

## DIGITAL LEVIATHAN OR UTOPIA: TOWARDS THE FREE AND FULL DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMAN BEING IN A DIGITAL EXISTENCE

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**Abstract:** *The development of digital technology has transformed people's lifestyles. While digital technology is driving human society toward a utopian vision of free and comprehensive development, digital existence also faces threats from the emergence of digital Leviathans and artificial intelligence self-awareness. To achieve human freedom and comprehensive development in the context of digital existence, it is necessary to establish the direction of technological development and ethical guidelines while embracing technological progress, ensuring that digital technology serves as a catalyst for human freedom and development in this era.*

**Keywords:** *Digital technology, Digital existence, Free and comprehensive development, Human-computer relations.*

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### Introduction

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In the “Top 10 Chinese Media Buzzwords for 2023” and “Top 10 Buzzwords for 2023” announced by China's National Language Resources Monitoring and Research Center and the editorial board of Biting and Chewing, buzzwords with distinctive signs of the times, such as New Quality Productivity, Digital China, Artificial Intelligence Big Model, Global Civilization Initiative, Big Language Model and other buzzwords with distinctive marks of the times made the list. Languages record social changes and the picture of innovation and creativity, and are derived from the development of objective reality. The many buzzwords

on the list reflect the extensive impact of the application of smart technologies such as ChatGPT and “Wenxin Yiyan” to social production and life, reflecting the advent of the era of digital development and highlighting the power of technology and cognitive leap.

Today's big data, the Internet, blockchain and other digital technologies of the cloud run tide, promote human society toward convenient and intelligent digital survival era slammed, Information revolution era trend volatile forward, cyberspace carries the infinite vision of mankind for a better future. Remote work, information resource sharing, online interaction and learning have become commonplace in the digital age. A wide variety of intelligent robots can not only replace humans in mechanical, hazardous, monotonous and repetitive physical labor, but specific AI models also show the potential to replace humans in performing cognitive tasks such as data analysis and decision-making inferences. But “Every technology or gift of science has a dark side. Being digital is no exception.” Issues such as personal privacy breaches, panoramic digital surveillance, digital device dependency and the potential loss of control of AI also pose serious challenges to the digital society as never before.

This paper argues that under the condition of digital survival, human society has taken a big step forward towards the beautiful state of free and comprehensive development of human beings, but digital survival does not mean that human society has stepped into the utopian world filled with science and technology, and digital survival also means a new type of shackles forged by hegemonic power. In order to realize the free and comprehensive development of human beings under digital existence, the direction and ethical rules of technological development must be formulated while embracing the development of digital technology.

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### **Opportunities and Dilemmas in Digital Survival**

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The opportunities for digital survival include three elements; first, digital technologies increase the quantity and quality of time available for free human activity. Second, the social structure woven by digital technology brings about

an expansion of human cognitive ability, communication ability and access to resources. Third, individuals in the digital society have more new platforms to express their individuality and creativity.

In short, in the era of digital existence, ever-changing science and technology, the explosive growth of social productivity and the constant increase in leisure time have together created a superior environment and means of practice for human beings to display their talents. The mobility, freedom, depth and breadth of individual practical life activities have been greatly expanded and given new space for play and forms of expression, and individuals and societies have gained the possibility of deeper comprehensive development to an unprecedented extent, while the comprehensive development of individuals will further promote the realization of the comprehensive development of all humankind.

Surviving in a highly technologically advanced digital society, the richness of human nature should be fully demonstrated, realizing the leap from the Kingdom of Necessity to the Kingdom of Freedom, and leading to a cyber-utopia or digital utopia in which the flow of information is unimpeded, the distribution of resources is equal, and the society is harmonious and coexisting. However, if the development of digital technology is not accompanied by the improvement of social institutions, the revision of laws and regulations, and the construction of spiritual civilization, the digitalization process may be transformed into a shackle to the comprehensive development of human beings. Currently, the operation of human society is surrounded by an intricate digital network, which supports human labor production, knowledge transfer, and economic and trade activities through invisible connectivity. As more and more human activities are replaced by artificial intelligence and automated machines, the digital network to serve human beings has begun to show a contraction trend, excessive attachment to technology makes it difficult for human beings to break through the digital network of the shroud, some scholars have pointed out that people enjoy more comprehensive and advanced data services, a sense of bondage to the digital is also quietly arising, digital information technology itself may evolve into a new kind of Leviathan or digital leviathan. It is as if an invisible wall has been constructed, limiting the realm of human existence and

the ability to act to a predetermined range. In his book *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes likens the powerful and invisible force of the social contract to the Leviathan (the sea monster with dominion powers that appears in the Bible), symbolizing absolute power and public order under its control. Similar to the centralized authoritative power noted by Hobbes, the digital leviathan refers to a digital power structure or technological system of coding and algorithmic decision-making that monitors and controls individual behaviors and social dynamics, a potentially new type of behemoth that, as an abstract being, invisibly affects, and even restricts, human autonomy and privacy, and has the potential to exacerbate social inequality and intensify social conflict.

The limitations imposed by the digital leviathan on the human being include three aspects, the first is the strong impact of digital technology on the individual's right to privacy. The second is that the individual's resistance and autonomy are silently dissolved in the digital flat that can satisfy needs and maintain operating habits. Third, Big Data Recommendation Systems (BDRS), which can give strong behavioral predictions and decision-making recommendations by comprehensively processing large-scale data sets, are evolving into authoritative and uniform decision-making guidelines.

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### **Digitization: the cornerstone and the path to free and comprehensive human development**

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Although the existing digitalization process has not led mankind to the door of a utopian world, it is still a cornerstone and a necessary path to the realization of comprehensive human development. The comprehensive development of human beings includes the integrated development of human intelligence, physical strength and spirituality, which enables individuals to give full play to their talents and creativity in a variety of practical activities. The monotonous labor of the factory assembly line in the industrial era could not satisfy the individual's desire for creativity and self-expression, and was only used as a means of earning a living in order to maintain the minimum need for survival, and the workers were alienated from their own labor and the fruits of their labor, and were unable to obtain the material basis of a decent life, let alone obtaining

self-worth and spiritual fulfillment in their labor, therefore, Marx was looking forward to a communist society where everyone could carry out creative activities according to their own interests and real needs. Therefore Marx looked forward to a communist society in which every individual could engage in creative activities according to his own interests and real needs. What direction people develop, how they develop, and to what extent they develop depends on social conditions. The development of productive forces is the most central and important driving force in the course of history, and the all-round development of each individual must be built on the material basis of a highly developed society.

Realize the comprehensive development of human beings. There must be sufficiently developed social productivity, and human beings are free to achieve a highly automated and intelligent digital society within the limits determined and allowed by the existing productive forces, and the optimization solutions provided by big data and artificial intelligence technologies in production scheduling, inventory management, market strategies, etc., have greatly increased social productivity, and human beings are able to reduce the input of socially necessary labor time in large quantities, and spend more time and energy on personal development and freely chosen activities. Only through the further development of the digitalization process will human society be able to reach the ideal state Marx once envisioned.

Moreover, due to the gradual advancement of human-computer cooperative technology and human thinking ability, the influence and threat of the digital surveillance system and the “digital leviathan” will be greatly limited, and the spirit of development and sharing in the digital society has shaped the bottom-up transcendence path, so that individuals are equipped with more ways to counteract, or even deter, the emergence of the fully dominant “digital leviathan”. Individuals have more ways to counteract and even deter the emergence of a fully dominant “digital leviathan”. Unlike the unidirectional, top-down authoritarian way of processing, creating and disseminating information, the networked way of processing, creating and disseminating information has the basic characteristics of interactivity, parallelism, openness and non-

authoritarianism in its form. The public is able to break through the limitations of status and identity in the digital age, and has more channels to obtain information and ways to express opinions. Numerous actors, organizations and systems build a complex network of digital society, which is dynamic, multi-faceted, and encompasses a variety of social behaviors such as competition, cooperation, conflict and negotiation, effectively hindering the formation of a single authoritative force such as the digital leviathan. In addition to this, the growing importance that individuals place on the values of privacy and freedom, and the gradual improvement of legislation and ethical regulation provide the basis for a weakened system of digital surveillance, so that a combination of forces and factors is neutralizing the threat of the digital leviathan, which seeks to dominate the digital society.

Embracing digital technology is a necessary condition for human society to move towards an ideal state, but the digitalization process must be subject to positive guidance and ethical regulation to ensure that technological development exists at a pace that is coherent with the level of human thinking, the capacity for governance, the conceptual framework and the structure of industry; otherwise, the chaos and disorder resulting from the savage growth of technology may lead to unforeseen social problems. The digital technology process needs to be guided by the principle of people-centeredness, transforming institutions inherited from the industrial era that are not adapted to the needs of society, and making serving the good needs of human growth the goal and meaning of development. The following strategies can further promote the support of digital transformation for comprehensive human development. First, guarantee universal access to digital infrastructure, especially in remote and poor areas, to ensure that all people can access fast and reliable network services. Secondly, strengthening user privacy and data protection by formulating and enforcing data protection regulations that emphasize users' right to control their own data and to be able to independently choose to participate in or opt out of specific data collection and use. Third, emphasize the development and use of digital technologies that enhance individual potential and quality of life, such as technologies for preventing climate change, improving public health and online education, and avoid the misuse of digital

technologies for arms races and resource plunder. Fourth, promote human-machine collaboration rather than the complete replacement of machine decision-making, ensure the autonomy and dominance of human thinking, and utilize machines as powerful tools to aid decision-making. Fifth, advocate sustainable development, effectively manage resources through digital technology, mitigate resource depletion and environmental pollution, and encourage technological innovations consistent with the goals of sustainable development.

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## **Conclusion**

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The emergence of “digital leviathan” and AI self-awareness reflect different dimensions of the problem, the former is more related to the issue of data monitoring and technological hegemony within the static system, as well as how to safeguard the privacy and freedom of individuals in the digital era, while the latter leads us to think deeply about the dominant ability of potential dynamic intelligence and its impact on human beings, and its inherent dynamics. The latter leads us to think deeply about the dominant power and impact on humanity of potential dynamic intelligences, whose intrinsic dynamics and spontaneity may challenge the existing social, ethical, and philosophical order. Therefore, it is indispensable to establish strict laws, regulations and ethical rules around the development of digital technologies to ensure that technological development enhances material living conditions, reduces the time necessary for human labor, protects the well-being and dignity of all human beings, and allows people more time for free creative activity. Humanity is at a critical juncture in determining its future and destiny by maintaining respect for and preserving human nature, avoiding a completely spiritless digital world, and preventing the existence of a superintelligence that dominates human free will and ideology.

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*Major Fields of Scientific Research: Information Philosophy*