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## CONCEPTUALIZATION OF VIRTUAL REALITY IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY: INTRODUCTION TO WORLD-VIRTUAL ANALYSIS

**Abstract:** The article considers the interpretation of the concept of «virtuality» in the context of the search for common ground between philosophy and the expanding field of virtual reality research.

Based on the thesis of one of the most popular among modern people, David Chalmers, who, in turn, defined virtuality as «Reality +», that is, as «real» reality or real realities, the article sets the task of conceptualizing this concept based on a brief overview of the history of philosophy. The development of modern information technologies makes the phenomenon of «virtual reality» attributable to almost any representative technology.

Within the framework of modern culture, the term «virtual reality», used by Geron Lanier in the 80s. 20th century to identify technologies that effectively mimic being in an artificially created environment, which has become associated precisely with computers that give rise to the idea of cyberculture. Thus, despite the wide interdisciplinary context, the study of the ultimate reality as a sign system, to which the relativizing conclusion is applicable, is relevant. From this point of view, appearance in this work changes as a specific form or aspect of the activity of consciousness, felt by emotions through human senses. of the occurrence of this disease in humans, the course and outcome of the situation are no longer often met with restrictions, and human control over the technological situation is required. The measure of reality in the real world can be defined specifically for ontological concepts. The article shows what follows from the understanding that the most fundamental ontological categories, for example, reality, levels and forms of being, etc. socially constructed, within the framework of the modern information society, the transition from material to representational technologies has important consequences for our ontological representations.

**Key words:** virtual reality, ontology, philosophy of consciousness, information technology, being, representation.

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### Виртуал реалдықтың философия тарихындағы концептуализациясы: виртуал талдау әлеміне кіріспе

**Аннотация:** Мақалада философия мен виртуал реалдықты зерттеу саласының ұлғаюдағы алаңы арасындағы түйісу нүктелерін іздеу контексіндегі «виртуалдық» ұғымын интерпретациялау қарастырылады. Сондай-ақ ізденісте виртуалдықты «Reality +», яғни «нақты» реалдық немесе нақты реалдықтар деп анықтаған виртуал реалдықтың заманауи танымал зерттеушілерінің бірі Дэвид Чалмерстің тезисін сүйене отырып, философия тарихына қысқаша шолу негізінде аталған ұғымды концептуалдау міндеті де қойылған. Заманауи ақпараттық технологиялардың дамуы «виртуал реалдық» феноменін кез келген репрезентатив технологияның атрибутиві етеді. Заманауи мәдениет аясында ХХ ғасырдың 80-жылдары Жерон Ланьенің жасанды түрде жасалған ортада болуды сапалы түрде имитациялайтын технологияларды белгілеу үшін қолданған «virtual reality» термині кибермәдениет идеясын тудырып, компьютерлермен байланыстырыла бастады. Пәнаралық контекстің осындай молдығына қарамастан виртуал реалдықты релятивтендірілген сенімділік ұғымы қолданылатын белгі жүйесі ретінде зерттеу өзектілігі шүбә туғызбайды. Осы тұрғыдан бұл зерттеуде виртуалдық адамның нақты мақсаттарымен анықталатын сана қызметінің специфик формасы не аспектісі тұрпатында қарастырылады. Адамның осы іс-әрекетін өрістету нәтижесінде ситуацияның барысы мен аяғы ендігі жерде табиғи шектеулермен анықталмайтындығы, технологиялық ситуация адамның бақылауын жүзеге асыруды талап ететіндігі айқындалады. Осы контексте виртуал әлемдердің реалдығының өлшемін онтологиялық концепцияларға жүгіну арқылы анықтауға болады. Мақалада реалдық, болмыстың деңгейлері

мен формалары және т.б. секілді іргелі онтологиялық категориялардың әлеуметтік тұрғыдан құрылымданатындығын ұғыну негізінде қазіргі ақпараттық қоғам аясында материалдықтан репрезентатив технологияларға көшудің онтологиялық идеяларымыз үшін маңызды салдары бар екені көрсетілген.

**Түйін сөздер:** виртуал реалдық, онтология, сана философиясы, ақпараттық технологиялар, болмыс, түсінік.

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### **Концептуализация виртуальной реальности в истории философии: введение к мир-виртуальному анализу**

В статье рассматривается интерпретация понятия «виртуальность» в контексте поиска соприкосновения между философией и расширяющейся областью исследований виртуальной реальности. Отталкиваясь от тезиса, одного из наиболее известных современных исследователей виртуальной реальности David Chalmers, определившего виртуальность как «Reality+», то есть как «настоящую» реальность или настоящие реальности в статье ставится задача концептуализации данного понятия на основе краткого обзора истории философии. Развитие современных информационных технологий делает феномен «виртуальной реальности» атрибутивным по отношению практически любым репрезентативным технологиям. В рамках современной культуры термин «virtual reality», использованный Жерон Ланье в 80-х гг. XX в. для обозначения технологий настолько качественно имитирующих пребывание в искусственно созданной среде, что стал ассоциироваться именно с компьютерами, породив идею киберкультуры. Таким образом, несмотря на широкий междисциплинарный контекст актуально исследование виртуальной реальности как знаковой системы, к которой применимо релятивизирующееся понятие достоверности. С этой точки зрения виртуальность в данной работе рассматривается как специфическая форма или аспект деятельности сознания, определяемая конкретными человеческими целями. Вследствие развертывания этой человеческой деятельности ход и исход ситуации уже не определяются естественными ограничениями, а требуют реализации человеческого контроля над технологической ситуацией. Мера реальности виртуальных миров в данном контексте может быть определена посредством обращения к онтологическим концепциям. В статье показано, что исходя из понимания, что наиболее фундаментальные онтологические категории, например, реальность, уровни и формы бытия и т.п. социально конструируются, в рамках современного информационного общества переход от материальных к репрезентативным технологиям имеет важные последствия для наших онтологических представлений.

**Ключевые слова:** виртуальная реальность, онтология, философия сознания, информационные технологии, бытие, представление.

## **Introduction**

The relevance that the problems of virtual reality are currently acquiring is due to the technological development of representative technologies, as much as to the question of criteria and attributes of the real world. At the same time, the interdisciplinary nature of the formulation of the problem of virtuality, in our opinion, directly actualizes the appeal to the philosophical understanding of this phenomenon.

The search for definitions, criteria, boundaries of virtuality is directly related to the classical areas of philosophical research in the field of ontology, epistemology and philosophy of mind. First of all, it is possible to mention the original definition of virtuality as possibility and potentiality. Virtuality can also be comprehended in the context of the new

European dilemma about the certainty of existence, ascertained through perception. That is, when relying on representation and perception («to be means to be perceived»), the differences between virtual and objective reality are leveled.

The next important approach for analysis is related to understanding the levels of being, which, being equally «real», have a hierarchical structure. And the true being in this model of the world most often has not a purely material world, but the ideal, perfect, intelligible ones preceding it – that is, in fact, «virtual» worlds. In addition, it is possible to note that the study of virtual reality as a complex and multi-level text, as a sign system, also allows us to fix different ontological layers.

Thus, virtual reality is analyzed as a special space and time in which ontological and epistemo-

logical problems acquire a special perception. In addition, it is possible to note that the modern philosophy of virtuality is firmly connected with linguistic and sign problems. Research in these areas (ontology, epistemology, philosophy of language and consciousness, etc.) provides us with a basis in order to propose a conceptualization of virtuality that combines the formulation of fundamental questions in order to take into account new developments in human technologies.

This article sets the task of interpreting the concept of «virtual reality» based on a brief review of the history of philosophy. Considering that the development of modern information technologies makes the phenomenon of «virtual reality» attributable to almost any representative technology, it is possible to note a wide interdisciplinary context of the problem. From this point of view, virtuality in this work is considered as a specific form or aspect of the activity of consciousness, determined by specific human goals, and the measure of the reality of virtual worlds in this context can be determined by referring specifically to ontological concepts.

### Materials and methods

The philosophical analysis of virtuality, in contrast to its understanding as an environment artificially created by means of computer technology, involves not only an interdisciplinary vision, but also a different interpretation of virtuality in the context of purely philosophical approaches.

The phenomenon of «virtuality» in modern philosophy is most often considered in the aspect of ontology and philosophy of consciousness. The grounds for this analysis can be found even in ancient philosophy, within which the main traditions of studying the reliability of reality and our ideas about it and, accordingly, their criticism were formed.

First of all, the reading of virtuality is relevant in the context of the search for criteria for real and possible existence. It is the philosophical analysis of virtuality, according to, for example, M. Grimshaw has the opportunity to present «decisive» arguments in this matter. Virtuality, in fact, cannot be interpreted otherwise than as a representation of a part of reality, explained through the concept of «presence» (Grimshaw, 2014). According to L. Ropolyi, the starting points for constructing various interpretations of virtuality are presence, mundane and multiplicity (Ropolyi, 2015).

Focusing on the interdisciplinarity of the problem, Thomas K. Metzinger proposes a number of

new research goals, presenting concrete examples of problems characterized by high theoretical significance and relevance. Among these examples are the philosophical tradition of analyzing the formation of the content of consciousness; epistemological interpretation of probability as a degree of confidence in the truth of a judgment (the so-called «Bayesian» probability); the problem of managing the reality/virtuality continuum, the fusion of virtual reality and artificial intelligence; new social constructs based on virtual reality, religious belief and practical phenomenology (Metzinger, 2016).

On the basis of philosophical analysis, it is also possible to propose an approach to virtuality that can take into account various elements of its understanding, both in terms of the world-creating ability of language and consciousness, and from the standpoint of analyzing computer systems as new representation technologies.

### Literature review

On the basis of semantic analysis in modern literature, conclusions are often drawn about meaningful changes in the meanings and meanings of natural language, illustrating the penetration of virtual discourse objects into all spheres of public life (Lesley, 2015).

The very concept of «virtual reality» was initially firmly associated with computer technology and was considered in a narrow sense as an artificial environment created with the help of computer tools and imitating reality. The richest, most reliable and closest to the ideal, virtual experience remains the one that we currently know – this is our own, ordinary, biologically developed form of our own waking consciousness. And virtual reality is the best technological metaphor for conscious experience we currently have.

The study of virtuality is relevant in the context of the philosophical tradition of analyzing the formation of the content of consciousness, which makes it possible to develop new social constructs based on virtual reality, religious faith and practical phenomenology (Metzinger, 2016).

Virtuality as an ontology realized with the help of calculations is interpreted in the works of M. Heim, who emphasizes the symbolic, symbolic nature of virtuality manifestations (Heim, 2011). Thus, the constitution of virtual reality in the human mind requires attention to the means of its implementation.

Analysis of virtual space and its individual phenomena (such as the «phenomenon of iconic pres-

ence», «symbolism of identification», «ontological insufficiency effect») (Shaev, 2013: 860) can be carried out from the standpoint of semiotics and the philosophy of the sign. The identification of such phenomena can help develop an approach to the analysis of ontological problems, problems of virtual space and time, problems of cyberspace. Thus, the constitution of virtual reality in the human mind requires attention to the means of its implementation. Thus, virtual reality can be interpreted as a certain space for the manifestation of various semiotic effects.

G. Fauconnier, who formulated the idea of mental spaces defined by language, comes closest to the idea of virtual spaces created by language. They are defined by the author as models of real or hypothetical situations «in the form in which they are conceptualized by a person». Among mental spaces, G. Fauconnier names situations modeled in the mind, ideas about the past and future, any fictional situations, and the reality that is usually called directly given (Fauconnier, 2002).

It should be noted that in a number of modern studies, the interpretation of «mental spaces» as a third space is updated (Kosari, Amoori, 2018). The basis of this interpretation should, in turn, be the understanding of virtual space as a relatively independent space. So, Kosari M., Amoori A. in the article «Thirdspace: The Trialectics of the Real, Virtual and Blended Spaces» / «Third Space: Trialectics of the Real, Virtual and Mixed Spaces» set the task of redefining the concept of the third space and establishing tripartite relationships between the concepts of real space, virtual space and individual mental space. This tripartite relationship requires a new understanding of the relationship between the body and virtual space and the actual conceptualization of the processes of «migration» of modern man from the real to the virtual environment.

## Results and discussion

The fact that digitalization has now reached such a level of distribution that it has formed not only new systemic properties of the social reality of the information society and such problems as information security, digital ethics and digital ethics, and much more, but also, in fact, gave rise to a kind of «new» reality – virtual. One of the most famous modern virtual reality researchers David Chalmers calls it «Reality+». The central thesis of his work is that virtual reality (VR) is real reality or real realities. Virtual worlds don't have to be secondary re-

alities. The author proposes to break this thesis into three parts:

- Virtual worlds are not illusions or fictions, or at least they shouldn't be. What happens in virtual reality really happens. The objects we interact with in virtual reality are real.

- Life in virtual worlds can in principle be just as good as life outside of virtual worlds. You can lead a full life in the virtual world.

- The world we live in can be virtual. «I'm not saying it is. But this is a possibility that we cannot rule out», notes D. Chalmers (Chalmers, 2022).

Let us now turn directly to the concept of the virtual. This concept is very vague, and is interpreted differently in interdisciplinary discourses. «In recent years, the term with roots «Virt» has appeared in almost all interdisciplinary discourses» (Taratuta, 2007). Let us first define the essence of the concept of «virtual», in its modern and historical meaning. The very concept of virtuality is – potentially, the possible existence of a subject, object, idea and state that does not exist in reality or whose existence is only an assumption. In philosophy, the meaning of this term is interpreted primarily in an ontological context. Actually, even in humanitarian discourse, it is very multifaceted and can take on different meanings. At the same time, it is important to note that religious philosophers have also used it to define their theological arguments, but more on that below. The usual interpretation of it as a product of computer technology is neither basic nor the only one.

The most precise example of the described concept, we find in physics. The application of our word refers to the field of quantum electrodynamics, where it is used to describe a photon acting as a carrier of electromagnetic interaction between two electrons. The photon participating in the interaction exists for a very short period of time and is not fixed by means of observation as a separate particle. It is called virtual, in contrast to the free photon registered by the device.

The word itself has ancient historical roots. Referring to the Latin or ancient concept, it should be noted that the word «Virtus» has the basic meaning of «possible». The concept is used to describe the states of the soul of a warrior, such as masculinity, courage, valor, and this also includes the idea of the potentially best qualities of a person. In other words, this is «virtue». «One more meaning from the Latin-Russian and Russian-Latin Lexicon of Ivan Kroneberg should be added to this list: reality. Of particular interest for the subject of this work is the ancient interpretation of the word virtual: having the inher-

ent power to produce certain effects, translated as the possession of innate energy for the production of certain effects» (Schereverov, 2000: 56-58). It is very interesting that even in a linguistic context there is no unambiguous definition of virtuality.

Some learned linguists and philologists believe that the Greek «aretg (ἀρετή) – glorified» and «virts» have similarities with the concept of virtue. The word Virts and ἀρετή are virtue. As J. Huizinga notes on this occasion, “Every thing has its own (ἀρετή) inherent in its nature. A horse, a dog, an eye, an ax, a bow has its own «virtue» ... The virtue of a person of noble rank is a number of such properties that make him capable of fighting and commanding. Of course, this also includes generosity, wisdom and justice. It is quite natural that among many peoples the word for virtue arises from such a concept as masculinity, like the Latin «virtus» (Huizinga, 2014). This fragment tells us that an existing object or entity, while remaining real and identical to itself, may contain virtual characteristics. It can be explained if we take the following example as a basis – a person is created in the likeness of God, but is not him, does not have the full range of possibilities, but at the same time has an inner essence striving for good, for God himself is good. This entity in us is completely virtual. So, if a person kills another or violates some religious commandment, he will be a violator, a sinner, but nevertheless he is still the bearer of this virtual virtue, as a kind of attributive property. Even a thing represented in the mind, we have already endowed with some possibility, virtuality, some ideal, but this does not mean that it should exist in reality.

From the ancient world, the sayings of Cicero have come down to us, who uses the term «virtus» not only when he describes the virtue inherent in modest, restrained statesmen. The highest virtue, for him, is the spirit of a true Roman warrior, for whom there is nothing higher than military prowess: «Remember this firmly: the power of the spirit and some of its extraordinary greatness, which manifests itself with special force in contempt for suffering, is the most beautiful of all that exists in the world, and all the more beautiful if it does not seek public approval and enjoys itself» (Cicero, 1993).

In addition, it can be noted that this concept was used by Homer in his works to describe the characters. Here I immediately want to emphasize that the heroes themselves are fictional, as well as the mythologized world. War and virtue in the days of ancient culture were understood inseparably, even the very meaning of death was associated with glory

and heroism. The people themselves, who turned someone into a hero, endowed him with these qualities, and if we recall the Greek myths, they wear precisely a virtual form. Speaking of myths, the theater should also be mentioned. Imitation of animals in primitive times, totemism, shamanism, magic and rituals, all this is a kind of theater. Everything on the theater stage is virtual, and this virtual is not a borrowing, but a separate reality. One of the playwrights of the 20th century, Antonin Artaud, noted: «The task of the theater is to create a special reality, an unusual course of life. The theater should give us this ephemeral but authentic world that comes into contact with the real» (Arto, 2000: 49). The connection with virtuality here begins when a person begins to represent, and therefore endow the object with this virtual, which makes a person consider himself a god. Also, «... in 1938, Antonin Artaud in his book *The Theater and Its Double* described the theater as *la réalite virtualalle* (in the English translation «virtual reality»), that is, «on the one hand, as a world where characters, objects and images move, and on the other hand, a purely conjectural and illusory world». In the Russian edition of the book, *la réalite virtuelle* is translated as «potential reality», which indicates the deeper historical roots of the category «virtuality», referring to the concepts of Aristotle’s act and potency» (Solovov, 2010: 73).

In addition, it should be noted that the term Virts is gradually acquiring its closest to the modern meaning – as perceived, presented as real, imaginary. From the heritage of the ancient world, we should recall one of the main philosophers of that time, namely Plato with his images of shadows. In *The Myth of the Cave*, shadows dance on the wall and seem real to people, in fact they are just one of the possible forms of reflection of reality, that is, in other words, a virtual «version», a distorted image of reality or opinion. And his very concept that our world is a projection of the world of ideas, in other words, the world of the divine, is a logical chain leading us to the realization that the world is a kind of virtual reality. The allegory of the cave raises deep questions about values (Chalmers, 2022). Which is better, living in a cave or living outside a cave? Plato’s answer is clear: life outside the cave is much better. We can ask the same question about virtual worlds. This brings us to the more fundamental questions of traditional philosophy: the source and possibility of having any knowledge about the world, the nature of reality and also objectivity or illusory nature, and finally, the difference between good and evil. The two worlds of Plato (the imper-

fect sensory world and the perfect world of ideal Forms) represent the spheres of virtuality and reality in a very clear form. The sensual world is the realm of change and impermanence. It is a complete world, but it has a lower value than the true, fully real world of forms. The world-forming Platonic virtuality is an ephemeral and random reality, which is an imperfect copy of the true reality. In this world, knowledge has strict limits. If we are limited in the use of our experience, we can only form different opinions about the realm of virtuality, and here it is impossible to reach absolute truth.

The next person to touch upon the essence of virtuality is Aristotle, with him it takes the form of the concepts of act and potency, which can be conveyed as reality and possibility. "For the first time, the idea of the virtual is found in the works of Aristotle (but the concept itself is absent), for its disclosure the philosopher uses the categories «dynamis», «energeia» and «entelechy». The term «dynamis» denoted the possibility, potency, ability; «energeia» – energy, activity, implementation; «entelechy» – reality, fulfillment» (Nemykina, 2011: 54). These judgments can be correlated with the concept of form and matter. Another aspect is the concept of entelechia as completeness. However, according to Aristotelian thinking, both actual and potential being are inherent in every being, which means that reality and virtuality are distributed among the beings of our world, and are not concentrated in completely separate worlds. In the early Christian tradition, the Neoplatonic concept of act and potency was used by Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine in the doctrine of the Trinity and the Logos (as God the Word), containing in eternity the potency of things. The Christian tradition was also influenced by the Greek translation of the Bible (Septuagint), in which the «powers of God» are conveyed by the word δύνανμις (potency).

«During the heyday of scholasticism, the term virtual «Virts» was used as a kind of solution to the theologian's concern about causality, being of different levels. The most important for understanding virtuality in medieval scholasticism is the work of Thomas Aquinas «The Sum of Theology». Thus, Thomas Aquinas uses the categories of virtuality to address the issue of the existence of other forms in a person besides the thinking soul, believing that there is no other substantial form in a person. In his understanding, only the thinking soul contains the virtual basis of the feeling soul and the nourishing soul. Virtuality was also understood as potentiality. Not to be confused with the logical concept of po-

tency. It is here that a vast layer of understanding of how virtuality interacts with religion appears (Heim, 1991).

In the Middle Ages, the concept of «Virts» takes on a more concrete shape. «In medieval Latin, we meet a concept already significantly transformed in the Christian spirit, but quite recognizable, this is –

- 1) Supernatural being – an angel
- 2) Deeds that demonstrate «power» according to the medieval Christian concept, miracles
- 3) Deeds of boldness, the power of movement
- 4) Form, «in veritate», potentiality
- 5) Warrior, army
- 6) Medication (Taratuta, 2007: 29).

Another medieval author, namely Nicholas of Cusa, uses the concept of Virtual for specific theology, although Thomas Aquinas leaves for him the Greek form Virt. Nicolaus Cusanus, as Elena Taratuta notes, perceives this concept as a potentiality, but this is only part of the lexico-semantic definition used by him. «... At the lowest, empirical level, he singles out facts or phenomena of an empirical nature, as an example of which he considers a tree. The current state of a beautiful tree with a lush crown is described by Nicolaus Cusanus as being contemplated by «corporeal eyes». If we try, following Nicolaus Cusanus, to see what the beginning of this empirically beautiful tree is, we get to the next level of the world order. Here, every seed of a tree contains virtually a concrete-empirical tree, as well as all possible empirical trees» (Taratuta, 2007: 33). Applying the concept to theology, its conclusion goes further to God. God is compared with a seed and a tree, but God is an absolute, therefore, an analogy between a seed and a tree is impossible, even if we call God the first seed of all seeds, he loses the essence of his all-encompassing content (virtuality). God is virtuality, and further Nicolaus Cusanus says, «the tree in you, my god, is you yourself, my god, and in you is the truth and prototype of his being; likewise the seed of the tree in you is the truth and the type of itself, that is, the type of both the tree and the seed. You are truth and type» (Nicolaus Cusanus, 1980: 47).

It is also important that it is thanks to scholasticism that the concept of the virtual acquires a familiar meaning to us, a different reality. The very concept of virts is transferred from the meaning of the spirit of a warrior to holiness. Going deeper, heaven and hell were virtualized, but they were perceived as real as the church itself. It is the postulation of the creation of some kind of virtual reality that is securely entrenched not only in Christianity, but

also in Islam and Judaism. The separate existence of two realities, lower and higher, became the rationale for the existence of absolute perfection, and also gave rise to a mystical understanding of the ways to achieve it. The further image of the saint acquires, like a warrior, certain qualities that are transformed into ethical values or virtues. As already mentioned, they can be virtual, in only some aspect intersecting with the physical definition of existence, accessible to understanding, but not available for confirmation.

«Thus, according to Christian thought, only God has, in the strict sense, true existence, while the entire created world has existence as a virtuality – by «participation» in the divine life-giving energies. A curious variant of the Christian interpretation may be the perception of the area of mystical experiences as an independent reality located between the «earthly» and «divine» worlds (Hamidulin, 2017: 165).

In its first meaning, Greek and Latin, the term «virtual» remains only in French. But, over time, his inner essence was also modified. In English, the concept of virtuality has acquired precisely the meanings of holiness and purity (Sosnina, 2017). Answering the question when the term comes to the world of natural sciences, it can be noted that although the concept of virtuality in terms of terminology has already been used by various scientists and philosophers, at the moment it enters the terminology of the natural sciences, it is subject to contamination, since physics and technical sciences do not tolerate vague concepts. It should be noted that there are still no precise restrictions on the use of this term. Thus, the concept of virtual reality did not arise, but only changed significantly under the influence of computer technology. The phrase «virtual reality», which is used to denote a specific space-time continuum generated by the possibilities of computer technology, in relation to modern information culture can be interpreted as coming from an «antinomic game of opposite meanings: medieval Latin *virtualis* – possible; English *virtual* – real, actual, non-nominal» (Bychkov, 2006).

Here we can ask the question: «What is religion and virtuality, in their mutual connection?». If we talk specifically about religion, then here we have an extensive layer of understanding of how virtuality interacts with the world and religion. In the context under study, it would be more rational to understand virtuality as a represented or desired image, idea or meaning, as well as a feeling or some kind of spiritual phenomenon that can really exist or not exist, like the heroism of a warrior.

As an example, God is fictional, that is, virtual, but the qualities that a person endowed him with, kindness, honesty, omnipotence, etc. are real and belong to the person, with the essence that the person is trying to reach them. Further, we find a relationship between the concept of virtuality as an idea and virtual reality, which, like a theater, borrows the forms of reality, endowing them with new higher virtual qualities, hence the idea of the emergence of heaven and hell in their theological and mystical interpretation. Arguing in this spirit, we certainly come to the conclusion that religion is a game with great pathos, and the Catholic Church is like natives dancing in front of the totem and bringing him gifts, where they both will be indistinguishable from each other. «Just as formally there is no difference between the game and the sacred action, that is, the sacred action takes place in the same forms as the game, so the consecrated place is formally indistinguishable from the playing space» (Huizinga, 2014: 19)

Speaking of virtuality, we can refer to the comparison of late monotheistic religions with primitive beliefs. Unlike primitive religions, where ritual dance, play, sacrifice were an image of a fantasy about the world, an attempt to explain the world or prohibit something (taboo) and are directed accordingly to external needs, in monotheism ritual actions are turned inward, to the spiritual component. Word games and imagination enhance people's aspirations, and in this sense, feelings, emotions, desires become virtual.

Another element is imagination. A person plunges into his own world and even tries to create it in reality. «As soon as a figurative expression appears in the description of a state or event in the words of the surrounding life, we embark on the path of personification. The personification of the incorporeal or lifeless is the soul of all myth-making and almost all poetry» (Huizinga, 2014). In this example, Huizinga Y. wants to say that at a certain time, words being virtual are overgrown with colorful metaphors, this is a favorite writer's move. The further cultural existence or development of any word or meaning occurs with the help of personification. According to J. Huizinga, «if the effect of a metaphor is to describe a state or event in terms of a moving life, then a direct path to personification opens». Poetry itself is a form of cultural development, which is based on the game and images of virtuality.

Let's move on to the concept of a simulacrum. As you know, a simulacrum is a copy of a copy (Baudrillard, 1994, 2001). It is necessary to indicate that, unlike simulation or simulacrum, virtual reality has

its own ontological status. There are two definitions of modern religion in virtual reality in the scientific community. The first is the modernization of religion, the second is the understanding of virtual religion as a new phenomenon. A simulacrum, in this context, can be considered as a kind of reflection of the world, its projection into another world, naturally into a virtual one. It is possible to demonstrate as an example the sects of modern times, like ufological and pseudoscientific ones, to the ideas of which not only the concept of virtuality is applicable, but also a simulacrum (simulation of a simulation).

It is important to emphasize that the essence of religions is full of simulacra, as well as games and books «... creativity is either divine, creating natural objects and their reflections, or human, creating artificial objects and their reflections (man, creating objects, simulates the activity of God)» (Emelin, 1999). This idea was expressed by Plato, he also distinguished two types of imitation. The first – creating images similar to objects, and the second – creating ghosts. For them in material reality there are no corresponding samples. As an example, Plato cites a sophist who creates by imitation, and he creates ghosts not with the help of any means or masks, but with a voice, body, and, therefore, the simulacrum acquires corporality. If we turn again to the example about the virtual essence of God, which is reflected in people, then its achievement can be defined as a simulacrum, since it is not a real property that is acquired, but only its exaggerated ideal. The problem of the soul and animation is also connected with the simulacrum and virtuality. Deleuze J., in opposition to Plato, says that the very concept of authenticity, correspondence, loses its meaning in a huge number of simulacra, where any authenticity is simply lost. A simulacrum is a phantasmagoric image, devoid of similarity; in contrast, the iconic image, which places the likeness outside, but lives in difference (Deleuze, 1998: 93). That is, according to Deleuze, «a simulacrum is only an external effect, an illusion; in fact, its true essence is in divergence, becoming, eternal change and difference in itself» (Emelin, 1999).

The concepts of J. Deleuze and Baudrillard show that a simulacrum is a body, with only one addition – this is a virtual body. The simulacrum is as real as anybody that is compared with reality is real, only it is «virtually» real. We can say that the simulacrum begins where the similitude ends. This is where virtual reality begins, which is nothing but the space of simulacra. But, nevertheless, it is real, we can create virtual care and initiate it, as

if we are playing a game, just like Christians take flesh for bread and wine for blood. We come to the conclusion that where the chain of similarity begins to break, any sign becomes a simulacrum, a copy of a copy, devoid of similarity and living with the difference that Deleuze wrote about. And then the simulacrum itself, acquires a virtual existence, in relation to our reality – still primary, constitutive and generative.

### Conclusion

Summing up, it can be noted that such a situation is similar to the comprehension of probability in the 17th century (Hacking, 2006), as a result of which the concept of certainty is consistently revised and relativized. Now the turn of the concept of reality has come. Currently, in the description of the world created by representative technologies, there are two fundamentally different consistent worldviews, with different ontologies. In the «classical» Aristotelian world view, the world is inhabited by (absolute) actual and (absolute) potential beings. This view is indeed effective for understanding our world, populated by macro and microscopic bodies, but not very useful for understanding the mental or cultural components of human reality. These difficulties have become much more significant due to the dominant role of representational technologies in the construction of social being.

However, it is with the expansion of the concept of virtuality that the possibility of a new interpretation of reality is formed: all beings in our world can be considered as virtual beings, i.e., real beings with a different, finite measure of reality. However, one can accept a certain mixture of these two worldviews and speak of a world inhabited by actual, potential and virtual beings, or of three separated worlds of these beings.

Thus, it is possible to note that based on the understanding that the most fundamental ontological categories, for example, reality, levels and forms of being, etc. socially constructed. The fundamental postmodern ideal is the so-called decentralized ontology, in which the boundary between reality and virtuality is destroyed. In the world of hyperreality, the line between the real and the unreal is blurred. In this world, images and signs, simulations and simulacra have no referents, they can only be considered as real beings. In this situation (approaching the last stage of the cultural crisis), the image masks the absence of reality and replaces it. It makes no sense to



talk about the external and internal world, because the construction itself is a definite, central part of intellectual activity. The meaning and role of place, body, distinguishable material and intellectual entities are collapsing, they are replaced by their interconnections and networks.

Postmodern reality/virtuality is created, perhaps, by the imagination, which is a specific and concrete

mixture of perception, will and reason and has a pronounced individualistic character. The postmodern world is open to include everything and exclude nothing.

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