



Political anthropology of the subject: Digitalisation of discourse and the boundaries of the lifeworld

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Abstract. The relevance of the topic of the article was determined by the need to understand the trends in the development of modern political anthropology in the context of digitalisation of discourse. In this context, it also seemed appropriate to outline the phenomenological vision of the mentioned issues. The purpose of the study was to outline the directions and mechanisms of the existence of political discourse in the conditions of transformation of the lifeworld and reframing of digital subjectivity, as well as the significance of political anthropology as a methodology for studying not only the sphere of politics, but also communication in the digitalised world in general, since within it the distribution of information subjectivity emphasised the relationship between the elements and components of the political, social, cultural, etc. whole. The article used phenomenological, analytical and anthropological approaches to the problems of the transformation of human subjectivity under the influence of digitalisation of the socio-political space. It was established that the traditional methodology of political anthropology in the conditions of digitalisation of social communication, political relations and virtualisation of culture was insufficient, for which the method of historical and philosophical analysis was applied. The transformations of human subjectivity under the influence of the total digitalisation of socio-political space were investigated. Political anthropology was interpreted in the context of searching for an answer to the crisis of classical models of the rational subject, as one of the methodologies that offered a heuristic analysis of discursive mechanisms that determined the boundaries of the human lifeworld through the analysis of political and authority relations. It was stated that the rapid introduction of digital technologies blurred the concept of social and political action due to the need to include non-human formats of agency in this concept. The conclusions indicated that the boundary of the human was an ontological and political category that defined the right to vote and responsibility in terms of identity and presence. A vision of political anthropology as primarily a philosophical, rather than a political science subdiscipline, was proposed. The practical value of the study lay in the possibility of applying the considerations expressed and the conclusions proposed by specialists in social philosophy, political science, as well as in the process of teaching socio-humanitarian disciplines in higher education institutions

Keywords: social philosophy; discursive practices; reframing of political activity; political subjectivity and agency; lifeworld

Introduction

Political anthropology as an interdisciplinary field of knowledge arises in response to the crisis of classical models of political theory, which were based on the idea of a rational, autonomous and universal subject. In

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the 20th and 21st centuries, these ideas undergo a significant revision under the influence of anthropological, sociological and philosophical research, which problematise the very category of the lifeworld as a semantic centre, the “core” of subjectivity. Also, the dynamics of digitalisation processes, especially in the field of content generation, primarily textual, actualises the issue of discursive practices as life forms and markers of a specifically human interpretation of social interaction in general and socio-political action in particular. Thus, the question arises about the limits of the human as the limits of the human lifeworld, since this phenomenological category retains its importance as a politically relevant category and a way of constituting the subject in authority relations. In this context, the reconceptualisation of political anthropology as a sphere of accumulation, structuring and understanding of the social, political and cultural experience of a cognitive agent as a subject of politics and political relations seems heuristic not only for manifesting the ambivalent consequences of digitalisation for human meaning generation, but also for analysing the discursive mechanisms of these processes, which can serve as a justification for the problematics of the research topic.

The manifested problems have been actualised in numerous studies in the latest years. In particular, the issue of the correlation of human agency and the agency of artificial intelligence (AI), as well as the related reconceptualisation of human subjectivity in relation to socio-political action, was studied by L. Floridi (2025). The researcher came to the conclusion that the scope of the concept of agency needs to be expanded in order to avoid blurring the content of the concept of subjectivity. The issue of uncontrolled expansion of the concept of agency in relation to the concept of subjectivity in the field of the political dimension of communication and culture, media space and content generation, the formation of narratives and discourses as social and political practices was considered by A. Puzio (2025), who singled out the feedback between the concepts of agency and subjectivity as a determining basis for control over the expansion of the use of generative AI. The convergence of digital and human subjectivity and agency was examined by A. Lykhatskyi (2024), which, in the author's opinion, can lead to a crisis of human identity in the ontological sense. According to O. Khodus (2024), the practice of permanent human transitions from real to digital experience becomes the cause of fundamental changes in the very foundations of anthropology. The essence of digitalisation processes in relation to the social structure and configuration of social ties was considered by domestic researchers

A. Ghedzyk *et al.* (2024), among whose conclusions, the statement that the determining and significant impact of digitalisation processes on the transformation of the social and political structure of society and the mechanisms of its functioning was relevant for the topic

of the study. The latest typology of a political actor as a digital political subject was studied by a modern domestic researcher N. Steblyna (2021), whose conclusion regarding the prevalence of vertical information and activity connections over horizontal ones became relevant for the study. The aforementioned studies did not specifically consider the vision of actualised problems from the perspective of political anthropology, and not only in reliance on the description and statistical analysis of social interactions and structures and political activity, but also in the context of ontological issues (human subjectivity and identity, the correlation), as well as the optics of phenomenology (reception, comprehension, and verbalisation of experience, lifeworld structures). The purpose of the study was to clarify the intentions of the transformation of the usage and meanings of political discourse in the context of changes in the life world and the reconfiguration of human subjectivity, in parallel with outlining the significance of political anthropology as a methodological basis for studying not only the political sphere, but also information processes in a digitalised reality, since within it the distribution of the information field between human and AI agents transforms subjectivity, emphasising the relationship between the components of political, social, cultural, etc. systems.

Materials and Methods

The study used general scientific and philosophical methods to conduct a comprehensive conceptual analysis. Hermeneutic methodology was used to outline the concepts of agency and subjectivity, as well as the correlation between the scope and content of these concepts. In order to clarify the key conceptual apparatus and delimit basic terms, elements of analytical methodology were applied, namely to clarify the specifics of the concept of political anthropology. Etymological-linguistic interpretation of concepts, metaphorical modelling and actual post-structuralist deconstruction of discourse were used. In addition, a phenomenological approach and sociological optics (theoretical direction) were used to outline the context of conceptualising political anthropology as a philosophical subdiscipline against the backdrop of the digitalisation of political interactions in the media space and the virtualisation of culture. A comparative approach was applied in order to compare the political science and philosophical optics of considering political anthropology in the light of the digitalisation of socio-political action through digital discursive practices, narratives within the media space and the space of socio-political interaction.

In order to fix the phenomenological perspective of the study, a heuristic analysis of the discursive mechanisms of socio-political communication, individual and collective imagination as a prerequisite for the formation of a conditional conceptual agenda of individuals and communities at the level of the horizon of

meanings and the life world was used. One of the research methods was historical and philosophical analysis, which allowed tracing the genesis of political anthropology in the 20th and 21st centuries and formulating a thesis about the relevance of its interpretation as a philosophical subdiscipline. Elements of discursive analysis were also applied to differentiate between the traditional understanding of socio-political action, which might involve dialogical practices of understanding and direct communication, and the mechanisms of digitalised discourse, which, even in the presence of authorship, functioned as depersonalised and dehumanised. The object of the philosophical analysis in this study was modern discursive practices associated with the Large Language Model (LLM) and digital frames of description and understanding of the sphere of political activity and interaction. The systemic approach provided the basis for analysing the phenomenon of political anthropology as a tool and, at the same time, a space of resistance to the challenges of dehumanisation of sociocultural interactions in the context of digitalisation as a mainstream trend in the development of civilisation, which manifested itself in various spheres: social, political, cultural and existential. This approach allowed integrating ideas from various disciplines, including social philosophy, phenomenology, sociology, cultural studies, political science, and discourse theory into a coherent research narrative.

The research was conducted through a thematic analysis of selected historical and philosophical conceptualisations of political anthropology, which allowed recording the need to rethink the tools and theoretical and practical content of political anthropology in the context of the virtualisation of culture and the digitalisation of socio-political communication, as well as the functioning of discursive practices and narratives in the media space and the space of culture. The concept of the lifeworld in this context was used as a marker of the transformation of the forms and modes of accumulation, comprehension, and approbation of the experience of political interaction at the level of individuals, groups, communities, and societies. Methodologies developed by other researchers were incorporated by applying a critical rethinking of classical concepts based on modern interdisciplinary approaches (such as modern cognitivism, the cluster of speculative realism, transhumanism, etc.). This allowed for the extension of classical interpretations to modern technological and globalised realities.

Results and Discussion

As a result of the analysis of the manifested issues, the following key vectors of transformational changes can be outlined, which may subsequently acquire the status of paradigmatic ones. In particular, political anthropology, in connection with the problematisation and reconceptualisation of human subjectivity and agency in the

context of the emergence and dynamic spread of generative AI, goes beyond the problem field of classical anthropology, political theory, sociology, and political science, significantly approaching the searches of modern philosophical anthropology. In turn, human subjectivity, which was considered by political anthropology as a necessary and sufficient condition of agency, that is, the ability to act purposefully in a certain social system of interactions, has been limited by the need to differentiate human action and the action of a non-human agent (in particular, numerous language simulators based on generative AI), which has led to a crisis in the definition of human identity and anthropocentric visions of humanism (in particular, the emergence of phenomena of digital anthropology or post-Kantian non-anthropocentric ontologies). The phenomenological concept of the lifeworld is considered from the perspective of separating human (directly empirical, dialogical) and digital modes of accumulating experience and working with information. Discursive practices and narratives are considered as basic structures of meaning generation and control of socio-political action for political anthropology as a philosophical subdiscipline. It is important that the sociological optics of the analysed phenomena, applied in the theoretical aspect, allowed assuming the emergence of a tendency towards digital inertia of development and transformations of socio-political action and political relations within the structures of social communication, media space and cultural space, processes of meaning generation, and ultimately the formation of the experience of individuals, groups, and communities.

Thus, the following points of comparison and differences between the two analytical perspectives, political science and philosophy, can be identified: the role of discursive practices generated by human and AI agents in the formation of the philosophical picture of the world; the significance of these processes for the transformation of the concept of man (as a political actor and cognitive agent) and the human (in connection with the reconceptualisation of socio-political action) by political anthropology in retrospect and in the perspective of its development; the formation of a new digital subject based on the description of human experience by discursive AI agents. In general, political science theories and empirical approaches to the issues of discourse and speech practices are aspectual in nature, not focusing on the forms and modes of human linguistic agency as a subject of political or other action, as well as a cognitive (currently epistemological) agent, focusing on the discursive structure of political reality. This applies to the interpretation of discourse as an instrument of power (Foucault, 2002), critical discourse analysis (Cap, 2020), structuralism and poststructuralism with the theories of discourse (Narwaya, 2021), and the constructivist paradigm. A vision of discourse that is tangential to that manifested

in this study is represented by framing theory (Chong & Druckman, 2007) and the narrative approach (Schlauffer *et al.*, 2022), according to which discursive practices shape the agenda of public opinion (framing) and form the narrative structure of political action. In turn, empirical methods of discourse analysis in political science (content analysis (quantitative), computational linguistics (topic modelling, sentiment analysis), analysis of political debates, social network research, corpus analysis of political texts) do not necessarily raise the question of transformation and scaling of discursive agency and subjectivity, that is, philosophical consideration at the level of epistemology and philosophical anthropology, social philosophy. Therefore, it seems heuristic to consider the above-mentioned issues from a philosophical perspective. It is significant that Lyotard's concept of the war of narratives (Skordili, 2003) acquires new relevance in the digital age.

The rapid introduction of digital technologies in the field of social interaction and social communication is currently in the focus of attention of the humanities and social sciences primarily because of the difficult-to-predict consequences of the transformation of traditional life forms, formats of work with information, modes of social interaction and communication, models of cultural, social and political behaviour. It is worth assuming that at the intersection of phenomenological and sociological visions of human action, which includes conditionally objective/subjective manifestations of activity, the fundamental philosophemes of the lifeworld and social action must be reconceptualised. According to P. Kretov & O. Kretova (2022), the Weberian concept of social action (German: *Soziales Handeln*), under its modern reading as a socio-political action (in the context of the processes of globalisation, glocalisation, geopolitical restructuring and reconfiguration of political reality as a structure), is being eroded due to the crisis expansion of its own scope due to the need to include non-human formats, structures, and systems of agency in it.

The late Husserlian concept of the lifeworld (German: *Lebenswelt*) in turn is being problematised due to the transformation of the criterion framework and forms of expression of subjectivity, if the latter is considered not only from the perspective of critical post-Kantian approaches (in particular, the cluster of anti-correlationism, which includes not only the ontologies of speculative realism concepts, but also non-anthropocentric aesthetics of the late 20th – first quarter of the 21st centuries), as well as the searches of modern philosophy of information, philosophical anthropology and social philosophy. If, in conformity with L. Floridi (2025), the emergence of LLM language simulators based on generative artificial intelligence (AI) necessarily reveals a feedback loop between agency and subjectivity (primarily in the field of the virtual dimension of culture and communication, media space,

content generation and the formation of narratives and discourses as social and political practices), then according to A. Puzio (2025), limiting the scope of the concept of subjectivity necessarily leads to an uncontrolled expansion of the scope of the concept of agency and vice versa.

Thus, the traditional correlation of subjectivity and intelligence as an entity and a feature is recognised as not corresponding to the existing realities, because if not taking into account the artificial formats of realisation (simulation) of intelligence, then the carrier of the latter can only be a person. But if assuming that this is so, then, according to L. Floridi (2025), it is necessary to expand the modern idea of activity, including forms of activity, such as artificial ones, which lack cognition, intelligence, intention or mental states. Therefore, agency can be ontologised and considered as a kind of quintessence of digital architecture, interaction, and communication. At the same time, it is necessary to clearly distinguish between the functional description of AI and the ontological consequences of its functionality for socio-political reality, which are rooted both in the specificity of the instrumentality of human culture as a mode of attitude to objective reality and in the human cognitive sphere. Thus, for entities whose defining feature is virtuality (currently this concept is interpreted in the orthodox meaning of J. Lanier as the ability to exist between the material and the mental, on the border of subjectivity and objectivity), the medieval alchemical metaphor of quintessence appears to be heuristic, since this fifth essence (according to Paracelsus) unites all entities and elements through man, the presence, and action. Indeed, if digital architecture unites the functionality, organisation and implementation of computer systems (which includes both hard and soft), then at the level of implementation it necessarily presupposes man, and the latter's participation can be interpreted both as a simple mediation between human and machine interaction, operator work or even an element of the system's periphery, and as a format of synergy between man and machine, the formation of a common cognitive space. Just as the quintessence in late medieval alchemy is not just matter, but the "soul" or active principle of matter, which is separated from the "body" (material shell) by means of alchemical processes, in the space of virtuality the agency of AI (currently primarily language simulators) acquires the illusion of subjectivity, is ontologised.

It is also necessary to distinguish between the concept of digital architecture, which fixes the functionality and methods of organising computer and network systems, and the concept of the digital configuration of society as its dynamic cultural, social, communicative and political structure, and the digital configuration realises itself not through the design capabilities of the functionality of certain software or computer equipment, but through human practices of generating

content, orientation and self-positioning in the semiotic codes of culture and language, interaction with other cognitive agents and political actors within social and political structures, etc. This refers primarily to the non-obvious fact that the adoption of digital formats of human interaction and the corresponding transformation of life forms changes not only the actual ways of representing human activity, but also the person, transforming the person's subjectivity and adjusting agency. By analogy with the already classic paraphrase of M. McLuhan (1964) of the Latin proverb *nomen est omen* (name is message, fate, prediction) to *medium est message* (mediator is message), the current situation has the potential to transform the noetic and noematic structures of human consciousness, and therefore, with necessity, changes the conditional parameters of the information content of the human lifeworld, both at the Husserlian level of the horizon of meanings and at the Deleuzeian level of the plane of immanence, pre-logical and pre-verbal. The information channel, without losing its instrumental functionality, can acquire ontological content, displacing and replacing human subjectivity not only at the level of agency (if the interaction of virtual formats of agency and a person is understood as the delegation by a person to AI of the acceptance and implementation of the person's own decision), but also at the level of subjectivity itself – *simulatio est omen*.

Of course, this is inextricably linked to the problematisation of the concept of reality, which at the level of philosophical anthropology initiates a number of paradoxes. One such paradox is the paradox of self-realisation (Prisniakova *et al.*, 2023) of a person on the border of the real and the virtual – extrapolating the core of the personality, behavioural models, value orientations, social habits to the virtual, a person encounters a twist of fate (irony of fate), when the individual's self-actualisation appears as an untrue existence. The defining feature in this context is the apparent antinomy of the human vision of reality and autonomous alternatives to it, in particular the hypothetical subjectivity of AI, which must nevertheless be represented within the framework of human semiotic codes and mechanisms of understanding, language, discourse, in general – within the framework of human consciousness, because following T. Nagel (1974), it is necessary to recognise that a person does not know what it is like to "be a bat", because it is impossible to criticise or undermine "something" with "nothing", that is, essentialism cannot be completely eliminated from the human description of reality and the semiotic codes of language and culture. The concept of non-human digital subjectivity ironically appears as a Kantian transcendentalism and semantic antinomy at the same time, or (an even more ironic analogy) similar to Freudian and Jungian psychoanalytic concepts of the unconscious, archetypes, and selfhood, which are not amenable to verification/falsification, but even to consistent definition. For philosophical

anthropology, therefore, any formats of human activity that are not directly related to human subjectivity must appear as structures derived from it, its subsystems, since these structures are described by humans and function as concepts within the human horizon of meanings, lifeworld, and the semiotic code of language.

Therefore, it can be assumed that the autonomous agency of AI undermines not only the principle of correlation between being and thinking as a millennial Platonic foundation of the philosophical tradition of the West, but also the understanding of action as human activity, which is personified in all dimensions of subjectivity from cognitive to existential. According to O. Khodus (2024), the key feature of social relations formed through the mediation of digital technologies is the hybridity, or a-locality. In this context, hybridity means the gradual erasure of boundaries – social, symbolic, and physical – between private and public, material and immaterial, human and non-human dimensions, which occurs under the influence of digitalisation. For the subject, this is of fundamental importance, because hybridity undermines the traditional positionality of human experience, built on the logic of "either/or". In fact, this suggests that digital ontology is organised in such a way that a person can exercise the agency – through civic participation, bodily, linguistic and emotional manifestations, as well as various forms of interaction – regardless of the division into "virtual" and "real". At the same time, these categories are no longer tied to clearly defined spaces or boundaries, because in the conditions of radical digital transformation of society, the constant movement of a person between physical and digital realities is becoming a familiar state. This allows researchers to state the presence of processes of a certain convergence of digital and human subjectivity and agency (Lykhatskyi, 2024).

Such a metamodern metaaxis as a fluctuation between the empirical reality of the physical world and the virtual world, as if "embedded" in it, the reality of which differs significantly at the level of social and political practices, can lead not only to a certain "schizophrenification" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983) of consciousness, but also to the emergence of a discursive ontological object that appeals to an alternative topology of consciousness, similar to the concepts of "round square", "high sea" (Marek, 2021). Objects are differentiated as those that exist objectively, into those that have existence (German: Existenz) and those that are characterised by presence (German: Bestand). It can be assumed, according to such logic, that, for example, the difference between human thinking and "machine thinking" cannot be doubted, but it does not exist (German: Existenz), but is present (German: Besteht). It is about objects and lenses – the former have existence, and the latter have presence (Kroon & Voltolini, 2023). In political anthropology, this may explain the effectiveness of post-truth technologies that

depersonalise and anonymise knowledge and information and the emergence of political digitalised discourses (in particular, such centaur concepts as authoritarian democracy (conditional Trumpism) or democratic authoritarianism (rashism)). It is meant that the image of social reality is currently being formed within the processes of digitalisation of information and mediation (Cottle, 2006) of social action, because “the construction of identity increasingly depends on integration into the media infrastructure, and maintaining one’s “digital body” requires constant access to social network services” (Karas & Skrynnyk, 2024). Thus, socio-political action, framed by technologies, can become impersonal, dehumanised, and automatic, not unifying through averaging, like Heidegger’s *Das Man*, but through the creation of specific discursive practices in the media space, the virtualised space of culture, and digital communications.

It is not simply about lowering the threshold of criticality of information reception by people and communities or increasing manipulative influences on people and society in the field of socio-political action, but about the emergence of digital frames of description of political action, which are capable of functioning as performative speech acts and self-fulfilling prophecy. A person, joining the network content and algorithmic selection of information occasions that shape the person’s agenda and influence the conditional grand narrative, the philosophical picture of the world, may lose the ability to free conscious socio-political action even at the level of social and political scenarios or habitus, that is, the discursive context itself will shape the boundaries of individual and collective imagination as Wittgenstein’s boundaries of the human world, and action can thus be reduced only to a click, a certain tag or hashtag. Therefore, a person appears as a relay, part of the periphery of meanings that are usually not generated by this person and about which an individual is not determined with the need to accept or reject such meanings as a choice, evaluation, but only takes into account, broadcasting these meanings in a self-closed algorithmic cycle.

Taking into account one of the defining features of the digital society and, accordingly, digitalised politics as a set of interaction formats, which A.K. Vanden-Broek (2017) defines as superconnectedness, which in the context of the current topic means a complex correlation between numerous networks of connections and communications that form the architectonics of meaning-generation processes in individual and mass consciousness, and also influence the collective imagination, it should be noted a certain interference between the negative and positive freedom of a person and the person’s socio-political action. This may mean that *homo digitalis* appears as a much more inertial actor in relation to political activity, i.e. personal intentions of meaning generation and individual

socio-political action significantly lose the ability to influence the political space if such intentions are not installed, not involved in network processes of meaning generation and content creation, which are controlled not by people, but by algorithms. A paradoxical phenomenon of digital inertia of agenda-setting in the media and political space arises, in which human activities receive transformative power only if such activities are mediated by the digital communicative space, its formats and mechanisms. The biblical idiom about the voice of one crying in the wilderness acquires a completely ironic sound in the context of comparing approaches to human socio-political action in traditional philosophical anthropology and numerous visions of conditional digital anthropology.

Researchers A. Ghedzyk *et al.* (2024) argue that “the digitalisation of modern society can be defined as a set of processes of hyper-connectedness, networking, datification, platformisation and algorithmisation that occur simultaneously, support and reinforce each other. Hyper-connectedness manifests itself in the unprecedented prevalence of social connections and the methods, when distance and time no longer play the role that was previously inherent to such connections. As a result of hyper-connectedness, new social features of human existence are formed. Networking creates the basis for the existence of digital platforms and ecosystems that generate big data that allow for algorithmic management of social systems”. These statements, while fully describing the current state of affairs and trends in the development of the situation, for obvious reasons do not provide for an analysis of the existential and axiological dimensions of social and political action, as well as the vision of political anthropology.

Scientific descriptions focused on capturing modern transformational trends related to information and communication technologies, precisely because of the descriptive nature, consider the issues of socio-political interaction from the perspective of macropolitics and macrosociological processes, while it is about significant changes not in the model of human integration into politics or in the methods of interaction with people and socio-political structures, but in the formation of new foundations of experience, mechanisms for its formation and comprehension, which practically means new cognitive settings of human consciousness. Modern researcher N. Steblyna (2021) argues that “a new type of political actor is a digital political subject that can implement policy only if the user networks available in the digital space are mobilised into its sphere of influence. It has been determined that networks are the main political resource of digital political subjects, and the integration of networks is a key condition for implementing effective policy in the context of global digitalisation. Digital political actors compete for the attention of fragmented communities, whose political participation is determined by personal interest, rather

than political ideology or party affiliation. In these processes, classical political actors gradually lose the influence, and the political process itself is constructed from a series of political projects that involve the instantaneous integration of fragmented networks connected by weak ties to pressure decision-making. A descriptive approach to the issues of digitalisation of human relations and behaviour and digitalisation of socio-political action from a strategic perspective can lead to a loss of control over the defining vectors of development of the social sphere, and aspectual studies of this issue usually start from the beginning from instrumental meta-theoretical guidelines regarding the digital society, which is considered as not significantly changing human nature, while in the optics of philosophical anthropology and approaches of modern political anthropology, the actualisation of which is generally almost the same age as the digital transformations of civilisation and societies (the last quarter of the 20th – the first quarter of the 21st century), the digital era changes a person much more powerfully than scientists previously imagined.

The tradition of political anthropology was initiated in the 20th century by E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1940) to L.H. Morgan (1877), G. Balandier (1967). In addition to these researchers, there were also P. Clastres (1974), J.C. Scott (1972), C. Geertz (1973) and others who relied on the fundamental connection between the evolution of human sociality and the development of political theory. (Lewellen, 2003). In particular, the following criteria were used as a comparative consideration of the contribution and ideas of the mentioned thinkers: Methodological basis (evolutionism, functionalism, structuralism, systems analysis, etc.); Understanding of the political (as power, management, coercion, decision-making system, symbolic order); Anthropological model of man (biological, social, cultural, symbolic); Type of sociality (primitive societies, traditional, industrial, modern); Source of political power; Role of culture and symbols; Attitude to evolution/historical development; contribution to the formation of political anthropology as a discipline. The following generalising Table 1 is proposed.

Table 1. Main approaches of political anthropology in the pre-digital era

Author	Methodological approach	Understanding the political	Anthropological model	Source of political power	Role of culture	Scientific significance
L. Woltman	Biologicalisational evolutionism	Politics as a continuation of biological struggle	Biosocial	Biological inequality	Secondary	Introduction of the term, reductionism
L.G. Morgan	Classic evolutionism	Stage of development of social organisation	Socio-evolutionary	Generative structure	Limited	Historicisation of political forms
E. Evans-Pritchard	Structural functionalism	Social order without a state	Socio-structural	Segmental organisation	Integrated	Universality of the political
J. Balandier	Dynamic structuralism	Domination and symbolic power	Cultural-historical	Symbolic legitimization	Central	Symbolic analysis of power
D. Easton	System analysis	Authoritative distribution of values	Functional	Institutional legitimacy	Environmental	Integration with political science
P. Clastre	Anti-state anthropology	Mechanism of prevention of the state	Collectivist	Social control	High	Criticism of state-centrism
J. Scott	Critical anthropology	Everyday resistance	Agentic	Hidden practices	High	Politics "from below"
K. Geertz	Interpretive anthropology	Symbolic system	Symbolic	Cultural legitimization	Determinative	"Thick description" of the policy

Source: developed by the authors based on T.C. Lewellen (2003)

Agentic and symbolic anthropological models, especially the concept of "thick description", which assumes a deep contextual understanding of political actions, and not just the superficial description, reliance on contextual and multi-level interpretative analysis of meaning generation, are fully suited to the analysis of liminal political realities if the newest life practices and formats of experience of the digital era are considered "symbols of transition" (Turner, 1967). However, it should be emphasised that when it comes to the digital world, human sociality appears in a transformed

form as largely anonymised, depersonalised and, in the Marxian tradition, alienated from the person, since the tools and mechanisms of human interaction, being ontologised, began to determine not only the modes and formats of this interaction, but also its source. Paradoxically, in the system of network politics and communication, a person appears as a peripheral element of a system in which it is not entities and subjects that determine its development, but the configuration, interaction, and relationship between elements in the composition of a virtual digital whole (media space,

post-truth technologies, digitalised discourse, in which, in a completely Foucault sense, codes are autonomised in relation to referents)

Such a new superadditivity, appropriate for political anthropology, may mean that the methods of comparative consideration of traditional, archaic, modern power and politics, primarily genetic, functionalist, structuralist, typological, conceptual, are insufficient for considering systems of socio-political action between distributed non-human agents and limited human subjects. Modern researcher O.V. Krysenko (2015) notes: "The relationship between political science and anthropology...is quite interesting, because anthropological concepts of interpreting political phenomena (state, power, rule and political leadership, etc.) developed, in principle, independently of political science". This suggests that from the beginning, political anthropology had the potential for an anthropometric, actually philosophical vision of the political, and not just comparative descriptions of types of political governance, power, political relations, etc.

It is meant that modern political anthropology implicitly relies on the idea of a person as a bearer of freedom due to the very fact of thinking and self-awareness, which allows asserting the colossal humanistic potential of political anthropology in the context of the crisis of humanism, subjectivity, and the transformation of the social and political within the digital world. In particular, modern researcher V. Palahuta (2024), considering the issue of subjectivity in the digital world, appeals to the concept of "biomass", which until not long ago was considered relevant only in conspiracy discourse: "The process of individual digitisation significantly transforms the subjectivity of modern individuals. In fact, there is an individual, but this individual can no longer be called a subject by the standards of the classical understanding of subjectivity. In other words, now the modern world financial and economic elites, who control information flows and power structures almost all over the world (primarily in developed countries of the world), have launched global technologies for managing the behaviour of individuals as biomass. Therefore, when using such technologies due to the widespread use of digitalisation, the modern individual almost completely loses such an individual dimension as "being in freedom".

The controversy unfolds around the interpretation of the hypothetical consequences of the digitalisation of the representational forms of the subject: two main approaches are being formed, one of which interprets digitalisation as a basic mechanism and instrumental strategy of a "disciplinary society", or a "society of achievements" (German: Leistungsgesellschaft), in particular H. Byung-Chul (2023), while the second interprets the digitalisation of the subject in the Fuquanese tradition as a threat to the ontological status of man and the fundamental foundations of freedom, justice,

and rationality for Western civilisation. It is noteworthy that such a vision of the subject can paradoxically take on the features of an existential-clinical analysis of the content of the human lifeworld, or rather, the psyche: "The philosophical discourse of the pathology of the subject in the second half of the twentieth century was investigated not only within the framework of the existential-phenomenological, but also the anti-psychiatric and sociocultural paradigm... The sociocultural paradigm considers the transformation of the subject in the clinical discourse of philosophical anthropology through the prism of the history of culture and society. Thanks to this consideration, the foundations and mechanisms of action of culture and history are revealed" (Skyrtach, 2018).

Such a seemingly simple differentiation of "instrumental/essential" in terms of political anthropology and the issues of digitalisation of the subject is significantly connected with the inevitable fact that justifies the trend and vector of development of modern social and political communication in particular and civilisation in general, which consists in conditioning the formats of meaning generation and understanding by semiotic codes of language, narratives and discursive practices. In a situation where the late Husserlian concepts of the horizon of meanings and the lifeworld are undermined by the significant transformation of human experience, the flow of which loses its direct connection with physical objectivity and, being virtualised, forms the space of decentered, distributed subjectivity and agency, the appeal to the modern dichotomy of freedom and coercion as Marx's alienation seems insufficient. Perhaps, in the context of the foundations of the analytical tradition and Lyotard's concept of the war of narratives, attention should be focused on the issue of the priority of content formation, primarily digital.

It is worth emphasising that it is not about the instrumental capabilities of language simulators for content generation, which will certainly only grow (Jones *et al.*, 2025). It is about the ontological dimension of the phenomenon of meaning itself in the anthropological sense. Will such seemingly fundamental mechanisms of human understanding as the hermeneutic circle or noesis be functional in the context of reframing the flow of experience if the latter is predominantly receptively digitised and artificially generated by non-human agents? Current language usage testifies not only to changes in the reception of reality, both physical and virtual, in the communicative and media space, but also to the formation of new models of working with information that shift the emphasis from the rational to the emotional, from understanding to involvement, from meaning to absurdity (currently this concept is traditionally interpreted as one that does not completely exclude the presence of meanings).

For example, the concept of parasocial (word of the year 2025, according to the Cambridge Dictionary;

captures a one-sided existential and emotional connection between a person and a virtual subject – from an influencer to a chatbot or a fictional character). The Oxford Dictionary chose rage bait (provocative content generated to spread news through hype mechanisms) as the word of the year (The Oxford Word..., 2025). Merriam-Webster Dictionary has chosen slop (scum, scum) as the word of the year for 2025 – mostly AI-generated, partially or completely low-quality online content (2025 word of the year: Slop, 2025). It is also worth recalling the Oxford word of the year for 2024 – brain rot – a slang expression of generations Z and A, which is usually ironically used to denote a state of cognitive and existential stupor after a long immersion in the absurd and rhizomatic space of information flows of online platforms (Taylor, 2024). The point is that the production of cheap content capable of holding attention lends itself well to both monetisation and the formation of a political agenda in the collective imagination and mass consciousness. Therefore, the modern slogan of the Cold War era up to Fukuyama's infamous "end of history" – "one clip – one bomb" – is now significantly outdated, because Generation A, which consists of digital natives, is much more focused on absorbing information through short videos, infographics and interactive formats, voice assistants, educational programs, and therefore the very concept of intellectualism is undergoing transformation, and therefore the traditional settings of human cognition.

Political anthropology, as a philosophical subdiscipline, forming discursive practices of representing political activity in the conditions of digitalisation of social communication and virtualisation of culture, must form cognitive frames for the reception of linguistic usage. Thus, political anthropology will influence not only the formation of the phenomenological horizon of the subject's meanings and the agenda of the ideas about political and social reality, but also to a certain extent will determine the algorithmic structures of generative AI as a political agent and quasi-subject. Thus, in the digital era, the intuitions of L. Wittgenstein (1922) regarding the limits of language as the limits of the human world and J. Habermas (1984) regarding the communicative-discursive nature of socio-political action are actualised, which actualises the problematics of the subjectivity of speech and meaning generation. Political anthropology, thus, explicates its searches in the problematic field of the philosophy of language (and analytical philosophy in general) and phenomenology, which testifies to the interdisciplinary nature of the modern reinterpretation of political anthropology.

In general, political anthropology of the second third of the 21st century is likely to be more focused on the achievements of classical anthropology than on political theory, because digital society and the digitalised political space are paradoxically much more amenable to the methodology of analysing ritual and cult

practices than was the case in the generally rational information space of the Western world of the second half of the 20th century. The resacralisation of politics and political space can be defined as one of the basic trends of the current situation and vectors of its development. Moreover, this is reflected not only in the systemic crisis of democracies and the renaissance of populist politics and ideologies that appeal to irrational values and virtues, in particular radical forms of nationalism that emphasise the philosophemes of "soil" and "blood", but also, firstly, in the transformations of mass culture, which, on the one hand, is becoming extremely complicated due to diversification, and on the other hand, due to substantive and formal simplification, is becoming much more vulnerable to manipulative practices and indirect control. That is why political discourse in the digital environment goes far beyond the simple fixation and promulgation of political doctrines or programs. Discursive practices in the digital dimension become a complement to visual content or anticipate it.

Modern researcher V. Sokolov (2025) notes that "discourse analysis is not only a description of linguistic structures, but also an interpretation of meanings that arise in a specific sociocultural context. However, digital discourses often exist in translocal and transcultural spaces, which complicates the empathic involvement of the researcher and can lead to false conclusions due to the lack of intertextual knowledge. In addition, the role of the researcher in social networks can be ambivalent: the researcher can be simultaneously an observer, a participant, an object, or even a part of the analysed environment. Researchers I. Erdocia *et al.* (2025), note that a modern political actor (and this applies to both individuals and communities, in the context of digital information interactions) may lose the very possibility of understanding both due to changing formats of working with information that do not provide for reflection, and due to the specifics of the information explosion situation, when the amount of information and the speed of interaction grow asymptotically.

Thus, it is more about responding, an action that is more instinctively determined than reflexively. The appeal to emotions in modern political discourse should therefore be the focus of attention of political anthropology, since it indicates not only openness to manipulation or the manipulative nature of interaction itself, but primarily a fundamental reconfiguration of the elements of political space. This, in particular, can lead in democracies to the decentering of subjectivity and the blurring of structures of political interaction between political actors, which primarily concerns the state and society, and in authoritarian regimes or quasi-democracies, on the contrary, to the hypercrystallisation of power structures, vertical reliance on mechanisms of control and suppression. Modern researcher N. Steblyna (2021) defines the elements of digital politics as "digital political subjects, fragmented communities

(networks of users), united by weak horizontal ties, the digital field and digital infrastructure". According to such a vision, political anthropology should focus precisely on the study of vertical ties within the structure, that is, it is about the combination of two supposedly opposite tendencies: on the one hand, a digital political actor, losing the autonomy due to the loss of control over information interactions, joins a powerful vertical structure of relations; on the other hand, the blurring of the concept of subjectivity and the expansion of the concept of agency decenter the political space on a horizontal level, complicating the self-identification of a person as a source of socio-political action, power, rights, law, etc. From this perspective, a person appears as a relay of the current vision of political reality, its basic slogans and memetic images, which significantly limits the individual's analytical and critical capabilities as a cognitive agent.

Considering that Husserl's concept of the lifeworld necessarily includes, in addition to social interactions and everyday experience, also the world of imagination and delusion (Kebuladze, 2017), it is possible to assume that the digitalisation of the socio-communicative sphere, changing human life forms, also transforms its imagination, paradoxically adding to reality (perhaps in the mode of Merton's self-fulfilling prophecy), for example, verbal and visual construction of texts and videos by language simulators and generative AI, similar to delusions or hallucinations. But human subjectivity implies not only the ability to speak, but also the ability to be morally and politically responsible for one's statements. An automatically generated text cannot bear moral responsibility in the full sense: pessimistic scenarios demonstrate that when people begin to delegate responsibility to systems, a vacuum of responsibility arises between developers, users, and platforms. The political anthropology approach currently expounds the thesis of the correlation of subjectivity and responsibility (Wang *et al.*, 2024).

It is also crucial that the notion of authorship in digital discursive practices is being disrupted: when an article or political commentary is partly generated by an LLM, who is the author? Who bears the political consequences? This is not just a legal issue: it is a question concerning the self-identification of political actors and the legitimacy of the statements in the public space. Claims about the impossibility of distinguishing between human and machine generate crises of authenticity and identity, especially in the context of political propaganda. Also, the latest research by I. Erdocia *et al.* (2025) shows that cultural specificities are often lost in discursive models, which increases the risks of unification of political language. Thus, the problematisation of the agency of human socio-political action in the conditions of digitalisation of social communication, virtualisation of culture and its correlation with the agency of AI allows using the philosophical optics

of these processes, which directly indicates the discursive and activity-based, practical reinterpretation of the fundamental categories of freedom, responsibility, justice, and law.

In the conditions of digitalisation, the communication channel ceases to be a neutral tool and acquires an ontological status. The mechanism of ontologisation of the medium has been recorded, in which digital architectures and discursive formats determine the parameters of the subject's experience, imagination, and meaning generation. The consequence of this mechanism is the delegation of cognitive and normative functions (assessment, interpretation, decision-making) to algorithmic systems, which causes a structural gap between action and responsibility. In a verified form, this means the transformation of the lifeworld as a space of human experience and the rethinking of the boundaries of the human as an ontological and political category. The fixation allows considering political anthropology not as a descriptive branch of political science, but as a philosophical methodology for analysing the discursive and ontological foundations of modern socio-political action. The thesis is proposed on the need to reinterpret modern political anthropology primarily as a philosophical, rather than a political science, subdiscipline. The assumption is substantiated that political anthropology, relying on discursive practices of political interaction and political narratives, has the opportunity to consider socio-political interaction not only as a structure or configuration of the political field or an algorithmised ritual sequence of political interaction, but also to take into account the cognitive and existential dimensions of the formation of political experience, that is, noetic and noematic structures of consciousness, using a phenomenological vision of human political activity. The boundary of the human is not only a philosophical category, it is political, as it determines who has the right to speak, to create discourse, who bears responsibility, and how political decisions are legitimised. With the advent of language simulators and generative AI, this boundary has been undermined, which means a transformation of the human lifeworld. Political anthropology, which traditionally studies the creation of the political subject, must take on the task of not only description, but also normative (at the axiological and ethical levels) intervention: how to preserve human responsibility, how to restore or reconstruct mechanisms of identification, and how to prevent the concentration of influence by private structures (tech corporations, for example, "Tech Bro" politics) or governments. In this sense, the boundaries of the human lifeworld, outlined by experience and narratives, discursive practices, are a space of political construction in which the vision of anthropology must be both an analytical and practical component and participant. Political anthropology records that the modern subjectivity is transindividual – it is formed in multiple

distributed connections. The utilitarian implementation of AI in administration and decision-making may seem effective, but it changes the political structure of the transmission of meanings and decisions at all levels: from human participants to algorithms. If the subjectivity of political culture is automated, then the legitimacy of political decisions is also questionable. Therefore, political anthropology must question any automatic extension of AI agent systems to political functions without appropriate accountability mechanisms, because language simulators are effective tools for disseminating information. Such systems are also capable of amplifying disinformation, creating imitations of public opinions, and manipulating emotions. Political anthropology must focus on the fact that the legitimization of political discourse always requires authentication and the establishment of identity. Therefore, institutional responsibility should certainly be supported, cultural interpretability and inclusiveness should be developed in datasets, transparent markers of authorship and attribution should be defined, and educational practices of media literacy should be developed, but above these practices there should be a metatheoretical vision of the correlation of subjectivity and power, socio-political action and agency of AI, digital narratives and discourses, and the human lifeworld, shaped by political anthropology as a philosophical subdiscipline.

Conclusions

As a result of the examination of the manifested issues, the following conclusions were formulated. The study clearly identified three key mechanisms for the transformation of political discourse in the digital era: hybridisation of agency; algorithmic discursive framing; ontologisation of communicative media and delegation of responsibility. The functioning of political discourse in the context of digitalisation is determined by the mechanism of hybridisation of agency and the distinction between subjectivity and agency. The analysis found that digital political discourse is formed in the mode of systemic interaction of human and non-human agents (algorithms, language simulators, platforms), as a result of which the classical correlation "human subjectivity → political action" is violated. The mechanism of hybridisation of agency is recorded, which consists

in the inclusion of non-human formats of action in the processes of meaning generation, representation, and transmission of political content. The verified consequence of this mechanism is the structural demarcation of subjectivity (as a bearer of responsibility and identity) and agency (as a functional ability to act), which changes the anthropological foundations of political discourse. The transformation of political discourse is implemented through the mechanism of discursive framing and algorithmic selection of meanings.

The study found that digital discursive practices perform not a descriptive, but a constitutive function in relation to socio-political action. The mechanism of algorithmic framing was identified, which consists in the formation of the agenda, horizons of significance and scenarios of political participation through digital platforms, media infrastructure and recommendation systems. This mechanism is verified through the reduction of political action to reactive, performative and symbolic acts (click, tag, hashtag), as a result of which the discourse not only represents political reality, but also defines its boundaries. The boundaries of the lifeworld in digital political discourse are established through the mechanism of ontologisation of communicative media and delegation of responsibility. The prospects for further research are determined by the need to deepen the analysis of transformational forms of discourses and political discursive practices, political narratives in the process of digitalisation of the processes of formation of human experience and digitalisation of social communication, media space and cultural forms and the influence on the emergence of new interpretations of human and machine subjectivity and agency, which would not eliminate from social and political practice the defining philosophemes of traditional humanism, such as freedom, choice, justice, etc.

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Анотація. Актуальність теми статті визначена необхідністю осмислення тенденцій розвитку сучасної політичної антропології в контексті цифровізації дискурсу. Також у цьому контексті видається доречним окреслення феноменологічної візії зазначеної проблематики. Мета дослідження – окреслення напрямів і механізмів побутування політичного дискурсу в умовах трансформації життєсвіту та рефреймінгу цифрової суб'єктності, а також значення політичної антропології як методології дослідження не лише сфери політичного, а і комунікації в цифровізованому світі назагал, оскільки в ньому розподіленість інформаційної суб'єктності акцентує відношення між елементами та складниками політичного, соціального, культурного та ін. цілого. У статті використано феноменологічний, аналітичний та антропологічний підходи до проблематики трансформації людської суб'єктності під впливом цифровізації соціально-політичного простору. Встановлено, що традиційна методологія політичної антропології в умовах цифровізації соціальної комунікації, політичний відношень та віртуалізації культури є недостатньою, для чого застосовано метод історико-філософського аналізу. Досліджено трансформацій людської суб'єктності під впливом тотальної цифровізації соціально-політичного простору. Політична антропологія інтерпретована у контексті пошуків відповіді на кризу класичних моделей раціонального суб'єкта, як одна з методологій, які пропонують евристичний аналіз дискурсивних механізмів, що визначають межі людського життєсвіту, через аналіз політичних та владних відношень. Констатовано, що стрімке впровадження цифрових технологій розмиває поняття соціальної та політичної дії через необхідність включення до них нелюдських форматів агентності. У висновках зазначено, що межа людського є онтологічною та політичною категорією, яка визначає право голосу та відповідальність як ідентичність та присутність. Запропоновано візію політичної антропології як насамперед філософської, а не політологічної субдисципліни. Практична цінність дослідження полягає у можливості застосування висловлених міркувань і запропонованих висновків фахівцями із соціальної філософії, політології, а також у процесі викладання соціогуманітарних дисциплін у закладах вищої освіти

Ключові слова: соціальна філософія; дискурсивні практики; рефреймінг політичної діяльності; політична суб'єктність та агентність; життєсвіт