

Towards a Phenomenology of the Digitalization of Consciousness. The Virtualization of the Social Space

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Abstract: The digitalization of the everyday experience is a process which achieves virtual reality through a process of replacing the original and authentic experience with digital artefacts: cybersex, augmented reality, revolutions 2.0. We are even proposed a full digitalization of the contents of consciousness, and the development of our own existence in virtual spaces, as a means of prolonging life indefinitely. The objective of the paper is to identify and analyze certain philosophical perspectives on the mutations at the level of the cultural model called *transmodern society*, following the process of “virtualization of the social space”. The virtual space is non-tridimensional. The characteristic of *topological distance*, specific to any human cohabitation is being replaced with that of intersubjective distance, regarded as the *subjective intensity* of the *communication*. The understanding of the virtualization of social space may open new horizons of investigation in the philosophy of mentalities, cultural anthropology, communication sciences and tehnnoethics.

Keywords: *virtualization of social space; transmodern society; unoccupied spaces.*

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Introduction

Technological globalization can be analyzed from the perspective of the mutations in the interpretation of the social space from the traditional one (Huidu, 2018; Rusen, 2019), limited to the geographic coordinates of the interaction, to a delocalized and universalizing one (Rotilă, 2018). The digital revolution generates a phenomenon of social space virtualization - in the sense of transferring socializing interactions to virtual environments - with distinct and somewhat unpredictable consequences for the evolution of the being (Apostu & Turliuc, 2017) and even the human species.

In this paper we identified certain constitutive dimensions of the phenomenon of virtualization of social space, its specific evolving tendencies and the possible sociopathologies. We will aim to identify the “interpretative drift” understood as the deconstruction of the traditional anthropological perspective of the human being, as being limited by its own corporality and proximity (Popoveniuc, 2016), in the context of the communicational globalization and the generalization of the teleaction. The research will be oriented towards the possible ontological constructions derived from the construction of a new society in the network, trying to identify certain potential ethical constructions that are capable of shaping new communicational strategies in the context of globalization and virtualization of the social space. The globalization of communication, specifically the one on-line, creates a new particularity of social interaction, given by the escape from the physical space into a purely communicational (virtualizing) one. This space being transcultural in essence, generates a continuous (re)negotiation of the interpretation of social reality and construction of new interpretative models. Understanding the interpretative drift of the concept of reality in the context of virtualizing the communication allows us to state that the virtualization of the social space has led to the humanity in the horizon of exploring a *sui generis* other dimension of space (Sandu & Vlad, 2018), instead of a physical one, that can be traced by an unethical one, which can be experimented in the form of instant communication and virtual omnipresence.

Virtualization of the social space

Through the virtualization of the social space, we understand the construction of a new communicational universe in the virtual space, and the transfer of certain social interactions of globalizing nature towards it (Sandu, 2012).

The globalization of communication, especially the one on-line (Suduc, Bîzoi, & Gorghiu, 2018), creates a new particularity of the social interaction, namely the escape from the physical space into a purely communicational (virtualizing) one. The virtualization of social space alters the behavioural habitus, any type of communicative interaction (Habermas, 2000) being prone to undergoing virtualizing effects which lead to intrinsic changes in the interactional specific, by transforming the (social) space from framework of interactions and co-existences, into a framework of mediating the communicational action (Habermas, 2000). We notice a formalization of communication with the purpose of better positioning in the search engine, in parallel with the decrease in the emotional impact of the act of communication due to its mediated nature, etc. (Sandu, 2012).

Virtualization of the social space and the transmodern culture

Considering the modification of the dimension of creativity through “collaborative creativity”, the idea specific to modernity regarding the importance of originality in the act of creation suffers transformations rather in the form of a socialization of creation. The philosophy of collaborative creativity generates the “virtual social networks”, which become a priority from the classic forms of mass communication. We notice a modification of the level of global culture in the sense of a re-adaptation of the universal which now transpires from the networking of particular elements. In this regard, we draw the attention to the fact that the contemporary society – as a society of knowledge – is at the point where it switches from using knowledge in the purpose of producing goods and services, to the production of knowledge itself. The knowledge-based society, identified as the transmodern one, due to the roles of the social groups called cultural creative (Ray, 2001) which become the dominant social category detached from the actual middle class – undergoes a process of redefining the social categories based on the contribution of creative industries and those specialized in knowledge management. The added value which is the engine of social development will no longer be predominantly in the material area, but rather in the symbolically communicative one, through what we call the virtualization of the social space. The establishment of an integral (transmodern) culture is a process of continuous adjustment of the local cultures to the globalizing elements.

The social phenomena impose a new socio-communicative construct, namely the spiritualization of distances as a virtual replica of the frontiers’ spiritualization phenomenon, the dependence on search engines,

which in our opinion generates a formalization of communication for the purpose of good positioning in the search engine, the diminishing of the emotional impact of the act of communication due to its mediated character, etc. The phenomenon of “virtualisation of social space” has a polycentric and unstructured character, with so many virtualizing environments, with so many communication projects being deployed at a time. General characteristics of the phenomenon can be highlighted by repeated researches on distinct communication phenomena of various dimensions, and the sensing of some communication constants that appear in a whole series of such communication projects.

The establishment of an integral (transmodern) culture is a process of continuous adjustment of local cultures to the globalizing elements. Any type of communication interaction may suffer virtualizing effects as a consequence of the transfer of social interaction into virtualizing environments, either positive or negative, but with the certainty resulting in the modification of the interactive one.

From Virtualization of Social Space to Technological Transcendence

The phenomenon of "virtualization of social space has a polycentric and unstructured character, with as many virtualizing environments, as communication projects are being deployed at a time. The "face-to-face" communication is replaced by virtual proximity, a process generated by the interconnection of the internet network and communications equipment in the communication process. The virtualization of communications denies a defining element of the human condition, that of the face-to-face relationship with the otherness (Sandu, 2003). Instantaneous communication action is a form of ubiquity that goes beyond the traditional human condition. Virtual space is non-three-dimensional, the topological distance being replaced by the intersubjective intensity of the communication. This change affects the aperception of spatiality in its categorical quality, being understood as a transcendence of the human condition of being located in time and space. The category of space limits the freedom of consciousness from the point of view of ubiquity.

Like immortality, ubiquity is a characteristic of the transhuman condition - in the mythological sense of divine, semi-divine or demonic beings (Sandu, 2015). Traditional anthropology considers the human being to be conditioned as a topological being, locally existing and bounded by one's own corporeality, and human interactions encounter the Other as a Close one. The limitation in fullness appears as an awareness of the

dissipation of Totality, being at the origin of any subjective causality. From the technological point of view, the most promising discourse that aims to overcome the limitation in fullness can be linked to reality virtualization strategies that allow the (somehow digitized) Consciousness to simulate any sensation, and satisfy any attachment or desire.

The transcendence of corporeality, seen as a limitation in content (Bostrom, 2003, 2011), raises the issue of virtualization of space and separation of consciousness from the biological support (Fukuyama, 2002; Raulerson, 2019). A non-local consciousness can be interpreted as transcending the limitation of space into a continuum of being. Social space virtualization technologies (based on the Internet and / or virtual reality) allow the emergence of an additional, non-localizable dimension in which consciousness manifests itself as teleaction (the use of telemedicine robotic arms, 3D printing technology - the construction of objects based on the simple design conscious without human transformation on a raw material). Virtual space allows for a non-topological existence, interactions being rather noetic than physical or biological (Sandu & Vlad, 2018).

Ethical Perspectives on the Virtualization of Social Space

The virtualization of the social space generates a special category of responsibility - responsibility for the non-presence (Singler, 2019). Conscious technologies (as long as it is possible to upload and download consciousness - uploading or downloading consciousness into a digital device) will also lead to a pseudo-transcendence of limitation in fullness by completely relocating consciousness to a digital adimensional space (Sandu & Vlad, 2018).

Conclusions

New technologies require anthropological reflection on the post- and the transhuman condition. In our opinion, the elements of technology can be framed in the concept of virtualization of the social space and the complete transformation of all forms of social action into communicative action.

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