

## **VIRTUAL WORLD, VIRTUAL IDENTITY, SIMULACRA AND HYBRID WARFARE**

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One of the main features of the information society is the manifestation of the effects of new technologies that cover all spheres of human activity [1]. A new reality is being formed, in the structure of which computer technologies, the emergence and rapid development of the World Wide Web and the whole visual and semantic dimension – virtuality – are of particular importance.

The phenomenon of virtual reality is beginning to emerge, and many social processes are being transferred into its realm. In the virtual space, a virtual person works, studies, rests, communicates, consumes information, it is for him that more and more new virtual phenomena, entire virtual worlds arise and exist.

From the point of view of philosophical science, virtual reality is a technically constructed interactive environment for generating and operating objects similar to real or imaginary ones, technically constructed with the help of technical means, on the basis of their three-dimensional graphic representation, simulation of their physical properties (volume, motion, etc.), simulation of their ability to influence and independent presence in space[2]. The terms "virtuality" and "virtual world" are attracting more and more attention of scientists, while from the point of view of their essence, computer worlds are considered to be a product of computer games. Thanks to computer games, such a kind of computer world as virtual social reality is created, which is not an objective, but a subjective-objective phenomenon.

There are scientific studies of the conceptual and categorical apparatus in the relevant field. Virtual reality is considered as a certain virtual space in which the corresponding illusion of the real world is created with the help of computers and various technical means. A set of virtual objects, relative to the reality that generates them, forms virtual reality. Virtual reality is built around information flows, technologies, organizational interactions, and symbols. As a result, a new environment of life creation is formed, in which the meaning of space and time changes [3]. O. Kostenko proposes a definition of the category of "metaverse (cyberspace)" as an electronic environment formed by a set of electronic subjects and objects that interact with each other, as well as electronic or other technologies that ensure their interaction. The emerging social relations combine the metaverse (cyberspace), artificial intelligence, a physical person and its digital alternative – an

electronic person and an electronic avatar [4]. Thus, it is already said that this is a set of not only certain objects, technologies, but also subjects.

So, today the concept of virtuality is increasingly used in a context that goes beyond computer science and computer technology, now we are dealing with categories such as "virtual enterprise", "virtual money", "virtual democracy", "virtual learning", "virtual toys", "virtual person", "virtual personality", etc.

The penetration of virtuality into social and individual life is so deep that it is a question of the "virtualization" of society and the formation of "virtual identities". The study of virtual life, virtual relationships, and virtual identities is an analysis not only of technology, but also of human experience in the field of digital, virtual space.

In recent years, a person has been living in the space of information technology, Internet communication and Internet use, which leads to a change in styles, rhythms and quality of life depending on the availability of information and digital technologies. Therefore, for a modern person, social existence appears primarily as it is represented on the Internet. Evidence of the existence of a "parallel" virtual life of a person are records in mail services that store data on transferred documents, statuses in computer games, accounts in online libraries and social networks, which contain information about favorite movies, music, photos and books, etc. Thus, in the network, in the virtual space, a certain virtual person (personality) is formed, identical to an individual. But this coincidence is not absolute.

In the process of communication on the Internet, a virtual person constructs his own identity through self-presentation through self-description and self-expression. In the first case, a person creates his own image using a description – an iconic image of himself is created, as close as possible, in his opinion, to his personality. In the second case, the created image differs from the personality it represents, and the author appears to us in an indirect, symbolic form.

Today, electronic avatars created by people rarely duplicate the typical appearance or behavior of a person, especially do not duplicate the appearance of the real owner of the avatar or its user. For the most part, an electronic avatar is an imaginary generalized or idealized image of an impersonated person or a fictional fantasy character that is endowed with virtual powers or super functions that are possible only in the metaverse [5]. Thus, we never know who we are dealing with in reality, and in this case, we are most often talking about the so-called simulacra, which are the product, the result of the virtualization of human social existence. In the virtual reality space, in the processes of virtual communication, any person can acquire the desired appearance, age, gender, nationality, etc. [6].

A simulacrum is a copy that depicts something that either has no original in reality or has lost it over time.

According to Baudrillard, there are four phases of image development:

1. The image is a beneficial image, a copy that we believe, which can be called a reflection of fundamental reality;
2. The image is a malignant reflection of reality, an unreliable copy that masks and distorts fundamental reality and has a harmful character;
3. The image masks the absence of fundamental reality, here the sign pretends to be an authentic copy, but such a copy does not have an original. Symbols and images pretend to represent something real, when in reality there is no

representation at all, and accidental images only pretend to be those things to which they have nothing to do;

4. And finally, the phase of pure simulation, where simulacra have nothing to do with any reality, being a simulacrum in its pure form [7].

Thus, simulacra are a constructed, seductive, symbolic object focused on satisfying the desires of the consumer. It is a false resemblance, a conventional sign of something that functions in society as a substitute for it.

As a result, modernity is an era of general simulation that creates hyperreality and covers all spheres of life of an individual who is accustomed in the era of postmodernism not to distinguish the real from fiction. Reality ended, giving way to the simulative hyperreality of simulacra[8].

From the point of view of legal regulation of relations in virtual reality, it is very important to distinguish between simulacra that have nothing to do with reality and electronic persons (personalities), which are "digital fingerprints" of real subjects.

Here you can use the concepts of electronic avatar and electronic personality proposed by O. Kostenko.

"Electronic avatar" is data in electronic form sufficient to reproduce the prototype of a person - the owner of an electronic avatar in the metaverse (cyberspace) with maximum reliability and rights established by law.

"Electronic personality" is the necessary and sufficient data in electronic form defined by law, which is used to identify the human owner of the avatar and any electronic data in the metaverse (cyberspace)[8].

At the same time, the following basic meanings of the term "virtual personality" are given in the literature: 1) identifier for entering the computer system (login, user name); 2) nickname or pseudonym used to identify the user in the electronic environment (user name, nickname); 3) abstract representation of a person, which is used for his/her civil, legal and other social identification (passport number, personal identification code, fingerprints, DNA); 4) a computer program that simulates intelligent behavior (robot, bot); 5) the same, but in combination with the body (Android, Cyborg); 6) a fictitious person, which is created by a person or a group of people, which gives rise to semiotic artifacts and/or is described from the outside (virtual character, virtual persona); (7) any person as perceived or modeled by anyone; In other words, images or hypostases of the personality as something different from its essence (e.g., the ego in its opposition to the self) [9].

As you can see, electronic personality is understood quite broadly.

Starting the discussion, we would like to offer our own vision of the correlation of the mentioned categories.

So, as it seems, the avatar should be attributed to the objects of intellectual property rights, which is a set of static and/or dynamic images of the user (real or fictional, fantasy), 2D or 3D models that may contain the user's nickname (names or pseudonyms), which, according to its author, is a reflection of his personality in the relevant virtual environments and is the result of the author's intellectual creative activity.

A person can have several avatars and they can be different depending on the role of the person in the relationship of the virtual environment.

An electronic identity is not and should not be a simulacrum, as it must reflect the necessary and sufficient data defined by law in electronic form, which is used to

identify the person who owns the avatar and any electronic data in the metaverse (cyberspace).

Even a cursory analysis of the categories related to the identification of a person in virtual reality shows the complexity of their definition, their connection with certain technical categories and phenomena. And this is all the more important from the point of view of law in general and intellectual property law in particular.

In addition, the topic of simulacrum has become very relevant with the growing role of the media and the Internet in shaping public opinion. Simulacra are used to manipulate society, to create the necessary basis for various purposes. It has been widely used in the context of hybrid warfare, with the aim of manipulating consciousness, creating the necessary information background, far from reality.

It should be recalled that the information war, which is part of the hybrid war, begins long before the armed offensive and is aimed at a kind of "preparation" for the purpose of deliberate destruction of the spiritual world and culture of the nations against which the appropriate means are carried out.

The birth of simulacra is possible with deliberate concealment of information, chronological order of events, euphemistic periphrasis, labeling that has an evaluative meaning, manipulation of textual material, its truncation or rearrangement of its individual parts, etc. The main simulacrum used by Russia throughout the post-Soviet space is "the idea of the unity (brotherhood) of peoples led by an older brother (Russia)." This element is formed through the imposition of a distorted historical memory - a simulacrum of true historical memory. It is historical memory that is the primary springboard for the beginning of aggression [10].

It is only recently that serious scientific studies of the problems of historical memory and the role of simulacra in this process have begun to appear. It is noted that there is no general public agreement in the country regarding the "foreign", anti-Ukrainian nature of the imperial and communist power imposed from the outside. Therefore, there were fierce political discussions on the interpretation of the Russian-imperial and totalitarian Soviet past between the bearers of different conflicting models of memory - "Soviet", "national-patriotic" and "liberal". Anti-Ukrainian politicians divided the country with massive manipulations of history, which de-sovereignized consciousness and undermined the foundations of statehood. The identity crisis has become a manifestation of the state of uncertainty regarding the established all-Ukrainian system of socio-political values, the sharp confrontation of multi-vector political forces and, as a result, the impossibility of determining the optimal direction of society's development. The problem of developing the concept of historical memory and the formation of national identity was further complicated by the fact that Ukraine had a protracted transition period, there were constant fluctuations regarding the choice of the direction of civilizational development and its place in the international community. It is worth emphasizing that the threat to the Ukrainian government and society is posed by the activities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), which is actually a branch of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). The use of historical and religious themes to keep Ukraine in the space of Russian influence, obsessive statements about a "common civilizational space", "common historical existence" and, finally, the statement that "we are one people" and Ukraine allegedly "invented in the nineteenth century" - all these are components of the

implementation of anti-Ukrainian ideological projects of the Russian authorities [11]. Thus, a simulacrum of the model of historical memory is formed, which aims to desubjectify Ukraine.

Thanks to the efforts of information warfare specialists, simulacra such as "Banderites", "Right Sector", "Ukrainian fascists", "Kyiv fascist junta", "Ukrainian terrorism", "Novorossiya", "Donetsk People's Republic", "Luhansk People's Republic", etc., also emerged. In this way, simulacra of terror, horror or catastrophe are created that are more frightening than real manifestations of violence or natural disasters experienced in reality, with the "+" sign usually replaced by the "-" sign.

According to the researchers, in the modern world, the most noticeable is the creation and functioning of political simulacra. The number of such simulacra increases during periods of political crisis. The crisis situation in political life is defined by many researchers as an "information war". The main means of manipulating people's consciousness is news management, which includes the management of information flows with the help of modern psychological and media technologies.

The transfer of mass media to virtual reality has become a new means of influencing the human psyche with the help of visualized images.

Simulacra of the virtual-online culture of the information society are being formed and continue to live their own lives. This problem is caused by the fact that the personality today is formed in an artificially created virtual world, which distorts the personality and forms its torn and incomplete image. The game component has become an integral dominant of the modern virtual vita, and the game itself has become a marker of a postmodern society, in the center of which is the performative, playful "I" [12].

The most prominent and acute problem of simulacra is in journalism and the media. The World Press Freedom Index in 2023 demonstrates a very high volatility of the current situation, with significant ups and downs, unprecedented changes. This instability is a consequence of the increased aggressiveness of the authorities in many countries and the growing number of manifestations of hostility towards journalists both on social networks and in real life.

The astonishingly rapid development of generative AI is shaking up the already fragile world of media, which has already been largely undermined by Web 2.0.

Thus, in the editorial policy of many media outlets controlled by the Kremlin, one can see a single clear strategy of manipulation aimed at one goal: provoking socio-cultural uncertainty among the citizens of Ukraine and instilling a sense of fear, disorder and anarchy in the country. This is achieved by performing several semantic tasks.

First, such media systematically exaggerate the scale and significance of Ukraine's internal problems, downplaying the results and significance of the threat of Russian aggression and Russian influence since independence.

Secondly, the boundaries of the discussion and the context of the news are artificially and manipulatively expanded to the point of absurdity, beyond which the non-professional viewer loses any rational guidelines and authority.

Thirdly, the pro-Kremlin media network is clearly manipulating the issues and heroes of the current agenda. Topics, the significance of which does not correspond to objective reality and sociological data, are artificially actualized on the air. And vice versa. Corruption is often more important than Russian aggression.

Fourth, the revanchist media network artificially inflates topics that deepen social divisions and radicalize citizens' views [12].

Summing up, it should be noted that digital technologies, as they gradually improve and weave into the cultural and historical context, are increasingly becoming virtual, ceasing to reflect reality and beginning to simulate reality. Virtual reality and simulacra are not neutral in relation to a person, they change the psyche of people, the reality around them, and, thus, get the desired result for the customer of the simulacrum.

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