

The Person in the Face of Massified Society and Artificial Intelligence: Contemporary Challenges and the Urgency of Dialogical Personalism

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ABSTRACT

Late modernity is characterized by the emergence of a massified, technocratic society dominated by Artificial Intelligence (AI) algorithms—factors that foster the reification and dissolution of the singular person [1]. Faced with this scenario of systemic depersonalization, this essay analyzes the challenge posed to contemporary philosophy to recover the concept of the ethical and relational subject [1-6]. Integrating the foundations of French personalism by Emmanuel Mounier and Maurice Nédoncelle, the philosophy of dialogue by Martin Buber and Emmanuel Lévinas, and confronting them with the implications of cybernetics and transhumanism, it is argued that human dignity and the ethical consideration of vulnerable subjects can only be safeguarded through a rediscovery of alterity and ontological attention [1-9]. It is concluded that technological advancement must be subjected to a humanist filter, preventing technology from reducing human beings and living entities to mere manipulable data [1].

Keywords

Philosophy of the person, Massified society, Artificial intelligence, Dialogical personalism, Alterity, Contemporary ethics.

Introduction

Contemporary societies face an unprecedented anthropological mutation [1]. While witnessing extraordinary scientific and technological achievements—led by the proliferation of Artificial Intelligence systems and digital automation—we simultaneously experience a profound crisis of meaning and depersonalization [1]. Cultural massification, driven by global markets and the algorithmic management of life, tends to dissolve individuality into an anonymous aggregate of consumers and data producers [1].

In this context of hypermodernity, the question of what constitutes a "person" becomes central and urgent [1]. Western philosophical tradition, heavily marked by Cartesian dualism and utilitarian drifts, provided the fertile ground for the instrumentalization of both human beings and other sentient creatures [1-3]. However,

faced with the totalitarian threat of technique and massification, philosophical reflection is called upon to revalue the status of subjectivity, the reciprocity of consciousness, and radical alterity [1-9]. This essay explores how personalism and the ethics of dialogue offer a critical response to massified society and the dilemmas posed by the digital age [1-9].

Furthermore, contemporary philosophical inquiry must confront how digital architectures subtly reshape human consciousness [1]. The omnipresence of algorithmic feeds and automated decision-making systems encourages a passive assimilation of reality, eroding the inner sanctuary where genuine critical reflection occurs [1]. By bypassing deliberative rationality, massification threatens to substitute authentic moral agency with standardized behavioral responses [1]. Consequently, recovering a robust philosophy of the person is not merely an academic exercise, but an urgent existential necessity to safeguard human freedom against systemic co-optation [1,6].

Massified Society and the Threat of Reification

The massification of industrial and post-industrial societies was widely diagnosed by twentieth-century thinkers whose insights retain striking relevance in the face of current massification algorithms [1,7]. The reduction of the individual to an economic cog or a mere statistical profile promotes what Gabriel Marcel designated as the "technique of the emptying of the ego" and the predominance of having over being [1,7].

- **The One-Dimensional Man:** In the wake of the critique of instrumental rationality, massified society converts culture into a commodity and the citizen into a passive user, generating a deficit of critical thinking and existential depth [1].
- **The Disarticulation of Community Bonds:** Isolation within large urban and digital concentrations destroys organic networks of solidarity, replacing authentic interpersonal relations with fragmented and utilitarian virtual connections [1].
- **Reduction to an Object (Res):** Just as traditional law reduced animals to things (res), technocratic logic tends to treat human beings as optimizable human resources, forgetting their intrinsic and inalienable dignity [1-3].

This systematic flattening of human experience strips individuals of their unique narrative trajectories, reducing complex biographies to quantifiable metrics [1]. As corporate and governmental entities increasingly rely on automated categorization, the human person risks becoming entirely transparent to surveillance yet entirely opaque in terms of subjective worth [1]. Countering this trend requires a deliberate reaffirmation of interiority, recognizing that human dignity resides precisely in those dimensions of existence that resist complete instrumentalization and datafication [1,7].

Dialogical Personalism as an Antidote: From Nédoncelle to Lévinas

As a response to the dissolution of the person in the masses or the machine, the personalist movement of the twentieth century—embodied in the works of Emmanuel Mounier and Maurice Nédoncelle—postulated that the person is not a substance closed in on itself, but a being essentially constituted by the vocation to love and communicate [1-6].

- **The Reciprocity of Consciousness:** For Maurice Nédoncelle, the ego only realizes itself fully in the gift of self and the acceptance of the other, postulando that personal existence is inseparable from intersubjectivity and love [1-5].
- **The Dialogical Principle (Ich und Du):** Martin Buber demonstrated that human life is genuine to the extent that it is lived in the "I-Thou" relationship, as opposed to the instrumental "I-It" relationship, where the other is objectified and instrumentalized [1,8].
- **The Ethics of Alterity:** Emmanuel Lévinas radicalizes this perspective by placing the Face of the Other as the origin of the primordial ethical demand [1,9]. Infinite responsibility before the vulnerability of the other dismantles the ontological egoism of the subject and establishes the true status of the person [1,9].

This relational anthropology transforms our understanding of community, shifting the focus from atomic individualism to mutual interdependence [1,4,6]. In dialogical personalism, identity is forged not through self-assertion or domination, but through openness to the transcendent reality of the other [1,8,9]. By emphasizing that consciousness is fundamentally co-existence, personalist philosophy provides an essential theoretical framework to challenge the isolating tendencies of hyper-technological societies [1,4,6].

Artificial Intelligence, Cybernetics, and the Limits of the Human

The expansion of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) and autonomous decision-making systems poses complex new challenges to the philosophy of mind and ethics [1]. By simulating cognitive processes, language, and even traits of empathy, AI blurs the traditional boundaries between artifact and living being [1].

- **The Illusion of the Artificial Person:** Although algorithms process massive volumes of information at a speed unattainable by the human brain, they lack interiority, existential biography, sentience, and corporeal vulnerability—fundamental elements that characterize the condition of a "subject of a life" or a person [1-3]. Attributing legal personality or full moral status to artificial entities risks trivializing the concept of dignity [1].
- **The Risk of Technocratic Transhumanism:** Transhumanist currents advocating the fusion of man with machine or the digital trans-migration of consciousness incur a radical Cartesian error: they overlook the importance of the flesh, finitude, and relational ecology that underpin human experience and personal dignity [1].
- **Algorithmic Citizenship and Surveillance:** Digital massification through facial recognition systems and corporate data control threatens to transform society into a digital panopticon, where freedom of choice and the intimacy of consciousness are systematically eroded [1].

Furthermore, the uncritical deployment of predictive algorithms in social governance deepens existing systemic biases while cloaking them in the guise of mathematical neutrality [1]. This displacement of human judgment onto opaque computational models weakens democratic accountability and moral responsibility [1]. Safeguarding human agency requires maintaining strict boundaries regarding where automated systems can be legitimately applied, ensuring that critical life-defining decisions remain rooted in human empathy and moral deliberation [1].

Conclusion: Toward an Integral Ecology of the Person

Massified society and the era of Artificial Intelligence confront humanity with a decisive bifurcation: to yield to the temptation of a dehumanizing technocracy that reduces everything to data and commodities, or to rescue the centrality of the person through an ethics of attention and dialogue [1-9].

Recovering the profound meaning of the person—whether by extending ethical consideration to non-human animals who share

with us the vulnerability of life, or by protecting the inviolable singularity of the human being against the totalitarianism of algorithms—demands a renewed humanism [1-3]. Technology must be firmly subordinated to the common good and respect for alterity, ensuring that the digital future serves to amplify freedom and justice, and never to consummate the final reification of the human spirit [1-9].

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