

## **Intersubjectivity World of Virtual Reality: Facebook Users Behaviour in the Context of Privacy, Self and Identity**

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This paper brings together the perspective of social production of space as a 'category' which creates the 'inter-subjective' world of virtual reality where interaction is subjected to individual's virtual 'privacy' and in turn shapes their extended 'self and identity'. This reality keeps on negotiating with the actor as an external entity which can be identified as 'identity' and also as an internal entity which is often categorised as 'self'. The perspectives on extension of space blurred the notion of reality and imagination by identifying itself with Baudrillard's (1983) notion of 'hyper-reality'. And this is being considered to study the 'intersubjectivity' of virtual reality. Empirically, the paper focuses on young Facebook user's behaviour to understand major questions like young users concern on the issue of 'privacy' in virtual space and their presentation of 'self and identity'. For the construction of the young user's notion on "privacy, self and identity", we have considered the qualitative explanation provided by 80 young users across different parts of the country.

Keywords: Social media, Facebook, self, identity, privacy, intersubjectivity

Space can be apprehended as a category and a material reality. So, Space confronts two ideologies, one as a product of society called objectivist and other as the factor of social production called subjectivist. This paper brings together the perspective of social production of space as a 'category' which creates the 'inter-subjective' world of virtual reality where interaction is subjected to individual's virtual 'privacy' and in turn shapes their extended 'self and identity'. This reality keeps on negotiating with the actor as an external entity which can be identified as 'identity' and also as an internal entity which is often categorised as 'self'. The perspectives on extension of space blurred the notion of reality and imagination by identifying itself with Baudrillard's (1983) notion of 'hyper-reality'. And this is being considered to study the 'intersubjectivity' of virtual reality. While attempting to understand hyper-reality in the context of virtual 'intersubjectivity', the paper takes the argument further in the context of user's behaviour in the popular social networking site like Facebook.

The inter-subjective notion of cyberspace always questions the notion of reality. However, the question always remains that whether cyberspace can be considered as alternative reality or hyper-reality. As Berger and Luckman say, reality is always constructed in a social condition and thus, it wouldn't be wrong to say that cyberspace gives an

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opportunity for the creation of another social condition. Further, in the context of physical social condition, reality is also questioned as “who constructs that ‘reality’?”

Reality is as real as somebody’s experience and as neutral as one’s interpretation of another’s experience. In the context of reality and hyper-reality, social condition remains the key along with the notion of Space. Both the objectivists’ idea of Space and subjectivists’ notion of Space remains crucial for any social condition. As Lyotard (1986) would argue, in the postmodern condition, there is no uniformity in societal discourses or rather there is no one meta discourse that stands above all others; there is no one form of knowledge that is privileged and serves as the ground for all others. Rather, there is simply a multiplicity of various language-games<sup>1</sup>, a term which Lyotard borrows from the Wittgenstein. The basic idea that Lyotard borrows from Wittgenstein is:

“of you want to know the meaning of a term, a phrase or a sentence, look at how it is utilized, how it functions in human interaction. There is no metalanguage that embraces and grounds all of the different types of statements and phrases; science gives us cognitive statements, to be sure, but there are many other, different kinds of statements that science is not concerned with at all.”

The same has also been argued by Foucault (1977) with his genealogical method that hermeneutic quest for deep and hidden meaning merely uncovers more interpretation, “as everything is already interpreted (as quoted in Introna, 1997).

To quote Introna (1997), “we have entered the age of postmodernism. The modern epoch with its subject-object duality has proved to be untenable. The sacred categories of the modern age: essence, substance, truth, real self, science, and so forth are all the philosophical trash heap along with Philosophy (with a capital P). Postmodern society hangs precariously suspended over the abyss of nihilism. How should it understand itself, how should it react?”

In the context of the subjective and objective world and between reality and hyper-reality, the society is conditioned by the mediated technologies. In the journey and evolution of media and/or mediated technology, social transformation of life is shaped and interpreted in multiple ways. As Baudrillard argues, this journey always happened in phases when reality starts getting represented through signs and symbols becoming another form of relation even dissociating from the ‘reality’. The journey has always been shaped by different form of media technology. In the journey of reality to hyper-reality and dialogue between subjectivity and objectivity, we always remain in the dilemma of who we are and our presence in the world of reality or hyper reality. The question always remains, how should we understand and think about our existence, our identity and our self. How should we make sense of ourselves? Is it a subjective interpretation of the human existence or do we need to think about being more practical and talk about the objective reality of the existence (we will discuss in the literature review section). Being objective about self-existence is also questioned in terms of the social conditioning of the objective reality of the society, what Berger and Luckmann (1966) call ‘social construction of reality’. What if the reality we know is a constructed reality and has a shared meaning. To quote Berger and Luckmann (1966) again:

"...theoretical knowledge is only a small and by no means the most important part of what passed for knowledge in a society... the primary knowledge about the institutional order is knowledge... is the sum total of 'what everybody knows' about a social world, an assemblage of maxims, morals, proverbial nuggets of wisdom, values and beliefs, myths, and so forth" (p.65)

So the whole notion of individual understanding of self, existence and individual identity is in a fluid path. If there can be alternative reality, alternative space of elasticity of individual self, identity and existence is also possible. Multiple Spaces can also be the reality and multiplicity of reality can be both objective and subjective as well. Here the self and identity is fragmented and the fragmentation is another form of reality.

This fragmentation of human existence unfolds multiple layers of human living and paves our path to a new 'world', new frontier which is basically the reality of imagination, can't be seen, can't be touched but still have their own presence and have their own existence in form of cyberspace and virtual reality.

### Structure of the Study

In the context of increasing engagement in cyberspace and individual participation in the virtual world, a reflection on the ontological<sup>2</sup> status of 'human existence' is important. This becomes more pertinent when life operates more in a mediated world which goes way beyond the objectivist notion of reality and questions the understanding of subjectivist interpretation as well. The growth and evolution of internet and bringing the extended and exhaustive social space bring many more arguments relating to human existence. To be more specific when we talk about online social networking, the involvement, engagement and establishment of social relationship on inter-personal and intra-personal level always brings the notion of fluidity in the static nature of understanding human existence. The most intriguing question of understanding the social condition as social or asocial puts forth another question as to whether this, is reality, imagination, myth or as Baudrillard says the 'hyper-reality'. This paper is neither arguing in the favour of hyper-reality nor rejecting the notion of hype-reality but is an attempt to understand the status of human existence in an alternative reality. However, this is certain that in this kind of Space reality remain as a question in the context of Heidegger's (1962) 'presence and rationalistic' tradition. Essentially, there are two distinct claims and schools of thought pertinent to understand the new social reality. One comes from the rationalistic tradition and goes up to the Baudrillard's (1981) notion of *Simulacra and Simulation* and the other sticks to the rationalistic tradition and has been argued by Heidegger (1962) in *being-and-time*.

One of the interesting examples which bring the dualism of cyber reality is 'cyber sex'. As cited in (1997) and we quote:

"if an individual cyber traveller claims to have been raped in cyber space (Dibbel, 1994), what does such a claim mean. What will police officer say if the victim enters to the local police station and tries to charge the other virtual person who raped her? What sense will such a claim have? What will be the social institutional background be that will make such a claim sensible to a point that the police officer can and will investigate it."

In this paper, we have attempted to understand this very example which essentially envelopes two major 'reality'. One is the notion of 'privacy' and other is the 'self and

identity'. When the previous one essentially remains individual, the self and identity is always contextual with the social meaning. The above mentioned case can be understood in two major lenses. Firstly, the police needs to file the case and needs to investigate it as this is absolutely an atrocity against one individual and violation of the individual right to live and live with dignity (Indian Constitution, Article 21<sup>3</sup>). However, considering the volatility of Space, the existing laws may not be applicable for the investigation of the cyber-rape. A new law is essential for this investigation, which raises the question of Baudrillard's (1983) Simulcra. This is another form of reality not necessarily representing the reality of the physical world or Space. This can be considered as the last stage of simulation, in which the simulacrum has no relationship to any reality whatsoever. For him, 'reality is dead', it never existed, it was and is just a staging, a simulation. He sees the transcendence of nihilism<sup>4</sup> in what Nietzsche (2007) called 'absolute nihilism' or 'hyper-nihilism'. In this condition, we are free to produce the reality that we desire.

So considering the case of cyber-rape as a reality, we should accept the practice and create mechanism which is different than the physical reality. This leads to the establishment of the philosophical basis for a wholesale acceptance of cyber-reality as a hyper-reality and cyberspace as hyper-space. Secondly, we may think about Heidegger's approach to understand the reality in the context of 'we are always already in the world'. That cyberspace, which for the most part, is a trivial mode of existence and in which a subject can enter time to time, experiences an imaginary life called second life, travels cyberspace and has cyber-sex but at the end, needs to switch off the device like computer, mobile phone etc. and copes with everyday life, do things that people do as a student, father, mother, husband, wife etc. In this lens of understanding, cyber-rape doesn't make existential sense in the context of existence, identity and self in cyberspace.

In developing our argument, we will structure the paper in four major sections. Firstly, we will discuss the subjectivist tradition of 'being-in-the-world' in the context of cyberspace. Secondly, we will focus on the objectivist tradition to understand the cyberspace. Thirdly, we will analyse the empirical data collected as a part of our field work to understand both the subjectivist and objectivist tradition to find out the notion of 'privacy, self and identity' in cyberspace. Finally, we will discuss and critically evaluate the meaningfulness of the notion of cyber construction of reality while being in cyberspace.

## Methodology

The paper draws its inspiration from the major theoretical contribution to understand 'reality' from thinkers such as Baudrillard, Heidegger, Gibson, Turkle, Derrida and Foucault. However, recent works in the areas of 'privacy, self and identity' are being referred in order to understand the growing concern over cyberspace and particularly the social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter etc. The data used for this paper belongs to the qualitative part of the study which attempts to find the Indian Facebook user's concern over the issue of 'privacy' in virtual space and their presentation of 'self and identity'. As a part of the qualitative phase of the study, around 80 users in different parts of the country were asked to write essays on questions pertaining to the issues of privacy, self and identity. Five questions were asked to 80 Facebook users relating to these three issues and answers were obtained from them. The purpose of generating these answers was to identify items concerning the issues of privacy, self and identity and subsequently develop a scale to measure these in virtual space. For this paper, we have used the answers given by 80 respondents on five major questions relating to privacy, self and identity (see Appendix-1). All answers have been examined and used for the analysis of the paper.

## Being in the Cyber-World

The interpretive world of reality is difficult to understand as it always questions the 'understanding' itself. Every social artefact has assigned a meaning and the meaning is created by the society itself (Burger & Luckman, 1962). Individual's engagement in the world of reality is always constructed in a conditioned social set up. An individual operates in a duality of constructed social reality and a self, which grows out of a society's interpersonal interactions and the perception of others. As Cooley (1964), says about the 'looking glass self, people shape their self-concepts based on their understanding of how others perceive them and how they think others think them to be. Every individual self emerges from the interaction of another social being. As per the symbolic integrationist Goffman's (1959) interpretation and cited in Zhao (2005):

"We present ourselves to others as we interact with them, and we come to know ourselves as others react to us. Just as we find out how we look from the reflections we see in the mirror, we learn who we are by interpreting how others respond to us. Others communicate their attitudes toward us not merely in the expressions they give, but more important, in the expressions they "give off" (pp. 387-390).

Extending from the physical presentation of self, existing research suggests that the cyberspace has followed the Goffmanian tradition of presentation of self to others in virtual environment (Turkle, 1995; Zhao, 2005). The anonymity of the virtual world extends the possibility of the physical space for creating multiple social realities where individual presents his/her self. Coming back to the major argument of the paper that the existence of self is being questioned as a subjective reality or objective reality, virtual space grows between the two. As some literature suggests the notion of presence and the feeling of 'being there' is central to the tele-operation and virtual reality (Minsky, 1980 cited in Zahorik & Jenson, 1998). However, a considerable effort has been given in the social studies research to understand the notion of 'reality' and to question that follow from the presence definitions, for instance: What determines presence? How may presence or existence be measured (ibid, p. 78). To understand the reality of presence and existence either in the physical or virtual world from the vast literature in the field, the paper is going to highlight two major tradition of understanding of 'being in the world'. First one advocates the subjectivist tradition of understanding the reality and argues for the relationship between psychological and physical domain that determines the reality. This argument extends till the post-modernists argument of psychological construction or mental map of reality as Baudrillard (1981) highlights in his argument of simulacra and simulation. The second philosophical tradition holds the objectivist's notion that existence and reality tied to our normal, everyday physical interaction with the physical world which we belong to. Essentially this comes from the Heideggerian work on 'being and time' and the work of psychologist J.J. Gibson.

### Subjectivist Understanding of Being in the World

This tradition always believes in the intersection of the psychological and physical domain of reality. This can also be related to the rationalism that traces its origin from the Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz (as cited in Shand, 2002). They are of the opinion that knowledge is obtained on the basis of reason or rationality. This framework underwrites the information processing approach to perception and cognition. The subjectivist's notion of understanding

the reality generally considers the digital computer as a metaphor for the process of cognition as well as of perception, in as much as a process of intelligent problem solving (Zahorik & Jension, 1998). Where the programming is considered as the mental condition and the hardware is considered as the physical co-presence.

In the case of social conditioning of reality, the human mind works as computer programming and physical co-presence represents the social conditioning. This envelops both subjective and objective world of reality. While mental domain is considered to be purely subjective world of individual's reality, physical domain is considered as objective world of individual reality (Winogard & Flores, 1986 as cited in Zahorik & Jension, 1998). Due to both the subjectivists and objectivists understanding of the major works in the domain, it is considered as the rationalistic tradition of understanding reality. However, the subject/object distinction brings the whole range of debate in the context of virtual reality. When physical space is getting detached from the extended Space in the form of virtual space, the question of multiple realities comes to existence. Multiple realities lead to the Baudrillard's concept of hyper-reality and Simulcra. Though this paper is not framed in the Baudrillard's notion of Simulcra but we are not rejecting the notion of hyper-reality to understand the socio-personal relationship in the cyberspace.

In addition to the hyper-reality, postmodernists also believes that with the emergence of the cyberspace, we now experience an information society in which the media no longer broadcasts high culture in a one-to-many direction, but the media has become more fluent, individualistic and superficial (Jacobi, 2012). With the advent of new media technology, signs, images and symbols are no longer the copy of the reality. They have become the reality in itself. Though this has happened from the time of television but has become more obvious in the cyberspace, which detached the users from the represented reality. The image presented is no longer less real than real or less authentic than the original. Each image or symbol has a story of their own and carry a set of meaning which not necessarily tenders its meaning from the physical reality. Baudrillard explains this as rise of the hyper-real world with the 'death of the god<sup>5</sup>', which has caused 'the desert of real' (as cited in Jacobi, 2012).

The theory of Baudrillard, is not only contested but also contrasted by many of the critical and modern theorists. While all of them agreeing on the rise of information society, Baudrillard (1988), argue that with the rise of information society and new media technology, not only the social world has diminished but also the individual and self has imploded like any other meaning in this world. For example 'modernity' for Habermas, can have real value, as it carries true knowledge and significance and in some aspects, is linked to the past or objectivist world. Whereas this is a sharp contrast to Baudrillard's simulacrum, as in the argument of Habermas, the contemporary existence can have genuine meaning and can be understood through rationality (Habermas, 1992). Same is the case with Marshal McLuhan. Though they both talk about the increase of information and modern mass media, but, they have different opinion on the same. When McLuhan talks about the global explosion of mass media in the late stage of modernity, it gives a meaning to the reality and strengthens the reality. While for Baudrillard, explosion of mass media is the concomitant of 'implosion of all meanings'. For McLuhan, 'medium is the message' (McLuhan, 1964) and for Baudrillard 'medium is the simulation in itself' (as cited in Jacobi, 2012), which creates the state of Simulcra and hyper-reality. The paper brings together multiple issues in the context of virtual reality, which is more real than real, which has a meaning of its own and traces no connection with reality and remain in the mind of human beings and gives new meaning to all kind of reality, be it privacy, self or identity as an independent 'simulacra' or the hyper-reality.

## Objectivist's Creation of Reality

Everything physical or being physical can only give a meaning to any creation of 'reality'. We can travel the Space in our imagination. Life beyond the physical is temporary and can be withdrawn at your wish. Heidegger, attempts to answer the ontological question of 'what it means to be'? He argues that, it refers to an existential sense of 'in' (Heidegger, 1962). Human being is always involved – 'concernedly absorbed in the world, so is never primarily a being, which is so to speak, free from being in but which sometimes has the inclination to take up a relationship towards the world. Taking up a relationship towards the world is possible only because the human being, as being-in-the-world, is as it is' (as cited in Introna, 1997). To answer the ontological question, 'what it ought to be', Heidegger felt that it is not possible to adopt a detached view point for examination as since such examination can take place in the context of certain physical, social, and historical state of affairs (Zahorik & Jenison, 1998). For Heidegger the nature of human existence or the reality of human being is essentially the way we interpret the situation or environment we are in. For him this is the 'thrownness' of what it means to be?

From a Heideggerian point of view, human beings are thrown in situations in which they must continue to act and interpret. Every action of human being in any form is situation driven and most of the time all of our action is unavoidable, so human being can't detach itself from the action it is doing or supposed to do. This has no relation with the different contextual reality as human detachment from the situation is impossible. In a way this questions the fluidity of 'self and identity' in virtual reality, as detachment is not possible. Every action is spontaneous and immediate so hardly there are any opportunity for detaching oneself from the 'individual self' and creation of another or multiple reality. He also strengthens his argument further by saying even though an individual wants to interpret his presentation, the representation is always influenced by individual's current experience and state of mind which it primarily derives from being-in-the-world. So 'being there' and 'presence' has therefore been arrived at: cited by (Zahorik and Jenison, 1998) and we quote:

"presence is tantamount to successfully supported action in the environment. The environment may be virtual or real, as well as local or remote in relation to the operator. Heidegger deny that any type of subjective component of presence exists at all, under conditions of concerned action in the environment"

## Intersubjective World of Cyberspace

Drawing from both the subjectivists and objectivist's tradition of creation, understanding and interpretation of reality, this section brings some empirical findings to clarify the question of reality vs. hyper-reality in the virtual world. Through this empirical understanding, attempt has been made to find out how the objectivists understanding of reality is interpreted in the context of virtual space and meanings created. Is it leading to the creation of another 'Simulcra' or denies detaching from the objectivists understanding of reality. Three major realities of human existence like privacy, self and identity being framed to be tested in the context of a virtual social conditioning. Questions were framed and asked to selected Facebook users. For the purpose of our analysis, following are the four descriptive type questions that we use that deal with the notion of 'privacy, self and identity':

RQ1. What measure do you take to protect your privacy in Facebook?

RQ2. How do you present yourself on Facebook, especially in terms of your photos, age, gender or your orientation, status, update, comments etc.? Do you think these things tell something about you?

RQ3. What are the most crucial features of Facebook that helps you to describe yourself and understand about others?

RQ4. How are you different from Facebook description of your real life?

While the first question deals with the reality of privacy, other three questions deal with two important realities of life: self and identity. To understand the realities of existence for this study, we have explained 'self' as "person's essential being that distinguishes him/her from others, especially considered as the object of introspection or reflexive action". Further, "Self includes the internal characteristics of the person. For example: thinking, attitude, emotions etc." and 'identity' is being defined as "the fact of being who or what a person or thing is. Identity is constructed with external characteristics of the individual". For example: his body features, citizenship, profession, education.

## Privacy

Privacy as a reality is described as a thing which is personal, which an individual wants to protect from 'the others'. In the objective sense of reality privacy is always related to the wealth, secrecy of information or private part of human body, which s/he wants to protect from the others. At times, privacy is also very subjective, which goes beyond a particular individual and confines in a close group. It is the tendency of an individual to protect a set of objects or things from others and he/she takes different measures to protect the same. While trying to get answer of how users think and interpret the reality of privacy in a virtual reality, specifically in the Facebook, we found that a set of things are created and measures are taken to protect the same under the reality of privacy. While trying to understand what is private for you:

*Respondent 1:* "I block all my photographs, my wall, my friends list from everyone except my friend"

*Respondent 2:* I have blocked people whom I don't want to be a part of my friend list. I also blocked my photos from being misused"

*Respondent 3:* "well, who is not in my friend list can only access my name and location in India, and won't able to access any other information. Some of my photo albums on Facebook are restricted such that some of my family doesn't have access to it; as some of them has severe problem of being judgemental and ....."

For all three respondents, the reality of measure to protect their things from others is same as we do in our physical space. However, a new set of 'the others' and things need to be protected in the social conditioning of virtual reality like photographs, a close family in physical space becoming 'the others', so the personal things need to be protected from them as well. Some other respondents also created the layers among their friends to make sure which need to be protected from whom, primarily deriving from the extension of Space of being-in-the world. For example one of the respondents responded as:

*Respondent 5:* "I share my status updates only with friends rather than public. Also I have changed my settings to ensure that friends have to ask for permission before tagging me and ....."

This indicates that in the virtual space, individuals act as private persons and attempt to monitor him/herself, where s/he needs to be or not. At times, the device from where people use Facebook plays an important role in making the meaning of being private. As one of the respondent responded that:

*Respondent 6:* "I avoid using Facebook from public computers and if I have to use, I make sure that I have logged out properly"

Thus, we see that the nature of protection is essentially coming from the objectivist's tradition and Heidegger's notion of being-in-the world while, things that need to be protected from 'the others' in a virtual reality is essentially subjectivists in nature and more coming from the Baudrillard's notion of hyper reality or simulacra. Even the creation of 'the others' is also another form of simulacra which is not essentially derived from the notion of being-in-the world.

#### Self and Identity

Unlike privacy, which is clear for our respondents, which needs to be protected and from whom, analysis of self and identity gives a different picture of reality. It is more towards the creation of reality or a reality with imagination as most of the postmodernist argue. Both the internal as well as external manifestation of reality in forms of self and identity takes different meaning in virtual space. There are many responses which indicate that the Space as just an extension of Space goes clearly with the objectivists' tradition of meaning creation and reality. However, there are responses which indicate that Space creates its own meaning and shapes its own reality. So this is not necessary to present as the extension of physical self and identity. For example while asking the second set of questions:

*Respondent 10:* "I always try to present as I am. I provide all correct information. I always try to keep my profile real and not funny. A person can judge whether, a person is kind, sad, happy by the updates and comments she makes on Facebook. Mostly I prefer to update my real descriptions because that is how my friend could know me in spite of being apart. This is a media to inform the loved ones about our life ....."

*Respondent 15:* "I don't like to present myself using my own photos or personal information's. I don't think there is a need to share our personal information..."

*Respondent 23:* "Facebook shares a virtual world, where we share only good or positive side of ourselves. All personal things happening may not be shared ..."

*Respondent 27:* "My status updates are usually attractive one. I show anger in my real life quickly but I control a lot in Facebook. I don't think you can describe yourself in Facebook. It's just through pictures, status updates and comments you can get some idea about the opposite person ..."

This operates in both the objective and subjective world of reality, where not only reality can be manipulated but also can be created. Though with the intervention of new media and technology, an extended Space is being generated but this may be possible through signs, symbols and the meanings being interpreted. As Baudrillard points out that signs and symbols may carry the reality at first stage but with its development, signs and symbols can become the reality in itself which would have no connection to the being-in-the-world objective reality.

*Respondent 53:* "I describe myself as a great person, I may not be real in some of my photos, comments or Facebook shares etc. I do status updates especially

jokes on sardars (Sikhs) by news feed and love quotes and shayaries (Urdu poetry) in a group, 'love is life'. My age, gender, orientations are the same as in my real life. My relationship status in Facebook is 'complicated' for being different .."

*Respondent 67:* "I present myself on Facebook especially in terms of my photos, age, gender or my orientation, status update or my comments etc in a very simple way. Because I want people to always think that I am a simple person. My status updates are always related to social messages. In my real life I am not so simple. I am a fun loving person but in Facebook I never describe or comment anything about fun. It is always very simple or related with serious matter. I am not a serious person in life..."

Responses like this always exist in the virtual space, which provides a Space to experiment with the existing human reality. In the context of self-identity, it has been found that in most of the responses, it is easy to modify or recreate the self which is essentially internal and intangible facts of life, including human nature, emotion etc. This can be recreated in terms of associating yourself with signs, symbols for example liking the books, pages or personalities one associates his/her self with. However, in most of the responses, we have found that they are clear in terms of their identity presentation in virtual space.

## Conclusion

This brings the comparison between privacy with self and identity. When almost everybody is concerned of being personal and protecting and sharing a created meaning of reality, in case of self and identity many instances give multiple narrative of the reality, which creates and recreates itself in the virtual space. Though most of the responses are sounding to be conformists and going with the notion of extension of Space with the self and identity but, inherently, there is an ongoing phenomenon of creation of reality in terms of reproduction of signs and symbols. Though, I would not completely agree with the idea of 'simulacra' being produced in the virtual space but certainly, realities are reproduced with imaginations. Some of the responses are clearly depicting that individual reality is mixed with their imagination to produce a cyber reality, which is no less than truth but also not truth or reality. With the explanation of three forms of cyber-reality viz. Subjective, objective and inter-subjective, we see an emerging category of individual virtual participation. Firstly, conformists: those going with the objectivists notion of reality and their virtual self is an extension of physical self, secondly perfectionists- they mostly bring the notion of hyper-reality and attempt to accommodate the imagination with the objectivist reality, tamper some component with the virtue of cyberspace and create another form of reality which has its root in reality, and finally, virtual invaders- those who create a Space for themselves in virtual space and create a reality for themselves as well as for others for their acceptability, which is essentially a reality without any root in being-real. The third category can be considered as deviants or non-conformists in virtual space which is not very popular at this stage of virtuality. However, needless to mention that all forms of reality in virtuality confirms both subjectivist and objectivist tradition reality by being intersubjectivity.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>A language-game is a philosophical concept developed by Ludwig Wittgenstein and Friedrich Waismann, referring to simple examples of language use and the actions into which the language is woven. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language-game\\_%28philosophy%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language-game_%28philosophy%29) on 29/09/2015

<sup>2</sup>Ontology is the metaphysical study of the nature of being, becoming, existence, or reality, as well as the basic categories of being and their relations (Wikipedia)

<sup>3</sup>Protection of life and personal liberty No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law (Constitution of India)

<sup>4</sup>a viewpoint that traditional values and beliefs are unfounded and that existence is senseless and useless and a doctrine that denies any objective ground of truth and especially of moral truths (Webster English dictionary)

<sup>5</sup>The pre-modern way of life in which god gave ultimate meaning to all representations has been "murdered" and we now experience representations through "substituting signs of the real for the real itself". Real meaning, therefore, is ever increasingly imploding in itself to the extent that it is no longer appropriate to theorize about one media culture or one audience (as cited in Jacobi, 2012).

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### Appendix-1

#### List of qualitative questions used for the study

- Question 1: How do you present yourself on Facebook especially in terms of your photo or photos, age, gender, or your orientation, status update, comments etc.? Do you think these things tell something about you? (Around 150 words)
- Question 2: What are most crucial features of Facebook that help you to describe yourself and understand about others? Please briefly explain how? (Around 150 words)
- Question 3: How are you different in your Facebook description from your real life? (Around 150 words)
- Question 4: What do you understand by privacy while using Facebook? (Around 150 words)
- Question 5: What are the steps taken by you in Facebook to protect some of the information about yourself from public? (Around 150 words)

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