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EXISTENTIAL RISKS AND PROBLEM OF ESCAPISM UNDER CONDITIONS OF E-CULTURE

KEYWORDS: digital (online) culture, e-culture, escapism, escape from reality, hikikomori, “death group”, risks, values

ABSTRACT: The article is devoted to the study of new existential problems of man in the conditions of electronic culture, forms of alienation from reality, virtual escapism, “being to death” in network communities of suicidal orientation, new forms of transcendence in electronic culture. The human existence under the e-culture conditions causes a shift in its main spheres (communication, creativity, education, leisure, art), forms a range of new problems both in value, ethical and ontological-existential relations. On the basis of the existential-axiological approach, it is shown how the values of the reality and game, life and death shift in the minds of young people in network communities and “death groups” in search of their own individuality and freedom from the society. It is identified that the electronic environment allows to transform communication, change the character of sociality, existence and transcendence of a person in the virtual being. The study results show that today the electronic environment has become not only a stronghold of modern communication and unprecedented integration of the society, but also a ground for deliberate and unconscious escape from the social reality, new manifestations of escapism and giving up the desire to live in the reality.

1. Introduction

Starting from the last quarter of the 20th century, the world has faced boosted growth of technological and social changes caused by adoption of digital systems in economy and everyday life; this growth has influenced the nature of the modern culture that has become information-focused and global, according to researchers' modern definitions. The core of these changes seems to be connected with qualitative transformation of the society and a person that actively shift from real to information, virtual, distance and network interaction. Most modern developed countries have already faced certain consequences of virtualization of culture and interpersonal communication; along with the improvement of living standards and significant breakthrough in medicine, electronics and robotics they have brought new deviations, addictions related to the break in relations between a person and the world and to the focus on the virtual sphere; thus, person's aloofness has intensified.

To a large extent, European countries, USA, Japan, China and Russia have already faced phenomena of “escape from the reality”, increasing number of teen and youth suicides, bursts of uncontrolled aggression, escape to virtual worlds, intensifying asociality in youth, higher dependence from gadgets and online-presence in the virtual reality, which is now qualified as one of the threats for the modern cultural and existential security. At the same time, the emergence of new threats is one of the results of formation of the information or e-culture, another process that is more significant and general. This type of culture is both a source of new opportunities and a factor for new risks many of which are determined by technological conditions.

Nowadays, the theory of digital culture (e-culture) is an interdisciplinary conception functioning in Philosophy, Cultural Studies, Sociology, Education, Psychology, Economics and of course in the field of Information Technologies. This research associated with several disciplinary fields, such as philosophical anthropology, philosophy of media and Digital Humanity.

Structure of article includes three main parts. The first part addresses the characteristics of electronic culture and its distinctive features. After that we describe the most dangerous virtual communities affecting the minds and behavior of young people, including pushing them toward suicide. And in conclusion we try to identify existential risks of e-culture. Some results of investigation of this paper were published partially in Russian languages.

2. Literature review and methodology approach

In the methodological aspect, two considerable groups of sources should be noted which affect this research, namely, the theories on the problems of the information age, e-culture and the research of Internet impact and cyber-threats to a person in the information environment.

Leading academic and collegiate centers in different countries of the world have been recently dealing in studying of the influence of informatization on different socio-cultural processes. Thus the issues of the development of electronic culture are the subject matter for the scientists in the University of Milan (Ronchi 2009); McLuhan Institute (Virtual Maastricht McLuhan Institute (VMMI), the Netherlands (Veltman 2004); studying ethical and anthropological issues of the information space are the subject matter for the researchers in the International Centre for Innovation in Education (ICIE) Karlsruhe, Germany (Capurro 2006); London School of Economics, department of Media and Communication (Great Britain) (Haddon 2004); Centre for Computing and Social Responsibility (De Montfort University, Great Britain) (Rogerson 1998); Center for the Study of the Information Society of the University of Haifa, Israel (Raban 2009); ethical, political and legal

aspects of informatization are the subject matter for R. Baarda/L. Rocci (2012), B. J. Kallenberg (2001), C. L. Chang (2011) and others.

Such humanities scholars as J. Baudrillard (1993), P. Virilio (1984), B. Heller (2012), M. Heim, (1993), B., Girard/S. Siochru (2003) and P. C. Rivoltella (2008) studied issues of the influence of e-culture (digital culture) on the world of human values, its existence, lifestyle and emerging risks. L. Floridi (2013) conducted a study on philosophy of information and ethical issues of using information technology. A. Duff (2008) considered ethical issues of Internet development and addressed the issues of copyright, digital inequality and violation of the right to private life. F. Schäfer (2009), E. Castronova (2005) and others studied existential issues and risks of the information society and cyber culture development. These problems were also raised in our earlier studies related to existential-ethical and anthropological aspects of the electronic and media culture development.

An important for our study was the work devoted to the study of virtual communities associated with the departure from reality, problem of escapism, loneliness in Internet space (Okorokova 2018).

Also relevant for our study were the work on the study of the features of communication in virtual communities, the role of gamification of content, issues related to existential problems. Also relevant for our study were the work on the study of the features of communication in virtual communities, the role of gamification of content, issues related to existential problems (Marshall 2012).

In recent years we have also analyzed the notion of electronic culture and given preliminary general characteristics of ethic and existential human problems in culture of such a kind.

The object of our study is a recently escalated issue of juvenile escapism and suicidal virtual communities, tragic for the modern society and typical of it. With the existential and axiological approach and the empiric data analysis (Internet communities and their websites) as the basis, we are going to find a solution for this issue to detect risk factors and groups and to characterize these complicated social entities in the electronic culture.

Transformation of values related to the information stage of the society development is also in focus of attention of the leading scientists studying psychological, cognitive, moral aspects of the value dynamics, pluralistic view of the values of modern person is being developed. This view is specific for a person lives actually in three parallel worlds: in the world of nature and physical objects, the world of his own consciousness and the world of virtual life (synthesis of the world of ideas and high technologies). The role and importance of the virtual world is developing so rapidly that people cannot imagine their life without the electronic space. The research aims at defining the most significant transformations in basic spheres of person's life which are caused by the influence of this new form of existence. Characteristics of these changes will allow to determine

the risks of the ultimate risk for a person and his value basis and thus for the development (or deformation) of culture.

For that purpose the following tasks should be solved: to specify the understanding of values as a polysemantic notion: to define the changes of the value priorities in cognitive, communicative, existential, interpersonal spheres. Multiplicity of the modern axiological picture will require application of the principle of antinomy in the analysis of values, this will help to avoid one-sided conclusions and will enable to forecast the alternative scenarios of development.

The methods of our research are determined by the existential approach to understanding of human values and risks of his/her being, application of axiological analysis of key anthropologic phenomena and processes in the society and theories of the information society (M. Castells) and e-culture (A. Ronchi).

3. Concept of E-culture in different discourses

The analysis of the specific character of e-culture should be started with the definition of this concept, as it is polysemantic and requires its content specification. E-culture or digital culture is first of all a new sphere of the human activity, associated with the creation of the electronic copies of spiritual and material objects as well as the creative work of the virtual objects of science, communication and art (Ronchi 2009). "Electronic" means the representation in a digital form. E-culture first was mentioned at the end of the 1990s.

Approaches to the understanding of e-culture as a set of phenomena created on the basis of information technologies are varied, as well as its denominations. One can find such notions as *cyber culture*, *online culture*, *digital culture* and *e-culture* that are adopted in certain countries or scientific discourses. It should be noted that the notion "e-culture" is used in European countries, while "online culture" is typical for USA and Canada. If addressing the meaning of the notions that are similar to the e-culture definition, one should mark out the most significant notions that passed the conceptualization stage:

Cyber culture is a system of indirect interaction between people with the use of computer networks. The field of study on cyber culture includes issues of forming cyber-humankind, convergent nano-, bio-, info-, cognitive and socio-humanistic studies and technologies (NBICS), as well as foresight prediction. The notion of cyber culture is also applied to denominate hacker subcultures, cyberpunk literature movement and is used as a futuristic metaphor for different ICT-based forms of society. At the same time, this term is referred to the cultural practice of ICT users, to mass media studies and theories, which indicates that the boundaries of the concept are quite fuzzy (Macek 2004).

Internet culture is social phenomena and processes related to the Internet, as well as the area of their studying. Online culture is a synonym to Internet culture, an American analogue of the term (DiMaggio 2001; Tai-Quan Peng 2013).

Electronic culture (digital culture) includes IT, social media, Internet, digital economy, learning and other phenomena and processes of the information society. Digital culture is a wide world that includes IT production, usage and IT products with a big role of mass media, that forms online identity, etc. (Miller 2013; Ronchi 2009).

According to the European tradition, e-culture was originally understood as a form of cultural heritage preservation and also as some opposition to e-commerce. Later, the term was used for the notion of different objects having electronic or other digital form. Nowadays, “e-culture” is an interdisciplinary concept having connotations in Philosophy, Cultural Studies, Sociology, Political Science, Economics and of course in the field of information technologies. Its subjects and creators are scientists, programmers, artists, representatives of mass media and average users of information systems, creating electronic forms of self-representation and self-manifestation in the global network Internet by the means of technological facilities. The most important characteristics of e-culture is transparency, globality and availability for every user besides every subject can become both an user and a creator of its phenomena, being enough free in creative work and not having strict limitations.

In general e-culture represents cumulative results of creative activity and communication of people under the conditions of the information technology implementation, characterized with creating of free information space, a virtual form of expression, distant technology, and content liberality. The distinctive features of e-culture are a digital form, virtuality, freedom of access, openness for the members of “information community” (those who have electronic resources); remotability, real distance from a subject; activity in gaining access to electronic information, possibility to participate in developing of the information content from any point of “information space”; liberality, linguistic description, absence of strict rules and norms; dominance of visual things over conceptual ones; innovativeness, technocracy and a high speed of changing. There are two main structural types of e-culture expression: 1) electronic form of forms of real cultural objects (e.g., on-line museums, libraries, exhibitions, etc.) as a great online-archive (Kosnik 2016); 2) electronic cultural objects in form and essence (computer games, social networking sites, Internet, digital art pieces, etc.)

Every of the above-mentioned types has its own characteristics, although they are formally similar and intercross. Culture having electronic form and essence is the continuation and the development of the former one, having become an electronic one in its expression nowadays (to maintain its value and competitiveness).

E-culture afforded new opportunities to human beings: The borders of space and time expanded; conventionalities of language barrier were overcome; the boundless world of digital information appeared, etc. How did these achievements influence on their creators—human beings and their world of values?

The existential and axiological approach to electronic culture comprehension adopted by the author of this article, considers this culture as a form of digital existence a human being leads seeking for solutions for his or her existence problems (embodiment and mortality limitation, loneliness, lack of freedom, etc.). Digital environment is transforming itself into a kind of human existence prolongation, new forms of freedom and immortality obtainment, transcendence for the Other. Electronic culture has its values, primarily associated with uttermost choice of freedom, which multiply amplifies in the digital universe. This kind of culture is becoming a complex of all information phenomena created by a human being with advanced technologies aimed to ensure his or her new forms of existence – those without strict borders between external and internal, art and consumption, unique and predictable.

Our study of digital culture focused on a rather new research area being now developed. It is the theory of existential cyber security addressing philosophical and existential analysis, cyber threat research and destructive cyber influence which severely affects values, life purposes, attitude to life and death, etc.

4. Existential risks and virtual escapism

Human existence in E-culture presents some existential (“existence in and for yourself”) and transcendence syntheses (“existence with and for the Others”). In the electronic culture a human being re-opens for him- or herself such phenomena and terms of his or her existence as “control” and “freedom”, “time” and “space”, “existence” and “death”, “loneliness” and “the Other”, “objectivity” and “subjectivity” (Schafer 2009).

Information environment makes it possible for one status to “pour into” the other; digits make all phenomena as if more liquid.

E-culture encourages various forms of virtual reality formation while they are gradually replacing the real World. The human being changes his or her attitude towards the real World – existence – and it is a key existential problem influencing a personal worldview, life principles and values.

Reality is a core ontological category, which is considered as value of a person, basis for vital, social, and moral values in the context of an axiological approach. Nowadays an attitude to reality undergoes essential changes under the influence of the factor of information and virtualization. Modern young people spend

the greatest part of their free time, communicating virtually (in social networks, game space, doing computer creative work). For them the modern life is first of all the life in the Network. It means the presence of a subject in the virtual Internet-space as a source and a recipient of information, a person, expressing activity and feelings, an author of ideas and judgements. It is some kind of “the second life”, an analogue and extension of a real person at the same time. This state can be compared with an Indian concept “illusiveness” of the external world which a person lives in. The modern virtual world, created by the age of high technologies, is associated in many ways with such characteristics: For “user”, wandering in the Network, and a computer game player the virtual world is the illusion, being created by information technologies, though it is visible, perceptible, attractive, having a set of a great number of ways to delude, attract and relax a person. The Buddhists call it “tricks”, by means of which a person is involved into the routine and a samsara cycle. A gamer understands that the world, attracting him, is unreal, as attitudes and relations, formed by it, are unreal. Step by step gamers begin interpreting the virtual world as more and more significant and real, as they have real feelings of this world environment. The virtual reality seems to cover individuals with one more coating, hiding the true basis of the universe from them. Illusions become more and more significant for individuals, and they are losing interest to the world of real people and feelings, replacing them with brighter artificial images. Coming into the world of the virtual samsara (turns of transformations) and dying in it, human beings strive not to rid of its chains, but to get higher levels.

J. Baudrillard thoroughly explored the essence of the human entry into the virtual culture. He determined the ontological status of the simulation in terms of the formation of the “hyper-reality”, absorbing and eliminating the reality (1981). Discussing the consequences of the virtual hyper reality development, J. Baudrillard gave two assessments. On the one hand, he predicts universe cloning as an unconscious choice of the mankind, refusing the natural state in favor of artificial, more viable, and effective things. On the other hand, he asserts that the impetuous development of the virtual will lead to implosion, i.e. blurring of the borders between the real and alternative worlds. In both cases, the object – subject relations replace subject-object ones when the things, the products created by individuals, start swallowing up their originators, manipulating them, and subordinating them to their functioning.

The real life thus is less bright and amazing, as it involves a lot of problems, that’s why it pales into insignificance. Real relationship with other people and own status, which is compensated with a striking avatar in the Net, also become less important. An avatar was originally a graphical representation of a gamer or the Net user that they chose as they wished. This image was a desirable form of self-presentation for others and a picture of that person, who a real person would like to seem to be. We mention, that self-presentation in the world of a virtual samsara

becomes an extremely important engagement, taking a considerable amount of time and requiring exuberant imagination. Researchers even point out the development of special ethics of representation and behavior in the Network (Brey 1999). The self-presentation becomes important in the context of the ontology as there is a principle in the world of modern communication: If you are not in the Network (i.e., There is no information on persons or their blog, profile in a social network, etc.), you do not exist. The features of the self-presentation depend on the purposes of a person. First of all, the self-presentation is focused on the search of partnership in particular sphere where individuals search emotional, professional or intellectual communication. To achieve their purpose individuals choose appropriate nickname, style, image, and content of the self-presentation. An avatar and a nickname in this reality is that person image which other users communicate with (Raban 2009). These are moreover not users themselves, but their images of the self-representation. It strengthens a game element, the virtualization of relations between players of games or users of social networks.

The existence as being, in which a person seeks and finds his/her meanings and guidelines serving as the expression of his/her intellectual and moral freedom, often turns out to be simulative and quasi-real in online otherness. All the choices in virtual reality are made by milder rules, the boundaries between norms and deviations become transparent, as well as truth and lie, good and evil, game and reality. This boundlessness for a digital native is perceived as a norm which has no clear guidelines.

The online environment does not only become a stronghold of modern communication and unprecedented social integration, but also is a basis for deliberate or unconscious escape from the social reality, new forms of escapism, refusal to live in the reality. A good example is a “Hikikomori” phenomenon – act of deliberate self-isolation, which is widely spread across Japan as a way of existential protest against the society by means of deliberate refusal of its laws, real-life communication, and socialization. In Japan the number of Hikikomori is up to 1 million people (with overall population of 129 million people). In the USA they are called “basement dwellers”, and in Europe a term “NEET” (Not in Employment, Education or Training) is used. This sub-culture is also widespread among teenagers in Russia; there are around 400 online communities of this sort. Hikikomori and their analogues are characterized by radical isolation from the outer world and refusal to work, study and communicate; a person never leaves his/her home (room) and spends life in front of a PC at the expense of the relatives and without participation in social life. The first generation of Hikikomori in Japan is over 40 years old now with more than 20 years passed in isolation, in other countries Hikikomori are mainly young people and teenagers. The reasons for avoiding real communication are mostly connected with the opportunities to live in the Internet environment, childish desire to run away from real life problems, unwillingness to leave the online space

which has no restrictions, limits, and social stress (Ishikawa 2009). In fact, it is a sort of digital downshifting, when a person abandons a civilized existence and considers it of no value to him/her. Online environment and communication are perceived as total freedom with no need in social responsibility, emotional bonds, care, cooperation, etc. During the teen years, such sort of escapism sounds similar to the emotional state of a growing up person who understands that there are multiple systems of individual's submission to the society. The fact that this state does not pass away during aging indicates the increasing unwillingness to step up to adult life, blocking oneself as a person who has outer obligations. The Hikikomori phenomenon indicates that a modern person, heavily pressed by the society on one side and able to gain online freedom on the other side, chooses to avoid the society and its ties. In this scenario, the interpersonal communication and human existence as a social subject is at high risk.

But the highest risk, connected with depreciation of the reality and society value, manifested itself in "groups of death" in the Worldwide Web. Unlike Hikikomori and gamers, their participants make their choice not deliberately but being under the influence of external manipulation, secret control and imposing someone else's will; their main target is not craving for pleasure or constant rest, but experiencing danger, extreme conditions on the basis of general disappointment in real life. In Russia, this phenomenon asserted itself in 2015-2016 and led to a number of scandalous investigations, adoption of stricter punitive measures for driving someone to suicide, in particular through the use of the Internet. Similar communities have also appeared in other countries (including Ukraine), although the scale of spreading was far less. "Groups of death" is a general name for online communities where, under the guise of performing tasks in the form of a game, children and teenagers were driven to commit suicide. The communities utilized a gaming form, where day after day a participant had to perform more and more difficult tasks, from making scratches on his/her arms in the shape of a whale (notorious among mammals for their ability to commit suicide) to falling off high-rise block roofs and other forms of suicide. Around 130 children died in this manner in Russia in 2015-2016. As a result of the investigation of 15 death cases of children and teenagers, 21-year-old Philip Budeikin (nickname Lis), an administrator of eight "groups of death" in "VKontakte" (the most popular social network in Russia), the most notorious of which was "Blue Whale", was arrested on November, 16, 2016. After the scandalous trial, a wave of teenagers' suicide started to cease, and online "groups of death" started being banned by social networks' administrators and volunteers (primarily the parents of deceased children). However, the phenomenon itself hasn't been eradicated for good. In the last few years a media war between people who promote suicidal communities and those who oppose to it, flared up in Russia. According to the community project "Anti-Blue Whale. We Oppose to Deaths", groups of death have become increasingly popular yet again since 2017;

their activity has shifted to Instagram as their public pages in vk.com were banned. After the notorious “Blue Whale”, “Whales’ Sea”, “Wake Me Up at 4.20” and other banned groups, the new ones that also combine virtual community and the form of a game, emerge. Viral messages about the game “Run or Die”, where the children are tasked to cross the road in front of a moving transport, appeared in February, 2018. In January, 2018, the information on the game called “24-Hour Disappearance”, inciting children to leave their homes, was spread across VK. The information about committed suicides is “viral” for younger audience and may become a catalyst for committing such an act (the Werther effect), that is why these massive cyber attacks have hidden mechanisms for drawing teenagers’ attention to these subjects. As a result, the level of adolescent suicide rate, where Russia has already been ranked first in Europe and sixth worldwide, has more than doubled (Gareth 2017).

At first sight, the “groups of death” have a radically different scenario, connected with active and intentional involvement of adherents into groups aimed at rupture of relations with the reality and subsequent suicide. At the same time, this scenario can only be triggered when there is an existing set of such factors for its implementation as affiliation to a high-risk group, a set of external unfavorable social factors and presence of virtual communities for parallel “existence with no rules”. People that are prone to join groups of addicted gamers and Hikikomori are also at risk. For example, persons at risk of Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) are, as a rule, apt to frequent depression, weak-willed and easily-addictive; they lack for social support (friends, trusted people, positive relations with parents), undergo a crucial period of adolescence, have an acute feeling of their loneliness, are misunderstood by the society and attracted by what evokes strong feelings and emotions (Kuss 2014).

A risk group similar to people suffering the IGD include those who got in virtual “death groups” as well as those who is highly susceptible to someone else’s control and manipulation. A psychological factor appears to be one of the factors related to these risk groups. Apart from the social factor, an important role in getting to a risk group is played by existential vacuum, lack of meaningful goals and values that help a person survive even under the most unfavourable conditions. Modern youth’s understanding of the meaning of life appears to be connected with attention to the self on the Internet, with personal fulfillment, welfare enjoyment, entertainments and peak experiences that fill the life with striking moments. Formed by advertisers, consumerism ideology, media electronic environment, and virtual communities, these patterns have a decisive impact on young person’s worldview. Neither family and religion nor culture and education can offer a youngster, being in a risk group or on the “verge”, grounds for a positive answer to the main existential question – “Is life worth living?” The loss of desire for living and communication becomes a reason of suicides and escape from the world to parallel lives. The most widespread topic among youngsters in network communities is disappointment and loss of ability to experience positive emotions. A virtual environment without real

emotional bonds leaves a person one on one with existential problems that cannot be solved under conditions of prevalent virtual communication. The weakening of these factors favours growing pessimism, boredom and apathy – a background for a suicide as the end of the story that has no sense or value.

Administrators of virtual communities for death use such RPG scenario as to encourage its participants to complete the game like gamers do, which is a crucial external aspect of the juvenile suicide issue. Manipulation on behavior and consciousness with peculiarities of juvenile psychology in mind relates to deliberate destruction of borders between game and reality, allowed and forbidden. In addition to this, the factor of death and suicide romanticization, as an action performed by a person who is not afraid to rival the World and to live under his or her own rules, is used, as well.

An existential borderline case, which teenagers-member of such communities could suffer, could be used as a source of self-destruction that could result in suicide.

We can state that nowadays electronic environment is not only the foundation for modern communication and unbelievable society integration but also the ground for both conscious and unconscious escape from social reality, new escapism manifestations, refusal from a wish to live in the real World.

Hikikomori, as a kind of existential suicide, is transforming itself into the phenomenon related to conscious refusal to live under social laws, co communicate in real life, to be among other people and to be socialized. Computer game addiction presents escapism in the electronic culture, too, if a person treats a computer game as an essential hobby and addiction, which may result in separation from his or her social environment.

Virtual communities for death are the most dangerous escapism manifestation leading to suicide as a complete refusal to live. Unlike Hikikomori and gamers, in communities for death teen, actually, have no choice since they are externally manipulated, secretly controlled and imposed strangers' will; for them satisfaction and constant rest have no account while they strive for danger and risk on the ground of common disappointment in the real life.

Our complicated modern life is constantly increasing its pressure on a human being who can either improve his or her abilities or try to escape from this life.

The electronic environment creates various prerequisites for it, makes it possible to transform communication and change sociality, existence and transcendence character of a human being in the virtual existence (Baeva 2018).

5. Existential risks of e-culture

Existence in the digital “here-and-there” is becoming a new form of personal existence, “thrust into the digital World” mainly determined by the very subject and is modified by it. Freedom from reality and its objectivation, however, can lead a human being not only to self-development and creativity but to the highest degree of loneliness and digital autism. It can also amplify escapism and suicidal ideas typical of borderline cases and conditions.

Person’s virtual being was initially intended to be a tool, a supplement to his/her real existence; however, as far as different forms of e-communication and media culture are developed, virtual being becomes a terminal value adding “mass” to a real object like a photon. The value shift from a real sphere of the being to a virtual one also indicates changes in human essence, his/her life and environment. At the same time, a digital society person still preserves such values as freedom and guarantee of individual rights.

What are the main risks connected with these transformation? We suppose that first of all the next ones among them should be mentioned:

The most dangerous tendencies probably lead to the loss of traditional culture and vital world of man which have existed for thousands of years and which are now disappearing under the impact of globalization and informatization of culture. The annihilation of traditional values, models and norms of behavior formed at the level of ethnic groups, states and social communities leads to the change of lifestyle of man moulded by new eclectic, informationally open cultural conditions which causes a greater openness and instability of the individual himself. Culture itself, the legacy created by humanity which aren’t nowadays absolute values but are ejected and regularly renewed, are threatened with neglect.

Serious risks are also connected with the transfer of values in virtual worlds, social networks, which complicates the real communication and the capability to solve vital problems, develops the destructive way of thinking and self-destructive behavior.

The dangerous contents of the websites with suicide clubs and so on are the factor that contributes strongly to the self-destructive behavior of the youth. Internet addiction disorder, loss of real vital emotions caused by perception of oneself and his milieu as virtual world characters can be other reasons of such behavior. Interpersonal communication is being replaced by its virtual imitation, such important spheres of relations as love and friendship being ejected also.

The spiritual sphere appears to be nowadays the zone of risk. It suffers crisis under conditions of the consumer society and hedonism. Fundamental science, education, art in their traditional forms lost in many respects their leading position in the postmodern culture. The commercialization and pragmatization of these

spheres called into being by the post-industrial age and the post-industrial society eliminate their humanistic, educational contents, their developmental and ennobling influence over man. In spite of a high-speed growth of scientific technologies and an active expansion of scientific influence over civilization it may be mentioned that theoretical science as well as humanities which are less connected with quick applied results are at the periphery of the entertainment and consumer society development. As the consequence of the humanistic knowledge crisis the liberalization of morality, spiritual imperatives comes; upbringing and education are replaced by forming applied skills and abilities; art doesn't elevate man but entertains him cultivating the lowest needs to an even greater degree than the highest ones (Baeva 2018).

In the age of information some risks are caused by the development of the value of freedom, which under new conditions acquired such form as information freedom. The term "information freedom" refers to the ability of man to be the source, bearer or transmitter of information not being responsible for its contents and the consequences of its translation in mass media. Every web user can be a source of unverified and what is more falsified information which can considerably influence not only over social processes but also political stability.

Openness of information and the dependence of its contents from each subject multiply risks for modern culture and engender new types of unfreedom such as manipulation of public opinion, misinformation of large social groups, dark public relations, interference with citizens privacy, etc.

The greatest risk to existential safety is not only the loss of interpersonal relationships, but the denial of the value of reality itself, with all its problems and obligations. The reluctance to exist in real "here and now" generates various kinds of digital escapism, from the hikkikomori phenomenon to the suicide associated with in virtual "death groups". A new existential problem-the loss of the boundary of reality associated with the split consciousness of man living in two worlds is not equal. At the same time, the real world is becoming less and less important, and the virtual, the value of which increases, continues to remain a simulacrum without a real reason.

Problems of existence are always connected with attitude to social and moral rules and norms. "Condemnation" of the constant choice of priorities and actions, including in the moral sphere, in the digital world is becoming extremely acute, since the possibility of anonymous action creates significant temptations to violate the norms that are harsh in real life. The existence of electronic culture and virtual communication lead to the multialternative, pluralistic patterns of behavior which blurred the boundaries of norm and deviation, games and crime, sin and virtue that gives rise to a normative crisis.

Virtual simulation of the most important spheres of life contributes not only to the loss of existential foundations of man, but also changes the moral and ethical guidelines associated with the awareness of the value of the Other. In place

of the mass man of the era of industrialism comes digital, which has great opportunities and risks. Threats to human existential security in the context of e-culture are the dependence on the virtual “environment”, simulation of human existence and transcendence, the loss of personal private space, the weakening of the boundaries of reality, as well as the boundaries of morality and social norms.

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