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EXISTENTIAL DIMENSION OF THE INDIVIDUAL LIFESTYLE

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Abstract

The study of individual lifestyles in today's world is related to the ongoing transformation of the conditions of existence of members of society, which brings about changes in ways of organizing life practices related to the transition of society towards a new stage of civilizational development, i.e. the information society. Object: The aim of the paper is to reveal the existential dimension of lifestyles and its crucial role in the individual's destiny, based on research into the main individual behavior patterns in various sociocultural settings. A lifestyle acts as a psychological, physiological and sociocultural bond of the human life and ensures its integrity. From a social perspective, a lifestyle, which refers to a comprehensive system of deep-rooted life practices, acts as the main regulator of the individual's entire life. As a structure organizing the individual's activities, a lifestyle takes on existential significance for the individual. Methods: An analysis of the lifestyle as an existential phenomenon should be based on the writings of Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schutz, the German philosophers who explored the 'living world' as well as on the existentialist principles developed by Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger, among others.

Keywords

Lifestyle - Existential dimension – Success – Escapism – Virtual lifestyle

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Introduction

Each type of society creates a unique living world, in which people's acts, interactions and relationships are based on tools that are peculiar to this world. One of the main and most widespread tools is the human lifestyle which shapes people's acts, interactions and relationships. Studying the organization of human life by using a system of anthropological characteristics and social practices provides an opportunity to encompass all spheres of life in terms of society, individuals and social groups.

Various aspects of lifestyles of individuals and social groups throughout the sociocultural history of mankind has been a matter of concern for different social sciences, whose main focus is the study of various aspects of social and cultural life. These include history, culture theory, sociology, philosophy, economics, etc. At the same time, social studies have until recently focused on detecting general patterns of the social process or on investigating the functioning of the sociocultural system, as a whole. Only occasionally did researchers examine microdynamic processes taking place in social and cultural life. What makes a study of the present-day human lifestyle relevant is the ongoing transformation of social life. Changing conditions of existence of members of society brings about changes in ways of organizing life practices, in other words, the human lifestyle. This leads to the conclusion that there is an increasing need to investigate the lifestyle. The study of this topic also has 'intra-scholarly' incentives, in addition to the increased social needs. The point is that, in recent decades, various social and human sciences have accumulated large amounts of empirical knowledge and theoretical generalities on the human existence under new social conditions related to the technological revolution and the transition of society towards a new stage of civilizational development, that is, the information society. The subject of research is the examination of the philosophical aspect of the human lifestyle, more precisely, its existential significance for the individual.

The aim of the paper is to reveal the existential dimension of lifestyles and its crucial role in the individual's destiny, based on research into the main individual behavior patterns in various sociocultural settings, including the information society.

Methods

In our view, an analysis of the lifestyle as an existential phenomenon and of its manifestations in the information society should be based on the civilizational methodology, which makes it possible to comprehend the lifestyle as a sociocultural phenomenon and to reflect upon the anthropological, social and technological lifestyle determinants. In philosophical research, this approach is based on the writings of Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schutz, the German philosophers who explored the 'living world' as well as on the existentialist principles developed by Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger, among others. This method enables researchers to make use of appropriate cognitive and methodological tools, including a number of concepts such as the living world, existence, choice and lifestyle.

Existential methodology for interpreting the lifestyle

The individual's existential dimension was the subject of heuristic search in Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism. The present study will investigate the individual existential dimension according to the principles exposed in his Existentialism is a Humanism. Sartre states that the main methodological principle underlying existentialism is 'Existence

precedes essence¹. With regard to the research topic investigated in this paper, this principle means the recognition of the priority of life practices for the shaping of the individual's inner world. Existentialism perceives the individual as an active subject who creates his own world, his own ego and his personality. The fundamental characteristic of the personality is freedom. From the existentialist perspective, the individual chooses his own behavioral pattern and his life practices. The ability or inability to choose is what makes a person an individual and a person a self. The individual can choose to act or not and, being the subject of choice, he is answerable to himself and to the entire world for the consequences of this choice, which determine both his future and that of the entire world. Consequently, the lifestyle and life practices shape the individual's value and cognitive sphere and, thus, determine his subsequent conduct and outline his destiny in this world. In Sartre's words, they outline its idea or essence. Specifically, the choice of various life strategies is what realizes the existence.

Results

In the world, there exists an infinite multitude of life practices. Researchers, however, identify two opposite lifestyle strategies: the active and the passive ones. The active lifestyle strategy is related to the choice of life practices targeting self-fulfillment. What is the content of this strategy? Above all, individual self-fulfillment is usually of conscious and target-oriented nature. As a rule, the person makes self-fulfillment his goal and deliberately chooses by what means and in what area he will attempt to achieve this goal. It should be emphasized that individual self-fulfillment is always substantive. Of great importance is the force that pushes the individual towards self-fulfillment and the source of his need in self-fulfillment. In our view, a key factor in self-fulfillment are values, on which depend the energizing aspects of acts of self-fulfillment, including their incentives, potential and content.

As many researchers of social processes rightly hold, in today's world, personal and social success often is a value that becomes an energizing force for self-fulfillment. Searching for success, showing off symbols of success and keeping up success standards is an essential tool used by individuals with this strategic attitude. Social success can manifest itself in various areas and at different levels: in public activities and in the private sphere, in career achievements and gender roles, at the level of socialization and social adaptation, social competitiveness and social leadership and within various social institutions. Success has a resultant nature in so far as it is a consequence of achieving personal and socially-approved goals. As a social phenomenon of modern society, success may act as an independent social value instead of being directly related to the achievements of a specific person. Success is objectified and becomes part of social relationships as a standard, a social imperative or a specific social quality that determines and motivates other people's behavior. Therefore, the phenomenon of success becomes a social fact and a major component of social relationships. As O. Yakutin rightly holds, "as a social fact or a social phenomenon, success goes beyond the subjective human individuality and personal achievements. It objectifies and acquires independent social status and, as such, exists outside and independently from the individual's consciousness, i.e. from now on, it exists outside its creator and has a coercive effect, motivating and inciting others to achieve the model provided"².

¹ J.-P. Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*. Sumerki bogov (Moscow: Politizdat, 1989).

² O. Yakutina, "Social Success Practices: Discourse of Everyday Life and the Socio-Philosophical Notion". Ph.D. Thesis (Rostov-na-Donu, 2011).

In this way, social success is a type of goal-oriented practices based on leadership, self-assertion and self-fulfillment motivations and, therefore, it is a way of implementing these practices into a specific social reality. Social practices can be considered successful if their outcomes have social and personal significance and correspond to the initial goals. A major factor for achieving personal success is the possession of social intellect. Social intellect is an integral individual ability determinant of successful communication and social communication as well as of adequate and successful social interaction.

External and internal criteria of a successful lifestyle can be identified. From the outside, criteria of a successful lifestyle are the individual's financial prosperity and social well-being. Other external criteria of success include social prestige, social reputation and social status. These features of the social status make success socially tangible and bring the successful individual to the level of socially accomplished personalities.

In the public mind, a successful person is assessed as 'a person who made himself', which is indicative of the public recognition of one's individual responsibility for his or her destiny. While sharing this assessment, the authors would like to point out that not only successful persons 'make themselves'. Without denying a certain role of anthropological and social conditions of human activities, the authors consider that external circumstances alone do not explain success. All people are subjects of activity, interactions and relationships. Losers, people with no established position and escapists 'make themselves' too, and their destiny also results from their lifestyle and from the combination of life practices accomplished by them. The escapist lifestyle scenario is given below with a view to substantiate the above assertion.

Escapist lifestyle strategy

The escapist strategy is the opposite of the socially active lifestyle strategy, as it excludes society and focuses its lifestyle on self-assertion by achieving the individual harmony with itself and Nature. This lifestyle strategy highlights the individual's self-perfection as well as his spiritual and moral development. Metaphorically, the individual having such an attitude towards life strives to 'build the Kingdom of God' inside himself. After espousing this idea, the individual renounces wealth, prestige, career and other worldly goods. In Abraham Maslow's classification, this attitude corresponds to the highest order of human needs, that of self-actualization³.

A focus on individual self-perfection and, in the first place, on his moral and spiritual development, is an important aspect of the escapist lifestyle. No less significant is the fact that self-perfection is in the hands of the individual himself. In our view, thus formulated, the ideal lifestyle implies a focus on complete individual freedom. According to this formula, the individual's spiritual comfort and even happiness depend directly on the individual rather than on some external circumstances.

This solution to the spiritual and moral issue is highly attractive, particularly to people with various worldviews. It is most appealing to those who believe in God. Present-day secularized society, however, is dominated by the worldly interpretation of the 'Kingdom of God'. Among prevailing values are wealth, prestige and social success, and attainment of the 'Kingdom of God' is commonly interpreted as the acquisition of material goods. From the

³ A. Maslow, *Theory of Human Motivation: Motivation and Personality* (St. Petersburg: Evraziya, 1999).

authors' standpoint, this interpretation of the 'Kingdom of God' and the related lifestyle is erroneous and offers no attractive future prospects.

A more inviting lifestyle strategy can be found even from secular positions. To be fulfilled, this strategy does not require, albeit not on the religious basis, the establishment of any hierarchy of primary life practices, namely, the spiritual, psychic and somatic ones. The three levels must be intimately interrelated and interactive without any of them being dominant, since the ultimate value is the achievement of harmony between the individual's natural/somatic and spiritual self. Both the spiritual and even the somatic, or physical, personal development can be the beginning of a path to harmonious development of the individual.

The implementation of this kind of strategy requires the development of new worldview and value foundations for the lifestyle. At the same time, one must be self-confident and motivated to obtain freedom and self-sufficiency. The individual must develop a strong stimulus for self-realization and a desire to make use of his will, mind and love of life and to be absolutely confident in order to pursue this strategy.

In our view, the value of Ego formulated as 'I am the source of everything, I am the reason of myself' must become the primary value of this lifestyle strategy. From a moral perspective, this value is implemented according to the following logic: I am building my 'Kingdom' for myself in order to find some supreme comfort in it. Consequently, my own attitudes must be a priority for me.

In terms of this value and cognitive attitude, the issue of good can be interpreted as follows: good is what is beneficial for the individual and provides him with an opportunity to live comfortably. On the contrary, evil is what reduces the level of personal comfort and hampers one's development and self-assertion. The issue of duty is dealt with exactly the same way: in the first place, the individual must take into consideration his own needs, while those of others are relevant as long as they correspond to the individual's own interests.

At this point, it can be argued that the consistent implementation of such an attitude might lead to utter selfishness from a moral point of view. It is evident, however, that if the individual totally disregards interests and needs of people around him will, he or she will have difficulty in achieving his or her own goals. Natural social processes make society, reference groups and other individuals create conditions that inhibit the development and self-fulfillment of individuals, whose life practices disregard the needs and values of people around them. There is always the possibility of avoiding extremes and of practicing the so-called 'reasonable egoism', as defined by the Russian philosopher Nikolay Chernyshevsky. Within the framework of reasonable egoism, considering interests, needs and demands of other people, specifically, those of the individual's inner circle, is quite possible.

This said, the authors do not believe that it would be appropriate to focus on rational and pragmatic aspects, as far as reasonable egoism is concerned. In our view, top priority should be given to emotional and spiritual principles. Love is the value that must guide the construction of a lifestyle in the mode of self-assertion. The value of Love shaped a distinctly new moral attitude as compared to egoism, which consists in accepting and serving interests and needs of the significant others. This can provide a sound foundation for developing psychological egoism.

As noted above, only of the main values of the secular lifestyle strategy is that of freedom. In our view, the interpretation of this value should be based on the ontological status of freedom; in other terms, freedom is not granted to the human being, it is inherent to him and every human being is born free. Freedom is an ancestral attribute of his being.

In the individual's sociocultural life, there are two aspects to the implementation of the value of freedom. Philosophers identify the first aspect as "freedom from". In the discussed strategy, this aspect of the life strategy is reflected in the above-mentioned interpretation of moral values such as Good, Well-Being, Duty and Love. Many people's life experience, however, convincingly demonstrates that the domination of freedom in terms of "freedom from" makes the individual's life poor, shallow and empty. This is why it is crucially important to connect the "freedom from" attitude to the "freedom for" attitude, which implies the positive and substantive content of the value of freedom.

A lifestyle in the information society

A new stage of civilizational development is taking place in the present-day world, namely, the information society based on digital technology. Modern society is transforming into a global network, which brings about significant changes to social interactions, individual and social group lifestyles. One of the best-known theories about the network society was developed in the 1990s by the American sociologist Manuel Castells and exposed in his *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*⁴ and *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business and Society*⁵. Castells states that networks have become the basic units of the information society. In our opinion, the network lifestyle can be defined as follows. The lifestyle in the network society is a system of the most widespread and recurring life practices in virtual space implemented as message-based communications.

Information and communication technology provides extensive opportunities to implement various lifestyle aspects into the network society. Along with positive aspects, a number of major features of the Network, however, open up the opportunities to develop negative lifestyle aspects. Negative lifestyle aspects in the network society have become a matter for concern among researchers and the general public. This concern encouraged them to start reconsidering network processes in terms of how lifestyle deformations can be reduced in the network society, given that laws are unable to control them, hence the need for moral regulation. Many researchers, public personalities and Internet users expressed the need for specific principles, norms and assessment methods applicable to various actions related to the use of information and communication technology. This generated extensive debate on ways of countering negative aspects of the negative lifestyle in the various areas and levels of public life and among information and communication technology developers. As an example, Pope Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger) joined in the discussion about impacts of information and communication technologies on lifestyles, urging the international community to develop a universal 'info-ethics' in the following terms: "Not everything that is technically feasible is ethically acceptable"⁶.

⁴ M. Castells, *Building the Society of Network Structures: A New Postindustrial Wave in the West*. Antology. Editor Inozemsteva V. L. (Moscow, 1999).

⁵ M. Castells, *Building the Society of Network Structures*...

⁶ M. Castells, *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business and Society* (Yekaterinburg, U-Faktoriya, 2004).

The discussion on the ethical principles of life governing the network society detected two main value attitudes. The first one, labelled as liberal, is based on the traditional Western ethical values such as human rights and freedoms, protection of human dignity and of private life. In terms of Western ethics, this intellectual pattern tends to perceive the Internet as the sphere of mainly private and commercial interests, which is why it insists on strict copyright protection of all digital products and, consequently, on the responsibility for their illegal exploitation. The result is that the rights of information owners restrict other people's right to obtain this information.

The second attitude can be labelled as anti-liberal, communitarian or anarchist. Its supporters regard the Network as a unique reality that is markedly different from the surrounding world. In their view, the human aspiration to expand the boundaries of communication and to perfect their own education made the advent of the Internet possible. Consequently, the mission of the Network is to contribute to general education and nobody can restrict it without causing considerable harm to mankind. Accordingly, the supports of this anti-liberal attitude reject the very notion of copyright law on the Internet, believing that everything posted online, albeit once, becomes public. In their opinion, restricting the right to use it is useless and the authors' charging fees for every downloaded copy is wrongful. Furthermore, copyright is nothing but an agreement between major producers aiming to transform the global network into a venue for promoting private commercial interests. With their radical ways of thinking, supports of the anti-liberal, communitarian position do not see the risk of destruction of ethical principles by stepping across the line in terms of what is allowed on the Internet. On the contrary, they assert that free virtual relationships will make people better understand each other, thus making them more compassionate and less aggressive.

When assessing these attitudes, the authors share the opinion of A. Skvortsov that both of them are one-sided and hardly applicable in their totality. The main drawback of the liberal attitude is that it stresses the homogeneity of network and conventional reality. It goes without saying that both spaces are not foreign to each other, but special challenges have emerged with the advent of the Internet, for instance, with respect to unlawful copyright. Similarly, the anti-liberal attitude overestimated people's aspiration to perfection and failed to predict many negative aspects of the global network that inflict great harm on real people rather than on some 'virtual subjects'⁷.

Virtual lifestyle

As mentioned above, information and communication technologies produce a new form of social reality, i.e. virtual reality, which makes considerable changes to all spheres of life of social groups and communities. Created by means of computers and other compatible devices, virtual reality recreates the real world and offers the individual the opportunity to build up interactions that are similar to the real ones without changing his or her location or coming into direct contact with other people. Moreover, the individual can experience various intense emotions, which are equal to, if not greater, than those they experience in real life. Virtual reality generates new symbols, knowledge, values, norms and social patterns that are part of the culture of a society, an individual and, consequently, of the individual lifestyle. Virtual reality imitates the surrounding world, as reproduced by the computer and, partially, selected by the user, and eventually offers the latter a new behavioral pattern.

⁷ Terrell Ward Bynum and Simon Rogerson (eds.) "Computer Ethics and Professional Responsibility" (Malden, MA, 2004). Retrieved from: <http://www.bolizm.ihep.su/>

Virtualization doubles reality and replaces the real world with the virtual one, although the sensory world of the supposed reality is unlike the one existing in virtual reality. The authors share the view of M. Govorukhina that a sensory image of virtual reality is the image of an image. In other words, the virtual sensory image is nothing but the real-world image constructed by the program's developers. A natural sensory image originates from the real, intricate and authentic world. The sensory image of the natural world is represented by the non-organic body of man who belongs to this world, whereas the sensory image of the virtual world is no such body⁸.

The question arises as to virtual reality's epistemological foundations. Postmodern philosophical methods can provide an answer to this question.

Postmodernism is known to use the term 'virtual' to create the impression that the world is multi-layered and each subsequent level results from the previous one, while living and existing according to its own rules. Under this approach, the excessive picturesque of reality undermines the traditional understanding of reality. A phenomenon is disconnected from the subject, which lives its life, hence the perception of virtual reality as an independent phenomenon that only needs reality in order to be created. In structuralism, a sign represented the real exterior world despite its dependence on its internal structure, whereas postmodernism annihilates the essence of the sign and denies its relation to the outer world. This fact conveys a typically postmodernist meaning to the notion of virtualization and makes it possible to detect the emergence of 'textual' virtual reality. Postmodernists' views on social reality as a 'text' puts a new interpretation on virtualization understood as the process of replacing real objects with their cognitive simulations. At the same time, virtual reality is presented as a specific language environment, in which the text dissolves while the 'textual' social reality becomes a new subject of research. In terms of postmodernism, the information and communication environment has, at least, two levels of reality: the superficial one, which consists of facts, events and phenomena, and the internal, structured one, which determines and explains events that are on the surface. Language constructions generate a specific layer of reality that abounds in image simulations aspiring to obtain a real embodiment.

Notably, postmodern philosophy is based on the assumption that the total semiotization of existence implies no connection between the significant and the signified, the limitation of human existence by textual interactions and the decisive role of sources in discourse formation. From the perspective of this school of thought, an ontological cultural aspect in postmodern times is simulativeness, whose evolutionary trend is manifest in all forms and at all structural levels of public consciousness in the given era. Simulation is a form of existence and of movement in the public consciousness of simulacra, characterized by the limitation of the perceptions of the surrounding space to a sphere of signs that have lost contact with reality.

In terms of postmodernism, the formation of virtual reality can be represented as a process of increasing simulation culminating in the becoming of the simulacrum. Let us clarify what is meant here by the term 'simulacrum'. The word was first time used by the ancient Roman philosopher Lucretius. Postmodernist French philosopher Georges Bataille introduced the term to modern philosophy, and it was popularized by Jean Baudrillard who believed that a simulacrum corresponded to no reality except its own. According to Baudrillard, a simulacrum is a representation of a missing reality, a credible semblance

⁸ A. Skvortsov, "Ethics on the Internet: Main Issues and Principles". Retrieved from: <http://media.ls.urfu.ru/182/1063/2120/2072/671/>

lacking the original, an object with no reality behind it, a representation of something that does not exist in reality. Consequently, a simulacrum is a form of virtual reality and a pseudo-image that attained the ultimate form of expression⁹. When socially interacting, simulacra take the form of constructs, which are invariable figurative, cognitive or value systems or models, with which individuals attempt to arrange in their mind and to interpret events occurring in life. Therefore, a figurative interpretation of social reality is based on postmodernist ideas, and the virtualization of society is represented as a process of generation of simulacra, signs and images that live their lives, are detached from real objects producing them and are of greater significance for people than their real-life analogs. It follows from the above that the lifestyle in virtual space is of simulative nature. Social practices adopted in this space are based on simulacra, which are the basis for information and technology communications in virtual space.

Researchers have different opinions on how to designate the need producing the virtual lifestyle. Given that research on psychological consequences of the virtualization of the lifestyle records states of frustration and depression in the subject of virtualization, some researchers name this need illusory, while others believe there is a need for illusions. In our opinion, a better-grounded approach is taken by authors who consider that the need producing the virtual lifestyle neither is illusory nor is a need for illusions. Instead, it is a real need for protection and self-preservation, which is satisfied by illusory means. In this regard, the virtual lifestyle becomes an answer to the situation of alienation and a need to overcome forces that dominate mankind. In the presence of certain socio-economic and political conditions, this need cannot be satisfied in reality through the material and practical transformation of the world. A solution to this situation is a practical and spiritual activity directed at producing socially ideal forms that foster the regulation and self-regulation of public life. In our view, the virtual world should be regarded as a variety of spiritual alienation, a perverse perception of the world generated by the perverse world. In this regard, virtual reality is characterized as a depraved, fantastic reflection of reality. From the epistemological perspective, this means that the results of the world's reflection in the mind of the subject of virtualization – or virtual images – are of false and inadequate nature. However, such notions as the 'adequacy' and 'inadequacy' of virtual images or their 'genuineness' and 'falseness' do not suffice to explain the reality reflected by the subject. Virtual images are a variety of social illusion rather than mere delusions or the results of the individual's reflection of reality. They do not emerge from the subject-object cognitive relationship and are not knowledge in the strict sense of this word, although a cognitive element is certainly present in them. A particular way of embracing reality, which can be defined as value-based or spiritually practical, is characteristic of virtual illusions and of types of social illusions. Social illusions are a perverse form of the subject's social consciousness and a reflection of the person's place in the system of social relationships, his needs, interests, motivations and a kind of the subject's self-orientation in relation to social values. The content of illusions manifests itself in various categories, including determination, obligation, good and evil. With respect to this special feature, one of the significant characteristics of the illusory (and virtual) reflection of reality is, admittedly, the transfer of the properties of the reflecting subject (his goals, aspirations, needs, etc.) to the object. What matters in this case is only what is related to the person and plays a certain role in his life. The main focus is on the reflection from the position of desirable possibilities. Consequently, the main content of virtual images results from certain aspects of individuals' spontaneous social and psychological experiences and from the transposition of their worldviews to the world rather than from their exploration of objective connections and relations of reality.

⁹ M.Govorukhina, *Virtualization of the Modern World: Split Reality* (Yekaterinburg, 2004).

The subjectivity of the virtual reflection is closely related to its other major feature, namely, the split world with illusionary and fantastic formations of collective consciousness. In virtual reality, the product of reflection replaces the reflected object and functions, in social interactions, as an independent essence or a specific reality. As a result, subjective psychological desires and fantasies transform into the objective world of personified spiritual essences. In virtual reality, objectified formations of consciousness act as tools of alienation. Influenced by certain social relationships, the products of this consciousness related to perceptions of beings, properties and contacts come together to create a world of fictional specificity and take on the appearance of independent forces. The mind of the subject of virtualization seems to lose the ability to distinguish between subjective ideal images and exterior objective reality, since images from the mind merge with reality and are perceived as reality. As a result, the individual acts together with the image, but does not control it. Instead, the image acts inside and through the individual and control him. The individual does not realize that events taking place in the imagined virtual world are nothing but a function of his own activity, so he himself becomes a function, an addition and an application of the processes and phenomena of his mind.

In summary, an analysis of the social nature of virtual reality leads us to the second important conclusion about the lifestyle in virtual space: it is of illusionary nature. Social illusions prevail in the lifestyle of the individual in virtual space, which raise legitimate questions about the objective and functions of social illusions for the subject of virtualization. The majority of researchers negatively assess the social role of illusions and most often identify them with misconceptions, myths and utopias. In our opinion, this assessment of illusions in general and of social illusions in particular seems one-sided. When evaluating social illusions, we believe that social illusions are a remedial self-deceit and the individual's false perception of these of those social and psychological processes and phenomena. We share the opinion of L. Shukshina that social illusions represent an existential value for people. Illusions are their inner resource and, in this regard, social illusions can be defined as a form reflecting the integrity of life within the context of fragmentary life in virtual space. Social illusions are necessary for the individual to concentrate his energy and to oppose the frustration impact of the environment. Social illusions contribute to the individual's adaptation to his environment and, as such, are a positive value, but only if these misconceptions do not exceed some threshold level, in which case the individual's actions become inadequate and delusional and result in personal and social catastrophes¹⁰.

Social illusions find expression in a unique concentration of energy aimed at achieved a goal and at surviving. By fulfilling their existential needs in love, creativity and happiness, social illusions enable the individual to withstand alienation and shape specific states of mind and spirit for the individual to be able to adapt to and change negative situations. Consequently, social illusions are a necessary and positive component of the social process, which is actively shaped by society and people to support life processes. Based on the above, the virtual lifestyle in the information society can be defined as follows: the virtual lifestyle in the information society is a specific form of organizing information and communication practices that are of simulative and illusionary nature.

¹⁰ G. Baudrillard, *On Perversion*. Ad Marginem '93. Yearbook of RAN (Laboratorii postklassicheskikh issledovaniy Instituta filosofii RAN). 1993.

Discussion

The study revealed that the lifestyle, which is a series of life practices that have been recurring for a long time, is based on various strategies, mainly the socially active and the passive (escapist) ones. The socially active lifestyle strategy is related to a choice of life practices aimed at individual self-assertion. In the present-day world, personal and social success based on leadership principles is a value that becomes an energizing force for self-assertion. The opposite of the active lifestyle strategy is the escapist strategy, which excludes society and focuses its lifestyle on self-assertion by achieving the individual harmony with itself and Nature. This lifestyle strategy highlights the individual's self-perfection as well as his spiritual and moral development. The escapist lifestyle strategy can have a religious or a secular value basis. The religious basis is salvation-oriented, while the secular lifestyle strategy highlights the value of freedom on the basis of which self-assertion is made possible in this world.

Modern society based on digital technologies is transforming into a global network, in which a specific lifestyle is being shaped. A lifestyle in the network society is a system of most common and recurrent life practices in virtual space, mainly in the form of message-based communications. A new form of social alienation takes place in virtual space. In this space, objectified mental formations perform the role of an alienation tool, replacing the reflected object and functioning in social interactions as an independent essence and a special reality. Social illusions prevail in the lifestyle of the individual in virtual space. As a result, the individual acts together with the image, but does not control it. Instead, the image acts inside and through the individual and control him. The individual does not realize that events taking place in the imagined virtual world are nothing but a function of his own activity, so he himself becomes a function, an addition and an application of the processes and phenomena of his mind.

Conclusion

Philosophically, a lifestyle is a system of most common and recurrent life practices adopted in anthropological, socio-cultural, technological and social environments. Psychologically, a lifestyle functions as a psycho-physiological and socio-cultural binding force of the individual's activity, thus ensuring the integrity of the concept of personality, the Ego. If various psycho-physiological and socio-cultural circumstances forces the individual to change his lifestyle, this individual loses his footing in life. Socially, a lifestyle acts as the determinant structure of the individual's activity. Because anthropological, motivational cognitive, moral, social and technological factors find expression in the life style, the latter acts as an integral system of deep-rooted life practices and functions as the main regulator of the individual's activity. Metaphorically speaking, a lifestyle puts the individual's activity on certain rails and then life rolls along these rails automatically, for the most part. The loss of the previous lifestyle means the termination of old determinants and the individual's newfound psychological freedom. The burden of freedom, however, is often unbearable for many people. If a person does not manage to build a new effective lifestyle and to 'get on the new rails' by acquiring new determinants, he or she risks a psycho-physiological or social degradation. Practice shows that, in exceptional circumstances, it is of utmost importance for the individual to preserve, as far as possible, the previous lifestyle in order to achieve stability. Hence, it may be concluded that the lifestyle is a structure that organizes the individual's activity and, as such, has an existential significance for it. Specifically, the existence of a lifestyle, which is a set of stereotype life practices, determines the essence or, in other terms, the destiny of the specific individual.

The research importance of the present study consists, above all, in that it adopted a new approach to the analytical analysis of the lifestyle as a social phenomenon, while taking into consideration the socio-cultural and technological factors behind its determination. This approach opens up new prospects in both the theoretical study of the lifestyle and the use of relevant social practices in implementing a wide range of research programs investigating various aspects of the lifestyles of different social groups.

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