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The Vanishing Reality

Hauer T*

Department of Pedagogical Studies, Univerzitna 8215/1, 010 26 Zilina, University of Zilina, Slovakia

*Corresponding author: Hauer T, Department of Pedagogical Studies, Univerzitna 8215/1, 010 26 Zilina, University of Zilina, Slovakia, Tel: +4215131453; E-mail: thauer777@gmail.com

Abstract

The main objective of this text is to tell the story of the philosophy of an image, a story of the relationship between a technical image and its exterior, figuration of the struggle between the analogue nature of the human body and the digital nature of the computer code, grasped through philosophical interpretation of technical images. The notion of a technical image – is a dominant cognitive metaphor and simultaneously a hegemonic rhetorical figure through which we adapt our bodies to the digital space. In the creation, storage, selection and distribution of technical images, we ritualize inner acceptance and mastery of the laws of numerical structuring of the human analogue body. The reality is disappearing in favor of hyper reality.

Keywords: Technical images; Hyper reality; Dromology; Simulation

Editorial

Coding, visualization, technical image

The Prague native and media theorist Vilém Flusser derives of the above nature of the media system a program of its deconstruction. Encoding of technical images occurs inside the so called "black box", and any criticism of technical images must therefore be directed to illuminate this "inside" [1]. In the text, we will try to look into this black box of an unknown, digital medium/apparatus and explore it, acquire it using philosophical means. In Flusser's philosophy, the path to illuminate the computer black box has reached the interim peak. Another form of the adventurous journey to the nature of the apparatus is the theory of the French philosopher of science Bruno Latour [2]. Technical images repeatedly stage the illuminating surface of a monitor, display, screen, or any projection space as an original two-dimensional art object. The one-dimensional binary code is metaphorically depicted as a continuous stream or rain of hieroglyphs (randomly generated characters) with an occasional outline of figures. The image is divided into a stream of flowing numbers, but the essence of the image blurs in this current, it fades to its outside. In one image, there is an intermediate collision of coded characters with the image that produces this code, of an abstract number with the human body, of an image-surface with an image-depth.

Apparatuses that create the digital nature of the computer code systematically produce a number as the real and unique fundament of a digital image-technical image by attributing it the autonomous spatial vastness of the "body" of the new image"[3]. Fetishisation of numbers as a paradoxical spatial object is thermalized through simulated rolling on the monitor as if the camera passes through the number. The number acquires three-dimensional volume, a specific inner structure formed by the illuminating fibers, stratification. Fetishisation of numbers is a clear guide to figural reading of an image as a metaphor that thermalizes the conflict relationship between the human body perception and the digital technology that can construct and transform a space entirely under the laws of its arbitrary logic, regardless of the perceptual reality and dimensions of the human body. Although "physicality" of the world of an analogue image ceases to exist in the technical medium, the digital visually constructs new physicality and tactility of its own nature. Flusser's texts are a highly imperfect attempt at visualizing a dispositive of a technical image [4], formed by a computer, which, unlike earlier attempts to visualize cyberspace and the inside of hardware is not primarily based on mechanical interference between digitally and analogue nature (immateriality and materiality) as two types of an image, the technology, and the life principle .

Paradoxically, the simulated world of technical images at the visual level is more "realistic", closer to everyday perceptive experience of contemporary man than the "real" space outside the simulation. The light mode based on the principles of vision and remote control, instantaneous speed and immediate feedback among everything becomes the decisive line of digital media dispositive. Digital media-technical images penetrate further and further beyond the visible: in areas of extreme speed, microscopic dimensions, distant celestial bodies or physical phenomena imperceptible to the human eye. Theorists of new media can therefore foresee a process of gradual "illumination" of the entire planet, its interior and past, as well as the inside of the human body and the human cultural heritage: each place, data file or human body can be digitally visualized, linked with a processor and become a segment of hyper textual network. Likewise, in reverse motion, monitors and processors can spread to real places and objects: every object or place have the potential to become a projection space in the universe of technical images, a display, monitor or screen that will display another real or virtual space, or a place to install a sensing device or a control terminal controlling other objects and places.

In his etymological analysis of the word "apparatus", Vilém Flusser comes to the explanation that "the apparatus is an object that is ready and that is secretly lurking for something" [1], ready to act (e.g. for taking photos). From the cultural analysis of the functioning of apparatuses, Flusser concludes that apparatuses are "black boxes" simulating thinking that involve human beings as their function in the process of cultural production of symbols. The apparatus is a system

with which the creator is confronted rather than the recipient, and its heart is a technological arrangement. The technology is not innocent and is subject to complex cultural coding.

Flusser outlines the difference between the technically constructed pointiness of an electronic image and the naturally given molecularity of a wooden (analogue) desk by analyzing its confidence in the strength of the material facts. He asks himself why he believes that the desk does not fall through the desk when in theory he knows that wood "in a closer consideration, is a swarm of particles, and to a large extend it is an empty space" [4]. The reason for this confidence is that the scientific theory reveals the microstructure of wood ex post, while in the case of a digital image; an abstract theory preceded its concretization in the form of recognizable visual figures. Therefore, we cannot ignore the dot pattern of a digital image; we cannot trust it as we trust a desk. In the world of technical images, people cannot trust anything, nothing is what it seems, and every object and everybody can lose its strength and intersect with another body. The task of the atmosphere of inexplicable mystery and oddity hidden in seemingly banal phenomena of everyday life, which is built with sophisticated visual and sound effects of technical images, is that the viewer is gradually prepared for a shock of "conceptual epiphany" that molecules of matter are in fact digital points. Universities, the Internet, films, media, marketing, etc., are in fact only training facilities, simulators of a new type of vision that learns to see, beyond the space itself, just calculated artificial constellations of data that could also get completely different forms.

Simulacrum and technical image

Baudrillard's text Perfect Crime from 1995 is a description of murdering the reality, the disappearance of authentic facts in favor of simulacra. According to Baudrillard, after the reality has been murdered, we found ourselves in the material illusion of the world, which is characterized by the absence of things themselves, the fact that they do not take place, but they only seem that way, the fact that everything disappears under its illusion and that, therefore, nothing is identical to itself [5]. What is real disappears in favor of what is more real than the reality for the benefit of the hyper-real. In favor of what is more real than the reality, that is a simulation. We are unable to distinguish the reality from the hyper reality (simulation). The reality is fully replaced by a simulation. A material illusion provokes fear/horror in us, which urges us to decipher this world, thus destroying the initial illusion, because we cannot bear its enigmatic character. We cannot bear even the illusion of the world nor pure semblance, but in the same way, we do not tolerate the radical reality and transparency. Everything can disappear; all that has to stay alive is disappearing, because it keeps track of the crime. When the process of disappearing is at our disposal, we know that there is something that is disappearing. Otherwise, we would not be able to keep a record of this change. Subsequently, the premise that something is disappearing will lead us to conclude that before it was gone, it had to be here. Something that does not exist cannot disappear. If, however, even the disappearance succumbed to destruction, we would lose track of the crime. In modernism, we have forgotten to learn "that deducting gives strength and power is born from absence. And since we are no longer able to face the symbolic dominance of absence, we are now drowning in a reverse, conjured away illusion, illusion of excessive proliferation, screens and images [5]. Using images for someone's own disappearance, however, may be the perfect strategy; to illustrate this, we can imagine a criminal who is leaving false clues to divert attention to a different direction, so that

could have an opportunity to disappear. The actual clues will be indistinguishable from the false ones.

As Baudrillard says, we are getting into a situation when we cannot even identify our own face, because its symmetry is falsified by the mirror. Our own image in the mirror is a good example illustrating the falsification of our transparency. We cannot behold ourselves in a mirror nor on a photo. Suffice it to try a simple task in front of a mirror: if we raise our right hand, the image will be overturned. All objects that appear to us are always the ones that have already disappeared. Nothing appears before us in real time. The path of the object to its representation in our mind has a duration that differs in length. Currently, we find ourselves in a situation when images are more important. We live in a world where the highest function of a character is to allow the reality to disappear, and at the same time, to mask this disappearance at that [6]. The art does nothing else today. The media do nothing else today. The disappearance can be understood as a change in the relationship between the image and the reality. Previously, we assumed that the reality is the original and the image is its derivative expression. Baudrillard then shifts the relation between the image and the reality to a level where these two terms are not directly related. The concept of simulacrum is presented. Simulacrum means a virtual copy of a non-existent original, this copy being more real than the reality. It is a change in the interaction between the image, the reality and the perception of the reality [7]. The current period is hyper real. The perception of things is shifted due to the image. Overproduction of characters has thus caused them deviate from the object they are supposed to represent, and then it becomes a cycle causing the end of the reality. Thus, this reality is replaced by the hyper reality mentioned earlier. Multiplying simulations blur the distinction between the reality and the image of reality.

We are mere observers of character systems; we yearn for complete information without participating in actual events. The trick of the original is that it is disguising itself by means of multiple copies. We are obsessed with objective reality. We transfer the view of our illusion of being to technology. During the turbulent technological development, we have ceased to believe in our own existence and we have become determined by a virtual existence. The technology thus becomes a trigger of the disappearance. The fact that we want the world to become more and more real deprives it of its vitality. What is real becomes universal by its expansion until death occurs. Due to the radical imperfection of the world, the world has to be an illusion. If everything was perfect, the world would simply not exist, and if perhaps by some misfortune it arose in perfection again, it would quite simply not exist any better. Such is the nature of crime: if it is perfect, no clue is left. What confirms the existence of the world, therefore, is that its character is accidental, guilty, and imperfect. In short, it cannot be determined otherwise than as an illusion. Earlier we asked why there is something rather than nothing. Now the questions have turned around: Why is there nothing rather than something? There is not just something. There is nothing. Continuous illusion of an elusive object and a subject believing to have seized it. The constant human quest for grasping the elusive, for breaking this mystery, leads to the production of new characters we need to name the realities in our new hypotheses. It is precisely due to this large number of new characters that we lose the reality we wanted to approach. The paradox is that although our efforts were directed to the reality, the result is the exact opposite: we have moved far away from this reality. The perfect crime is the crime of unconditional realization of the world by updating all its data through the transformation of all our acts, all events in the pure information – in short: the ultimate solution, pre-judgmental acceleration of

resolving the world through the cloning of reality, and killing the real by its double.

We are in captivity of information, the data that manipulate us. We have killed the real by expanding it. Everything is created through a digital code. The everyday human life has become a reality show. Nothing exists outside it. Man experiences "what he is" through a language, through technical gadgets that surround him. We grasp the world through language; we use it to name the reality around us, to communicate with others. Technical devices also serve us to confront us and the surroundings. Baudrillard presents the concept of acting-out, which is a certain energy that aims at getting rid of something, best of all of itself. Modern technologies are extensions of man, or rather expulsion? Extension refers to a certain expansion, infection; expulsion is a designation for expulsion. Modern technology "extends" the man; it increases the production of his images. Ultimately, however, it is actually the case of the expulsion when a person is evicted; he is deprived of his natural space where he could make use of his potential. Or more precisely, the space in which one lives is not important. What become important are modern technologies, which are a key part of the world.

There is a great divergence between thinking and the real; these two concepts are mutually non-transferable. Thinking has two contradictory requirements. It does not want to draw the unquestionable truth from the world by analyzing it, but it wants to help the reality to be inexorably verified. The reality wants to be subjected to hypotheses and verified, and therein lays its revenge. We live in a world where theories are not based on real events, but events are drawn from theories. Another problem of the present world is the speed of production of simulated things; simulations progress faster than we are able to perceive, which results in disorder, because we interpret them retrospectively, with a certain time lag. Meanwhile, there are more and more simulations arising, the time lag between the emergence of the simulation and our interpretation increases. Any idea that we have to defend is guilty in advance. Any idea that cannot defend itself deserves to disappear.

Conclusion

Concepts simulacrum and the technical image represent the analytic tools that allow us to understand the processes by which the framework for understanding the relationship between the reality of digitized audio-visual hypertext and the conventional reality of everyday life is established. Loss of confidence in the "eye reality", that is what we can see with our own eyes without mediation, and an increasing reliance on illusory view designed using technical devices, digital hypertext and telematics vehicles may be one example. Overlaying the physical environment by virtual telecommunication space may not only lead to total disorientation of man, but also to the possibility of absolute control over his being.

The French philosopher Jean Baudrillard in one of his best-known and key texts Simulacra and Simulation emphasizes that "simulacrum does not hide the truth that simulacrum hides that there is nothing". In Baudrillard's concept, therefore, in the definition of the term simulacrum, a decisive role is played by over-abundance of representations of reality. Today, according to Baudrillard, the reality can be freely created as a (re)presentation as a digital image constructed by telematics vehicles. Baudrillard's simulacrum denotes something that is universally characteristic of our epoch. Namely the deliberate creation of reality, through technical and communication system or speed. It involves rethinking the problem of sign or other forms of representation of reality. Is it possible or not, and in what form?

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