

The phenomenon of anxiety in the digital culture: Dialogues with clinical phenomenology

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Abstract

New technologies, linked to the massive presence of the internet, have brought significant changes to people's daily lives on a global scale. As we spend more and more time online, our contact with the world has also become mediated by screens, leading us to question the impacts of digital culture on human life and its intersection with contemporary forms of suffering, such as anxiety. In this work, we aim to understand the phenomenon of anxiety in its intertwining with digital culture through a critical perspective situated in the field of phenomenological psychopathology. To this end, we conducted a bibliographic research study through a theoretical essay. In the face of hyperstimulation, anxiety is understood as an intersubjective phenomenon situated at the intersection between subject and culture, especially in the configuration of digital culture. It was evident that the current anxious experience cannot be reduced to a linear causal relationship with culture, but rather understood as an ambiguous and constitutive intertwining between the self-other-world, where the exposure to the logic of performance and temporal acceleration modulate the conditions of possibility of psychopathological experience. As a result, there is a clear need for a critical, ethical, and comprehensive clinical approach, capable of incorporating the intersubjective and cultural dimensions into sensitive listening to experiences and configurations of anxiety in the contemporary world. This perspective points to a break with practices focused on mere adjustment, pathologization, and adaptation of subjects to the logic of production and performance, revealing the ways in which the digitally mediated world can stiffen or restrict the conditions of possibility of human existence.

Key-words: Anxiety; Digital Culture; Psychopathology, Phenomenology.

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O fenômeno da ansiedade na cultura digital: diálogos com a fenomenologia clínica

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Resumo

As novas tecnologias, atreladas à presença massiva da internet, trouxeram mudanças significativas para a vida cotidiana das pessoas em escala global. Como passamos cada vez mais tempo online, nosso contato com o mundo passou a ser também mediado por telas, o que nos levou a questionar os impactos da cultura digital na vida humana e seu atravessamento nos modos de sofrimento contemporâneo, tais como a ansiedade. Neste trabalho, temos como objetivo compreender o fenômeno da ansiedade em seu entrelaçamento à cultura digital por meio de uma perspectiva crítica situada no campo da fenomenologia clínica. Para este fim, elaborou-se uma pesquisa de base bibliográfica por meio de um ensaio teórico. Identificamos que diante da hiperestimulação, a ansiedade é compreendida como um fenômeno intersubjetivo situado na interseção entre sujeito e cultura, especialmente na configuração da cultura digital. Evidenciou-se que a experiência ansiosa não pode ser reduzida a uma relação causal e determinista com o virtual, mas sim compreendida por meio do entrelaçamento ambíguo entre sujeito-outrem-mundo, o qual se desvela na lógica do desempenho e abre condições de possibilidade do vivido (psico)patológico. Como resultado, evidencia-se a necessidade de uma postura clínica crítica, ética e compreensiva, capaz de incorporar a dimensão intersubjetiva e cultural na escuta sensível das experiências e configurações da ansiedade no mundo contemporâneo. Tal perspectiva aponta para o rompimento com práticas voltadas ao mero ajustamento, patologização e adaptação dos sujeitos às lógicas de produção e desempenho, revelando as formas pelas quais o mundo digitalmente mediado pode enrijecer ou restringir as condições de possibilidade do existir humano.

Palavras-chave: Ansiedade; Cultura Digital; Psicopatologia; Fenomenologia.

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Introduction¹

Through the simultaneous development of information technologies and other communication channels, we have witnessed a massive increase in the use of computers and the Internet (Terroso & Argimon, 2016). The latter has transformed into a complex communication network system that predominates in the postmodern world, given its pervasive presence across a wide range of electronic devices, such as smartphones, televisions, watches, tablets, and others (Cruz et al., 2024; Saraiva, Souza & Moreira, 2022).

New technologies, bound up with the massive presence of the internet, have brought significant changes to the daily lives of people across the globe, including the speed of communication, the ease of real-time information exchange, and the compression of geographical distances afforded by virtual reality (Morilla et al., 2020). The revolution that has taken place in social media since the emergence of the Internet has changed not only the way we communicate, but also the way we learn, work, and interact with one another (Terroso & Argimon, 2016; Oliveira Felizmino & Barbosa, 2018).

As we spend increasing amounts of time online, our contact with the world has come to be mediated by screens as well. We are constantly stimulated through notifications from digital media, emails, text messages, or any other form of online

¹ **Translator's note:** This translation was produced with the assistance of artificial intelligence, specifically Claude, model Claude Sonnet 4.6, developed by Anthropic. The model belongs to the family of large language models and features advanced natural language understanding and generation capabilities, with particular proficiency in academic, technical, and humanistic registers across multiple languages.

The translation was carried out from Brazilian Portuguese into English, following a section-by-section methodology, with systematic review of terminological consistency, preservation of the author's stylistic choices, and faithful rendering of the conceptual vocabulary proper to clinical phenomenology and existential psychopathology. Every effort was made to neither omit nor add ideas to the original text, respecting as closely as possible its argumentative organization, linguistic style, and conceptual density.

All quotations incorporated into the body of the text were translated directly from the version of the article provided for this activity, without independent consultation of source texts or alternative editions of the cited works.

The AI-assisted translation was initiated on May 22, 2026, and supervised by Fábio Luiz Socreppa da Fonseca, before being subsequently submitted to the author for review. The final version was approved by the author following her considerations and revisions on May 29, 2026.

Readers are advised to consider that, while every effort has been made to ensure accuracy and fidelity to the original text, AI-assisted translations may present limitations in capturing expressions that are highly context-dependent, stylistic nuances, or culturally situated meanings. Any queries regarding the translation may be directed to the supervisor.

content — with repercussions for aspects of health such as sleep quality and social isolation (Cruz et al., 2024). All these elements lead us to question the impacts of digital culture on human life and its entwinement with contemporary forms of suffering, such as the phenomenon of anxiety.

It is estimated that 4.4% of the global population presents some form of anxiety disorder, corresponding to approximately 359 million people, placing it among the most prevalent conditions in the field of mental health (D'ávila et al., 2020; WHO, 2025). Following the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, a 25% increase in the worldwide prevalence of these disorders was recorded (WHO, 2022). In the Brazilian context, more than half of the population reports symptoms related to anxiety (Instituto Cactus, 2024), and surveys indicate that 45% of cases among young people between the ages of 15 and 29 are associated with intensive use of social media and digital platforms (Veja Saúde, 2024a; 2024b). Beyond its statistical incidence or its diagnostic classification, it becomes necessary to interrogate the way in which this experience is constituted in everyday life.

Traditionally, anxiety is understood based on a vague and uncomfortable feeling of fear, tension, and anguish, manifesting through the anticipation of an unknown or dangerous situation (Castillo et al., 2000). When manifested with high frequency and intensity, it can entail emotional and physical impairments, such as tachycardia, sweating, muscle tension, and chills, among others, compromising quality of life. Anxiety may also be experienced as a form of suffering tied to people's everyday lives, which significantly broadens anxiety-related complaints in the general population (Castillo et al., 2000; D'ávila et al., 2020; Dalgarrondo, 2019; Pinto, 2017; Rós, Ferreira & Garcia, 2020).

The massive presence of anxiety in the contemporary world inserts it into the daily life of the population and into the language of common sense, where it is found being used in a generic manner to designate feelings and/or conditions of suffering, often confounding it with other psychiatric disorders. This line demarcates the process of pathologizing anxious experiences, which contributes to a greater prevalence of this phenomenon in people's daily lives and in specialized care settings, such as psychology and/or psychiatry clinics (Pinto, 2017). Nevertheless, anxiety is also part of a fundamental affective disposition that lies at the very foundation of human existence. Its core is immanent to being, and its meanings are

produced in contact with the world and cannot be separated from the latter as a purely individual product (Minkowski, 2000; Moreira, 2014; Souza et al., 2020).

The understanding of anxiety as a human phenomenon is profoundly intertwined with the world and the culture in which it manifests. It is common to find studies that contextualize anxiety within postmodern culture situated in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Han, 2016; 2017; Rosa, 2019; May, 1953/2016). During this period, important changes traced a new configuration of the world, such as globalization, technological advancement, new forms of labor, the virtualization of relations, and others (Han, 2016; 2017).

In light of these transformations, this article casts a critical gaze upon the understanding of anxiety beyond the traditional logic grounded in symptoms and nosology, which tends to reduce the subject to a mental disorder or a disease (Silva, 2023; Souza, Wurlitzer & Moreira, 2021). To that end, we draw upon the field of clinical phenomenology to understand the phenomenon of anxiety as intertwined with digital culture — an area that offers resources for the development of a critical perspective on the experience of illness by transcending the classical standards of health/disease and normal/pathological (Moreira & Bloc, 2021; Souza & Moreira, 2019).

Clinical phenomenology emerged in 1922 through the work of the European psychiatrists Eugène Minkowski and Ludwig Binswanger, who proposed a new approach to the understanding of mental illness by drawing on the philosophical writings of Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty. Initially named psychiatric phenomenology or phenomenological psychopathology, this field aims to comprehend the totality of the experience of illness (Tatossian, 1979/2025; Moreira & Bloc, 2021). The contemporary designation, clinical phenomenology, seeks to also incorporate clinical psychology and psychotherapy grounded in existential humanism (Moreira & Bloc, 2021).

Considering the complexity of the phenomenon of anxiety and its relations with digital culture through the lens of clinical phenomenology, we raise the following question: "What are the impacts of digital culture on the understanding of the phenomenon of anxiety in contemporary times?" This is a theoretical essay grounded in a bibliographic review, whose general objective is to understand the impacts of digital culture on the unveiling of the phenomenon of anxiety in the contemporary

world. To this end, we present anxiety and digital culture within the postmodern context shaped by the performance society. We then discuss the ambiguous entwinement of anxiety with digital culture from the perspective of clinical phenomenology.

Anxiety and digital culture in the performance society

Reflections on anxiety in the current context have gained increasing relevance, given the way in which this phenomenon recurrently pervades everyday life (WHO, 2022). Situated within the field that seeks to understand human existence in its entwinement with the world, clinical phenomenology constitutes a privileged space for broadening debates on anxiety, particularly in the face of the profound social and cultural transformations that characterize our era.

Culture is one of the primary elements for understanding this phenomenon, since anxiety cannot be reduced to individual suffering but is traversed by historical and social processes that constitute the ways of feeling and existing (Rosa, 2019). In this sense, contemporary anxiety must be understood in light of the transformations that have reconfigured modes of life: globalization, technological advancement, the flexibilization and precarization of labor, as well as the acceleration of everyday rhythms (Han, 2016; 2017).

These changes have not only expanded the field of possibilities for action, but have also established a scenario of permanent instability, in which the subject is called upon to perform, compete, and continuously adapt. Anxiety, in this horizon, cannot be reduced to a psychological reaction; rather, it expresses itself as a characteristic mode of being of contemporary culture, marked by the fluidity of relations, the erosion of collective guarantees, and the introjection of ideals of productivity and efficiency (Han, 2016; 2017).

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, such characteristics are manifested in a society marked by consumption, biotechnology, digital hyperconnectivity, and global corporate logic. The urgency to maximize production is sustained by the belief that each individual holds unlimited power of achievement (Han, 2017). This logic is carried to its extreme in what is termed *late modernity*, in which the pace of life disregards the limits of the body: illness, pain, and even events such as birth and death are incorporated into rigid temporal planning, until the

subject is confronted with the experience of paralysis and hopelessness (Rosa, 2019). Thus, anxiety in digital culture can be understood not merely as a psychic state, but as a bodily modulation of experience within the hyperconnected world.

In the context of digital culture, this dynamic does not remain solely at the level of social demands but inscribes itself in the very bodily experience before screens. The body, as a condition of possibility for the relation with the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2006), comes to organize itself according to micro gestures and attentional dispositions proper to connectivity: the gaze that returns repeatedly to the screen in search of new notifications, the bodily tension associated with the expectation of messages or immediate responses, and the breathing that alters during prolonged immersion in the flow of digital content. Phenomenological studies on the lived experience of smartphone use indicate that this device can be progressively incorporated into the perceptual and gestural routines of subjects, being described, in some experiences, as an extension of the body itself and of everyday functions such as attention, memory, and communication (Bezerra, Souza & Moreira, 2023). In this way, the logic of hyperconnectivity is not limited to reorganizing social practices but comes to configure bodily modes of inhabiting the world, in which the continuous surveillance of the digital environment is interwoven with the very sensible experience of existence.

This process reveals the paradox of freedom in contemporary society: each subject is converted, simultaneously, into master and slave of himself, submitting to forms of self-imposed violence in the name of performance (Han, 2017). It is within this context that Rosa (2019) describes "frenetic standstill" — the result of an acceleration that captures individuals without offering any space for pause. As Han (2017) observes, manifestations of suffering such as anxiety may be understood as pathological expressions of this paradox.

We live under the imperative of social acceleration, which alters not only the rhythm of everyday life, but also the relation with time. The linear and progressive temporality proper to classical modernity gives way to a fragmented and unstable perception, in which the present becomes the only real space of action. This condition generates a constant sense of urgency, intensifying tensions in intersubjective contact with the world, which become entangled with states of generalized anxiety (Rosa, 2019).

Technical development, understood as the advancement of technologies and devices that promise to accelerate processes and optimize the use of time, suggests, in theory, the possibility of a more decelerated life. In practice, however, this "extra" time is rapidly occupied by new tasks, intensifying routines, and reinforcing the logic of productivity. The space that could be devoted to non-productive experiences is lost in the overlapping of activities, generating a paradox: the more time one gains, the more one works. It is in this movement that the self-propelling character of social acceleration becomes evident, one that feeds back upon itself and perpetuates itself in modernity (Leite, 2022; Rosa, 2019).

In the neoliberal context, acceleration is associated with the logic of high performance, competitiveness, and individual accountability. Productivity is converted into a central criterion of human value, measured by metrics of efficiency and results, deepening feelings of inadequacy and exhaustion. In Brazil, recent data from the Ministry of Health and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) indicate a significant increase in common mental disorders, such as anxiety and depression, especially among young people and workers (Brazil, 2023; PAHO, 2023). The National Mental Health Policy itself recognizes that social determinants such as unemployment, the precarization of labor, and digital isolation contribute significantly to psychological illness (Brazil, 2023).

Digital culture amplifies this process by keeping the individual constantly exposed to information, notifications, and virtual demands. In this scenario, work and everyday existence become oriented by external stimuli, entertainment, and compulsion, configuring a passive "bare life," in which the subject adjusts to the demands of consumer society and finds himself subjected to continuous cycles of productivity (Leite, 2021, 2022; Butler, 2015).

In digital culture, the performance imperative is updated through slogans such as *"Just do it"* or *"you can do anything."* Social media platforms operate as showcases of success, in which failure is concealed, and exhaustion is romanticized. Freedom, in this scenario, is reconfigured as a form of symbolic coercion. As Han (2017) points out, this positivity does not liberate but coerces: by believing himself to be free, the individual intensifies his own self-exploitation. The apparent autonomy of digital platforms masks the violence of constant performance, in which free time is converted into capital and continuous exposure replaces rest and attentive self-

listening.

Pauses for contemplation become rare, and "unlimited" freedom is converted into a device of control even more effective for operating under the appearance of autonomy (Han, 2017; 2023). Absolute transparency and positivity dissolve the space necessary for critique, silence, and the re-signification of experience. In this way, psychic suffering takes on new contours: burnout, depression, and anxiety emerge as forms of illness directly related to the denial of vulnerability and the incessant demand for self-overcoming (Alvarenga & Dias, 2021).

Whereas the disciplinary society produced figures of the delinquent and the abnormal, the performance society generates exhausted, anxious, and depressed subjects. Suffering no longer stems from external repression, but from excessive self-accountability, in which failure is experienced as personal inadequacy (Alvarenga & Dias, 2021). Anxiety, within this logic, expresses the fear of failing to meet the ideal of performance, and reveals experiences of suffering that no longer find spaces of care in the face of the constant imperative of "having to be" (Han, 2017).

The transparency society eliminates the voids necessary for reflection and creation, for it "does not tolerate visual gaps or information gaps, yet thinking and inspiration require emptiness" (Han, 2017, p. 70). Boredom, far from being a failing, operates as a condition of openness to the new, enabling the emergence of meaning where repetition had previously prevailed. The excess of stimuli, especially those arising from virtual screens, far from expanding freedom, fragments attention and impoverishes temporal experience, hindering the "lingering" (Dias, 2021) essential to thought and to the constitution of the lived world.

In this scenario, positioning digital culture as a constitutive part of the lived world, rather than as a separate or purely virtual instance, becomes fundamental to the understanding of anxiety as a mundane phenomenon. As Tatossian (1979/2025) reminds us, clinical phenomenology demands an attentive listening to culture as an inseparable dimension of experience. The subject does not relate to digital culture as a mere observer, but is constituted by it, traversed by its meanings, norms, and tensions. Accordingly, technological devices cannot be understood as external accessories, but as elements that actively participate in the constitution of perception, affectivity, and the production of meaning. Inhabited and embodied by the subject, digital culture traverses the modes of being-in-the-world and the

contemporary forms of suffering.

Between the real and the digital: anxiety in clinical phenomenology

Anxiety is an eminent human phenomenon, present since the earliest moments of human history, for it rests upon the constitutive foundations of our existence. In the contemporary landscape, the term anxiety has been widely employed – whether in popular, philosophical, or scientific discourse – although its conceptualization is far from straightforward (Fuchs, 2023; Micali, 2022).

In its etymological sense, the term anxiety refers to a physical and psychic suffering expressed through affliction, agony, and anguish in the face of the uncertainties of the future (Michaelis, 2019). It is worth noting that this definition brings to light the polyphony characteristic of the phenomenon of anxiety, which is simultaneously a feeling, a symptom, and/or a psychiatric disorder (Micali, 2022). This renders the task of understanding such a phenomenon all the more arduous, particularly when we situate it within the digital world.

Within the field of clinical phenomenology, anxiety is understood from a critical standpoint that seeks to transcend the symptomatological logic that reduces it to a symptom or a disease to be eradicated (Moreira, 2014; Souza, Wurlitzer & Moreira, 2021). Anxiety is defined as a mode of functioning that emerges in the intersubjective entwinement between subject and world, manifesting as an encompassing experience of human existence. According to Moreira (2014), "anxiety is here understood as part of an existential style rooted in the *Lebenswelt*" (p. 39). It is, therefore, a form of presence in the world that orients the production of meanings based on the singularities of lived experiences (Moreira, 2014).

In philosophical phenomenology, the notion of *Lebenswelt* is initially developed by Husserl (1954/2012) with the aim of questioning European sciences by recovering the originary meaning of experience. Taken up by Merleau-Ponty (1945/2006), the *Lebenswelt* is elaborated as a fertile pathway for the consolidation of his philosophy of ambiguity, sustained by an understanding of human experience as constituted in the entwinement of the natural world and the cultural world (Moreira, 2001, 2009; Bloc & Moreira, 2013; Merleau-Ponty, 1964/2014).

It is within this horizon that we seek to understand digital culture in

contemporary times — a culture marked by the logic of performance and social acceleration, which becomes interwoven with the constitutive foundations of the *Lebenswelt* as a horizon of possibility. It is in this context that anxiety finds its ground in the ambiguity of the self-other-world relation and in the very way in which the subject anchors himself in the *Lebenswelt*.

As a phenomenon belonging to the order of experience, anxiety carries a singular universe of meanings that are inscribed upon the universal background of a world already given as reality (Souza et al., 2021). The modes of being in which anxiety manifests thus emerge from the vicissitudes of the contemporary world — marked by an accelerated temporality and by the cultural imperative of performance intensified by digital culture. The sense that there is "no time to lose" (Han, 2017) exacerbates the anxious experience, converting time itself into a source of existential pressure.

In understanding culture as an integral part of the lived world (Moreira, 2001; Telles & Moreira, 2014), we insert it into the process of the constitution of anxiety. This does not entail conceiving of culture as a mere cause or influence — which would imply reducing the phenomenon to a deterministic relation of cause and effect. Drawing on the philosophical phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (1942/2006; 1945/2006; 1964/2014), culture is understood as a constitutive dimension, functioning as a mediator between subjective life and collective life, and, in this sense, it traverses the anxious experience in its ambiguity.

Within this horizon of entwinement between subject and world, real and digital, Tatossian (1979/2025) emphasizes that clinical phenomenology requires an attentive listening to culture as an inseparable dimension of experience. The subject does not stand before culture as a merely neutral observer, but is from the outset constituted by it, traversed by its meanings, norms, and tensions. In contemporary times, the real and the digital intertwine and give rise to new ways of inhabiting the world.

It is in this context that anxiety must be understood not solely as a pathological phenomenon, but as a constitutive experience of human existence traversed by culture. Minkowski (2000) emphasizes that anxiety marks life in its depth, manifesting above all in the "upheavals of existence" (p. 161). In other words, anxiety cannot be reduced to a disturbance but expresses human confrontation with the

openness of the future and the unpredictability of life. Fuchs (2018) adds that psychic suffering is defined less by dysfunction and more by the rupture of the possibility of a shared world. From this perspective, anxiety becomes pathological when it loses its plasticity, transforming into an existential closure that restricts action in the world.

Fuchs (2018) further underscores that the human condition implies freedom of choice and temporal projection, which brings with it the confrontation with uncertainty and responsibility for one's own decisions. Anguish emerges, therefore, not as a failure of the psyche, but as an inherent effect of the freedom that constitutes us. It is a perspective that conceives suffering as a pathic phenomenon (Minkowski, 2000), rather than a merely pathological one, revealing the density of human experience and the subject's engagement with his own existence.

The phenomenon of anxiety, in this sense, can only be understood as an intersubjective experience, as it becomes entangled with the demands and cultural significations that operate both on the visible surface and in the more implicit layers of existence. The postmodern cultural world traverses our lives and becomes entwined with them through the meanings it produces, and it is at the intersection of this movement that we also encounter the horizon of our experiences. It is an ambiguous relation that is mutually constituted (Moreira, 2001; Telles & Moreira, 2014).

Digital culture, therefore, becomes a territory of intersubjectivity, in which the subject is constituted and transformed. Social media platforms, for instance, configure spaces in which continuous exposure organizes not only the way in which the subject presents himself to the other, but also the way in which he perceives himself in his existence. There is here an essential paradox: technological mediation promises an expansion of presence and communication, yet simultaneously accentuates the feeling of inadequacy, urgency, and imminent failure (Han, 2017).

The ambiguity characteristic of the lived world (*Lebenswelt*) in the digital era reveals that anxious states manifest, in many instances, not through an excess of interiority, but through a mode of exposure in which the subject finds himself constantly called upon to meet the unattainable ideals of performance and visibility. Within this horizon, anxiety cannot be reduced to a punctual reaction to external events but presents itself as a mode of being-in-the-world tensioned between the promise of freedom and the symbolic demand for permanent self-overcoming (Han,

2017).

To be worldly, for clinical phenomenology, is to be mutually constituted by this shared field of meaning, even when it shows itself as hostile (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/2014). Anxiety, in this context, emerges as an ambiguous phenomenon, in which the subject finds himself traversed by the presence of the other that at once summons, judges, and abandons. The ambiguity of the lived world is accentuated when the very horizon of meaning appears closed upon itself, as if there were no other possibility of being than that dictated by the dominant cultural imperatives. In this sense, suffering may crystallize before it even names itself as pathology: it insinuates itself as a form of life, as a silent adaptation to an ailing world that demands of the subject a "normality" rooted in performance, positivity, and the denial of vulnerability (Han, 2017).

Faced with this reality, the clinic is called upon to adopt an ethical and critical stance of engagement with the new configurations of contemporary suffering. The clinical gaze, anchored in phenomenology, must consider the inseparability between subject and world, body and culture, suffering and normativity, real and digital — as Moreira (2009) affirms: understanding psychic suffering today requires a listening that is sensitive to the ambiguity of experience and to the silent forms of violence that operate beneath the veil of freedom and autonomy. Rather than seeking to adapt the subject to the world, it may be necessary to attend to the singular meanings of a worldly experience that unveils modes of being entangled with the difficult habitability between the real and the digital (Tatossian, 1979/2025; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2006).

Final Remarks

This article sought to understand anxiety as a human phenomenon intertwined with the transformations of digital culture and with the modes of existence characteristic of the performance society. From a phenomenological perspective, we discussed how the acceleration of time, hyperconnectivity, and the imperative of productivity configure new forms of suffering, in which anxiety ceases to be merely an individual symptom and comes to express the tension between freedom and coercion that traverses contemporary living.

By integrating the lens of clinical phenomenology, the study points to the fact

that anxiety surpasses pathological and symptomatological logic, recognizing it as a mode of being-in-the-world that expresses the ambiguity proper to the human condition as intertwined with digital culture. The advancement of technologies and their incorporation into everyday dynamics profoundly transforms the modes of subjectivation, socialization, and normalization, establishing new forms of presence and relation mediated by screens. Thus, digital culture emerges not merely as a backdrop, but as a horizon of meaning that traverses and constitutes subjective experiences.

From this reading, it becomes clear that anxiety — as one of the most prevalent disorders worldwide — cannot be reduced to an individual dysfunction but expresses the contradictions of a subject tensioned between the desire for autonomy and the pressure for constant productivity and visibility. To consider anxiety from this standpoint implies displacing the gaze from the strictly pathological to the existential, recognizing, in the anxious experience itself, the search for meaning, limits, and a renewed encounter with the temporality of the lived.

Thus, addressing anxiety is not limited to the normative therapeutic dimension but calls for an ethical and critical reflection on the way of life that constitutes and sustains it. The imperative of social acceleration and high performance intensifies subjective tensions, inscribing identities and affects through metrics of efficiency and comparison. Digital culture, as it is inhabited and embodied by the subject, becomes interwoven with the modes of being-in-the-world, transforming the way in which the individual perceives, expresses, and relates.

In this landscape, the anxious mode of functioning may be understood as an expression and possibility of existence in the face of the permanent demand for performance, revealing an experience of suffering lived through the condition of openness and vulnerability that is in need of refuge and pause. The phenomenological understanding allows us to recognize anxiety as a fundamental experience of existence, one that becomes pathological to the extent that the subject loses his plasticity and capacity for movement within the shared world.

In light of this, the present study reiterates the importance of a clinical, critical, and ethical stance that considers the inseparability between subject and world, body and culture, suffering and normativity. What is proposed is a clinic sensitive to the *how* of the subject's experience of illness, one that values the totality of experience

rather than the isolated symptom alone.

The limitations of this research are acknowledged, particularly the scarcity of phenomenological productions on this subject and the constant transformation of digital culture, which poses the risk of analyses becoming outdated. Even so, the reflections developed here open pathways for new investigations into the conditions of possibility of contemporary psychic suffering. It becomes urgent to discuss the ways in which the world, in its manner of becoming entangled with the possibilities of existence, relates to the modes of suffering, rather than merely seeking to adapt the subject to a world that incessantly demands performance, productivity, and positivity.

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