

## ANALYSIS OF VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF HUMAN SECURITY

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**Abstract:** The author analyzes the phenomenon of virtual communities in the context of threats to the security of the individual. Modern communication would not be possible without resorting to virtual reality. In contemporary philosophy to the interpretation of the concept of “virtual reality” has two meanings: the traditional and the modern. In modern Russian philosophy the phenomenon of virtual reality is investigated in a wide range, but most of the concepts for the assessment of the impact of virtual reality on human nature. Modern “technocratic discourse” influences all spheres of life, including the sphere of social and cultural communication, forming a worldview, the worldview and mirror person. People join virtual community to allow information to be in the space next to the actors, competent in a particular area. Virtual communities, like any social phenomenon, has a number of positive features. The stay of users in virtual communities has a negative side. The most obvious threat to the human security virtual communities are in light of the propaganda of extremist ideas. Virtual communities facilitate an Association of persons, who set themselves the task of seizure of power. “Virtual community shadow” can be an active resource mobilization. Virtual communities can implicitly undermine some state bases. Flashmobbing as a modern sociocultural phenomenon can also carry a threat to the human security. Prospective analysis of potential state control and management of virtual communities is the goal of our further research.

**Keywords:** human security, virtual reality, communication, virtual community.

### INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development and diffusion of virtual communities in all areas of human activity, philosophical understanding of this phenomenon is undoubtedly relevant. In addition, such studies are important because problems virtual reality and virtual communities are interdisciplinary and detect acute problems of modern culture. Dehumanization of everyday life, the loss of sense of my own integrity as individuals and the growth of threats life world of man become apparent phenomena in modern society. Virtual reality, empowering people in various spheres of life, able to create technologies that violate information security, contribute to the deformation of the communicative space and contain the threat to the human security. Global information flow consumes one. The emergence of modern mass society is accompanied by the improvement of means of communication by which to overcome the traditional economic, legal, political, and cultural boundaries.

The most important function of social communication, which constitutes social reality as a special, is the ordering and structuring of society through communicative interaction for mutual understanding between people in the process of joint activity. The emergence of new information and communication technologies

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substantially modifies the traditional social practices, generating new forms of social interactions. An example of the latter are virtual social networks, which currently are a potent means of development of the Internet space. With the development of social networks and the growing number of their users that due to the constant improvement of their tools, they have become an ideal platform for the formation of virtual communities.

More and more often hear about the threat of human degradation under the influence of modern computer technology, the loss of a man of the fundamental bases of its existence, the prevalence of such phenomena as Internet addiction and the like. Russian society today is quite deeply integrated into the international network of virtual communities, and domestic audience of social networks is increasing at a record pace. This leads to the need to analyze and assess dynamics and trends of these processes in Russia and their impact on security of the person.

### **METHODS AND MATERIALS**

The choice of methodological tools derived from scientific and appropriateness for the tasks. In the joint as a General scientific and philosophical-anthropological methods in a methodological pluralism with philosophical and sociological principles of analysis. Methodological basis of investigation, the principles of historicism and consistency, comparative (comparative) approach.

Descriptive and explanatory methods allowed us to synthesize the philosophical and sociological concept of virtual communities in the context of the study of their impact on human security. Using the semantic method, the definition of key concepts, in particular virtual reality, virtual community, community virtual shadow.

The separate place in the course of scientific research is the system-structural and system-functional methods, wide application of which is due to study the transformational impact of the global information society on the security of society in General and the identity of the individual in particular. A synergistic method that allows one to look at the evolution of virtual communities from the perspective of nonlinear processes for the development of the global information society. The methods of induction and deduction, analysis and analogy was particularly relevant in the study of the specificity of communication in virtual space and identifying trends of its development and impact on the security of the individual. In addition, the study used formal logical methods for abstraction, formalization, and the categories and laws of dialectical logic.

### **DISCUSSION**

Mass communication exercise increasing influence on the socio-cultural processes not only in one country, but all over the world, contributing to the formation of a

modern social space, which is fixed in reflections G. Debord, Jean Baudrillard, John. Vattimo, J. Habermas, M. Heidegger and other thinkers. Globalization processes have contributed to profound changes in the communicative sphere of society and amplify the impact of mass media on people's behavior.

Modern communication would not be possible without resorting to virtual reality. For the first time in the modern sense of the term "virtual reality" used in the second half of the twentieth century, a well-known figure of cyberculture George. Lanier. In fact, the term "virtual" has a long history. Its Genesis begins with the Ancient and comes from the Latin "virtus", was originally used as an ethical category to designate virtues. In the works of Cicero, Thomas Aquinas, Leibniz, the concept of a "virtual" as the possibility of the existence of the absolute personality of Godhead, as the possibility of hidden, but possible. Over time, the content of this category has been enriched with the development of ethical teachings.

In the works of philosophers virtuality is considered as latent energy, as the creative potential, active force that generates the thinking process (N. Cusa) as a certain inner strength, potency, capability. With the emergence of a single information space occurs another phrase – "artificial reality". This concept reflects the essence of the interaction human-computer. Within a cybernetic approach to virtual reality is seen as the result of information interaction between human and computer, which is created using complex multimedia operational funds. Thus for a person in real time creates the illusion of immediate presence in a synthetic (imaginary) world.

In contemporary philosophy to the interpretation of the concept of "virtual reality" has two meanings: traditional, derived from "virtus" and identified with the possible and modern, understand virtual reality as a kind of epistemological reality, understanding of which may be based on the concept of simulacra (Jean Baudrillard) (Baudrillard, 2000).

The German scholar G. Rheingold talks about virtual reality as the "possible new world", that is, "a new parallel reality." The scientist considers "virtual reality like a magic window that lets you glimpse into other worlds, whether the world of molecules, or the world of our imaginations" (Rheingold, 1991). It was he who suggested the term "virtual community", interpreting it as follows: "Virtual communities is the social associations that emerge from the Network when a group of people support a public discussion long enough and thoroughly, in order to form a network of personal relationships in cyberspace" (Rheingold, 1991). It should be noted that Sam, Rheingold is one of the founders of one of the first virtual communities "The Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link" (WELL).

In modern Russian philosophy the phenomenon of virtual reality is investigated in a wide range, but most of the concepts for the assessment of the impact of virtual reality on human nature. Russian researchers (D. V. Ivanov, S. S. horujy)

social and socio-philosophical aspects of sequencing companies are discussed based on the concepts of simulation Gilles Deleuze and Jean Baudrillard (Ivanov, 2000). Scientists emphasized that there are three anthropological paradigm of the phenomenon of virtual reality that can serve as a criterion to systematize concepts – progressive (progressive), negative (negativity) and neutral, 1997.

In studies of McLuhan, Rheingold, K. Fiore attempted a more holistic concept of virtual reality as a complex simulation symbolic space, where these basic human needs – the need for communication, knowledge and entertainment (game). In this space you can “meet” other people, entertainment and gaming complexes, cognitive arrays, i.e. virtual reality is assessed as a major cultural event that can have a significant impact on our consciousness, on awareness of personal identity, the formation of various communities (McLuhan & Fiore, 2012).

The concept of a community, as the idea of virtual reality has quite a long history, its main provisions is substantiated by F. Tönnies in a number of works devoted to the distinction between *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society). In his opinion, a community is defined as an Association arising naturally and have their own values, while society acts as the consciously existing structure, based on which there is rational logic (Tönnies, 2002).

In the future, the views of F. Tönnies was developed many well-known social theorists, in particular, Etzioni A. and A. McIntyre. The relevance of the problem of understanding the essence of modern communities is reflected, for example, the fact that D. Bell and C. Newby in the course of his research found ninety-four the definition of “community”, although they, along with the differences, have something in common. To study the specifics of communication in virtual communities are important “category” and “aliens”, the study of which is traceable in the works by M. Buber, B. Waldenfels, E. Levinas (Levinas, 2000).

Special contribution to addressing the problem of philosophical Foundation of virtual communities has made the research of M. Castells. In his trilogy “the Information age: economy, society and culture” (1996) for the first time, social networks are considered as the basis of a new type of society that meets the information age in the development of mankind, network. M. Castells interpreted a new type of network society, “because it created networks of production, power and experience, which form the culture of virtuality in the global flows through time and space” (Castells, 2000).

However, modern communities, including virtual, can not only be regarded as “clubs”, as many researchers, for example, John. Clark (Clark, 2006), noted a steady trend of turning the modern “society” in “the community”. This trend has significantly strengthened the transition to the information culture, resulting from the development of the information society.

## RESULTS

The information society impact on socio-cultural orientations and ways of life of people. Such effects are especially pronounced in the communicative space. They provoke serious debate among scientists about the prospects of modern man in the society of developed information communications and generate rather contradictory, sometimes contrary, evaluation of information and technological challenges in the communicative environment and their consequences.

The current “technocratic discourse” has a multi-vector, not a definite influence on all spheres of life, including the socio-cultural sphere of communication, shaping our current worldview, worldview and *miroiterie*. In terms of total exclusion, a person loses his confidence that he knows how to live, to feel, to think, to act in virtual world systems, how to curb the world how to defend in him the freedom of their subjectivity (Nazarov, 2004). In studies *podcherkivaetsya*, and it is impossible not to agree that the information products created by man, got independence, got out of his control and began to act against him. This process is nothing short of complete alienation.

Cultural and communicative processes, the development of information technology lead to the further alienation of people from the means of mass communication that not only leads to distortion of communication, but also deepens the surrogate communication, makes it impossible to conduct an active and constructive dialogue and reach an understanding. Deformation of the communicative space manifested in the virtualization of reality, the manipulation of consciousness, tension, conflict, and the growing alienation of different types, affects integrative processes in society and has a devastating impact on a person’s (Nesmeyanov, Rudenko & Kotlyarova, 2015).

Space society network, according to M. Castells, is not determined by geography and level of integration in the global or local network and place in the production chain. “Organization of interaction in the network leads to the crystallization of a new lifestyle with new places socializing and Dating, innovative business and cultural strategies” (Castells, 2000). In society and natural communication are becoming increasingly distant from the person, and at the forefront of information and computer performances. Human activity today, especially in the realm of power and politics is due to media, computer networks and information technology.

Modern virtual communities can be divided into several main categories:

- communities of interest which bring together people with similar interests (such as cultural, political, social, economic, etc.; to such community concerns, such as the Club of fans of Asian culture <http://lady.webnice.ru>) or specialized (clubs of fans of animals, for example <http://lai-mik.ru> etc.);
- gaming community that allow their users to create their own environment,

history and characters in fictional worlds (the vivid example is the community of players well-known online game “Second Life”);

- geographic community based on geographic location or area (often these communities come together through local networks);
- community relationships are formed around certain life experiences and family problems and problems in parenting (e.g., community <http://babyblog.ru>); the loss of a loved one or the loss of the animal (<https://www.all-psy.com>), the presence of severe disease from the user or his relatives, the birth of children with severe diagnosis (<https://downsideup.org>), overcoming alcohol and drug addiction, or other important events where people can share their experiences and exchange views;
- commercial community where relationships are built on the purchase and sale of online goods and services. In such communities there are three distinct features: a reliable commercial and social environment, mutual support, and authority to transactions, allowing you to make some specialized products attractive to the sellers, spreading, thus, the database of existing products;
- special types of virtual communities.

According to the Press release of All-Russian Public Opinion, the most popular in the Russian segment of the Network are humorous virtual communities, communities, health-related and community news. Daily their pages, viewing more than 40 % of Internet users. The Russians are also interested in the culinary community, about family relationships and household, sports, technology and science – about a third of Internet users are in the data virtual communities or regularly browse thematic pages (“*Press release of All-Russian Public Opinion*”, 2017).

Why Internet users join virtual communities? Often people join a virtual community to allow information to be in the space next to the actors, competent in a particular area. Virtual communities include, first, people who interact to meet certain needs or perform certain social roles, and, second, the General objectives of the cooperation aimed at the satisfaction of common needs and interests. Thirdly, in virtual community users acting together according to the prescribed statuses.

Fourthly, an important characteristic of interaction in a virtual social network are norms, rituals, principles and rules of engagement, security of the person in the process of cooperation that acquire their specificity through its virtuality. As a result of interaction between participants formed a certain connection. These relationships can be durable and the surface, performing on the network different social functions: strong ties contribute to the stability of the social network, and surface – provide a network open to external influences, its susceptibility to innovations, protect the network from isolation and the like. That is why, according

to B. Uzzi, “optimal network structure should contain both surface and strong ties” (Uzzi, 1996).

Fifth, the functioning of virtual social networks is possible with the availability of computer systems that support social interaction on the basis of criteria of participation (network access) and are such that a sense of closeness (Kotlyarova, Shubin & Sysoeva, 2016). Multi-channel and decentralized nature inherent to such networks allows, according to A. L. Zhuravlev and T. A. Nestik (Zhuravlev & Nestik, 2010), to combine at first glance, irreconcilable – on the one hand, the growing autonomy of individuals, and on the other, the growing reliance on social solidarity and support.

Virtual communities, of course, like any social phenomenon has a number of positive features: quick search of associates, communication with friends, relatives, other people, between groups, which are at a distance; the possibility of self-expression, creativity; reading the news, commenting; discussion of questions and issues that may ignore traditional media; assistance in the organization of professional activities, promotion and advertising of its online advertising; education and obtaining the necessary information about class schedules, learning objectives, etc.; the ability to quickly assemble the necessary tools or materials for social help (the sick, the poor, affected people). Discussion in the network of urgent social problems or extraordinary events, makes the more traditional media to listen to them, to broadcast these messages on.

However, the stay of users in virtual communities has a negative side: rapid habituation to unlimited stay in the network, inappropriate use of time, vision loss, jet lag in the body due to lack of sleep, disorder of the nervous system; social networks can be a source of fraud use of personal data. In some networks missing the deletion of the generated page (you can only close it from the other) communication in virtual networks do not replace human interaction and real emotions and feelings; virtual social networks are becoming a marketing tool.

The most obvious threat to the human security of the individual virtual communities are in light of the propaganda of extremist ideas. Manifestations of extremist behavior is observed among representatives of many virtual communities, such as among football fans and anti-globalists, among believers and representatives of musical trends. In General, the threat of extremism occurs in any situation when people with positions of some important signs to divide into “us” and “them,” and thus the actions of “others” create the impression of danger to “their”.

Considering the growth of extremism in virtual communities, R. Finch and K. Flowers (experts on terrorism of police Greensboro, USA) noted the emergence of a new effect in the effect of self-radicalization. Self-radicalization is the new “norm” among the extremists discuss and plan acts of violence on social media forums. This effect manifests itself in an active the throw-in network of information about

upcoming crimes. As evidence to prove their thoughts, they give you a few examples of what happened, or prevented extremist attacks, which were accompanied by a massive proliferation of information on the Internet about the planned crime. For example, the infamous Breivik carefully planned and carried out the mass murder in Oslo in July 2011, a few hours before the crime was committed a mass mailing online document with preliminary description of their actions (Finch & Flowers, 2013).

The author shares the point of view of V. Wriston (Wriston, 1999) believe that virtual communities facilitate an Association of persons, who set themselves the task of seizure of power. This real threat has demonstrated the activity, for example, the “new” terrorist organizations that use virtual space as a place of communication, development and discussion of criminal plans. Such communication is much safer than “physical” meetings as may be conducted from different parts of the world, making it impossible for the action “cheat” members of terrorist organizations at the time of their collection. Such experience could be used by other groups who have a direct task of the seizure of power.

St. Ressler believes that the danger of virtual communities due to a focus on value network structure and not on the characteristics of the individual. The theory argues that the structure of the network and relationships and ties with other users in the network are more important (Ressler, 2006). The network structure is a modern organizational structure, whose power may be built on the idea of disintermediation. Disintermediation – removal of the intermediary role in the process or supply chain, or the notorious “removing the middleman”. Modern virtual communities are built on this idea of disintermediation, as people can directly connect with each other, especially with the achievements of modern telecommunications and the Internet. Force freely structured networks is that they can move quickly and be adaptive because they do not have to go through layers of a hierarchical chain. Disintermediation is important for terrorist networks as they cut out layers of bureaucracy; individuals can join a network through weak ties and plan attacks through loose connections.

A great interest point of view, human security is “virtual shadow community” – users of social networks, which are not elements of virtual community (does not participate in the functioning process of virtual community) but interested in his ideology. In accordance with the penetration and filling capability, “virtual shadow community” can be a active resource mobilization, the study of which is very difficult – if the user does not want, no one will ever know what purpose he has visited a page or other virtual community. And goals can be diametrically opposed: curiosity, the desire to maintain or, on the contrary, the desire to find the negative component and subsequently to counteract this virtual community.

Also virtual communities can implicitly undermine some state bases. Now there are so-called “virtual States” that have nearly all attributes of statehood (coat



of arms, flag, government, laws, etc.), with the exception of the territory. But if we assume that citizens of any of these States will be quite a lot, they can, if desired, together to buy, for example, any island, thus creating a “traditional” state. Or to buy land on Mars, because who said that state’s territory should be only on Earth? And imagine that such virtual States become more and more, and the citizens of these States to abandon their real citizenship in favor of a virtual one.

Flashmobbing as a modern sociocultural phenomenon can also carry a threat to the human security. After all, what is a flashmob? It is, in fact, when a lot of strangers, at least in real life, people respond to a call to arrive somewhere and do something. It is important to note that this is only possible within a virtual culture, as for people, far from it, this behavior will likely seem unacceptable. For people who share the values of the virtual culture, it is quite normal. Flashmobbing, as a movement, the immediate threat, of course, is not, because according to the rules of his organization, he should not pursue political goals and to create threats to public safety. But dangerous the technology is similar to the organization of many people at one time, in one place, and with whom General purpose. The application of this technology proved itself during the “Arab spring” in Maghreb countries. Flashmobbing is, in our opinion, very effective technologies of organization of public disorder in real space through the use of virtual and operation of virtual values of the culture.

## CONCLUSION

The rapid development of information technology forms a special type of thinking, the so-called “clip thinking”, which is also called the fragmentary, kaleidoscopic, mosaic, pixel, collage, etc. Scientists have warned about the danger of this type of thinking both for the individual and for the future of the community. Virtual space for the modern man presents “refuge” from life’s reality, a springboard to the realization of its desires, and thus a stimulant to the simulation, the substitution of reality a pseudo reality.

The over-saturation of the consciousness of modern man with diverse information reduces the ability to self-reflection, resulting in increased focus on the perception of new information, and not its comprehension and appropriation. There is a risk to be with the help of information communication technologies in alienated from the reality of the information field with artificial quasi-real objects, forming a kind of virtual reality. The development of virtual communities and virtual culture could represent a significant potential threat to the human security and government in General, moreover, the author is confident that in the near future there will be other technologies of people in both virtual and real space, which, like flashmobbing, based on the values and norms of behavior based on virtual culture.

In this regard, it is important that the state began to take direct part in the life of virtual communities, not brushed aside as something frivolous. It is clear that

direct state regulation of the activities of virtual communities is unacceptable, and it is impossible. However, the state can act as a partner in creation and provision of functioning of these communities. Prospective analysis of potential state control and management of virtual communities is the goal of our further research.

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