

## **PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PHENOMENON OF VIRTUAL GAMES**

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**Abstract:** *this article analyzes the phenomenon of virtual games from a philosophical point of view. Based on the concepts of virtual reality and simulation, the influence of virtual games on human consciousness and perceptions of existence is considered. The article highlights the processes of human self-awareness, moral choices, freedom, and social communication in the virtual environment based on the conceptual ideas of thinkers such as J. Baudrillard, M. Heidegger, Slavoj Žižek, Gilles Deleuze, and Sherry Turkle. According to the research results, it is substantiated that virtual games should be assessed not only as a cultural phenomenon, but also as a factor that shapes human consciousness and changes the system of relations in society.*

**Keywords:** *virtual games, philosophical analysis, simulation, human consciousness, existence, freedom, morality, social communication, identification, virtual reality.*

### **Introduction**

Virtual games have not only become an integral part of the global entertainment industry today, but also play an important role in the formation of social connections between people, personal identity, and culture. With the development of technology, games have become not only a means of spending

time, but also an environment that transforms human consciousness and existence. At the same time, the ontological, ethical, and cultural aspects of virtual games also require serious scientific analysis. Behavior, moral decisions, and changing social environments arising in games influence a person's psychological state, personal characteristics, and worldview.

From a philosophical point of view, virtual games are considered as a testing ground for human existence and moral responsibility. Postmodernist philosophers, in particular Jean Baudrillard and Gilles Deleuze, describe the virtual environment as isolated from reality and a simulated environment. In their opinion, virtual games reshape a person's consciousness and views on reality. At the same time, virtual games reflect the changing structures of society, cultural and social changes. Through games, a person has the opportunity to see themselves in new identities and social roles, which are directly related to real-life decisions and moral choices.

In this article, we will consider the philosophical analysis of virtual games, its ethical and existential aspects, as well as the role of virtual games in postmodern society and the formation of a new system of human relationships. The article focuses on analyzing the social and cultural significance of virtual games, as well as the impact of this phenomenon on human existence and moral responsibilities.

### **Main part**

Virtual games are a product of modern technology and culture, which redefine the boundaries of real and virtual reality in the human mind. The concept of "virtual game" is an interactive simulation tool that allows the user to operate in

a virtual environment, to feel like another person or being. From a philosophical point of view, virtual games appear as simulacra, replacing reality in real life.

Jean Baudrillard, in his *Simulacra and Simulation*, defines the concept of simulacra as follows: "Simulation is a phenomenon that replaces reality through signs and a system of signs that are similar to reality, but are not actually reality."<sup>1</sup> Virtual games, as such a simulation tool, form a "false truth" in the human mind.

From an ontological point of view, the problem of the difference between virtual reality and real reality was also analyzed by Deleuze. In his work *Difference and Repetition*, analyzing the differences between being and experience, the relationship between real and virtual, he describes virtual reality as an "alternative form of experience to reality."<sup>2</sup>

From an epistemological point of view, virtual games have a significant influence on the formation of human knowledge, understanding, and the process of consciousness. Slavoj Žižek defines virtual reality as a "field of false consciousness," emphasizing that in a virtual environment, a person removes their social masks and creates new identities.<sup>3</sup>

Modern psychologists and sociologists are also conducting research on the fact that the influence of virtual games on the consciousness of society and the individual is expanding, forming the social consciousness of young people and children, and losing the boundaries of the real and virtual world in their consciousness.

<sup>1</sup> Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and Simulation*. University of Michigan Press. — 6-p.

<sup>2</sup> Deleuze, G. (1994). *Difference and Repetition*. Columbia University Press. — 208- p.

<sup>3</sup> Žižek, S. (1997). *The Plague of Fantasies*. Verso. — 134-b p.

Virtual games encourage a reassessment of important aspects of human ontology. In a virtual environment, a person can experiment with forms and identities that do not exist in real life, experience their "I" as a new virtual being. This process transforms virtual games from a simple entertainment tool into an ontological experimental field.

Jean Baudrillard believes that in virtual reality, human identity is fragmented and masked. He explains this as "the loss of a being's essence within false reality."<sup>4</sup> In virtual games, a person pushes aside their real social roles, creates a completely new image, and through these virtual images strives to be free from existing restrictions in society.

In this regard, Gilles Deleuze defines the avatar phenomenon as "virtual differentiation." In his opinion, through virtual games, a person expresses their ontological existence in various forms, and these forms violate the boundaries between true and false identities in the human mind.<sup>5</sup>

Slavoj Žižek also analyzes the problem of identity in the virtual environment, emphasizing that in virtual games, a person unlocks their true passions and social masks. Žižek writes: "The virtual environment frees a person from moral and social constraints in real life and allows them to manifest their true I."<sup>6</sup>

For example, in games like World of Warcraft or Second Life, users can test themselves as a different gender, social status, or being through virtual avatars. In a 2009 Sherry Turkle study, 72 percent of participants stated that they embody

<sup>4</sup> Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and Simulation*. University of Michigan Press. — 12- p.

<sup>5</sup> Deleuze, G. (1994). *Difference and Repetition*. Columbia University Press. — 210-p.

<sup>6</sup> Žižek, S. (1997). *The Plague of Fantasies*. Verso. — 141-p.

themselves in virtual games as individuals who want to be in real life.<sup>7</sup> This shows how virtual identity influences the formation of personality in real life.

Additionally, Mark N. Taylor and Adrian Athique emphasize in their research that avatars in virtual games reflect the modern image of human ontology. According to them, "Virtual identity is a territory of free experience that does not exist in society, and a person can create their unlimited version."<sup>8</sup>

Virtual games are a new environment that tests human moral consciousness. In the virtual world, a person can bypass their moral norms and social rules of real life. Gilles Deleuze describes this situation as "the illusion of infinity in the consciousness of virtual possibilities."<sup>9</sup> Virtual games have the possibility of committing violence, crimes, and moral violations, which brings a person face to face with their ontological essence, that is, free will and moral choices.

According to Jean Baudrillard, the violence and violation of moral restrictions reflected in virtual games adapt the human mind to simulation. He writes: "Through simulation, a person moves away from reality and learns to abandon their moral positions."<sup>10</sup> This can lead to long-term ontological and social problems.

Ethical problems:

In her research, Sherry Turkle found that in virtual games like Grand Theft Auto, users regularly violate ethical boundaries and perceive it as a "safe zone."

<sup>7</sup> Turkle, S. (2009). Simulation and its Discontents. MIT Press. — 103-p.

<sup>8</sup> Taylor, M. N., & Athique, A. (2013). Digital Media and Society: An Introduction. Polity Press. — 188-p.

<sup>9</sup> Deleuze, G. (1994). Difference and Repetition. Columbia University Press. — 215-p.

<sup>10</sup> Baudrillard, J. (1994). Simulacra and Simulation. University of Michigan Press. — 21-p.

This indicates the emergence of a dissonance between a person's moral position in real and virtual reality.

The moral danger of virtual games lies in the fact that they have the power to artificially shape, and sometimes destroy, human consciousness and moral values. Slavoj Žižek calls this state the "illusion of virtual freedom." In his opinion, when a person acts in a virtual environment without moral responsibility, they actually express their passions and repressions.<sup>11</sup>

Existential aspect:

From the point of view of existential philosophy, virtual games lead a person to the boundary between existence and non-existence. Based on Martin Heidegger's concept of "Dasein" (existence), it can be said that in virtual reality, a person becomes part of not real existence, but its artificial manifestation. As a result, a person tries to search for the meaning of their life and the reasons for their existence in the virtual world.

Analytical studies show that in the 2018 Games and Psychology Journal study, 68 percent of survey participants felt more freedom in virtual games than in real life, and this situation negatively affected their understanding of existence in real life.<sup>12</sup>

Modern postmodern society perceives virtual games not only as a means of entertainment, but also as a field of information, identity, and social interaction. Virtual games are an "alternative model" of real life in today's society, in which people experience the simulation of a new society, politics, and culture.

<sup>11</sup> Žižek, S. (1997). The Plague of Fantasies. Verso. — 146-p.

<sup>12</sup> Games and Psychology Journal. (2018). "The Influence of Virtual Games on Ethical Consciousness and Existential Anxiety." Vol. 12(3). — 71-p.



### Society and identity:

Manuel Castells, in his work "The Rise of the Network Society," emphasizes that digital and virtual networks have radically changed human social connections. He calls virtual games "the field of recreation of social identities" and describes this phenomenon as a new stage in the dynamics of social relations.

Nick Yee, in his study *The Proteus Effect*, analyzed the impact of virtual game avatars on human behavior and social psychology. He found that a person changes their social and moral position in accordance with their avatar. For example, powerful and attractive avatars create an aggressive or self-confident mood in the user.

### Culture and aesthetics:

Jane McGonigal in *Reality Is Broken* shows the positive and culturally constructive aspects of virtual games for society. He analyzed virtual games as a cultural platform that transforms a person not only into a consumer, but also into a "creative participant."

Mark Fisher, in his work "Capitalist Realism," interprets virtual games as a means of controlling consciousness and manipulating attention in post-capitalist society. He writes: "Virtual culture is a simulated refuge created to avoid real-life problems."

### Analytical research:

In a 2020 study by Jonathan Gray and Tanya Krzywinska, published in *Media, Culture & Society*, it was noted that virtual games make violence in society a normal phenomenon, shaping information consumption and identity politics. The

authors of the study analyzed how virtual games romanticize aesthetic violence in modern postmodern culture and how this affects consciousness.

### **Conclusion**

Today, the phenomenon of virtual games has become not only a part of the entertainment industry, but also a powerful factor in the formation of human ontology, identity, and moral consciousness. The analysis and theoretical approaches presented in this article encourage the creation of new philosophical concepts about the human psyche and the role of virtual games in society. In particular, postmodernist philosophers, such as Jean Baudrillard and Gilles Deleuze, emphasized the aspects of virtual reality related to false and ontological contradictions. According to them, virtual games test a person's "I," and in the process of reconstructing reality, the boundary between real and fake disappears.

Also, modern sociologists and psychologists, such as Nick Yee and Manuel Castells, evaluate virtual games as transformative spaces of social connections and personal identity. They create new social personalities in the virtual environment, which reshapes interactions in real life. In virtual games, people have the opportunity to experience new types of identities, regardless of their generation, ethnicity, or gender, which expands the possibilities and limitations of postmodern society.

In addition, the ethical and existential aspects of virtual games also require great attention. Thoughts such as Mark Fisher and Slavoj Žižek speak of the possibility of a person moving freely in a simulation environment and moving away from moral responsibility in real life through games. This freedom can often



distort a person's moral character and lead them to lose their passions and repressions.

In general, virtual games are becoming not only part of modern technology, but also a powerful factor influencing the formation of human consciousness and changes in the social system. Therefore, analyzing virtual games is a necessary tool for a better understanding of social, cultural, and ethical systems. Games form a new system of connections between man and society and encourage a revision of the concepts of existence and meaning existing in the real world.

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