

后马克思主义视角下的社交媒体与异化问题
**SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE PROBLEM OF ALIENATION FROM
THE POINT OF VIEW OF POST-MARXISM**

Mashchytska Sergey Mikhailovich

Candidate of Science in Philosophy, Associate Professor

Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics

抽象的。本文考虑了经典马克思主义异化概念的转变，以及社交媒体功能背景下的相关商品拜物教和剩余价值概念。社交媒体作为创造剩余价值的工具和利用数字劳动力的手段的作用得到了体现。有人认为，社交媒体的运作基础是一种吸引、连接、提供的意识形态，作为掩盖数字劳动力剥削的技术。有人认为，这种意识形态的功能是掩盖对数字劳动力的剥削的技术。经历了积极的社交和沟通体验，个人为商业策略提供了大量的个人数据。与此同时，人们关注的焦点是数字化这样的现象，即社交媒体传播的虚拟空间引发了个体身份的分裂，而个体成为一个连续体。作为失去身份的替代方案，现代高科技资本主义提供了数字身份识别。这个过程可以在“主体之死”概念发展的框架内来理解。在先验主体之后，经验主体离开，据此我们解释了超人类主义的日益流行。与此同时，数字化可以在资本主义解域化逻辑的框架内进行解释。

关键词：社交媒体、数字化、数字资本主义、参与-连接-提供意识形态、商品化、身份分裂。

Abstract. *The article considers the transformation of classical Marxist concept of alienation, as well as related it concepts of commodity fetishism and surplus value in the context of social media functioning. The role of social media as tools for creating surplus value and as means of exploiting digital labor is shown. It is argued that social media functions on the basis of an engaging-connecting-providing ideology as a technology for masking the exploitation of digital labor. It is argued that such an ideology functions as a technology for masking the exploitation of digital labor. Experiencing a positive experience of socialization and communication, an individual provides a lot of personal data for business strategies. At the same time, the focus of attention is on such a phenomenon as digital alienation, which consists in the fact that the virtual space of social media communications provokes the splitting of the identity of an individual who becomes a continuum. As an alternative to the lost identity, modern high-tech*

capitalism provides digital identification. This process can be understood within the framework of the development of the concept of “death of the subject”. After the transcendental subject, the empirical subject leaves, in the light of which we explain the growing popularity of transhumanism. At the same time, digital alienation can be interpreted within the framework of the capitalist logic of deterritorialization.

Keywords: *social media, digital alienation, digital capitalism, engaging-connecting-providing ideology, commodification, identity splitting.*

The emergence of digital social reality is usually associated with the growth of welfare, solidarity and democracy. A digital society permeated with social communications must overcome or largely overcome many traditional problems due to the high degree of coordination of people through mobile communicators and the difficulties of hiding information in the conditions of digital technologies [1, pp. 46-90].

In the well-known book by top managers of Google Corporation Schmidt and Cohen “The New Digital World”, the authors draw pictures of the coming digital social reality in a semi-utopian form, emphasizing its advantages in comparison with the “old analog world”. These benefits are expressed in increased prosperity, solidarity and democracy. The digital society, permeated with myriads of social communications based on media platforms, should, if not outlive, then largely overcome many traditional problems. First of all, we are talking about the problems of deep economic inequality between individuals, social groups, states and geographical regions, about the abuses of political elites and officials. Positive transformations, according to digital visionaries, will be achieved due to a high degree of coordination of people through mobile communicators and transparency associated with the difficulties of hiding information in the conditions of digital dominance. In addition, digitalization gives a new impetus to globalization, which, in particular, should ensure that individuals have equal economic opportunities for employment in the economy. Not only individuals gain additional potential, but also ideas and solutions [1]. At the same time, the interests of capital in the new digital world are not articulated by the authors, just as the main question is not formulated: are digitalization, the Internet and social media capable of solving urgent social problems while remaining instruments of corporate capital, or rather generate new ones?

The concept of information society is associated with the socializing, solidifying and exposing role of social media. The subject of the article lies in the field of existential analytics of human existence within the information society. The analysis is based mainly on the ideas of the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. The aim is to demonstrate that the classical Marxist concepts

of labor, alienation, surplus value, commodity fetishism and others, reinterpreted within several generations of post-Marxism, under the conditions of the onset of a digital capitalist society, acquire new connotations that force, among other things, to reconsider the basic attitudes of Marx. In addition, at this stage, these transformations can be fully understood only taking into account transhumanistic and posthumanistic ideologies.

At the moment, a considerable number of authors are engaged in critical studies of social media within the framework of late capitalism. Among them are Andrejevic., Hesmondhalgh, Fisher, Fuchs, Mendelson, Scholz. The accusatory pathos of these researchers is usually associated with the identification of the interests of capital and the discovery of new forms of exploitation and alienation created by digital capitalism. Social media is considered from the point of view of the presence of implicit ideological attitudes that form distorted attitudes of consciousness. Marcuse saw in electronic computing devices the apogee of capitalism with its formal rationality and the desire to calculate everything in quantitative terms [2, p. 168]. However, the phenomenon of computerization fully manifests itself only at the beginning of the new century. The scale of this phenomenon is associated with the formation of a new anthropological type. We are talking about the final stage of alienation within capitalism.

We can talk about two aspects of this process. The first of them is ideological. As Lukach also noted, alienated labor needs an ideology that generates alienated consciousness. Analyzing the ideological functioning of social media, Fuchs proposes the concept of engaging-connecting-warning ideology (engaging/connecting/sharing ideology). Instagram Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and the largest media platforms proclaim the corresponding installations at the level of their slogans [3, p. 66]. When entering the media sphere, an individual should feel like an organic part of a benevolent community of communicants. The positive social experience of communication, entering into communities of interest, from Fuchs' point of view, veils the processes of commodification hidden behind it, the extraction of surplus value. The latter are directly related to the advertising business. Media platforms are essentially the largest advertising agencies that trade users' personal data and use digital labor. Thus, an inverted commodity fetishism is formed: the directly experienced social experience masks the financial relations hidden behind it.

The conclusion that follows from this situation is as follows: an inverted commodity fetishism is being formed, consisting in the fact that now the subjective hides the objective. That is, the social experience directly experienced masks the financial relations hidden behind it, which, due to powerful mediation, may not fall into the sphere of attention at all. However, it should be noted that what plays the role of objective in inverted commodity fetishism, in classical commodity

fetishism, was seen as subjective. In other words, for Marx, commodity-money relations hide the relations of exploitation, and in the new conditions, the positive experience of socialization hides the relations of exploitation. It turns out that the morally reprehensible, but indirect use of neighbors becomes possible due to their direct positive experiences. In critical Marxist terminology, this means that the subject masks the subject, more correctly the subjective hides the subjective. Thus, the ingenious inversion proposed by Fuchs turns out to be not exactly what he pretends to be. But still, another interesting conclusion follows from this: in the conditions of digital capitalism, there is almost no place for the objective. This train of thought directs us towards Jean Baudrillard's reflections on the dominance of symbolic exchange.

The second aspect of alienation in digital capitalism is anthropological. It can be described using the concept of digital alienation. The idea of well-known sociologists that "capitalism has outgrown individualism and is no longer so shaped by it that individualism may be dysfunctional for capitalism in the modern world" explains the phenomenon of proliferation of virtual personalities, leading to the fact that the number of accounts tends to exceed the number of real users of social media [4, p. 75]. It is known that the mechanisms of identity formation in post-industrial society began to have a market consumer character, when the "I" is built through images: "the "I" becomes identical to visual signals. They include the shape of your body, the forest decorations, the type and contents of your house, the places where you visit and where you can be met, the way you behave and talk, what you talk about, your expressed artistic and literary tastes, your usual food and the way it is prepared - and many other things supplied by the market in the form of material goods, services or knowledge" [4, p. 84].

Now these signals are sent in a virtual environment within different, often non-overlapping communities, which are selected a priori so as to perceive one or another identity of the communication participant loyally. The real world does not provide such comfortable conditions. As Openkov notes, "an individual, a whole person, walks away, chained to his uniformity, as to a heavy backpack, in his place comes a continuum, a man of many faces" [5, p. 64]. Virtual space is an incubator of split identity. Projected into a virtual environment, it is alienated, and alienated, it splits. Alienation and splitting are a two-pronged process, the first inevitably entails the second. This is the first moment of digital alienation and, at the same time, the moment of deconstruction of the empirical subject. Its specificity is that it is to some extent controlled by a person. But there is a second point. The centrifugal movement of the disintegration of identity in the virtual environment, in our opinion, raises a legitimate question about its preservation in digital form, namely in the form of digital identity identification. The latter is perhaps the most important component of the digitalization process in the modern

world. It is no coincidence that this process is actively promoted by States and transnational financial structures.

Thus, for the system, a person ceases to be even an empirical subject, he turns into a digital code based on biometric information. As Openkov rightly notes, “at the first stage, a man of many faces will stop trying to be a man, at the second it will become impossible for him to go back, no matter how much he wants it” [5, p. 65]. It turns out that the attractor in the process of anthropological alienation has always been the posthuman society in its digital form. This is the limit of alienation and at the same time the completion of the dialectic of enlightenment.

Honnet distinguishes intersubjective (in relation to others), subjective (to oneself) and objective (to the world/nature) forms of reification and corresponding forms of alienation [6, p. 75]. Communicants are used to motivate the virtualization of identity, the disclosure of personal data, which is then sold to the business. At the same time, they are dehumanized, entering the race of signification, permanently being information-generating devices. Such traditional constants of human existence as reflection, prayer, empathy are excluded by digital capitalism.

Social media also blurs the line between working time and leisure or work and play. As Fuchs notes, “in the race, work and play are combined in game work, which is used for capital gains. In this sense, Facebook focuses on the total commodification of time – all human time should become a producer of surplus value ...” [3, p. 128]. The newly invented activity in the interests of capital is called “playbots” (play-bour). The strategy of capitalism in this case is to present alienated labor as creativity and freedom for the exploited, so that they experience the pleasure of exploitation.

At the present stage, the boundary between production and consumption also turns out to be insignificant, since consumer alienation is the same as labor alienation, which was pointed out by Adorno. In addition, in conditions of excess production capacity, consumption becomes more important than production. However, let's not forget that consumption is an ideology, and the means of maintaining and the source of the necessary cultural standards are the media, but increasingly social media. And they, in turn, are based on what Jenkins called a “culture of participation” in relation not to politics, but to communication, in which any user is called upon to create and distribute new content [7, p. 133]. The communicant not only distributes content, but also gives valuable personal data to the business, as well as assimilates the necessary cultural patterns. Thus, late capitalism is confined precisely to the virtual environment.

Thus, the modern stage of the development of capitalism is rightfully called “digital capitalism”, since the process of creating surplus value is largely closed to the virtual digital environment of social media. Commodity fetishism, alienation, surplus value, as well as the ideology that ensures their functioning, having

originated within the framework of industrial capitalism, are not overcome, but are fixed in a new digital form. Through a positive experience of socialization and communication, an individual provides personal data for business strategies. Their implicit ideological basis is an engaging-connecting-distributing ideology and a culture of participation promoted by social media, which are also drivers of the depersonification process. Digital alienation consists in the fact that the virtual space of social media communications provokes the splitting of an individual's identity. As an alternative to the lost identity, modern capitalism provides digital identification.

List of sources used

1. Schmidt, E., Cohen, D. *The New Digital World. How technologies change people's lives, business models and the concept of states.* – M.: Mann, Ivanov and Ferber, 2013. – 368 p.

2. Marcuse, H. *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory.* – London: MayFlyBooks, 2009. – 220 p.

3. Fuchs, Ch. *Critical Theory of Communication.* – London: University of Westminster Press, 2016. – 230 p.

4. Bauman, Z. *Svoboda.* – M.: New Publishing house, 2006. – 132 p.

5. Openkov, M. *Hacking the future: an introduction to the philosophy of the Knowledge Society.* – Moscow: UNESCO WFP NGO "Information for All", 2007– - 127 p.

6. Honneth A. *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea (With Commentaries by Judith Butler, Raymond Geuss and Jonathan Lear).* – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. – 184 p.

7. Jenkins H. *Convergence Culture.* – New York: New York University Press, 2008. – 318 p.