

ABSTRACT
of the dissertation by Serik Niyazbekov
on the topic «Philosophical Analysis of Digital Alienation
as a Socio-Cultural Phenomenon»,
submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
within the Educational Programme «8D02202 – Philosophy»

General characteristics of the work. The dissertation is devoted to the philosophical analysis of digital alienation as a specific configuration of socio-cultural alienation that emerges under conditions of digital ontology. It is fundamentally distinguished from all preceding forms of alienation by its structural invisibility: it unfolds not in opposition to the experience of freedom, but under its guise. The study develops the categorial apparatus of Cognosynthesis and substantiates the normative conditions of sovereign digital existence within the Kazakhstani socio-cultural context. The work makes an original contribution to social philosophy, the philosophy of technology, and contemporary critical theory, integrating classical European philosophical traditions with the intellectual resources of Kazakhstani cultural heritage.

The relevance of the topic. The relevance is determined by the fact that the digital environment, encompassing nearly 6 billion people by 2026, has ceased to be a mere instrument of the subject and has become an infrastructure of consciousness — a pre-reflective horizon that configures the subject's value orientations and cognitive patterns without reflective awareness. The digital transformation of contemporary society has reached a stage where algorithmic systems not only mediate human experience but actively participate in the very constitution of human subjectivity, cognition, and value orientation. This fundamental shift demands a philosophical analysis of a new order — one capable of grasping not only the sociological or technological dimensions of digitalisation, but its deeper ontological and epistemological implications for the human subject.

The institutional aspect. The «Digital Kazakhstan» state programme and the current strategies for the development of the information-technology sector through 2029 create an institutional context in which the philosophical analysis of the conditions of value sovereignty acquires not only academic but also practical-political significance. The intersection of state-led digital transformation, cultural identity policy, and global platform capitalism makes Kazakhstan a philosophically productive site for examining the tensions between technological modernity and cultural self-determination. The dissertation therefore addresses not merely a theoretical lacuna but a pressing civilisational question.

Theoretical and methodological basis. The research is grounded in classical and contemporary philosophical concepts within the traditions of critical theory, phenomenology, philosophical anthropology, and social philosophy. The works of Hegel, Marx, Heidegger, Habermas, Zuboff, Han, Stiegler, and Jaeggi enabled the synthesis of the diagnostic and normative

potential of various traditions. The methodological architecture is formed by an ensemble of mutually complementary approaches: the dialectical method — for the analysis of the internal contradictions of Cognosynthesis; the phenomenological approach (Husserl, Heidegger) — for the analysis of the lived experience of the epistemological loop and ontological claustrophobia; the critical method (Jaeggi, Honneth) — for the normative dimension of the analysis; the hermeneutical method (Gadamer) — for the substantiation of recursive hermeneutics; and the comparative-historical method — for the analysis of Kazakhstani specificity.

Key gnosiological mechanisms. The dissertation demonstrates that classical concepts of alienation retain their heuristic value but reveal fundamental limits when applied to digital ontology. Digital alienation unfolds not at the level of the relation between an already-formed subject and external technology, but at the level of the very constitution of subjectivity — under conditions of the mutual constitutivity of human consciousness and algorithmic systems. For this reason, the category of Cognosynthesis is introduced — a rigorous description of the hybrid cognitive reality in which subject and algorithm co-constitute the cognitive space within which the subject can act as a subject at all. The category captures both the enabling and the alienating dimensions of this co-constitution, providing a neutral analytical foundation from which normative distinctions can be drawn.

The key gnosiological mechanism of digital alienation is the epistemological loop, whereby the algorithmic personalisation of information flows systematically removes access to the Other from the subject's cognitive horizon, trapping cognition in the recursive reproduction of the already-known. This mechanism operates below the threshold of reflective awareness — and it is precisely the imperceptibility of the loop that constitutes its alienating force. Consequently, the associated concept of ontological claustrophobia describes the phenomenological paradox where the subject experiences the closedness of an algorithmically constructed space as infinite openness. The expropriation of the faculty of judgement through the elimination of the temporal interval in which judgement matures constitutes the ontological core of alienated Cognosynthesis.

Deconstruction of Western critical discourse. Three structural limits of Western critical thought are identified in the work: the essentialist reduction of subjectivity (Zuboff), the teleological deficit (Han), and Western-centrism as such. It is shown that Zuboff's concept of surveillance capitalism, for all its political-economic precision, reproduces a nostalgic humanist bias that seeks an «authentic subject» where none existed in a pure form. Han, in *The Burnout Society*, formulates an accurate diagnosis but fails to provide a therapeutic or operational framework. Stiegler's pharmacology of technology captures

the ambivalence of the digital environment without establishing a criterion of dosage — a criterion supplied in the present study through Jaeggi's principle of appropriation, combined with the normative apparatus of Cognosynthesis. This critique does not amount to a mere catalogue of deficiencies in existing scholarship; it opens a productive space for a genuinely post-Western philosophy of digital alienation.

Kazakhstani configuration and cultural resistance. The domestic configuration of digital alienation is described through the category of the historical palimpsest and the principle of synchronous multi-layeredness. The Kazakhstani subject of the digital age simultaneously inhabits several historically accumulated forms of alienation, which renders them simultaneously the most vulnerable to algorithmic atomisation and potentially the richest in terms of living cultural resources for resisting it. The category of axiological derivation is introduced and substantiated as the systematic displacement of traditional Kazakh value configurations under pressure from the algorithmically embedded grammars of global platforms. This displacement occurs without explicit coercion: it is achieved through the structural design of recommendation systems, engagement metrics, and interface architectures that embed specific value hierarchies as the invisible default grammar of digital experience.

The dissertation substantiates that traditional Kazakh institutions — the epistemology of the aksakal as an embodied dialogical analogue of algorithmic prediction, and network communality (the «digital yurt») as an axiological filter against the atomising logic of platforms — are not archaic survivals but high cognitive technologies structurally opposed to the alienating configurations of Cognosynthesis. The epistemology of the aksakal — the deliberative, temporally extended, and communally rooted mode of practical wisdom embodied in the institution of respected elders — provides a model of cognition that is constitutively dialogical, embodied, and axiologically anchored. Its structural properties are precisely those that the epistemological loop destroys: openness to the Other, temporal depth, and communal accountability.

On the basis of the author's publications in *Pharos Journal of Theology* (Scopus, 2023 and 2025), the conducted comparative study of Kazakhstani and Finnish experiences of the mediatisation of religious life provided empirical verification of the theoretical claims regarding the role of cultural mediation in the formation of digital subjectivity and enabled the introduction of the concept of strategic Cognosynthesis — the use of digital instruments for the preservation of subjectivity under conditions of institutional pressure and legal vulnerability.

Normative architecture of the anti-panoptical standard. The normative framework for state digital systems has been developed on the basis of the four principles of equitable symbiosis: transparency, subsidiarity (the algorithm assumes only those functions that cannot in principle be performed by the subject independently), symmetry (the bidirectional character of

information flows between the state and the citizen), and cultural adequacy (categorical systems reflecting the specificity of Kazakhstani forms of communality). An operational criterion has been formulated for distinguishing the «Listening State» from the state of digital paternalism. This distinction is of direct practical significance for the design of the public digital infrastructure being developed within the «Digital Kazakhstan» programme and its successors.

The sovereign digital subject framework. The dissertation synthesises the conceptual framework of the «sovereign digital subject» through the integration of five interrelated characteristics: ontological stability, reflective distance, axiological appropriation of digital instruments, intersubjective rootedness, and temporal connectedness. The structural correspondence of this normative configuration with the concept of «Adal azamat» — the Kazakhstani ideal of the worthy, responsible, and culturally rooted citizen — is substantiated, which demonstrates that the normative horizon of non-alienated Cognosynthesis is not a universalist abstraction but can be articulated in culturally specific terms without losing its philosophical rigour. The methodology of recursive hermeneutics is developed as the practical-philosophical mechanism of transition from alienated configurations of Cognosynthesis to non-alienated ones.

The imperative of biosocial duty. The category of «biosocial duty» is substantiated as an existential imperative addressed to the subject, the research community, and state institutions before future generations — an obligation to create the conditions of equitable symbiotic being, in which the algorithm serves the human being and not the human being the algorithm. This category extends the normative horizon of the dissertation beyond the individual and the present moment, situating the philosophical analysis within the longer temporal scale of civilisational responsibility.

The scientific novelty of the dissertation consists in the following:

- The category of Cognosynthesis is introduced as a rigorous analytical description of the mutual constitutivity of the subject and algorithmic systems;
- The concepts of the epistemological loop and ontological claustrophobia are developed as original analytical tools within the phenomenology of digital alienation;
- Kazakhstani specificity is conceptualised through the category of the historical palimpsest and the concept of axiological derivation, offering the first systematic philosophical account of the multi-layered structure of digital alienation in the post-Soviet and post-nomadic context;

- The epistemology of the aksakal and network communality are substantiated as normative models of cultural adequacy and systemic resistance;

- The anti-panoptical standard and the four principles of equitable symbiosis are developed as the normative architecture of public digital systems.

The practical significance of the dissertation is determined by:

- The viability of utilizing its findings in developing the conceptual foundations of state policy in the field of digital transformation;

- The optimization of higher educational programmes through the direct application of the methodology of recursive hermeneutics;

- The structural design of state analytical and public data systems in strict accordance with the anti-panoptical standard;

- The preparation of academic disciplines and specialized courses on the philosophy of technology, media philosophy, and critical digital literacy at universities in Kazakhstan;

- Providing robust conceptual resources for civil society organisations, policy-makers, and educators engaged with the structural challenges of digital modernity in Kazakhstan and comparable transitional contexts.

Publications. The main results of the dissertation are reflected in publications in peer-reviewed scholarly journals indexed in the international Scopus database, including *Pharos Journal of Theology* (2023, 2025), in full accordance with the statutory requirements for PhD dissertations in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Науч. рук. Сугаубаев Т.О.
[Signature]