

The Genealogy of Digital Asceticism in the Vortex of the Attention Economy: The Dialectic of Technologies of the Self and *Muraqabah*

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Abstract

This study examines the genealogy of “digital zuhud” as a response to the attention economy that exploits individual subjectivity in the contemporary digital ecosystem. The main focus of the study is directed at the dialectic between Michel Foucault's concept of technologies of the self and the practice of muraqabah in the tradition of Islamic spirituality. Using a descriptive-analytical qualitative design with a literature study approach, this study analyzes the primary texts *Technologies of the Self* and *Al-Ri'ayah* through a philosophical parallelism method. The findings show that muraqabah functions as a transcendent mechanism that builds spiritual resilience to counter neoliberal alienation and self-quantification. Digital zuhud is formulated as a reconstructive framework for hybrid subjectivity to maintain moral agency amid algorithmic control. This study contributes to enriching the Foucaultian discourse with Eastern spiritual dimensions, while bridging the gap between Western technological ethics and Islamic tradition. The practical implications include guidelines for designing technologies that support ethical self-care. Future research is recommended to conduct empirical testing to validate the effectiveness of digital zuhud on a broader user population.

Keywords: Technologies of the self; muraqabah; attention economy; digital zuhud; subjectivity

1. Introduction

The digital-era landscape, dominated by hyperconnectivity, has triggered a profound transformation in the concept of “*technologies of the self*” as primarily conceptualized by Michel Foucault, which has now evolved from ancient self-care practices toward modern digital forms in the effort to shape one’s identity autonomously (Foucault, 1988). This transformation positions the concept of Digital Asceticism as a contemporary ascetic strategy that is urgently needed to navigate the paradoxes of digital technology in the neoliberal era (Nikolakakis, 2024; Schneider & Gerdenitsch, 2025). On one hand, digital tools function as instruments of individual empowerment; on the other, they become instruments of surveillance and alienation through “*quantified otherness*” (Nikolakakis, 2024). The subject is currently transforming into a *homo economicus* who manages themselves as an investment asset, yet

remains trapped within a network of algorithmic governance that reflects biopolitical control (Nikolakakis, 2024). Digital self-tracking technology also has an ambivalent impact that creates intrapersonal conflict between self-connectedness and self-alienation, as well as behavioral tension between individual agency and technological control (Schneider & Gerdenitsch, 2025). Therefore, digital humanism design is necessary to ensure users retain authority over themselves (Schneider & Gerdenitsch, 2025).

This contestation becomes increasingly complex because self-technology functions as a matrix of practical reason that humans use to produce themselves through *habitus* and mental and physical capacities (Burkitt, 2002). In Foucault's view (1988), technologies of the self are operations performed by individuals on their own bodies and minds, in which the body is positioned as both a technical object and the primary means of transformation (Burkitt, 2002). This technology has a dual nature: as an instrument of domination that dulls potential through mechanical repetition, and simultaneously as a means of liberation through critical reasoning (Burkitt, 2002). This perspective of liberation aligns with the application of dramatic conventions such as *the "Truth Game"* and *the "Hidden Thoughts Game,"* which can create a rupture in rigid institutional norms to weave a new, collaborative identity (Cahill, 2012). Meanwhile, within marginalized communities, self-technology emerges as a form of "tactic" of resistance through routine practices and the informal economy to negotiate identity amidst power structures (Black, 2019). However, in digital spaces, individuals often construct multiple and fluid "narrative selves," where family elements are frequently excluded to avoid moral scrutiny, while brands are integrated as status symbols (Jain et al., 2021).

A clash of values arises when humans—as cybernetically ultrastable, dynamic open systems—confront erroneous environmental representations within their cognitive structures (Laszlo, 1973). In this context, *mindful fitness* practices such as Pilates and yoga offer the potential for self-technology to move beyond the dominance of disciplinary body discourses toward an ethical mind-body balance (Markula, 2004). Furthermore, the extension of Foucault's framework through "*technologies of the other*" emphasizes empathy as an aesthetic technique that serves as a prerequisite for an individual's ability to engage in self-care through intersubjective interaction (Lobb, 2015). This technical mediation approach enriches the ethics of technology by positioning the individual as a "hybrid self" who practices routines through tools, thereby making technology part of the performance of human freedom rather than a form of alienation (Dorrestijn, 2012). Nevertheless, autonomy in modern digital technology often poses new challenges in the form of semiotic opacity and model autonomy, where machine decision-making processes exceed direct human control due to the complexity of neural networks (Lenhard, 2024).

The phenomenon of low-resolution selfies shifts the focus from a self-sovereign narrative toward a self-ecology that prioritizes connectivity, where gestural images allow the self to deviate from algorithmic control apparatuses (Boccia Artieri, 2021; Meriluoto, 2023). In the education sector, categories of self-technology such as *parrhesia*, transgressive experiences,

and observation indicate a cultural shift among internet-generation students who are dominated by computer network usage yet lack the capacity to listen (Guo, 2015). This tension is complicated by cultural values and social norms that function as constitutive elements of the cognitive system, so the effectiveness of behavioral interventions such as *nudges* is highly dependent on cultural calibration (Alshamy, 2025). Based on a review of contemporary literature, a significant gap was identified in the integration of *technologies of the self* with primary Islamic spiritual practices, particularly the concept of *muraqabah* formulated by Al-Muhasibi in the book *Al-Ri'ayah li-Huquq Allah*. The concept of Digital Zuhud as a form of contemporary asceticism grounded in Islamic self-surveillance has not yet been explored genealogically to address the attention economy that exploits attention as a commodity.

This imbalance creates a contestation between self-empowerment and structural domination, where individuals are trapped in a dialectic between autonomous agency and algorithmic surveillance. This study aims to fill this gap by tracing the historical roots of Digital Asceticism as a contradictory response to hyperconnectivity, positioning Al-Muhasibi's thought on *muraqabah* as an antithesis to data alienation. The central issue raised is the dialectic between Foucaultian self-technologies and *muraqabah*, where the practice of spiritual self-surveillance has the potential to become a resistance strategy that enables individuals to independently determine their own way of life amidst the dominance of "power". This study aims to elucidate how the genealogy of Digital Zuhud reflects the tension between self-autonomy and technological control within a complex digital ecosystem.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding digital subjectivity through a new lens for addressing alienation in neoliberal society. Academically, this research enriches Foucauldian discourse with Eastern spiritual dimensions, bridging the gap between Western technological ethics and Islamic traditions through a multidimensional theoretical approach. Practically, these findings provide guidance in designing technologies and interaction patterns that support Digital Zuhud as a form of ethical self-care to reduce dependence on rigid technical standards (Schneider & Gerdenitsch, 2025). This article is systematically structured, beginning with a literature review on the evolution of *technologies of the self*, followed by a genealogical analysis of Digital Zuhud, an exploration of the dialectics of Al-Muhasibi's *muraqabah*, a discussion of theoretical implications for digital autonomy, and concluding with a summary and recommendations for future research.

2. Methods

This study employs a descriptive-analytical qualitative design with a literature review approach as the primary methodological framework to deconstruct the discourse of subjectivity in the contemporary digital era. This approach was chosen for its capacity to reveal the transformation of self-care practices from a cross-traditional perspective, which is often obscured by the dominance of neoliberal technological narratives. To maintain theoretical balance, this study establishes Michel Foucault's (1988) primary text *Technologies of*

the Self and Al-Muhasibi's *Al-Ri'ayah li-Huquq Allah* as the main analytical anchors. The use of these two texts is deemed most relevant because they offer a systematic framework capable of bridging the gap between Western biopolitical analyses of self-quantification and the internal surveillance found within the tradition of Islamic spirituality. The analytical process is conducted through the application of Philosophical Parallelism, operationalized in three systematic stages visualized in the following figure:

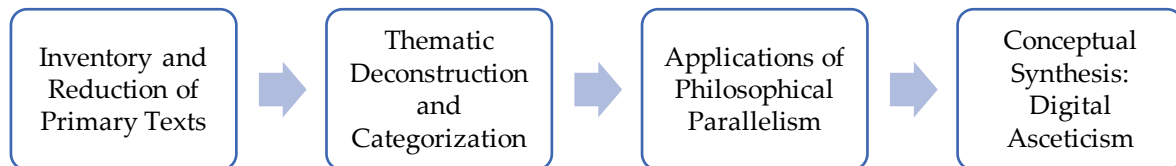


Figure 1: The Process of Philosophical Parallelism Analysis

The first stage is thematic deconstruction, which focuses on dissecting self-discipline techniques in the texts of Foucault (1988) and Al-Muhasibi to identify how the subject is actively constructed. In this stage, the researcher codifies mechanisms of internal control to avoid abstraction regarding self-discipline variables by referencing concepts of agency, autonomy, and digital behavioral regulation. The second stage is conceptual synchronization, which examines points of equivalence between the operationalization of the soul in Western philosophy and the practice of *muraqabah* as a form of continuous self-monitoring of the stirrings of the heart and intentions. The third stage is dialectical synthesis, which contextualizes these findings within the economy of attention to formulate Digital Zuhud as a strategy of ethical-spiritual resistance against alienation and algorithmic control. Through this stage, the research explores how these two traditions of thought can mutually enrich one another without reducing the distinctiveness of the historical and cultural contexts of each framework.

The scope of this research is limited to the ontological and ethical dimensions of self-technology practices in hybrid spaces, with an emphasis on the transformative potential of the subject through the articulation of contemporary Zuhud. Methodological limitations primarily lie in the interpretive nature of the literature review, which relies heavily on the researcher's depth of critical analysis of the texts. Since this study is oriented toward theoretical elaboration, generalizing the findings to the broader population of technology users still requires further testing through future empirical research. Nevertheless, the methodological framework employed provides a strong analytical foundation for replicating critical studies of the intersection between Western technology and Eastern spirituality. Overall, this integrative approach affirms that the digital space is not a neutral channel for information transmission but rather a contested arena where self-sovereignty and spiritual identity are continuously negotiated under the dominance of global algorithmic logic.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

This section presents the results of a textual analysis of Michel Foucault's *Technologies of the Self* and the book *Al-Ri'ayah lil Huquq Allah*, conducted through a qualitative approach based on a literature review (Al-Muhasibi, 1968; Foucault, 1988). By applying the technique of philosophical parallelism, the data is organized to reveal the underlying structure of subject formation within two distinct traditions of thought. The primary focus of the analysis is on identifying conceptual patterns that encompass mechanisms of agency, techniques of self-surveillance, and the subject's strategies of resistance against the surrounding structures of domination. This presentation of the results purely maps textual findings to provide an empirical basis for understanding how individuals manage their subjectivity, both within the framework of modern biopolitical power and within the framework of classical spirituality (Nikolakakis, 2024; Schneider & Gerdenitsch, 2025). All findings are systematically mapped to highlight the intersections and fundamental differences between Western self-techniques and practices of inner surveillance in the Islamic tradition.

Table 1: Analysis of Conceptual Parallelism Between Agency and Self-Surveillance

Technologies of the Self , Michel Foucault	The Book of the Care of Rights (Al-Ri'ayah lil Huquq) Allah	Conceptual Relationship Patterns
"External surveillance internalized through the panopticon and biopolitics to create subject compliance." (Foucault, 1988, p. 18)	" <i>Muraqabah</i> as continuous internal surveillance of the stirrings of the heart and intentions before they manifest as concrete actions." (Al-Muhasibi, 1968, pp. 154–159)	Both emphasize the importance of internal surveillance as the basis of self-control.
"The individual's ability to practice freedom through the aesthetics of existence and self-management as an asset." (Foucault, 1988, pp. 18 & 49)	"The capacity of humans as servants to choose obedience through the purification of the soul from material attachments." (Al-Muhasibi, 1968, pp. 223–224)	Foucault focuses on secular autonomy, while <i>Al Ri'ayah</i> focuses on transcendent connectedness.
" <i>Asceticism</i> or practical exercises to master oneself and transform one's perspective on truth." (Foucault, 1988, pp. 35 & 48)	" <i>Zuhud</i> and <i>Muhasabah</i> as practices for freeing oneself from the domination of desires and worldly interests." (Al-Muhasibi, 1968, pp. 1–10)	Both employ regular physical and mental exercises to achieve specific qualities in the subject.
"The practice of truth (<i>parrhesia</i>) as an effort to resist normalization and institutional domination." (Foucault, 1988, pp. 40–42)	"Inner integrity and sincerity as a bulwark against external temptations and corruptive social pressures." (Al-Muhasibi, 1968, p. 158)	Foucault's mode of resistance is political-aesthetic, whereas <i>Al-Ri'ayah's</i> is ethical-spiritual.

All findings mapped in the table above demonstrate significant data coherence in addressing the research question regarding the structure of self-formation. The data confirm that in both Foucault's theory and the text *Al Ri'ayah*, the individual is not viewed as a passive subject but as an entity possessing the means to intervene in oneself. The patterns of

relationship identified—ranging from technical parallels to differences in ultimate goals—provide an adequate picture of how the concept of agency operates in different spaces. These results directly support the research objective of mapping conceptual intersections between self-technologies and spiritual practices, which serve as a foundation for further understanding of the individual's position amidst the pressures of contemporary digital structures.

3.2 Discussion

The Dialectics of Subjectivity in the Vortex of the Algorithmic Attention Economy

An interpretation of these research findings suggests that the concept of self-technology inherited from Michel Foucault has undergone a fundamental mutation within the contemporary digital ecosystem characterized by hyperconnectivity (Foucault, 1988). While historically, technologies of the self focused on ancient ascetic practices to achieve self-mastery, the current reality reveals a shift toward a digital form dominated by extensive self-quantification (Nikolakakis, 2024). This phenomenon reflects a major paradox in the neoliberal era, where various digital tools originally promised as means of individual empowerment for self-formation have instead transformed into instruments of surveillance and alienation through data collection (Friesen, 2017). Through the process of datafication, the subject no longer merely engages in autonomous self-care but produces *quantified otherness* that blurs the boundaries between autonomous agency and structural control (Foucault, 1988). This underscores that the individual's position within the attention economy is no longer that of a fully sovereign subject, but rather as a *homo economicus* who actively manages themselves as an investment asset under the control of algorithmic governance reflecting modern biopolitical control.

A deeper analysis of algorithmic surveillance mechanisms reveals systematic co-optation of individual agency through three primary dimensions of tension, encompassing conflicts at the intrapersonal level between self-connection and self-alienation, the interactional level between social engagement and normative pressure, and the behavioral level between individual agency and technological control (Schneider & Gerdenitsch, 2025). Self-care practices, which should be a private space for ethical growth, have now been transformed into instruments of data commodification for the sake of a highly competitive market. This contradiction is exacerbated by conflicts at the intrapersonal level, where the subject experiences tension between efforts to build *self-connectedness* and the risk of *self-alienation* resulting from excessive reliance on quantitative data that often obscures natural bodily awareness (Schneider & Gerdenitsch, 2025). In this context, the self-autonomy offered by various digital platforms is often merely an illusion of freedom because every action of the subject is guided by system design and algorithms that create normative pressure through constant comparison against social standards (Schneider & Gerdenitsch, 2025). The dominance of this power structure indicates that self-tracking technology has an ambivalent impact capable of undermining user authority if not grounded in the principles of digital

humanism that ensure users retain authority over themselves (Schneider & Gerdenitsch, 2025).

Subjects' reliance on quantitative metrics also creates opacity that challenges humans' critical understanding of themselves through what is termed "model autonomy" (Lenhard, 2024). Findings regarding autonomous technology indicate that machine decision-making processes are now rooted in computer modeling that enables models to evolve into semiotic autonomous agents (Lenhard, 2024). The complexity within systems such as neural networks makes machine decision-making processes difficult to explain in human terms because this autonomy arises from automatic parameter adaptation that transcends the direct control of both designers and users. This reality implies the emergence of a fragmented hybrid identity, where individuals construct plural and independent self-narratives through collaboration with technology (Jain et al., 2021). In non-Western societies, this phenomenon even demonstrates tactics to evade family moral oversight by excluding family activities from digital narratives in order to gain social validation through the use of brands as status symbols (Jain et al., 2021). Such identity constructions are fluid and easily *retractable*, which ultimately dictates changes in individuals' actual behavior to meet the demands of digital content and feedback.

Integrating these findings into a framework of practical reason suggests that the body is now positioned as both a technical object and a primary means of self-transformation mediated by technology (Burkitt, 2002). However, there is a significant risk that self-technology could become an instrument of domination that dulls individual potential through mechanical repetition devoid of critical reasoning (Ramon, 2020). Nevertheless, there is an opening for the practice of freedom through self-hybridization that requires deep attention and ethical awareness (Dorrestijn, 2012). For example, the use of critical awareness in fitness practices such as Pilates and yoga can shift the focus from merely oppressive physical appearance toward daily functionality and a more self-reliant mental balance (Markula, 2004). The utilization of technology as part of human freedom can only be achieved if the subject is able to attain self-mastery in every technical interaction, so that technology is no longer perceived as a form of alienation but rather as a means to achieve an ethical end goal (Pylypa, 1998).

The theoretical implications of this research also touch on aspects of intersubjective relations through the technological modalities of others aimed at facilitating the autonomy of others (Lobb, 2015). Empathy can be understood as an aesthetic and ethical technique that ontogenetically precedes and serves as a prerequisite for an individual's ability to engage in self-care (Lobb, 2015). Furthermore, the effectiveness of behavioral interventions in digital spaces is significantly influenced by cultural contingencies, which must be treated as constitutive elements of an individual's cognitive system, rather than merely additional variables (Alshamy, 2025). The external validity of any self-empowerment strategy requires iterative cultural calibration so that technological designs can be understood contextually and

effectively outside Western societies (Alshamy, 2025). Without this calibration, behavioral interventions often fail because culture functions as a cognitive filter that determines how individuals respond to digital stimuli.

Conceptually, the phenomenon of selfies can be understood as the subject's attempt to create a low-resolution self that prioritizes kinesthetic connectivity within a hybrid digital environment (Tavani, 2024). This new ethos allows the subject to deviate from algorithmic control apparatuses through fluid aesthetic appearances (Tavani, 2024). In the world of education, a significant shift is evident among internet-generation students who prioritize digital observation over listening practices, a difference influenced by local culture and the dominance of computer network usage (Guo, 2015). Through appropriate analytical tools, this study successfully maps how self-construction occurs amidst the influence of modern technology with all its complexities (Guo, 2015). The study's contribution underscores that while autonomous technology threatens the subject's sovereignty, a deep understanding of self-technology still offers avenues for practices of freedom and strategies of self-resistance (Mitcheson, 2012).

Thus, the configuration of subjectivity within the attention economy is a manifestation of the ongoing dialectic between algorithmic biopolitical control and efforts to reclaim individual ethical agency. Mapping how the data market co-opts self-care practices provides a crucial foundation for understanding the shift in the function of self-technology into merely an economic asset within the neoliberal structure. This phenomenon directs the discourse toward the urgency of redefining human autonomy beyond quantitative metrics to address the challenges posed by the increasing opacity of autonomous technologies. Through the integration of digital humanism principles and deep ethical awareness, opportunities open up for developing more resilient models of agency in upholding the sovereignty of the subject. Thus, an understanding of the limitations of self-hybridization techniques in this digital space demands further exploration of the dimension of inner spirituality as a more fundamental strategy of resistance.

Spiritual Resilience through the Transformation of *Muraqabah* in the Digital Space

The conceptualization of *muraqabah* as a form of inner surveillance rooted in the Sufi tradition positions this practice as a fundamental antithesis to the phenomenon of digital alienation within the contemporary hyperconnected ecosystem (Al-Muhasibi, 1968). *Muraqabah* functions not merely as an internal self-discipline practice, but manifests as a transcendent mechanism that constructs spiritual resilience amidst the dominance of digital technology. Theoretically, this articulation enriches Foucault's framework of "*technologies of the self*" by demonstrating that inner surveillance represents an evolution of self-care practices that actively resist the neoliberal current of self-quantification. In contrast to the dynamics of *quantified otherness*, which tend to erode the subject's sovereignty (Nikolakakis, 2024), *muraqabah* prioritizes inner integrity as the primary instrument for maintaining subjective autonomy. This simultaneously mitigates the paradox between empowerment and structural

surveillance (Clark et al., 2024), affirming that *muraqabah* is not a technological rejection but an ethical resistance strategy to address intrapersonal alienation resulting from excessive reliance on quantitative data.

The transformative power of *muraqabah* in constructing resistance against the exploitation of attention by the digital market is rooted in the provision of a more stable internal fortress compared to external algorithmic surveillance mechanisms that often reproduce modern biopolitical control (Dorrestijn, 2012). This reality expands Burkitt's proposition (2002) regarding self-technologies as a matrix of practical reason involving habitus and capacities, where, in this context, *muraqabah* is understood as bodily techniques and spiritual habits that transcend mere linguistic performance. Through its transcendent dimension, *muraqabah* enables a dialectic between digital routines and inner surveillance, which in turn generates a deeper critical rationality. When compared to the use of dramatic conventions as technologies of the self (Cahill, 2012; Wright, 2000), *muraqabah* operates at a more intimate intrapersonal level, thereby offering a pattern of resistance that does not depend on external social validation but rather on an internal dialogue with the Transcendent. This integration contributes conceptually to the critique of liquid identity by positioning *muraqabah* as a spiritual technology of the self that combines reflexive and non-reflexive elements in resisting digital normative pressures (Black, 2019).

The contradiction between this spiritual practice and the collaborative narrative self-model underscores the role of *muraqabah* in introducing a spiritual narrative independent of digital validation (Jain et al., 2021; Sheth & Solomon, 2014). A reinterpretation of adaptive systems theory suggests that spiritual values in *muraqabah* function as an ultrastable objective index in confronting an exploitative digital environment (Laszlo, 1973). The failure of digital adaptation is understood not merely as a technical anomaly but as rooted in a misrepresentation of spiritual goals that can be recalibrated through the fulfillment of holistic biosocial-cultural needs. In line with the potential for the practice of freedom in physical activities (Markula, 2004), *muraqabah* transforms the subject's focus from mere digital physical appearance toward daily spiritual functionality. However, the resulting autonomy is more self-reliant because it stems from a spiritual tradition autonomous from the commercial industry, thereby expanding ethical self-aesthetics in the face of the dominance of gender norms and digital identities.

The position of *muraqabah* within the space of intersubjective relations demonstrates that inner surveillance ontogenetically precedes the capacity for spiritual empathy, thereby serving as a fundamental prerequisite for ethical interaction in the digital space (Lobb, 2015). This convergence creates a new conceptual framework in which *muraqabah* serves as a bridge between self-technology and other-technology, enabling subjects to deviate from algorithmic control apparatuses through low-resolution self-aesthetics (Tavani, 2024). Furthermore, this reality challenges the opacity of model autonomy within artificial intelligence systems by offering automatic spiritual parameter adaptation as a form of resistance (Lenhard, 2024).

Thus, contemporary philosophy of technology is required to integrate spiritual dimensions to analyze the formation of human autonomy from the earliest stages of technical modeling.

The alignment between the practice of inner surveillance and the typology of digital self-technology indicates that *muraqabah* is capable of strengthening the categories of observation and *parrhesia* while simultaneously filling a gap in listening practices for the internet generation (Guo, 2015). Cultural differences influenced by the dominance of computer networks can be mitigated through *muraqabah* as a transcultural self-construction instrument, which unites digital self-technology with spiritual traditions to address generational shifts. This aligns with the urgency of cultural contingency in behavioral interventions (Alshamy, 2025), where *muraqabah* is positioned as a contextual spiritual *nudge*. Within this framework, culture functions as a constitutive cognitive filter that determines individual responses to the architecture of digital choice, which in turn drives modifications to the 4E framework of cognition by incorporating the transcendent dimension as a crucial adaptive element.

This indicates that hybrid spiritual resilience offers a new understanding of how subjects integrate technical mediation with spiritual subjectivation to achieve self-mastery that transcends alienation (Dorrestijn, 2012). This phenomenon provides a new telos for the ethics of technology, namely the performance of freedom through stable inner integrity against the penetration of digital normative pressures. Overall, the configuration of subjectivity in the digital age is no longer merely a manifestation of algorithmic control but a space for the rediscovery of ethical agency through the spiritual dimensions of Islam. This theoretical contribution significantly expands Foucault's framework, offering more inclusive resistance strategies and opening new discourses regarding the future of human autonomy within an increasingly complex technological ecosystem.

Digital Zuhud as a Reconstruction of Ethical Agency and Autonomy

The conceptual articulation of digital *zuhud* represents an original contribution through a philosophical parallelism that synthesizes Michel Foucault's theory of *the technologies of the self* with the principle of Al Ri'ayah within the tradition of Islamic spirituality. As a reconstructive framework, digital asceticism facilitates the formation of hybrid subjectivity that enables individuals to navigate the digital ecosystem without degrading their moral agency in the contemporary space. This integration offers a resolution to the challenges of technological opacity and technical mediation, which often serve as sources of subjective alienation. Therefore, these findings underscore the urgency of cultural recalibration within the discourse of technology ethics to realize a more holistic and dignified self-autonomy as a response to the hegemonic dominance of digital structures.

An enrichment of Foucault's thought regarding the practice of self-care or *epimeleia heautou* reveals that subjects in the digital space tend to transform into *homo economicus* managed through exploitative algorithmic governance (Nikolakakis, 2024). The phenomenon of self-quantification, which triggers a paradox between empowerment and surveillance, is

interrupted by the principle of Al Ri'ayah, which offers a fundamental balance between material and spiritual dimensions. Digital Zuhud, as a new theoretical proposition, redefines *technologies of the self* not merely as neoliberal instruments, but as ethical practices of detachment from the conditions of digital hyperconnectivity. This position expands the analysis of the tension between individual agency and structural control by introducing reflective observation as a critical mechanism to address self-alienation within the digital ecosystem (Guo, 2015; Schneider & Gerdenitsch, 2025).

In a critical dialogue with the perspective of practical reason, the concept of digital asceticism enriches interpretations regarding the habitus matrix and bodily capacities in the construction of self-technology (Burkitt, 2002). The resulting hybrid subjectivity enables the transformation of digital habits from instruments of domination into more autonomous means of ethical liberation. Unlike the use of dramatic conventions aimed at creating an interruption of institutional norms (Cahill, 2012), digital asceticism functions as a virtual interruption that facilitates ethical polyphony amidst constant algorithmic pressure. Furthermore, the integration of the principle of Al Ri'ayah successfully overcomes the limitations of Western-centric approaches by offering spiritual detachment as a daily resistance tactic to avoid the digital marginalization experienced by subjects in various social contexts (Black, 2019).

The reconstruction of ethical agency through digital asceticism also involves a reinterpretation of the subject's autonomy in the face of the opacity of technical mediation, which tends to alienate human potential (Dorrestijn, 2012). Through the adoption of the principle of moderation, the digital subject is able to engage in ethical self-problematization resembling the practice of *parrhesia* to mitigate the effects of alienation or *quantified otherness* (Nikolakakis, 2024). This gives rise to the proposition that ethical autonomy is the result of a conscious hybridization that utilizes Eastern spirituality to counterbalance modern biopolitical control in cyberspace. Compared to the fluid and easily retractable nature of digital identity construction (Jain et al., 2021), digital asceticism serves as a moral *gatekeeping* mechanism that protects the integrity of identity from the penetration of aggressive normative surveillance.

This expansion of theoretical meaning also touches on the philosophy of systems, in which digital asceticism is understood as an ultrastable cybernetic adaptation process (Laszlo, 1973). Spiritual values function as variables for fulfilling biosocial and cultural needs, preventing adaptive failure caused by inaccurate technological representations of human identity. While the practice of critical consciousness in fitness aims to deconstruct disciplinary discourses on the body (Markula, 2004), digital asceticism transforms this consciousness into the virtual realm to comprehensively question digital aesthetic norms. Furthermore, the integration of others' technological modalities with intersubjective empathy grounded in Al Ri'ayah underscores that self-autonomy within the digital ecology is both communal and ontogenetic (Lobb, 2015).

Addressing the challenges of model autonomy within autonomous technological systems can be achieved through cultural calibration strategies championed by digital asceticism (Lenhard, 2024). Subjects consciously organize ethical parameters to overcome the semiotic alienation arising from the complexity of neural networks, which are often difficult to explain in human terms. In the context of self-ecology, digital asceticism acts as a form of ethical *misalignment* with algorithmic apparatuses, allowing the subject to remain an open and vital entity (Tavani, 2024). Unlike mere cognitive filters in behavioral interventions (Alshamy, 2025), digital asceticism positions cultural elements as the primary constituents for calibrating autonomy so that technological design can transform into a holistic instrument of empowerment.

The academic implications of this reconstruction emphasize the importance of developing a technology ethics through a non-Western cultural lens to address contemporary digital paradoxes (Schneider & Gerdenitsch, 2025). By aligning the thought of Foucault and Al Ri'ayah, digital asceticism emerges as an analytical tool ensuring that theories of self-technology are no longer monolithic but inclusive of Eastern spiritual dimensions. Overall, this synthesis makes a fundamental theoretical contribution by offering a robust framework of hybrid subjectivity against the opacity of technology. Through cultural calibration and deep ethical awareness, opportunities open up for achieving dignified subject sovereignty amidst the vortex of the attention economy, while simultaneously demanding further exploration of the role of spirituality as a fundamental strategy of resistance.

4. Conclusions

This study concludes that the concept of *technologies of the self* has undergone a fundamental mutation in the contemporary digital ecosystem, where extensive self-quantification triggers the paradox of alienation and algorithmic surveillance under neoliberal logic. The original contribution of this study lies in the formulation of “digital *zuhud*” as a conceptual synthesis integrating Foucault’s theory with the practice of *muraqabah* within the *Al-Ri'ayah* tradition. The findings indicate that *muraqabah* functions as a transcendent mechanism that constructs spiritual resilience, thereby enabling individuals to form a hybrid subjectivity resilient to the economic exploitation of attention. Through ethical detachment and inner integrity, digital *zuhud* successfully reconstructs human moral agency to remain sovereign amidst the opacity of autonomous technologies that tend to dull critical reasoning. The theoretical implications of these findings enrich the philosophy of technology with Eastern spiritual dimensions, while bridging the gap between Western ethics and Islamic tradition through constitutive cultural calibration. Practically, this study provides guidance in designing digital humanism technologies that support ethical self-care to reduce dependence on data. From a policy perspective, the research results emphasize the urgency of integrating non-Western ethical principles in formulating standards for human autonomy in cyberspace. Given the interpretive nature of this literature review, further research is

recommended to conduct empirical testing to generalize the effectiveness of digital asceticism across a broader user population, as well as to explore more deeply the dimension of inner spirituality as a fundamental resistance strategy.

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