

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE VIRTUAL CULTURE AND ISSUES OF INTEGRATION OF THE REAL IN MODERN LIFE

Alim Batyuk

Associate Professor PhD, Kryvyi Rih Economic Institute of SHEE “Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman”, e-mail: alim_60@rambler.ru, Ukraine

Abstract. The article analyzes the notions of «culture» and «virtual culture», considers the issue of the formation of modern culture and the impact of the World Wide Web on the process of forming a virtual space. The study also raises questions regarding the features of the virtual culture and the issues of integration of the real and the virtual into the modern culture

Keywords: culture, virtual culture, informatization, world cultural space, cultural activities.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.23856/2215>

Introduction

In recent decades, human activities have created and given wide currency to the notion of virtual reality. That was largely due to the rapid development of computer technology. Nowadays, electronic network is a complete synthesis of modern global trends of social and cultural life. In that synthesis, many problems of the modern and future social development manifest themselves. With the advent of the Internet, a new information environment appears. In that medium, information is formed, copied and transmitted almost instantly.

At present, the issue is becoming ever more relevant of the conceptualization of the current state of culture and the distinctive features of human existence in a culture that is being transformed under the influence of the development of computer technology. The constant increase in the level of use of information technology, which is characteristic of the present stage of the culture development, is accompanied by the emergence of new forms of social and cultural life of society.

The constant increase in the level of use of information technology

Exploring this subject, we come across the analysis of culture primarily in the scholarly papers by A. Comte, M. Weber and É. Durkheim. Among the Ukrainian authors, who have been developing those issues in the recent decades, A. Goncharenko, V. Pavlov, E. Bystrytskyi, O. Semashko and others are worth noting.

The level of virtual culture studies is quite ambiguous, because, on the one hand, many scholars have been investigating this subject for quite a long time now. Such a conclusion can be made from studying the papers by leading foreign authors such as D. Bell, P. Bourdieu, E. Hall, C. Shannon, R. Porter, A. Toffler, who offer analyses that shed light on communicative processes of the information society.

Despite a fairly large number of scholarly papers, an analysis of the scientific sources proves that the virtual communication is constantly changing and sometimes displacing other

forms of communication, so tracking the latest developments cannot lose practical relevance. The latter point is especially true of the characteristics of the general culture, which is fundamentally affected by the dynamic virtual culture in the process of virtual integration.

As a subject of sociological analysis, culture is a whole of structures and processes related to the functioning of society at different levels of its development, to the social behavior monitoring system. As a social phenomenon, culture is a complex phenomenon. It is integrated into various spheres of human activity. Hence we have the ambiguity of the culture itself, its logical structure, the essence of its forms (Gorodyanenko, 2008).

P. Sorokin described the culture as a system of values, by means of which the society integrates itself, supports the functioning and the interrelation of its institutions (Sorokin, 1992). He also stressed that any group has a culture. Moreover, in his opinion, neither a social group nor an individual can exist without culture.

Some authors regard culture as a social factor, and argue that, since it is representative, i.e. it generates ideas, meanings and values that are valid by virtue of their de facto recognition, it embraces all the beliefs, views, world outlooks, ideas and ideologies that influence social behavior as they are either actively shared by the people or have their passive acceptance (Kovalevska, 1998).

For a more complete review of the relationship between culture and the virtual environment of the Internet, it is also necessary to pay attention to the fact that, along with the spiritual culture, there is material one as well. However, the material culture by no means constitutes the material life of the society. It characterizes the material activity of people in terms of its influence on the development of an individual, the revealing and the use of his/her skills and abilities. Accordingly, the culture can be defined as a system of consistent rules that are transmitted from the past to the future, from what has already happened to what is going to happen. In other words, culture shapes an individual, and is created by an individual and the society. In order to be a full member of the society, a person must have command of that society's culture, and shape oneself according to the requirements of the said society.

We would like to call attention to the issue of the relationship between culture and virtual environment. According to the scientific research on the subject, there has in recent years been a tendency towards equating the virtual reality with the entire human culture and the social consciousness as a whole. Thus, the inventions of writing systems, book printing, theater, cinema, and finally the computer reality are allegedly only milestones on the way to the virtualization of our lives, to the departure from the reality of the world given to us and to accessing other virtual realities (Nasedkina, 2004).

In our opinion, the social virtual space of the Internet cannot be considered only as a reflection of the existing realities – political, economic ones, etc. This is a kind of «self-contained entity», which also actively influences the world of objects. The development of electronic computer networks is becoming a seminal factor for the culture of virtual reality. The computer implementation of virtual reality immerses the individual into an artificial world. In doing so, to attain «full» reality, there is no need for detailed modeling of the surrounding world. To achieve that, programs may be used that, besides conveying usual visual information, simultaneously engage some other sensory organs such as those of hearing and tactile perception. That is, if we are talking about the most advanced systems, the user is given a possibility to touch by his/her hand the object that exists only in the computer memory.

The philosophical meaning of a virtual program is that the realities or conditions of different nature are combined into an organic whole to create an artificial phenomenon or

product that exists only in the moment of communication or obtaining information. They exist in the formative phase, the phase of mutual transformation from one state to another. The designed virtual reality creates a feeling of authentic reality of what does not really exist.

The complexity of the virtual reality is that it is given in sensation. It is in the virtual reality that the social structure of the Internet is formed. Of course, its basic structure is technological, but it contains a number of «virtual» social mechanisms of development and transformation, and contributes to the development.

The concept of virtual reality encompasses many disciplines, and in many of them it is now integrated with computer technology. Of course, each process has both its positive and negative sides. The type of culture, which is formed under the influence of constant intensive introduction of computer information technologies into everyday culture through the mass communication media, combines mostly random elements from different cultures. The process of saturation of the virtual environment by information can hardly be called controllable and foreseeable, so all the phenomena that take place in that environment can therefore have different effects on social behavior and culture (Nasedkina, 2004).

Under the influence of transformation of socio-cultural processes, certain distinctive features of the virtual culture are formed. Although the virtual reality cannot be called common cultural practice, it still has a great potential. Due to the specifics of the spatial organization of virtual reality, associative logic of thinking is formed in the virtual culture, virtualization of public relations takes place, and the role becomes enhanced of social institutions that shape the environment of virtual communications.

The virtual culture, whose formation was conditioned by the rapid development of mass communication media, is focused on the values and interests of the vast majority of people. It combines the transient and the stable. Such a culture is designed for «mass consumption», it is a product of the modern times. Heightened attention to it is due to its capability of overcoming the closed nature and isolation of national cultures, of integrating those cultures into the world cultural space.

Heterogeneity can be mentioned as an important characteristic of the virtual culture. That property is associated with the features of structuring and value-oriented selection of social experience, as well as with the peculiarities of the cognitive process. A certain corresponding type of virtual culture that combines random elements of cultures of various groups, communities and peoples is formed as a result of intensive and continuous introduction of computer technology into everyday culture.

Conclusions and suggestions

The mankind is gradually moving from the written culture to the screen one and from the industrial civilization to the information one. The avenues of integrating the virtual reality and the culture are wide enough as they cover a variety of areas of human activity. The issue of that process impact assessment is now becoming ever more relevant.

Thus, the importance of the global network for many areas of society functioning is conditioned, on the one hand, by the possibility of it making an impact on the economic, social and cultural processes and, consequently, on the world perception and everyday-life forms of an individual. On the other hand, it is impossible to deny that network's effect on the social space proper, which manifests itself in the emergence of new communication practices. The emergence and development of Internet technologies have enhanced the understanding of the social reality by creating the virtual one.

Culture is a special aspect of the entire variety of the material and spiritual activity of people. Cultural activities, namely the creation, dissemination and assimilation of people's cultural values, are an inalienable factor in the preservation of culture. By the volume of objects and phenomena, which they embrace, the notions of «culture» and «human activity» are the same, they are identical, but they differ in the meaning of human activity.

It is in the virtual space that a considerable amount of information is saved: scientific, artistic one and that of everyday nature. Entering that virtual cultural space has not only simplified the use of that information providing access to the treasures of the world's artistic and intellectual culture, but has also simplified the communication, thereby making the Internet a place of communication and cultural exchange on a world-wide scale. The absence of geographical and political constraints has become a significant integrating factor in the development of the modern culture and civilization. On the other hand, the Internet blurs the ethical constraints, generates a new ethics and makes it possible to artificially form and even to impose views that are incompatible with the traditional human values.

References

- Gorodyanenko, V.G. (2008). *Sociology*. Kyiv: VC «Academia», 544. [in Ukrainian].
- Kovalevska, E.V. (1998). *Computer virtual realities, some philosophical aspects. Virtual realities*. Moscow: Writings of virtualistic laboratory, 37-43. [in Russian].
- McLuhan, M. (2001). *Understanding Media. The Extenssion of man [Electronic resource]*. Retrieved from <http://www.cuberchimp.co.uk/U75102/mcluhan.htm>.
- Nasedkina, Yu.V. (2004). *Virtual reality as the phenomenon of modern culture. Cultural studies 04: SB.sc.writings*. Saint Petersburg: Asterion, 81-85. [in Russian].
- Nosov, N.A. (1995). *Virtual civilization . Virtual realities in psychology and psychological practice*. Moscow: Writings of virtualistic laboratory. [in Russian].
- Pierre, A. (1969). *Sociologie de Comte*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 234. [Electronic resource]. Retrieved from http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/aser_00039659_1970_num_29_1_1843t10185_0000_4.
- Slyadneva, N. A. (2003). *Modern human in a virtual world: problem of information-analytical personality culture [Electronic resource]*. Retrieved from <http://www.galaktik.org.ua/SLOVARI/P4.htm>. [in Russian].
- Sorokin, P.A. (1992). *Human. Civilization. Society. General edition, content and foreword*. Moscow: Politizdat, 116. [in Russian].