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SPIRITUAL INFLUENCERS AND DIGITAL RELIGION

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Abstract:

Digital religion brings to the fore the figure of the spiritual influencer. This figure is accompanied by other significant actors, such as the religious influencer and Christian influencers, as well as by a wide variety of communities of followers, adherents, or believers. Digital religion is an outcome of the development of communication technologies and digital platforms, which open not only toward religious or spiritual content, but also toward religious practices and spiritual techniques mediated by technology and Artificial Intelligence. The present text focuses on revealing the specificity of the profile of spiritual influencers. Presenting themselves as an alternative to traditional ways of doing religion, spiritual influencers nevertheless stand in continuity with them by offering a holistic perspective on the human being's search for existential meaning and for the living of a good and authentic life. They operate within a hybrid register that brings together the real and the virtual world, within a construction of digital religious experience in which the individual finds himself or herself as part of a digital identity delivered according to the principles of spiritual marketing. The sphere of action of spiritual influencers, as agents in the construction of existential meaning, is very broad: it concerns a spiritual culture of personal fulfilment, the attainment of well-being, and a good life understood as a happy, that is, authentic, life.

Key words: spiritual influencer, religious influencer, Christian influencers, digital religion, religious experience, existential meaning, authenticity, communication technologies, digital platforms.

1. Religion in the era of digital communication

The development of communication technologies brings profound changes to all dimensions of human existence: the physical dimension, the social dimension, the personal dimension, the spiritual dimension, the religious dimension, and the digital dimension. Although all these dimensions presuppose one another, from the standpoint of understanding the status of spiritual influencers we are particularly interested in the intersection of the spiritual, religious, and digital dimensions. As I have also done in other analyses, in my philosophical counselling practices I distinguish between the spiritual and the religious dimension, because they refer to partially different registers, even though, if we were to use a Venn diagram, we would find that they share a significant number of common elements. The distinction is all the more useful since here we shall work with the distinction between spiritual influencers and religious influencers in order to reveal the different manner in which digital identity is constructed in the case of the two types of influencers. For me, the emphasis in the present analysis falls on spiritual influencers.

The religious experience of the human being in postmodern society changes fundamentally with the development of digital platforms. A new type of experience and a new type of religious practice is brought about by communication made possible by the internet, by communication technologies, and by the increasing access to Artificial Intelligence. Human beings are opened to a living, relational, sapiential, and everyday-life experience that is lived, interpreted, and practised according to a new logic of religious experience, captured by the phrase digital religion. In addition to dialogue and interference with the traditional way of thinking about religion and spirituality, it presupposes a series of new modalities of communication, of identity construction and integration into community, of legitimation, of discursive and ritual practices, and of the exercise of authority. Digital religious experience grounds its specificity in the fact that it is technologically mediated and digitally integrated.

The growing importance of social networks and digital platforms has an effect similar to that which Artificial Intelligence has on religious practices: "The process of digitalization takes on religious characteristics, functioning as a system that assigns value and importance to individuals and society. It is gradually shaping people's perception of reality through various algorithmic selection applications, influencing their worldview and social structure" (Florea, Gilder 2024, 83). Although it is not the objective of this clarifying endeavour, I must mention that an organic development

of digital religion also presupposes the integration of Artificial Intelligence as a medium, as an actor, and as an instrument in digital religious practices. Even though he does not deal directly with spiritual influencers, I believe that Liviu Vidican-Manci's analyses are significant for the way in which different categories of publics can integrate Artificial Intelligence into their religious practices. I do not have in mind here the use of conversational chatbots as a substitute for the pastor, priest, or religious officiant, but rather their use as a companion in personal development, in gaining access to what is communicated in the virtual space, or in AI-assisted approaches to solving spiritually dilemmatic situations. I believe that spiritual influencers can integrate Artificial Intelligence into all aspects of their relationship with different categories of publics. However, we must always keep in mind that technology can support religious practices, but it cannot replace interpersonal proximity (Vidican-Manci 2024).

Significant for understanding this type of experience is Heidi A. Campbell's statement: "digital religion sees online religious practices and beliefs as integrated into offline religious communication and communities and vice versa, rather than online and offline religion being seen as separate or competing entities. The embeddedness of the Internet into the everyday life of many religious practitioners means that digital culture and technologies often bridge, connect, and/or extend online religious practices and spaces into offline religious contexts" (Campbell 2017, 2). Thus, unlike the postmodern human being, who still lived in a world that sought ways of interference between the real world and the virtual one produced by the internet and social networks, the human being of the digital era makes the boundary between the real and the virtual highly fluid. Digital religion brings together, without any impediment, online religious communication and offline communication, owing to the universal connection made possible by technologically mediated religious and spiritual practices. We may also recall Christopher Helland's distinction between "religion online" and "online religion," which distinguishes, on the one hand, the online transmission of information with religious content and, on the other hand, religious practice with its entire ensemble of rituals, interactions, interpretations, and intentions. Digital religion concerns both platforms and interfaces, as well as experience based on intentionality, subjective interpretation, and interactivity. An important aspect is to understand "the Internet as an environment where people "do" religion" (Helland 2005, 13).

Theorists of digital religion emphasize that contemporary religious practices must be valued primarily through the lens of their hybrid character. This presupposes both continuity between the space of the real world and the virtual space, and a reciprocity of experiences lived in the two registers. Thus, the digital space shapes religious practice, while

religious practice, in turn, shapes and transfigures the digital environment. It is important to understand that the new type of religious and spiritual experience is not reducible to the access we may have to religious content available online, to videos, to the pages of religious institutions and communities, to applications that facilitate online prayer, to interactions among different religious communities, and so forth. What is at stake is a hybrid religious experience, lived as a connection between traditional experiences and the new types of religious and spiritual experiences that become possible and develop through technological mediation. Nevertheless, digital religion is not reducible to communication technologies. It presupposes new registers of the reconfiguration of corporeality, of sensibility, of belonging and identity, of symbolic recognition and authority, with many nuances regarding the instances that produce trust and provide the feeling of authenticity. It is likely that the new mode of constructing and manifesting authority decisively influences digital religion, especially because, alongside the traditional institutionalized bearers of authority, religious and spiritual content creators, administrators of spiritual communities, and above all a new type of religious leadership, represented by spiritual influencers, also play a central role (Campbell 2013; Campbell, Tsuria 2022).

One of the questions we ask in media ethics is whether, in the digital era, mass media play a socializing role similar to that of community institutions such as the family or the church. Mia Lövhelm points out that religion is no longer transmitted only through traditional means, but also through television, social media, blogs, or influencers. This change leads to a different dynamic of religious socialization. In the digital space, participants in the experience of communication are no longer merely receivers of religious tradition, but also active agents who negotiate religious resources. They are, at the same time, content generators, active participants on platforms, creators of communities and popular cultures that tend to become global. Mia Lövhelm proposes the concept of “religious media literacy,” which entails both the understanding of religious content and the way in which such content becomes part of technologically mediated experience. Those who live within the sphere of digital religion must acquire both religious competences and communication competences. Thus, “new media technology and new media literacy with its characteristics of transformation, fluidity, access and active participation accentuates religious socialization as a dynamic, evolving process, involving several participants and where the ideas, values and practices that are communicated are shaped and developed by these interactions” (Lövhelm 2012, 165). Religious media literacy is part of the process of socialization specific to a media culture. Digital religion is a way in which religion adapts to technological development and to the new communication practices

that it brings. It is a living, hybrid practice that concerns the transformation of the sacred and of spiritual experience. In this context, spiritual influencers play a decisive role as agents of communication, socialization, and spiritual transformation.

2. Spiritual influencers, religious influencers, and Christian influencers between public visibility and spiritual authority

I use the term spiritual here in a broad sense, more cultural than religious, in the strict sense of the understanding of religion. For this reason, I find it useful to recall that, in my philosophical counselling activities, I distinguish between the spiritual and the religious dimension because, in counselling practice, I have noticed that there are people who manifest a diffuse religious feeling in their relation to a transcendence conceived as ultimate reality, and others who must be approached from the perspective of their need to engage in dialogue with an intersubjective Transcendence, represented within the patterns of a particular religious tradition, or even to maintain an interpersonal relationship within well-defined frameworks of divine-human relation.

Different figures respond to these two different types of expectation: the spiritual influencer and the religious influencer. In the case of the spiritual influencer, we have in view a broader horizon, in which the central figure is a person endowed with authority in offering solutions for balance, for a harmonious lifestyle, for personalized practices of self-realization, for forms of healing, but above all for the construction of existential meaning. In the case of the religious influencer, the register is that of a religion identifiable through its rootedness in a certain tradition, with the influencer communicating in the digital space with a particular type of community and with a personal authority that remains connected to institutionalized religious authority. Within this fairly broad category, we can particularize and exemplify it through the presence of the christian influencer, who accumulates credibility and gains visibility by communicating through Christian symbols, values, practices, and narratives. What is important in understanding these influencers is the fact that they manifest themselves as authorities in mediating existential meaning, regardless of how close to or distant from a particular doctrinal or institutional authority they may be.

As a digital figure who offers a vision of life, orientation toward existential meaning, bodily or spiritual healing, and personal transformation, the spiritual influencer acts outside the classical forms of the institutionalization of religion. Spiritual influencers most often draw on social media, coaching, storytelling, books, elements of wellness and

lifestyle, promotional materials, and direct relationships with the public, thereby constituting themselves as an alternative spiritual authority. What is present here is a marketization of spirituality based on a spirituality cultivated at the intersection of autobiographical discourse, promises of personal transformation, cultural orientation, and other practices that consecrate the influencer's media presence. By proposing a distinction between institutional authority, charismatic authority, and digitally mediated spiritual authority, Claudia Jetter outlines the figure of the spiritual influencer by emphasizing the importance, in configuring this figure's media status, of the use of personal biography as a source of legitimation, the replacement of discourse about confessional belonging or ecclesial consecration with personal experience, authenticity, healing, transformational success, and the capacity to address followers with a credible offer. Thus, the spiritual influencer claims the authority to speak to his or her public and to make an offer within a process of self-authorisation in which meaning, energy, trauma, love, femininity, abundance, inner transformation, and the response that followers or the public give through identification with the digital community, through purchasing books, participating in offered programmes, attending courses, sharing content, commenting, and liking are central. All these count as signals that the influencer is a relevant figure in the lives of his or her followers. What we notice here is not so much the emergence of a new type of spiritual-religious leader as a profound transformation taking place at the level of spiritual authority and its modalities of legitimation. The main resource is not institutional, but rather the production of orientation and belonging, the visibility offered by platforms, and the response to spiritual marketization. It is essential to understand that alongside the process of spiritual self-authorisation, the recognition granted by the public through the relevance it assigns to the influencer for its own life is equally important. Claudia Jetter tells us: "As spiritual authority is a relational concept that depends on reciprocal ascription processes, the needs of the followers are just as decisive for generating authority as the spiritual self-authorisation of the leader is" (Jetter 2024, 369).

We must bear in mind that spiritual influencers are not centrally concerned only with issues that we traditionally associate with religion; they are active in the areas of health, the acquisition of meaning, knowledge, the attainment of well-being, or the development and valorisation of femininity, including from the perspective of setting conspiracy theories in motion (Heřmanová 2022, 352). When visible access to the sense and meaning of things is not sufficiently convincing, influencers can open access to the arcanized dimensions of existence and to esoteric forms of knowledge, can produce inspirational content, and can facilitate the development of alternative forms of consciousness. In this way, the

influencer is at once a spiritual guide, an existential stylist, or a mediator between alternative worlds. However, the influencer may also become the standard-bearer of conspiracy theories that transform him or her into an anti-system activist. We are accustomed to the fact that spiritual influencers appear to us as healers of corporeality and of the self, offering solutions for understanding illness, trauma, relationships, sexuality, institutions, politics, or personal destiny. Alongside the ideas of emancipation, freedom, and femininity, influencers may develop a symbolic universe in which distrust toward institutional authority becomes an integral part of understanding the values that can produce a good life. At the same time, we note that “vulnerability, produced and staged as part of an authentic performance, is one of the key factors that enable female influencers to bridge the gap between political and domestic content, seamlessly blending conspiracy narratives into wellness, spirituality or health-related content” (Heřmanová 2022, 354). Beyond the positive intentions of such an endeavour, from Marie Heřmanová’s analyses we may also infer the less luminous side of the spiritual influencer’s activity, namely that which brings with it distrust, fear, the exploitation of vulnerability, a feeling of loss of control, and disinformation, even when these are packaged within a discourse oriented toward the search for an authentic life.

Indeed, religious studies reveal that online religious activity has multiple faces. Digital platforms may serve as a support for disseminating fundamentalist religious perspectives and may contribute to the radicalization of individuals in search of a religious identity; at the same time, as generally happens in the case of spiritual influencers, the internet can facilitate the constitution of global religious communities, can open access to the overlap of non-religious lifestyles or beliefs with spiritual ones, or to the affirmation of forms of spirituality that produce a phenomenon of secularization even in religiously homogeneous contexts (Preda 2024, 119).

Spiritual influencers can play highly diverse roles. Most often, they are charismatic digital figures, endowed with a special persuasive force based on personal qualities and on the power represented by the knowledge of how to set communication technologies in motion within digitally mediated interpersonal relations. They prove to be very well prepared with respect to the benefits that the use of mediated communication and digital platforms can bring in a context of spiritual marketization. They can very easily combine the qualities of a guide in the search for existential meaning with those of an anti-institutional educator and with those of a mediator in situations of crisis. Under these conditions, the influencer manifests himself or herself as a spiritual entrepreneur who acts on a market of symbolic, existential, and everyday-life goods.

Unlike spiritual influencers, whose authority is sometimes ambiguous or non-transparent, in the case of the religious influencer the qualities of

the traditional religious leader are combined with those of a spiritual guide who uses social networks and digital platforms in a specific way, obtaining thereby a new type of authority, different from that of the community and tradition to which he or she belongs, even though he or she remains permanently in contact with them: a digitally mediated religious authority. Maintaining a close relationship with tradition obliges the religious influencer, on the one hand, to be very close and accessible, verbally and visually, but, on the other hand, to maintain a certain symbolic distance meant to preserve a religious status at the boundary between the sacred and the profane. This tense positioning differentiates the religious influencer both from the spiritual influencer and from the traditional cleric. The religious influencer has both the role of communicating about religion in the traditional sense of the religious community to which he or she addresses himself or herself, and the role of mediator between religion and the lifestyle of younger generations who reconfigure their religious identity through their presence on digital platforms. In this way, discourse about religion becomes increasingly close to discourse about lifestyle, adopting a storytelling about family, success, entrepreneurship, cultural belonging, and religious morality (Febrian 2024; Zaid et al. 2022).

Alongside the question of authority, in the case of religious influencers the question of legitimacy is also important. Unlike a secular influencer, the religious influencer must be perceived as legitimate and authentic from a religious point of view. He or she always belongs to a religious culture or subculture and must respond to the expectations of the members of that cultural and religious community. It is assumed that, in addition to being a witnessing entrepreneur, he or she is a representative of the religious culture to which he or she belongs, even if not officially integrated institutionally. He or she acquires authority and legitimacy through validation by the members of a religious community; consequently, the religious influencer must always be attentive to integrating himself or herself into the register of the community's sensibility and to keeping in harmony the relations among content, community, and his or her legitimacy, which requires constant confirmation.

A particular case is that of the christian influencer. This figure is characterized by the use of the entire digital ecosystem for the promotion of Christian faith. The christian influencer proceeds according to the logic of influencers' functioning. The starting point is not dogmatic, but rather that of a personal life lived according to the Christian values that he or she promotes. Through personal experience, the christian influencer filters models of life that he or she proposes to the public to be followed in everyday life. These models are examples of life in Christ that can enrich the ideal of life of any Christian. The authority of the christian influencer rests on two resources: on the one hand, Christian teaching as professed

by the community to which the influencer belongs; on the other hand, the influencer's personal authority, affectively outlined and mediatically shaped. We cannot ignore the fact that "Christfluencer act as gatekeepers to institutionalized religion and integrate Christianity and church as meaningful institutions into their mode of operation" (Haken 2025, 18). At the same time, however, the christian influencer creates a space of encounter freed from ecclesial constraints, yet based on Christian values, in which anxieties, crises, moral dilemmas, questions of faith, spiritual practices, and the search for the meaning of life are placed within a digitally shaped horizon of meaning.

In order to understand the significance that influencers have for Christianity in the digital era, we may recall that the Catholic Church decided to canonize a 'God's influencer', the so-called "Cyber Apostle" Carlo Acutis. It is important for young people to know that there is a Saint of the internet who can be used as a mediator in all situations of everyday life. To an even greater extent, however, influencers are involved in supporting the vulnerable. Rabson Hove shows that platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X, WhatsApp, and YouTube can very well be used to connect people and to transmit messages of support. These platforms should not replace face-to-face encounters, encounters with religious personnel or pastoral counsellors, but they can be very good instruments in guiding, accompanying, and assisting people who find themselves in problematic situations (Hove 2024). We can accept as legitimate the question: can there be pastoral presence in the absence of the pastor's effective physical presence in proximity to the vulnerable person? Kimion Tagwirei shows that religious influencers act precisely within a space of presence in absence. Influencers can be available in digitally mediated relations and can manifest themselves as a significant presence despite the fact that the encounter is mediated by an interface rather than taking place face-to-face. Certainly, effective presence cannot be substituted in situations of crisis, illness, suffering, or poverty, but digital presence can be valuable both affectively and as a supportive relation. Difficulties related to access to technology and media literacy may also be invoked, but these do not diminish the importance that the digital proximity of christian influencers can have (Tagwirei 2022).

The experience of the pandemic, reflected in countless articles, proved that the adoption of digital solutions was beneficial and continued in various forms after the end of the period of restrictions. Instruments of technological connection became a good that fully proves its usefulness in establishing connections among human beings. They were then also adopted by religious institutions and preserved as beneficial instruments in pastoral action. Giulia Isetti starts from a fact that we have already mentioned: the difference between online and offline is no longer a

rupture; it is highly fluid, and newer generations find solutions for placing them in continuity without confusing them. In such a context, christian influencers act within a hybrid environment that brings together institutional life and the everyday life of believers. It is true that risks may also appear as certain persons who are not strictly connected to church activity grow in visibility and in the preferences of believers. Although some research shows that representatives of institutions consider the presence of platforms and artificial intelligence to be beneficial only because they offer support in carrying out traditional tasks, technologically mediated communication “is not perceived as a threat to the established hierarchical structure, as digital communication is mostly viewed as inherently top-down, which reinforces existing hierarchies, power structures, and dynamics” (Isetti 2025). It is true that traditional institutions can compete with influencers and reduce the public’s appetite for personal digital figures only if they come to understand sufficiently well the mechanisms according to which digital platforms function (Borza, Căzan, Cosma 2023). Increasingly, the church will have to learn to negotiate forms of authority that the public already attributes to influencers with a vocation. The recognition enjoyed by Christian influencers is connected to the development of a culture in which spiritual care is mediated both by the community and by digital platforms and influencers (Isseti 2025).

We may say that the spiritual influencer is a digital presence that builds relationships starting from personal experience, affective marketing, coaching, and wellness. This figure manifests itself on the terrain of spirituality in the broadest sense of the word, including perspectives and lifestyles often perceived as secularized. The religious influencer is a digital presence within a recognizable tradition, constructing personal performance and the capacity to transmit religious content to a broad public, while enjoying communal legitimacy. The religious influencer constructs legitimacy and authenticity through personal lived experience and through appeal to institutionalized religious authority, as shaped by digital communities. By contrast, the christian influencer is a digital figure who performs within Christianity. This figure acts within an ecclesially delimited dogmatic field, which he or she makes accessible to a public whose Christian behaviour has been transformed, on the one hand, by the personal encounter with traditional Christian religious authority and, on the other hand, by interaction with the virtual environment organized according to the logic of digital religion. For each of these hypostases of influencers, authenticity is an important resource of authority, legitimation, and the maintenance of followers’ trust.

3. Spiritual influencer in search of authenticity

In digital religion, spiritual authority is exercised as a syncretic and diffuse authority that must constantly be confirmed, just like legitimacy, trust, or authenticity. The case of the spiritual influencer is relevant in this regard. The influencer does not construct himself or herself on the basis of professional authority (even when he or she possesses it), nor on the power of institutional authority, because what is fundamental for this figure is personal experience and the transformations undergone in the development of the self, spiritual biography and the transfiguration of the inner world, the capacity to integrate vulnerability and overcome it, the positioning on a path and the traversing of personal searches, personal healing and empathy based on one's own vulnerability. The spiritual influencer must be authentic, which presupposes a continuous performance of personal authenticity accompanied by public confirmation of the symbolic capital of authenticity.

The demand for authenticity derives from the very ethical profile of the influencer. Professional codes of ethics and communication legislation, when referring to influencers, state that they must communicate only personal experiences and that the truth of their claims must always be in accordance with the lived experience of the relation to the product, to the personal or institutional brand, or to the reality they present. Consequently, the influencer's authenticity is constructed somewhere at the intersection between his or her inner world, as a vulnerable being, and the refusal of an abstract authority. This refusal is compensated by the fact that the influencer's authenticity is circumscribed by a technology of validation from the persons and communities to whom he or she addresses himself or herself.

The authenticity of the spiritual influencer is connected to personal transformation, to the transfiguration of inner power, to the continuous return to the self doubled by a dynamic of continuous remodelling according to the needs of others. This means that personal authenticity is not static, despite the elements of continuity that followers expect to find every time they come into contact with the influencer. From the standpoint of the logic of the market on which the influencer acts, the stability of his or her identity must be doubled by permanent reinvention. Here we must keep in mind that the influencer's identity is constituted according to the patterns of the personal brand. It has both a tangible and an intangible dimension. This intangible dimension is dynamic and includes, besides the individual's personal values, all the structures and contents of the imaginary that he or she projects and through which the consumer of the influencer's offer relates to him or her. In the process of personal reinvention, for the type of celebrities represented by the

influencer, one must resort to an action similar to re-branding. The spiritual influencer must be recognizable and coherent with himself or herself, while at the same time always being new, fresh, and capable of remaining alive in the representations and perceptions of his or her followers. Authenticity is maintained through branding strategies that present change as an organic evolution, as personal development, as spiritual growth. Branding specialists state that the personal brand is a promise. It concerns the response it awakens in the affective register of adherents or consumers (Montoya, Vandehey 2009; Lindstrom 2010). Rebranding presupposes the permanent connection between influencer and public, between the influencer's mode of self-presentation and public recognition (Ali 2025). In this process, a multitude of digital practices intervene, revealing that authenticity, in addition to all the personal qualities involved, is the result of techniques for producing credibility and influence. We must retain the fact that "the authentic self is strategically manufactured and discursively negotiated through sets of self-presentational practices that are normatively recognisable as emblems of doing and being 'real' online" (Ali 2026, 45).

Analyses of authenticity highlight the fact that it can be ambivalent. Besides the fact that it can lead to the construction of existential meaning, to increased involvement on the part of followers, to the development of participation, and to support for the community, it can also legitimize disinformation and manipulation. In this context, authenticity manifests itself within the sphere of asymmetric, technologically mediated parasocial relations, which bring the risk that authenticity may turn into manipulative capital. It may be surprising to observe that authenticity functions with a high degree of efficiency even when it is fabricated, when it is not true, against the background of distrust in official experts, elites, or institutions (Baker, Rojek 2020).

4. Instead of conclusions

When we speak about spiritual influencers, we must keep in mind that their presence is facilitated by digital religion. Their affirmation is possible because "the digital environment acts as more than a context; It is an active engine that democratizes access, instils a consumerist habitus of choice, and creates a competitive economy of attention for rituals and meaning" (Ioan, Ioan 2026, 64). We find ourselves on a market of the creation of existential meaning characterized by the hybridization brought by the interference between the real and the virtual space in the living of religious experience. At the same time, we witness a diminution of religious authority in favour of a construction of authority based on the instrumentalization of credibility, as encountered in the case of influencers

in general: trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, similarity, to which is added the value of the content generated by influencers (Balaban, Mustăţea 2019, 35-36). These elements, which belong to the general mechanisms of influence, are significant with regard to the perception of authenticity. They make the followers of a spiritual influencer perceive him or her as similar, though different. In this way, existential investment is greater because, although the influencer may in turn appear vulnerable, close, and familiar, he or she is perceived as being at least one step ahead in terms of clarification, orientation, and the construction of existential meaning.

The spiritual influencer integrates into digital religion within a process of marketization of spiritual values on a market of attention capture, where he or she brings a personal style that sets in motion the mechanisms of influencing tastes, opinions, and behaviours, shapes worldviews, and orients the public toward a certain type of consumption. The spiritual element is connected to lifestyle and to the idea of having a good life, which transforms the entire endeavour into a search for existential meaning according to which both the influencer and the follower shape their mental structures, hopes, love, testimony, intimacy, and familiarity presupposed by the assumption of authenticity. Proposing himself or herself as an alternative to formal authority, the spiritual influencer creates spaces of belonging, offers support in spiritual growth, acts as a companion in overcoming vulnerability by adapting to a public with a complex affective register and an increasingly exacerbated sensibility, and is a presence available to his or her public under the conditions of everyday life.

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