



Digital Identity, the Self and an Anthropological Reading of Social Media through Byung-Chul Han

Abstract

Using an anthropological and critical-philosophical interpretation of digital culture, this paper explored the reconfiguration of human identity in the era of social media, mainly referencing Byung-Chul Han's ideas. It maintained that by turning identity into a regime of visibility, performance, and ongoing self-optimization, social media platforms have radically changed the conditions of selfhood. The self in our digital world is being built through carefully chosen photos, algorithmic feedback, and social validation measures like likes and followers rather than being largely based on physical presence or interior depth. The paper illustrated how digital platforms exacerbate self-exploitation processes while concurrently undermining interiority and contemplative life, drawing on Han's critique of neoliberal subjectivity, transparency culture, and the accomplishment society. The article further showed that the logic of hypervisibility promoted by social media contributes to the disappearance of alterity, as relational encounters are replaced by algorithmically filtered sameness and echo chambers of affirmation. This shift produces a fragmented and exhausted subject who is perpetually exposed yet paradoxically alienated from authentic self-understanding. From an anthropological perspective, the article highlights how digital identity marks a transformation of the human being into a hybrid entity shaped by both technological infrastructures and neoliberal cultural imperatives. It concludes by suggesting that a critical rethinking of digital subjectivity is necessary in order to recover dimensions of interiority, ethical relation, and meaningful presence in contemporary life.

Keywords: Digital identity; social media; philosophical anthropology; Byung-Chul Han; selfhood; neoliberal subjectivity.

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Introduction

The emergence of digital technology and social media has radically transformed the structure of contemporary human existence. In the twenty-first century, identity is no

longer formed solely through embodied interpersonal relations, cultural traditions, or stable social institutions; rather, it is increasingly mediated by digital platforms that shape how individuals present themselves,

communicate, and seek recognition. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and X have become spaces where the self is continuously constructed, displayed, modified, and evaluated through networks of visibility and interaction. Consequently, digital culture has altered not only communication but also the philosophical understanding of what it means to be a person in technologically mediated societies. Recent studies observe that digital identity has evolved from a static representation of the individual into an algorithmically produced and socially regulated process shaped by data extraction, platform governance, and performative visibility (Taylor *et al.*, 2023). The rise of digital culture has therefore generated profound anthropological and philosophical questions concerning selfhood, freedom, embodiment, and relationality. Scholars increasingly argue that social media encourages the commodification of personality through self-branding, constant self-disclosure, and the pursuit of validation in digital environments (Barros *et al.*, 2023). The human self is gradually transformed into a visible project that must remain permanently active, attractive, and socially recognizable. This condition reflects what Byung-Chul Han describes as the transparency society, where digital technologies dissolve privacy and interiority through voluntary self-exposure and psychopolitical control. Han argues that individuals in digital culture willingly participate in systems of surveillance by constantly producing data about themselves, thereby

transforming freedom into a subtle mechanism of self-exploitation.

The central problem this article addresses is **how social media reshape the anthropological understanding of the self in contemporary digital culture**. In responding to this question, the article draws on the critical philosophy of Byung-Chul Han, whose works on transparency, burnout, and digital capitalism provide a powerful framework for interpreting the transformation of subjectivity under neoliberal and technological conditions. Han argues that contemporary digital culture intensifies regimes of exposure and self-optimization, producing a subject that is both hyper-visible and increasingly exhausted (Ferreira, 2026). The research is guided by three interrelated questions which are: (i) what form of self emerges within digital social spaces? (ii) How does the logic of visibility displace interiority in social media culture? (iii) What are the broader anthropological implications of digitally mediated identity formation? Methodologically, the study adopts a philosophical-anthropological approach combined with critical theory, enabling a reflective engagement with both conceptual and cultural dimensions of digital subjectivity. This inquiry situates digital identity not merely as a technological phenomenon but as a deep transformation of human self-understanding in late modernity.

Conceptual Framework

This section establishes the conceptual and theoretical foundations for interpreting digital identity as an

anthropological and philosophical problem. It integrates contemporary debates in digital media theory, philosophical anthropology, and critical theory, while foregrounding the diagnostic framework of Byung-Chul Han. The aim is to clarify how social media reconfigures the structure of selfhood under conditions of algorithmic mediation, neoliberal rationality, and intensified visibility.

Digital Identity

Digital identity has become a central philosophical concern in contemporary thought due to the increasing entanglement of human subjectivity with technological systems. Identity in digital environments is no longer fixed or stable but is instead fluid, performative, and continuously reshaped through interaction with platforms and algorithms. Recent studies argue that online identity is co-constructed by users and algorithmic infrastructures that determine visibility, relevance, and social recognition (van Dijck, 2020).

Anthropological Conceptions of the Self

Classical philosophical anthropology understands the self as an embodied, relational, and dialogical being. Thinkers such as Aristotle, Augustine, and later phenomenological traditions emphasize that human identity is rooted in lived embodiment, intersubjective relations, and reflective consciousness. The self emerges through encounter, memory, and ethical relation rather than mere representation. Modern anthropology and social theory,

however, introduced a shift toward psychological and narrative conceptions of identity, where the self is understood as an evolving story constructed through temporal continuity and subjective interpretation (Ricoeur, 1992).

Han's idea of Digital Identity and the Self

The philosophy of Byung-Chul Han provides one of the most penetrating critiques of digital culture and contemporary technological society. Han's work explores how neoliberal capitalism, digital communication, and technological surveillance reshape human subjectivity and social existence. Unlike traditional forms of disciplinary power described by Michel Foucault, Han argues that contemporary digital society operates through subtle mechanisms of psychopolitical control in which individuals willingly participate in their own domination. Social media, in this context, functions not merely as a communication tool but as a system that transforms human beings into transparent, performative, and self-exploiting digital subjects. Central to Han's theory is the concept of the transparency society. According to Han, contemporary digital culture is driven by an obsession with visibility, openness, and exposure. Transparency is presented as a positive social value associated with freedom, communication, and participation. However, Han contends that excessive transparency destroys privacy, mystery, contemplation, and interiority. Human beings increasingly feel compelled to expose their thoughts, emotions, activities, and relationships through

social media platforms. The digital subject exists under conditions of permanent visibility where self-worth becomes dependent upon online recognition and public exposure. In this sense, transparency transforms human existence into a spectacle governed by visibility and data circulation (Han, 2020).

Closely connected to transparency is the phenomenon of self-exposure and voluntary surveillance. Unlike traditional surveillance imposed externally by authoritarian institutions, digital surveillance is often willingly embraced by individuals who continuously share personal information online. Social media users voluntarily upload images, opinions, locations, and personal experiences in exchange for recognition and participation within digital networks. Han argues that neoliberal digital culture transforms surveillance into a pleasurable and normalized activity. Individuals no longer experience themselves as victims of surveillance but as active participants in systems of data production. Consequently, social media platforms extract behavioral data that can be used for prediction, manipulation, and economic profit. This voluntary surveillance reflects a deeper transformation in which freedom itself becomes integrated into systems of digital control.

Han conceptualizes this transformation through the notion of psychopolitics. Psychopolitics refers to forms of power that operate through psychological motivation, self-management, and emotional optimization rather than

coercion. In neoliberal societies, individuals are encouraged to maximize productivity, positivity, visibility, and performance. The digital subject internalizes the demands of efficiency and self-improvement, becoming both the exploiter and the exploited. Social media intensifies this condition by encouraging users to constantly produce content, maintain online presence, and cultivate digital relevance. The result is a culture of self-exploitation in which individuals willingly subject themselves to emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and burnout in pursuit of recognition and validation. Han therefore argues that neoliberalism transforms freedom into a mechanism of domination because individuals perceive self-exploitation as personal achievement and self-expression.

Another significant aspect of Han's thought is his discussion of the disappearance of the Other. Han maintains that digital communication weakens genuine alterity and ethical encounter. In traditional human relationships, the Other appears as a mystery that challenges self-centered existence and demands ethical openness. However, digital culture increasingly reduces relationships to consumable interactions governed by immediacy, similarity, and algorithmic personalization. Social media platforms expose individuals primarily to content that reinforces their preferences and identities, thereby diminishing meaningful engagement with difference and otherness. The disappearance of the Other contributes to narcissistic self-enclosure in which individuals

encounter reflections of themselves rather than authentic interpersonal relationships.

This condition is further expressed through digital narcissism and fatigue culture. Social media encourages continuous self-presentation and comparison, leading individuals to perceive themselves as projects requiring constant optimization and visibility. The pursuit of likes, followers, and engagement transforms identity into a marketable performance. Han argues that this endless pressure for positivity and productivity produces psychological exhaustion, depression, and emotional fatigue. Contemporary society becomes what he describes as the “burnout society,” characterized not by external oppression but by excessive self-demand and overstimulation. Constant connectivity eliminates opportunities for silence, contemplation, and rest, thereby weakening the capacity for authentic self-reflection and deep human relation. Han’s critique of positivity and constant connectivity further illuminates the anthropological consequences of digital culture. Neoliberal digital society privileges positivity, speed, and uninterrupted communication while rejecting negativity, limitation, and silence. Yet Han insists that genuine human existence requires spaces of contemplation, withdrawal, and critical distance. Constant connectivity fragments attention and reduces human experience to instantaneous reactions and digital consumption. The digital subject becomes trapped within cycles of stimulation and performance that

undermine freedom, autonomy, and existential depth. Han’s philosophy therefore provides a critical framework for understanding how digital capitalism reconstructs human identity through mechanisms of visibility, surveillance, and psychopolitical control.

Digital Identity and the Crisis of Authentic Selfhood

One of the defining characteristics of contemporary digital culture is the transformation of identity into a performative project continuously shaped through social media participation. In technologically mediated societies, individuals increasingly construct and communicate selfhood through digital performances designed for public visibility and social recognition. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and X encourage users to curate personal narratives through images, videos, captions, and symbolic expressions that project desirable versions of the self. Consequently, identity becomes less a stable existential reality and more a continuously edited performance governed by audience expectations and algorithmic visibility. This condition has given rise to curated identities and aestheticized existence. Digital selfhood is increasingly organized around visual presentation, emotional branding, and symbolic consumption. Individuals selectively display aspects of their lives that correspond to socially desirable ideals such as success, beauty, productivity, happiness, and influence. Everyday existence is transformed into aesthetic content intended for digital circulation and approval.

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Philosophically, this aestheticization reflects the transition from lived authenticity to representational identity, where appearance often becomes more significant than being itself. Contemporary scholars argue that social media culture encourages individuals to interpret their lives through the logic of visibility and performance rather than through inward reflection and existential depth (Abidin, 2021). The emergence of influencer culture further intensifies the commodification of personality and identity. Influencers function not merely as entertainers but as symbolic entrepreneurs who transform personal experiences, lifestyles, opinions, and relationships into marketable digital content. In this context, the self becomes a commercial object capable of generating economic value through engagement, sponsorships, and online popularity. The boundaries between personal identity and economic productivity become increasingly blurred, as individuals are encouraged to monetize visibility and cultivate personal brands. This development reflects what Byung-Chul Han describes as neoliberal self-exploitation, where individuals willingly transform themselves into entrepreneurial projects driven by digital competition and symbolic consumption.

The contemporary digital environment is profoundly shaped by the human desire for visibility and recognition. Social media platforms operate according to economies of attention in which visibility determines relevance, influence, and participation. In digital

culture, to be visible often means to exist socially, while invisibility risks marginalization and exclusion. Consequently, individuals increasingly seek validation through likes, follows, comments, shares, and other forms of digital engagement that function as indicators of recognition and social worth. The desire for validation through digital engagement reflects deeper anthropological and philosophical concerns regarding recognition and human identity. Human beings are relational creatures who seek acknowledgment and affirmation from others. Philosophers such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Axel Honneth emphasize that identity develops through intersubjective recognition. Social existence depends upon being seen, acknowledged, and valued within communal structures. Social media amplifies this dynamic by quantifying recognition through numerical indicators of engagement. Likes, reactions, and follower counts become symbolic measures of social acceptance and personal significance. This process contributes to what may be called digital existence, where identity increasingly depends upon online visibility and participation. Individuals often experience anxiety when digital recognition declines because visibility becomes intertwined with self-esteem and social belonging. Social media platforms therefore create psychological conditions in which human worth appears dependent upon continuous public affirmation. Contemporary research suggests that excessive dependence on digital validation contributes to emotional instability, self-

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comparison, and diminished self-worth, particularly among young people immersed in online environments (Twenge, 2023). Visibility in digital culture also functions as social capital. Social capital traditionally refers to the social advantages derived from relationships, networks, and communal trust. In digital society, visibility itself becomes a form of symbolic power capable of generating influence, opportunities, and economic benefit. Influencers, celebrities, activists, and ordinary users compete within economies of attention where visibility determines cultural relevance and authority. Algorithms further reinforce this condition by prioritizing highly visible content and rewarding continuous engagement. Consequently, digital platforms create hierarchies of visibility in which social value is increasingly measured through audience reach and online influence. This condition transforms recognition from an ethical relation into a competitive struggle for attention and digital relevance.

The expansion of digital technology has also intensified new forms of surveillance and self-discipline that profoundly shape contemporary identity formation. Unlike traditional forms of surveillance associated with centralized institutions, digital surveillance operates subtly through participation, connectivity, and voluntary data sharing. Social media users continuously generate data through online interactions, searches, preferences, locations, and behavioral patterns that are collected and analyzed

by digital platforms. Surveillance in the digital age therefore becomes decentralized, normalized, and integrated into everyday life. One of the most significant aspects of this transformation is the emergence of internalized surveillance mechanisms. Drawing from Michel Foucault's analysis of disciplinary power, contemporary digital culture encourages individuals to monitor and regulate themselves according to social expectations and algorithmic norms. Social media users become highly conscious of visibility, audience perception, and digital reputation. Individuals discipline their speech, appearance, opinions, and behavior to maintain acceptance and avoid exclusion within online communities. Surveillance is thus internalized as self-regulation rather than imposed solely through external authority.

Anthropological Implications of Social Media

One of the most profound anthropological consequences of social media is the transformation of human relationality. Human beings are fundamentally relational creatures whose identities develop through interpersonal encounters, dialogue, mutual recognition, and communal participation. Traditionally, human relationships were grounded in physical presence, emotional depth, and sustained interpersonal engagement. However, the rise of digital communication has altered the structure and meaning of social interaction by shifting human relationships from embodied encounters to technologically

mediated networks. Contemporary social media platforms prioritize speed, accessibility, and constant communication, thereby redefining relational existence through networked interaction. Individuals increasingly relate to others through messages, reactions, emojis, images, and digital content rather than through direct embodied presence. Relationships become organized around immediacy, visibility, and continuous connectivity. While digital communication expands opportunities for interaction across geographical boundaries, it often reduces interpersonal engagement to fragmented and surface-level exchanges. Scholars argue that social media culture privileges quantity of interaction over depth of relationship, producing networks of connection that may lack existential intimacy and genuine reciprocity (Turkle, 2021).

This transformation contributes to the decline of silence, contemplation, and presence within contemporary human experience. Traditional philosophical and spiritual traditions regarded silence and contemplation as essential dimensions of authentic selfhood and meaningful relationality. Silence creates space for reflection, listening, inwardness, and ethical openness to others. However, digital culture is characterized by constant stimulation, perpetual communication, and uninterrupted connectivity. Social media platforms encourage immediate reaction, continuous engagement, and endless consumption of information, thereby diminishing opportunities for contemplative existence. Byung-Chul

Han argues that digital modernity destroys contemplative life by replacing reflective presence with accelerated communication and informational overload. Human beings increasingly experience reality through distraction and fragmented attention rather than sustained existential awareness.

Paradoxically, the expansion of digital connectivity has also intensified experiences of loneliness and isolation. Despite unprecedented opportunities for online interaction, many individuals report feelings of emotional disconnection, social anxiety, and existential emptiness. This condition may be described as digital loneliness amid hyperconnectivity. Social media often creates the appearance of community and belonging while weakening the depth of authentic interpersonal relationships. Online interactions can become performative and transactional, oriented toward visibility and validation rather than mutual presence and ethical encounter. Consequently, individuals may remain constantly connected yet profoundly isolated. Recent studies indicate that excessive social media use contributes to emotional fatigue, loneliness, and reduced psychological well-being, particularly among younger generations immersed in digitally mediated social environments (Odgers & Jensen, 2024). Anthropologically, this redefinition of relationality signifies a transition from communal and embodied forms of social existence toward technologically mediated modes of interaction. Human relationships increasingly operate through systems of visibility,

algorithmic recommendation, and digital participation, thereby transforming the meaning of intimacy, friendship, and communal belonging in contemporary society.

The digital age has also produced significant transformations in the understanding of embodiment and human existence. Philosophical anthropology has traditionally emphasized the embodied nature of human life, recognizing the body as central to perception, relationality, and lived experience. Human beings encounter the world through bodily presence, sensory engagement, and interpersonal interaction. However, social media and digital technologies increasingly mediate existence through virtual representation rather than direct embodiment. One major consequence of this transformation is the phenomenon of disembodiment in digital culture. Digital environments allow individuals to interact without physical presence, thereby weakening the centrality of embodied experience in social relations. Communication increasingly occurs through screens, text, avatars, images, and virtual performances rather than face-to-face encounters. The digital self becomes detached from concrete bodily presence and reconstructed through symbolic representation. While virtual spaces create new opportunities for communication and identity experimentation, they also risk alienating individuals from embodied reality and lived interpersonal experience.

This condition is intensified by the treatment of the body as image and

spectacle within social media culture. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok privilege visual representation, encouraging individuals to present the body as an aesthetic object for public consumption and evaluation. Digital culture promotes idealized standards of beauty, attractiveness, fitness, and lifestyle that shape bodily self-perception and identity formation. Filters, editing tools, cosmetic enhancements, and curated visual performances transform the body into a project of continuous optimization and visibility. Philosophically, this reflects a shift from experiencing the body as lived subjectivity toward treating the body as a visible object within economies of attention and digital consumption. The body therefore becomes increasingly mediated through images and symbolic performances designed for recognition and validation. This process contributes to heightened self-consciousness, bodily anxiety, and dissatisfaction, particularly among young people exposed to unrealistic digital representations. Scholars note that social media intensifies bodily comparison and performative self-awareness by encouraging individuals to interpret their bodies through the gaze of digital audiences (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2022).

The rise of virtuality further transforms human experience by altering the relationship between reality, perception, and social existence. Virtual environments increasingly mediate work, education, relationships, entertainment, and identity formation. Human beings now inhabit hybrid

realities in which physical and digital experiences continuously intersect. Virtuality allows individuals to transcend geographical limitations and participate in global networks of communication; however, it also blurs distinctions between reality and simulation. Jean Baudrillard's concept of hyper-reality becomes especially relevant here, as digital representations often appear more influential than direct lived experience itself. Anthropologically, the movement toward virtual existence signifies a profound transformation in human self-understanding. Human identity increasingly emerges through technologically mediated environments where embodiment is fragmented, aestheticized, and subordinated to digital visibility. Consequently, the digital age challenges traditional understandings of bodily presence, authenticity, and existential participation in the world.

The rise of social media and digital technologies has also transformed contemporary understandings of freedom, agency, and power. Digital culture often presents itself as a space of liberation, participation, and unlimited self-expression. Social media platforms provide individuals with opportunities to communicate globally, share opinions, construct identities, and access information. However, beneath this appearance of freedom lies a complex structure of technological and economic power that shapes behavior, desires, and social participation. One of the central anthropological concerns in digital society is the illusion of freedom

in digital participation. Social media users frequently perceive themselves as autonomous agents freely expressing opinions and constructing identities online. Yet digital participation is often structured by platform architectures, algorithmic systems, and economic incentives that shape visibility and engagement. Byung-Chul Han argues that neoliberal digital culture transforms domination into voluntary participation. Individuals willingly expose themselves, generate data, and participate in systems of surveillance because digital engagement is experienced as freedom and self-expression rather than coercion. This creates a paradoxical condition in which individuals become active participants in their own regulation and exploitation.

Ethical and Philosophical Implications

One of the most pressing philosophical questions arising from digital culture concerns the possibility of authenticity within technologically mediated environments. Social media platforms encourage continuous self-presentation, performance, and visibility, raising concerns about whether authentic selfhood can survive in spaces structured by algorithms, audience expectations, and digital commodification. The digital self often appears fragmented, curated, and strategically constructed for recognition rather than grounded in genuine existential self-understanding. Consequently, contemporary digital culture challenges traditional philosophical assumptions concerning sincerity, inwardness, and personal authenticity.

The question "Can authentic selfhood survive digital mediation?" reflects broader anxieties about the relationship between technology and human existence. Authenticity traditionally implies fidelity to one's true existence, moral integrity, and openness to genuine self-realization. However, social media environments frequently encourage individuals to adapt identity according to trends, metrics of popularity, and symbolic performance. The pressure to remain visible and relevant can transform identity into a calculated performance aimed at social approval rather than existential truth. Digital mediation therefore risks subordinating authentic existence to spectacle, branding, and algorithmic recognition. Nevertheless, authenticity in online environments should not be dismissed entirely as impossible. Digital platforms can also provide opportunities for self-expression, creativity, solidarity, and the articulation of marginalized identities. Individuals may use social media to communicate deeply personal experiences, form meaningful communities, and resist oppressive social structures. The ethical challenge lies not in rejecting digital communication altogether but in discerning whether technological mediation enhances or diminishes genuine human presence and self-understanding.

This debate may be illuminated through comparison with existentialist notions of selfhood. Existentialist philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, and Gabriel Marcel

emphasized authenticity as a mode of existence grounded in freedom, responsibility, and self-awareness. For Heidegger, authentic existence requires confronting one's finite being rather than becoming absorbed in anonymous social conformity, what he calls the *They*. Similarly, Marcel emphasizes presence, fidelity, and interpersonal communion as essential dimensions of authentic human existence. Social media culture, however, often intensifies conformity through trends, performative expectations, and digital mass culture. From the ongoing research it is crystal that individuals risk losing themselves within systems of endless comparison and public visibility. From an existential perspective, authentic selfhood in digital culture would require resisting the reduction of identity to performance and cultivating reflective self-awareness, ethical responsibility, and meaningful relational engagement. Authenticity therefore becomes not the rejection of digital existence but the critical negotiation of technological participation in ways that preserve human interiority, freedom, and existential depth.

The digital age has also generated profound ethical concerns regarding human dignity and the reduction of persons to quantifiable data. Philosophical anthropology traditionally understands the human person as possessing intrinsic worth that transcends utility, economic productivity, or instrumental value. Human dignity is grounded in rationality, relationality, moral agency,

and the capacity for self-transcendence. However, digital culture increasingly interprets human identity through systems of data extraction, algorithmic classification, and numerical evaluation. One of the most troubling dimensions of contemporary digital culture is the reduction of persons to data and metrics. Social media platforms transform human experiences, preferences, emotions, and interactions into measurable information that can be analyzed, predicted, and monetized. Individuals become visible through engagement statistics such as likes, shares, followers, and views. In this context, human worth risks becoming identified with digital popularity and algorithmic relevance. The complexity of personhood is reduced to patterns of data capable of generating economic value within systems of surveillance capitalism.

This reductionism raises serious ethical concerns regarding commodification. Under digital capitalism, personal identity increasingly functions as a marketable product. Social media users are encouraged to commodify appearance, personality, relationships, and emotions in exchange for visibility and recognition. Influencer culture exemplifies this transformation by turning everyday life into commercial content designed for consumption. Human identity becomes integrated into systems of branding, advertising, and economic competition, thereby weakening distinctions between personhood and commodity. The commodification of identity also intensifies psychological vulnerability

because self-worth becomes dependent upon external metrics of validation. Individuals may begin to perceive themselves primarily through digital feedback and audience response rather than through intrinsic moral and existential value. Such conditions threaten the ethical foundations of human dignity by subordinating personhood to visibility, productivity, and technological evaluation.

Against this reductionism, it is necessary to affirm that human value transcends algorithmic visibility. The human person cannot be fully understood through data profiles, engagement metrics, or predictive systems because human existence possesses dimensions of mystery, freedom, creativity, and transcendence that exceed technological calculation. Emmanuel Levinas emphasizes that the human Other always surpasses conceptual reduction and demands ethical responsibility beyond instrumental logic. Similarly, Gabriel Marcel distinguishes between treating persons as problems to be analyzed and encountering them as mysteries to be lived and respected. An ethical philosophy of digital culture must therefore resist forms of technological reductionism that diminish human dignity. Human beings are not merely data-producing entities or consumers within digital economies; they remain embodied moral subjects capable of authentic relation, ethical responsibility, and transcendence beyond algorithmic systems.

Despite the challenges posed by digital culture, possibilities for resistance and

rehumanization remain open. The dominance of visibility, surveillance, and performative identity does not entirely eliminate human freedom or ethical agency. Rather, the digital age calls for critical forms of resistance capable of recovering contemplation, relationality, and authentic human presence within technologically mediated societies. One important form of resistance is digital minimalism and contemplative resistance. Digital minimalism refers to the intentional limitation of technological consumption in order to preserve attention, interiority, and meaningful human experience. Philosophically, contemplative resistance involves reclaiming silence, reflection, and existential depth against the constant stimulation of digital culture. Byung-Chul Han argues that genuine freedom requires spaces of negativity, stillness, and withdrawal from the endless demands of productivity and connectivity. In a culture dominated by acceleration and visibility, silence itself becomes a form of ethical resistance. Rehumanization also requires reclaiming relationality and embodied presence. Human beings flourish through genuine interpersonal encounters grounded in empathy, dialogue, and ethical responsibility. Social media often fragments relationality by reducing communication to symbolic performance and digital consumption. Consequently, restoring authentic human connection involves reaffirming the importance of embodied interaction, attentive listening, and communal participation beyond virtual visibility. Philosophers such as Martin Buber

emphasize the significance of dialogical relation, where authentic existence emerges through genuine encounter with the Other rather than through objectification or instrumental interaction.

The ethical reconstruction of digital culture therefore demands critical reflection on the values embedded within technological systems. Digital technologies are not neutral instruments; they shape perception, behavior, and social organization according to underlying economic and ideological interests. Ethical reconstruction requires promoting technological practices that prioritize human dignity, relational well-being, democratic participation, and psychological flourishing rather than surveillance, commodification, and manipulation. Such reconstruction also involves cultivating digital ethics grounded in responsibility, moderation, and critical awareness. Educational institutions, policymakers, religious communities, and cultural organizations all possess roles in shaping humane approaches to digital life. The goal is not technological rejection but the creation of digital environments that support authentic personhood, ethical coexistence, and meaningful human development.

Conclusion

This study has examined digital identity as a profound transformation of human selfhood within the contemporary culture of social media. Through an anthropological and critical-philosophical reading grounded in the thought of Byung-Chul Han, the paper

has argued that social media platforms do not merely provide new channels of communication but fundamentally reshape the conditions under which identity is constructed, experienced, and recognized. The emergence of digitally mediated subjectivity reflects a transition from embodied and relational forms of selfhood toward identities increasingly defined by visibility, performance, algorithmic mediation, and continuous self-exposure.

The analysis demonstrated that digital culture operates within regimes of neoliberal subjectivity that encourage self-optimization, productivity, and performative authenticity. In this environment, the individual becomes both the producer and the commodity of digital capitalism, constantly curating and presenting the self for public validation through metrics of visibility such as likes, followers, and engagement. Consequently, identity is transformed into an ongoing project of exhibition and optimization, often accompanied by psychological exhaustion, fragmentation, and the erosion of contemplative interiority. The study further showed that social media contributes to the weakening of genuine alterity and dialogical encounter through algorithmic personalization and cultures of sameness, thereby reshaping not only personal identity but also the ethical structure of human relations. Within this context, the philosophy of Byung-Chul Han remains highly relevant for understanding the anthropology of social media and digital modernity. Han's analyses of the transparency society, the burnout

society, the achievement subject, and the disappearance of the Other" provide a compelling conceptual framework for diagnosing the cultural and existential consequences of digital capitalism. His critique illuminates how regimes of hypervisibility and positivity transform freedom into self-exploitation and communication into exposure. More importantly, Han's thought reveals that the crisis of digital identity is not merely technological but anthropological, involving a deeper transformation in how human beings understand themselves, relate to others, and inhabit the world.

The future of the self in digital culture therefore lies within a tension between exposure and interiority. On one hand, technological mediation increasingly pushes individuals toward perpetual visibility and external validation; on the other hand, authentic selfhood still depends upon interior reflection, embodied presence, silence, and meaningful relationality. The challenge for contemporary philosophical anthropology is to articulate forms of digital existence that preserve human depth without rejecting technological participation altogether. A reconstructed understanding of the self must therefore balance connectivity with contemplation, visibility with opacity, and digital interaction with embodied ethical encounter. The question of digital identity is inseparable from the broader question of what it means to remain human in an age increasingly shaped by technological mediation.

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