UDC: 1 (091).
LBC: 87.6
MJ № 308
10.33864/2617-751X.2025.v8.i5.13-26

DIGITALIZATION PROCESS AS THE GREAT EQUALIZER. ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Heydar Aslanov[•]

Abstract. Digitalization has become an irreversible and widespread process of integrating digital technologies into fundamental social institutions, including the economy, politics, education, family, and religion. We are witnessing the unprecedented phenomenon of social representations through digital transformation, yet the nature of these representations remains incompletely understood. We cannot apply traditional approaches to characterize the process of digitalization merely as evident progress, improvement, or development. A review of the actual impact on social life reveals evidence that digital technologies do not free individuals from subjective control; rather, they liberate control itself from any human (social) oversight. Furthermore, we are witnessing the gradual erosion of the very essence of the 'social' as it undergoes permanent dehumanization. This transformation occurs primarily through the quantification of social events and interactions. The major and ultimate consequence of this process is the obliteration of any qualitative features of social reality, which is the essence of what we understand as social- namely, hierarchy. Thus, we define the process of digitalization as the "great equalization".

Keywords: digitalization, Artificial Intelligence, equalization, desocialization, social institutions, social transformation, non-human control

[•] Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy (Ph.D),
Leading Researcher with the Department of Social Psychology of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan ANAS, Senior lecturer with the Department of Gender and Applied Psychology of the Social Sciences and Psychology faculty at Baku State University; Baku, Azerbaijan
E-mail: heydar_01@hotmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0129-2511
To cite this article: Aslanov, H. [2025]. DIGITALIZATION PROCESS AS THE GREAT EQUALIZER. ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVE. *"Metafizika" journal, 8*(5), pp.13-26.
https://doi.org/10.33864/2617-751X.2025.v8.i5.13-26

Article history:
Received: 07.05.2025
Accepted: 04.08.2025

УДК: 1 (091).
ББК: 87.6
MJ № 308
10.33864/2617-751X.2025.v8.i5.13-26

ПРОЦЕСС ЦИФРОВИЗАЦИИ КАК ВЕЛИКИЙ УРАВНИТЕЛЬ: АЛЬТЕРНАТИВНЫЙ ВЗГЛЯД

Гейдар Асланов[*]

Абстракт. Цифровизация стала необратимым и широкомасштабным процессом интеграции цифровых технологий в фундаментальные социальные институты, включая экономику, политику, образование, семью и религию. Мы являемся свидетелями беспрецедентного феномена социальных репрезентаций посредством цифровых преобразований, однако природа этих репрезентаций остается не до конца понятной. Мы не можем применять традиционные подходы, характеризуя процесс цифровизации только как очевидный прогресс, улучшение или развитие. Анализ фактического воздействия на социальную жизнь показывает, что цифровые технологии не освобождают индивидов от субъективного контроля; скорее, они освобождают сам контроль от любого человеческого (социального) надзора. Более того, мы являемся свидетелями постепенной эрозии самой сущности «социального», которое подвергается перманентной дегуманизации. Эта трансформация происходит в основном за счет квантификации социальных событий и взаимодействий. Главным и окончательным следствием этого процесса является стирание любых качественных характеристик социальной реальности, которые и составляют суть того, что мы понимаем под социальным - а именно, иерархии. Таким образом, мы определяем процесс цифровизации как «великую уравниловку».

Ключевые слова: цифровизация, искусственный интеллект, уравнивание, десоциализация, социальные институты, социальная трансформация, нечеловеческий контроль

---

[*] Доктор философии по философии,
Ведущий научный сотрудник отдела социальной психологии Института философии и социологии Национальной академии наук Азербайджана, Старший преподаватель кафедры гендерной и прикладной психологии факультета социальных наук и психологии Бакинского государственного университета; Баку, Азербайджан
E-mail: heydar_01@hotmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0129-2511

Цитировать статью: Асланов, Г. [2025]. ПРОЦЕСС ЦИФРОВИЗАЦИИ КАК ВЕЛИКИЙ УРАВНИТЕЛЬ: АЛЬТЕРНАТИВНЫЙ ВЗГЛЯД. *Журнал «Metafizika»*, *8*(5), с.13-26.
https://doi.org/10.33864/2617-751X.2025.v8.i5.13-26

История статьи:
Статья поступила в редакцию: 07.05.2025
Отправлена на доработку: 10.06.2025
Принята для печати: 04.08.2025

UOT: 1 (091).
KBT: 87.6
MJ № 308
10.33864/2617-751X.2025.v8.i5.13-26

RƏQƏMSALLAŞDIRMA PROSESİ BÖYÜK BƏRABƏRLƏŞDİRİCİ KİMİ: ALTERNATİV BAXIŞ

Heydər Aslanov*

Abstrakt. Rəqəmsallaşma iqtisadiyyat, siyasət, təhsil, ailə və din daxil olmaqla, rəqəmsal texnologiyaların fundamental sosial institutlara inteqrasiyasının dönməz və geniş yayılmış bir prosesinə çevrilmişdir. Rəqəmsal transformasiya yolu ilə sosial təmsillərin görünməmiş fenomeninin şahidi oluruq. Bununla belə, bu təmsillərin mahiyyəti hələ də tam başa düşülməmiş qalır. Rəqəmsallaşma prosesini sadəcə olaraq inkişaf, təkmilləşmə və ya inkişaf kimi xarakterizə etmək üçün ənənəvi üsullar tətbiq edə bilmərik. Sosial həyata faktiki təsirin nəzərdən keçirilməsi rəqəmsal texnologiyaların şəxsləri subyektiv nəzarətdən azad etmədiyinə dair sübutlar aşkar edir; daha doğrusu, onlar hər hansı bir insan (ictimai) nəzarətdən nəzarəti azad edirlər. Bundan başqa, biz «sosial»ın mahiyyətinin tədricən eroziyaya uğrayaraq həmişəlik məhv olduğunun şahidi oluruq. Bu transformasiya ilk növbədə sosial hadisələrin və qarşılıqlı əlaqələrin kvantlaşdırılması yolu ilə baş verir. Bu prosesin əsas və son nəticəsi sosial reallığın hər hansı bir kvalitik xüsusiyyətlərinin aradan qaldırılmasıdır. Bu, bizim sosial- yəni iyerarxiya kimi anladığımız şeylərin mahiyyətidir. Beləliklə, biz rəqəmsallaşma prosesini "böyük bərabərləşdirmə" kimi müəyyən edirik.

Açar sözlər: rəqəmsallaşma, Süni intellekt, bərabərləşdirmə, sosiallaşma, sosial institutlar, sosial transformasiya, qeyri-insani nəzarət

* fəlsəfə üzrə fəlsəfə doktoru,
Azərbaycan Milli Elmlər Akademiyası Fəlsəfə və Sosiologiya İnstitutunun Sosial Psixologiya şöbəsinin aparıcı elmi işçisi, Bakı Dövlət Universitetinin Sosial Elmlər və Psixologiya fakültəsinin Gender və tətbiqi psixologiya kafedrasının baş müəllimi; Bakı, Azərbaycan
E-mail: heydar_01@hotmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0129-2511
Məqaləyə istinad: Aslanov, H. [2025] RƏQƏMSALLAŞDIRMA PROSESİ BÖYÜK BƏRABƏRLƏŞDİRİCİ KİMİ: ALTERNATİV BAXIŞ. *"Metafizika" jurnalı, 8*(5), səh.13-26.
https://doi.org/10.33864/2617-751X.2025.v8.i5.13-26

Məqalənin tarixçəsi:
Məqalə redaksiyaya daxil olmuşdur: 07.05.2025
Təkrar işlənməyə göndərilmişdir: 10.06.2025
Çapa qəbul edilmişdir: 04.08.2025

1.Introduction

Although almost half of humanity lacks access to the Internet, it is quite evident that in a few decades, the world network will become an integral and decisive part of life for the entire mankind. According to the UN statistics, in just two decades, digital technologies have reached about 50 percent of population of the developing world [UN, 2019]. As World Economic Forum experts determined dynamics: "*today, global IP traffic is almost 150,000 GB per second, compared to just 100 GB per day three decades ago*" [WEF, 2020]. E. Stolterman and A. Force (2004) define digital transformation as changes associated with the use of digital technologies across all aspects of human life. In their opinion, digital technologies are now part of human life, and people are more and more aware of the world through information technologies.

As the media suggests, digitalization has a positive effect, as it empowers various sectors, including the service industry, financial sector, and public administration. It dramatically improve the quality of a person's life with the click of a mouse. is continually evolving to eliminate barriers that arise from an individual's social characteristics, geographic location, or physical and sensory abilities [Kanevsky, 2012]. However, how can we view this phenomenon as controversial and different from the perspectives presented by various digital media experts? Examining the impact on fundamental social institutions could illuminate this issue.

2.Economy

Bourgeoisie as once has destroyed traditional economy and hierarchy of patriarchal society, manifesting entire calculus through capitalization, associated with attractive liberty, fraternity and equality. Later on, that process appeared to cause tremendous alienation of humans from the new capitalized reality. The same goes for digitalization nowadays, altering and increasing alienation from virtual reality.

"Virtual" itself doesn't mean experienced empirical cognition or theoretical construction which results in human activity. It means presentation of digitally replicated object as real, the only legitimacy of which is in demonstration of fractal similarity. The process has been described by Baudrillard [1970, 1972, 1976, 1990] in his numerous studies. Under digitalization of activity, i.e., creation of a virtual replication of it, the very essence of economy is under question, as we move from production and exchange toward calculus of imaging and appearance. The very core meaning of industry stands opposite to virtuality, as the economy implies creation, while virtuality is based upon appearance. Since the end of XIX c. economy directed from production toward financial operations, and digitalization is a logical result of the process.

An example of the extensive integration of information technology into industry, business process automation, and the spread of artificial intelligence is the "Industry 4.0" - uniquely comprehensive program that encompasses the transformation of 18 functional areas simultaneously, ranging from production management to budgeting and management issues. The stated objectives of this strategy are to enhance efficiency, improve manageability, and unify business processes as much as possible. Another clear example is the growing interest in the virtualization of monetary instruments. Digital currency, or cryptocurrency, refers to money that exists solely in electronic format. According to Liu Yihua, a researcher at the Taihe Think Tank, digital currency will replace fiat money within the next 10 to 15 years. During this period, the financial sector will undergo profound changes, leading to the formation of a cashless society [Shen, et. al., 2021].

While there is no consensus on the fundamental aspects of the digital economy, positive evaluations of it are widely spread. According to B. Armstrong, digitalization enhances business profitability and "believes that crypto can serve as "a tool for economic freedom" that includes people in a fairer economy, with strong property rights and free trade." [Clynch, 2022]. In fact, business models are evolving to introduce new products and services, increase value, and foster a new management culture, rather than produce goods and trade them.

The most enigmatic concept actively implemented in developing countries is finalized under the "sustainable development" strategy. The term "sustainable development" gained prominence following the publication of a report prepared for the UN in 1987, [WCED, 1987]. It refers to development that meets the needs of present generations without depriving future generations of the opportunity to meet their own needs. In essence, it is to create a balance between generations. The use of digital tools in the economy is regarded as one of the most effective means to achieve this balance. However, there is no clarity regarding the definition of the term and how it interprets the well-known concept of economic progress of society. A significant challenge lies in achieving equality in distribution within a stable society that does not readily accept abrupt changes. Digital technologies can be an ideal vehicle for this stability, as they counteract the fundamental human productive intension – to grow and dominate in the present.

The 'sustainable' means to keep up the certain level that is resilient to risky and challenging fluctuations, thereby avoiding potential turmoil and ultimately achieving a balanced, equilized economic state. Clearly, the future belongs to companies that make the most of intelligent data to empower their employees and attain mutually beneficial business and environmental outcomes.

However, this approach contradicts the fundamental principles of economic competition and development.

3.Authority

In 2016, Japan announced a comprehensive strategy called "Society 5.0", developed by the government with active participation from the primary Japanese business association. Society 5.0, referred to as the "Superintelligent Society" [Rojas et al., 2021], as new historical type of social organization that follows the previous four types: the society of “Hunters and Gatherers” (1.0), “Agricultural” (2.0), “Industrial” (3.0), and “Informational” (4.0) societies. Unlike the latter, which aimed to digitalize certain elements, the project of Society 5.0 involves the complete digitalization of the social environment to maximize the utilization of all natural, technological, and human resources. In this society, humans and robots (or artificial intelligence) coexist and collaborate to enhance the quality of life. This new form of intelligence is presumably inspired by the behavioral patterns of ants within an anthill. The focus is not on totalitarian trends, but rather on trends of equalization, emphasizing community compliance and the elimination of any form of stratification, regardless of the criteria used.

Since the term “social” for us refers to hierarchy, then in Society 5.0 we can witness elimination of traditional social structures. This shift entails a distinct system of authority- digital authority based on quantification rather than the qualifications of its members.

Another project promoting the deconstruction of social structures through the transformation of analog technologies and objects into digital formats is the Metaverse [Ravenscraft, 2022]. On October 28, 2021, Meta co-founder Mark Zuckerberg's Facebook Connect 2021 presentation took place online. Zuckerberg talks about the universe he is creating: "A lot of people think that the Metaverse is about a place, but one definition of this is that it's about a time when immersive digital worlds become the primary way we live our lives and spend our time… I think it's a reasonable design" [Canales, 2022]. According to the creators of the Metaverse, society will benefit from advantages such as communication through avatars and augmented reality, both in private settings (“Horizon Home”) and in business activities (“Horizon Workrooms” service). E-government represents a radical transformation of the fundamental principles of interactions between authorities and the population. With the transition of government systems to a digital format, bureaucracy is almost eliminated by simplifying procedures, increasing the efficiency of public administration and transparency of general operations by enhancing public control. In fact, this creates a nationwide (at least) distributed public administration system that addresses a full range of tasks related to government

services and oversight. This entire control is described as an increase in citizens' trust in the state. However, this trust is of a different nature and has nothing to do of archetypical, traditional, cultural perceptions of governance. The masses should feel and witness the presence of power, visualized evidence of authority. Power should be articulated, presented, and represented to be recognized- whether through traditional values or the bourgeois values of modern times. E-government diverts the concept of authority to become independent from its perception. Furthermore, as corporations and governments actively try to develop and implement artificial intelligence, the very condition of 'trust' is under question.

This all signifies, above all, the depersonalization of actors in creating legitimacy for power. Since power means the ability to nominate, articulate, and assign, an actor who is depersonalized loses the capacity to determine and nominate. Consequently, concepts such as "the good" and "the bad", "the true" and "the lie" turn to appear as relative categories. The archetype of power, historically associated with patriarchal traditions and a natural hierarchy headed by wisdom and skills- attributes recognized since the times of Plato and Aristotle- loses its practical application. Political power, in turn, is no longer determined by substantial principles of hierarchy or the qualitative differences that constitute the "social" as it is.

The non-human control exerted by cybernetics undermines the very concept of "control" itself, which, as we recall, refers to the era of modernity and its totalitarian tendencies. Ironically, in contemporary society, independence from human interference in social processes does not lead to liberation for its members.

4.Education

Education, the transmission of knowledge, is one of the social institutions most significantly impacted by digitalization. During the COVID-19 pandemic, educational institutions worldwide were forced to adopt alternative, distance learning methods through online platforms to continue educational process. This shift was necessary, as over 1.2 billion children in 186 countries were affected by school shutdowns due to the pandemic [WEF, 2020]. Even prior to the onset of the pandemic, digital education technology was already experiencing substantial growth and adoption, with global investments reaching US$18.66 billion in 2019. The total online education market was projected to reach US$350 billion by 2025 [Dyrland, 2021]. But is online education truly sufficient for the essence of the educational process? It is often believed that distance learning fosters and enhances independence. But independence from what? Apparently, it is from the challenges and difficulties

encountered while learning and studying to acquire knowledge, which, in fact, ensures that very independence.

Away from rhetoric, it is evident that digitalization, particularly the virtualization of learning, brings significant side effects. First, as demonstrated by the authorities mentioned above, we observe a de-personalization of the teacher. Since the beginning of time, teaching has fundamentally been a human interaction. It is not solely about the challenge of ensuring that students comprehend the subject matter; human interaction itself is a crucial factor in legitimizing the truth that knowledge conveys. Therefore, any shift toward virtual learning undermines, or at the very least, diverts the teaching process by excluding the teacher from direct engagement.

Another effect is caused by the rapid development of Artificial Intelligence (AI). It is not just like 'Alien invasion' [Lawton, 2023]. This is rather opposite-pandemic equalization, where it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish the invader from the victim. The primary danger of AI, as discussed today, lies not in its unpredictability or its existential risk to humanity [Metz, 2023], but in its potential to erode any existing hierarchy, including social itself. We often fail to recognize AI as a non-human source of decision-making. Its implications are independent of the presence or absence or presence of human, absence or presence of social.

The acquisition, possession, or mere quantitative accumulation of flat data does not constitute education, nor has it ever. Education is fundamentally about the creation of a system of knowledge, which involves establishing a hierarchy of values and, consequently, fostering adherence to these values in individuals. This process encompasses what we refer to as 'becoming,' 'formation,' and 'personal development.' The absence of these elements results in a loss of the social function of education.

The same applies to scientific knowledge, which has become a form of bulk data aggregation that is easily accessible. In fact, true education lies in acquiring analytical skills rather than merely operational skills. While simplifying access to data enhances consumption, it does not necessarily foster cognitive skills or promote creativity; the latter is gradually diminishing in today's digitized world. Education should be about 'becoming' rather than 'reflecting,' and artificial intelligence alleviates us from this uncomfortable challenge.

While excluding the teacher as a legitimate authority, the verification of knowledge shifts from creative perceptions of truth and logical constructions validated by experience to the range of declared or presented propositions that can be easily accessed or retrieved from mass storage or data banks. Having instant access to large volumes of data is ineffective if the user cannot

comprehend or interpret what is being accessed. This phenomenon is referred to as in fact, consumption of equality in accessing data.

AI, as the ultimate endpoint of knowledge, renders education meaningless and diminishes the significance of personal development and the process of self-actualization.

5.Kid's development

We identified two issues related to contemporary psychological considerations. The first pertains to the significant impact of the digitalization of the social environment on human consciousness. The second concerns modern developments in gender determination and identity among children. The infant is not defined by temporality (age) at any specific moment in their existence. At this stage, the infant lacks sovereignty. The development of social and gender identity requires primary objects of attraction- such as patterns of self-identification and personal growth- and these objects are inherently binary, as they reflect the psychological representations of the mother and father.

Digitalization, in its most abstract sense, represents the negation of is the essence of human development. Through calculus and numbering, we fixate on the present. The individual accepts their state and condition as given, rather than striving for an ideal to achieve. In a digital environment, the infant ceases to be a child and becomes a subject stripped of essential psychological objects. The instances of the father and mother lose their bases to be presented in the infant's psyche. Digitalization, in its most advanced form- such as Artificial Intelligence and ChatGPT- excludes the paternal instance or the place of "the third", the presence of Lacanian "Other". Instead, an alternative instance is being deployed- the non-gendered, transcendental presence of an almighty absolute, which, however, this way or another, later or soon, will reveal its incestuous and narcissistic origins.

Moreover, the digital environment, which imitates society, replaces not only the process of socialization itself, but above all, eliminates the very need and certainty in the gender identity. This condition renders the initiation process ineffective. Consequently, libido becomes self-directed, as any digital representation of external objects is devoid of gender. The binary in a virtual society can be designated formally, but it is not the result of the achievement, initiation, or development of an individual's personality.

6.Religion

The significant impact of gender issues has led to a reevaluation of numinosity, which refers to the perception of the extraordinary nature of the supernatural. Since psychoanalysis has explained the direct relationship between religious feelings and the Oedipus complex, the guilt complex, and

the Law of the Father, any removal of parental figures will inevitably influence attitudes toward religion. With the movement toward equalization, not only are pagan concepts of binary gods being questioned, but the Christian understanding of God as Father is also being challenged. Meanwhile, other Abrahamic faiths- Judaism and Islam, which embrace a gender-neutral conception of God- are witnessing a growing number of online followers. Recently, developers from MIRS Communications Ltd., the Israeli division of Motorola, released a new device featuring all the necessary functionalities, positioning it as a mobile phone for true-believing Jews. The MIRS device does not support internet connectivity or messaging services, and access to adult content is restricted.

Singapore-based company has released the Ilkone i800 mobile phone, featuring unique capabilities designed to assist Muslims in performing their religious rites. The device includes the complete text of the Quran in both Arabic and English, stored in its memory. Additionally, it is equipped with an automatic reminder that alerts users when it is time to pray. The phone also features an electronic compass that indicates the direction of Mecca. Moreover, there are various unconventional religious applications, such as "PrayerMate", which allows users to track the number of prayers they have completed and set reminders accordingly. This shift may lead to a reliance on technology rather than genuine spiritual engagement. Another noteworthy application is "The Sanctuary", a Catholic smartphone app that offers a virtual visit to a cathedral. Users can light a virtual candle for the deceased, sing psalms, or pray, and even share their experiences on Twitter or Facebook.

This all tells much of the 'mediator,' which ultimately undermines the true essence of worship. The key point is that believers, relying on gadgets, eventually redirect their worship toward the gadget itself, becoming dependent on functionality rather than authentic emotions. With the aid of electronics and innovative mechanisms, believers shield themselves from challenges, presuming a priori that their spiritual strength is inadequate. This way or another, digital technologies implemented in religious activities prioritize and declare superiority of technology over religion, serving as justifications for commitment to religious objects. An example of this is the installation of a robot priest named Mindar at Kodaiji, a 400-year-old Buddhist temple in Kyoto, Japan. As S. Samuel (2020) notes, this "$1 million machine is an attempt to reignite people's passion for their faith in a country where religious affiliation is on the decline". This indicates that digital technologies are being called upon to revive and lead religious activities, as people view them as proof of the authenticity of their worship.

Evidently, digitalization diminishes gender differences, which in turn transforms the nature of worship. Worship becomes less reliant on psychology and turns toward individual behavioral demands. And, at the same time, it becomes less dependent on social norms, which traditionally served as a guiding framework.

7.Conclusion

We cannot define digitalization solely as progress or improvement in development, as the very concept of "development" is being questioned as far as inclusiveness and sustainability prevails in digital world. The process impacts the fundamental, archetypal principle of inequality that has shaped human behavior throughout history. At this point, we can no longer follow McLuhan (1964) in his dialectical construction regarding technology: "Physiologically, man, in the normal use of technology (or his variously extended body), is perpetually modified by it and, in turn, finds ever new ways of modifying his technology. Man becomes, as it were, the sex organs of the machine world, just as the bee of the plant world, enabling it to fecundate and evolve ever new forms. The machine world reciprocates man's love by expediting his wishes and desires, namely, by providing him with wealth". This dialectic does not apply to digital technology, whose function is not one of extension but rather of substitution for a human, particularly when we consider humanity as a creative diversity. Being a technological tool implies the existence of a master sovereign mind. The digital instance is not, and cannot be, a tool since it fundamentally questions the very independence of the mind- both in its reflection of reality and in decision-making. The very concept of independence can only be articulated and understood through the negation of equality, specifically as independence from similarity. We once believed that technology was incapable of controlling processes without human intervention; however, it has now developed the capacity to do so. This capability is facilitated by a process of equalization within the social sphere. This understanding aligns with Ritzer's prediction of "replacing human technologies with nonhuman technologies..." [Ritzer, 1993]. As a result, the essence of the economy- production and exchange, which reflects inequality in needs and demands- transforms into its opposite: the allocation of goods and services, i.e. overcoming inequality. Since this economy does not adhere to the logic of the market or planned necessity (both indicators of modernity and development), it represents a new phenomenon of sustained "condition," a term first proposed by Lyotard (1979).

Authority as a social institution, including political power, no longer requires legitimacy- whether derived from traditional sacredness, charisma, or the will of the people. Authority has become depersonalized, both from the perspective

of those who implement or execute it and from the standpoint of those who confer it- be it the democratic majority of eligible voters, religious charisma, or inherited grace.

The same applies to education. In today's world, where knowledge is often equated with mere access to digital data, teaching has become limited to the presentation of facts rather than fostering the ability to analyze and construct reality. Traditionally, education implies that reality should be explained, understood, comprehended, and adjusted. However in the context of virtual or augmented reality, this foundational approach is not inherently necessary. Digitalization practices in religion tend to minimize the social determinants of ethical and moral statuses, which, in turn, eliminates the hierarchy associated with these statuses.

We can conclude that the impact of digitalization has irreversible and qualitative effects. It does not simply modify social objects or institutions; rather, it radically and creatively transforms them into an unprecedented new system. This process leads to the equalization or elimination of social hierarchies. This newfound equality allows the new system to operate increasingly independently, asserting its own sovereignty over the social environment. Consequently, the very sovereignty of humans as social beings is called into question, as sovereignty itself is inherently rooted in inequality.

REFERENCES

1. Baudrillard, J. (1970). *The consumer society* (E. Samarsky, Trans.). Moscow: Cultural Revolution – Respublika, 2006. 269 p. (Original work published as *Crime parfait*. Paris: S.Y.P.P.). (in Russian)

2. Baudrillard, J. (1972). *For a critique of the political economy of the sign* (D. Kralechkin, Trans.). Moscow: Academic Project, 2007. 335 p. (Original work published Paris: Editions Gallimard). (in Russian)

3. Baudrillard, J. (1976). *Symbolic exchange and death* (S. Zenkin, Trans.). Moscow: Dobrosvet; KDU, 2009. 387 p. (Original work published Paris: Gallimard). (in Russian)

4. Baudrillard, J. (1990). *The transparency of evil: Essay on extreme phenomena* (L. Lyubarskaya, Trans.). Moscow: KDU Publishing House, 2014. 260 p. (Original work published Paris: Galilee). (in Russian)

5. Canales, K. (2022). Mark Zuckerberg says it is “reasonable” that the metaverse is not a place but a point in time. *Business Insider*. Retrieved June 14, 2022, from https://www.businessinsider.com/mark-zuckerberg-reasonable-construct-metaverse-time-not-place-podcast-interview-2022-2 (in English)

6. Chomsky, N., & Barsamian, D. (2013). *Power systems: Conversations on global democratic uprisings and the new challenges to U.S. empire*. New York: Metropolitan Books. (in English)
7. Clynch, H. (2022). Coinbase's Brian Armstrong on the virtues of digital assets. *Disruption Banking*. Retrieved February 23, 2023, from https://www.disruptionbanking.com/2022/11/07/coinbases-brian-armstrong-on-the-virtues-of-digital-assets/ (in English)
8. Dyrland, E. (2021). The power of eLearning: Why digital learning is the future. *Vendasta*. Retrieved June 22, 2022, from https://www.vendasta.com/blog/digital-learning-is-the-future/ (in English)
9. Elgan, M. (2008). Which religion has the best cell phone? *Computerworld*. Retrieved November 23, 2022, from https://www.computerworld.com/article/2787139/which-religion-has-the-best-cell-phone-.html (in English)
10. Gill, J. (2023). Pentagon chief AI officer 'scared to death' of potential for AI in disinformation. *Breaking Defense*. Retrieved May 6, 2023, from https://breakingdefense.com/2023/05/pentagon-chief-ai-officer-scared-to-death-of-potential-for-ai-indisinformation/ (in English)
11. Kanevsky, D. (2012). Technology change as a great equalizer. *White House Archives*. Retrieved January 15, 2025, from https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2012/05/07/technology-change-great-equalizer (in English)
12. Lyotard, J.-F. (1979). *The postmodern condition: Report on knowledge* (N. Shmatko, Trans.). Saint Petersburg: Alteya, 2016. 160 p. (Original work published Paris: Editions de Minuit). (in Russian)
13. McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. (V. Nikolayev, Trans.). Moscow: Kuchkovo Pole, 2018. 464 p. (Original work published Cambridge: The MIT Press). (in Russian)
14. Metz, C. (2023, June 10). How could A.I. destroy humanity? *The New York Times*. (in English)
15. Narvaez Rojas, C., Alomia Penafiel, G. A., Loaiza Buitrago, D. F., & Tavera Romero, C. A. (2021). Society 5.0: A Japanese concept for a superintelligent society. *Sustainability*, *13*(12), 6567. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13126567 (in English)
16. Ravenscraft, E. (2023). What is the metaverse, exactly? *Wired*. Retrieved February 6, 2025, from https://www.wired.com/story/what-is-the-metaverse/ (in English)
17. Ritzer, G. (1993). *The McDonaldization of society: An investigation into the changing character of contemporary social life*. United States: Pine Forge Press. (in English)

18. Lawton, K. (2023). AI 'could be like an alien invasion': AI bots like ChatGPT could herald an "alien invasion" with the capacity to "wipe out humanity," top artificial intelligence professor warns. *Daily Mail*. Retrieved May 10, 2025, from https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12079023/AI-bots-like-ChatGPT-herald-alien-invasion-capacity-wipe-humanity.html (in English)

19. Samuel, S. (2020). Robot priest can bless you, advise you, and even perform your funeral. *Vox*. Retrieved May 6, 2025, from https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2019/9/9/20851753/ai-religion-robot-priest-mindar-buddhism-christianity (in English)

20. Shen, T., & Ningwe, Q. (2021). Digital yuan could come to overseas users to challenge dollar dominance: Policy bank expert. *Forkast*. Retrieved April 28, 2025, from https://forkast.news/digital-yuan-overseas-users-challenge-dollar-dominance (in English)

21. Stolterman, E., & Force, A. (2004). *Information technology and the good life*. London: Kluwer Academic Publishers. (in English)

22. Thomas, M. (2019). *Digital transformations: Survive and thrive in an era of mass extinction*. New York: Rosetta Books. (in English)

23. Turkle, S. (2011). *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. New York: Basic Books. (in English)

24. United Nations. (2019). *The impact of digital technologies*. Retrieved April 28, 2025, from https://www.un.org/en/un75/impact-digital-technologies (in English)

25. World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987). *Our common future* ("Brundtland Report"). Retrieved from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-commonfuture (in English)

26. World Economic Forum. (2020). How COVID-19 is changing education for the better. Retrieved from https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-education-global-covid19-online-digital-learning/ (in English)

27. World Economic Forum. (2020). The dark side of digitalization – and how to fix it. Retrieved from https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/09/dark-side-digitalization/ (in English)