth exploration of Heidegger's perspective on the influence and impact of the digital world on human existence, several key themes emerge that warrant a thorough and analytical examination:

Enframing and Alienation

Heidegger's notion of "enframing" (Gestell) critically addresses how technology can transform the world into a mere standing-reserve for human exploitation. In the digital era, this concept manifests as digital technologies commodifying human experiences, converting them into a form of consumable content. This relentless interaction with curated digital content and the societal pressure to project an idealized self on social media platforms

can lead to a profound sense of alienation. This detachment is not only from one's authentic self but also from a genuine relationship with the external world. The incessant pursuit of digital affirmation exacerbates this alienation, reinforcing a sense of disconnection and estrangement from the authentic self.

Being-With-Others and Digital Relationships

Heidegger's analysis of "being-with-others" (Mitsein) as a foundational aspect of human identity and comprehension of the world gains new dimensions in the digital context. Although digital platforms offer unprecedented global connectivity, they often lack the depth, richness, and authenticity inherent in face-to-face interactions. The superficiality of online relationships, amplified by the anonymity of digital spaces and potential for miscommunication, can severely impair the development of meaningful human connections. The emphasis on quantifying relationships through digital metrics like friends, followers, and likes risks distorting the genuine essence of Mitsein.

Temporal Disruption and Acceleration

The concept of "Dasein," central to Heidegger's philosophy, emphasizes the importance of residing in time and indulging in introspective contemplation. However, the digital age, characterized by incessant information flow, immediate communication, and swift content consumption, fosters a sense of temporal acceleration. This rapid pace can diminish opportunities for meaningful reflection, self-discovery, and authentic engagement with the world, undermining the ability to dwell meaningfully in time and experience existence in its full depth.

Authenticity and Virtual Identity

In Heidegger's philosophical discourse, authenticity is a pivotal element of human existence. The advent of the digital world introduces complex challenges in maintaining this authenticity. The creation of online personas, virtual avatars, and the capacity to meticulously curate one's digital image call into question the authenticity of these identities. The digital realm enables individuals to construct and present alternate selves, blurring the lines between authentic and fabricated identities.

Loss of Meaning and Technological Determinism

Heidegger's concerns regarding technology's potential to obscure the true essence of being find significant relevance in the digital age. The deluge of

information, the tendency to engage with bite-sized, ephemeral content, and the distraction-laden nature of digital interfaces can lead to a superficial level of understanding and a consequent loss of meaningful engagement. The dominance of digital technologies in modern life potentially heralds a shift towards technological determinism, where both individual and societal behaviors are increasingly influenced and shaped by technological forces.

Overall, Heidegger's philosophical framework provides a rich and critical lens to examine the profound implications of the digital world on human existence. By navigating these complex themes – alienation, superficial relationships, temporal disruptions, erosion of authenticity, and the influence of technological determinism – with mindfulness and reflection, we can foster a deeper understanding of our selves, our relationships, and our place in the increasingly digital world. This thoughtful engagement with technology, guided by Heidegger's insights, can lead to a more enriched and meaningful existence in the digital age.

C. Conclusions

The exploration of Martin Heidegger's philosophy in the context of the digital age reveals several profound implications for human existence. Heidegger's concept of "enframing" becomes particularly relevant in understanding how digital technologies have the potential to commodify experiences and create a sense of alienation from our authentic selves and the world. The digital era, while offering unparalleled connectivity, also presents challenges to the depth and authenticity of human relationships as envisioned in Heidegger's concept of "being-with-others."

The accelerated pace of life in the digital age, marked by a constant influx of information and instant communication, challenges Heidegger's notion of "Dasein" and the importance of dwelling in time for introspection and authentic engagement with the world. This temporal disruption can hinder the ability to experience one's existence fully and meaningfully. Additionally, the digital realm complicates the pursuit of authenticity. The creation of online personas and virtual identities raises questions about the authenticity of these constructions and the extent to which they reflect our true selves. Furthermore, the overwhelming presence of digital technology leads to a form of technological determinism, where human behavior and societal norms are increasingly influenced by technology. This dominance of technology can contribute to a superficial understanding of the world and a loss of meaning in human experiences.

Heidegger's insights offer a critical framework for navigating the complexities of the digital age. By recognizing the potential for alienation, superficial relationships, and the erosion of authenticity, we are encouraged to engage with technology in a mindful and reflective manner. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of ourselves, our relationships, and our place in the digital world. Ultimately, Heidegger's philosophy urges us to contemplate and critically assess the impact of the digital world on our existence, fostering a more meaningful and authentic engagement with both the digital realm and the physical world.

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