

POLIS, COSMOPOLIS AND GLOBALISATION



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POLIS, COSMOPOLIS
AND GLOBALISATION

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meta Kivle

Imitation and Simulation of Number:
Ancient Cosmos and Postmodern Hyperreality

ABSTRACT: The study views the concept of number in the context of two different models of society – ancient and postmodern: one is hypostatic – coming upwards and downwards; the other is a horizontally generated multiplicity – the deconstruction of the real into details. In the context of the current study “global” is viewed as a universal order that gives understanding of composition and functions of the Cosmos, the World and human life in it where the concept of number is used as a measure for identification of global processes. The study centres upon a question: How number as a universal constituent element is presented in antiquity and in postmodernity? In ancient philosophy number is contemplated as a universal order of cosmos, society, art and human soul; in postmodern philosophy number is transformed from measure of harmony to coding systems, algorithms and self-generated forces of hyperreality. In the current study are employed cognitions of Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle, Plotinus *The Sixth Ennead, Sixth Tractate: On Number* and Baudrillard’s work *Simulacra and Simulation* as primary resources of the study.

How are presented numbers in ancient cosmos and how a human imitates the order of cosmos in art, music and society? In ancient philosophy number is an intelligible and creative entity, pre-given and universal (global) order where such concepts as measure, proportion, harmony, infinity and finitude, unit and multiplicity, universal and particular are viewed in connection with cosmos, life, justice, goodness and beauty.

In Baudrillard’s philosophy we see how the real world transforms into global simulacra, how appearances seem more real than the world of nature, people and objects, how number realizes a status of method that generates global hyper-reality in which relations of real life are transferred into signs without references to another reality. The most profound simulation is shown as the chain of simulative functions from one simulacrum to another simulacrum. Such simulation is based solely on flux of information: its aim is maximum speed of data and total control.

KEY -WORDS: ancient, postmodernity, reality, number, hyperreality, global

The main concepts of the current study - *number, imitation, simulation, ancient cosmos and hyperreality* - are employed as a core for identification of differences between

two realities – ancient and postmodernity. Number as the central concept of them and universal constitutive element is adherent to both of these realities. It is viewed from origin of philosophy till nowadays, comprehended in various philosophical approaches and included in different cultures.

Philosophy of number differs from mathematical approach – in mathematics number is used in relations of counting, calculation and geometric correlations remaining in realm of arithmetic operations. The most popular mathematical definitions characterize number as arithmetic value that is expressed by a word, symbol, or figure. In any case, (mathematical or philosophical) number relates to intelligible reality: it gives clear reference to particular quantity and demonstrates how mind is connected with sensitive world or how numbers simulate self-referential codes and signs. Numbers as a metaphysical order, an element of ontological structures, a measure of harmony, movement and transformation are applicable for comparison of various philosophical approaches. In *Tractatus on Number* Plotinus gives universal characteristics of relations between number and being: “It remains then to consider whether Being by its distinction produces Number or Number produced that distinction. It is certain that either Number was a cause of Being, movement, rest, identity and difference, or these the cause of Number.” (VI.6.9.)¹ Correlations between number and being show various, but, at the same time, common positions of different realities, in this case – ancient cosmos and hyperreality.

Philosophical approach seeks abstract and universal being of numbers that connates with ideas, shapes and forms - number always is something definite. From one side, numbers are independent of capacities of subjective mind but, from other side, numbers are constituted by human mind as measure of order, proportion, harmony, quantity etc. The stances that permeate all spectrum of human activities are considered as the main philosophical characterizations of number; they elucidate functions of being and justify rational order of the world as well as constructed realities - simulacrum, hyperreality, digital world, etc. In this case, number is used not only as measure, sequence or order but also as an intelligible entity, indicator and methodological tool for comparison of different cultures and different realities:

- number - intelligible entity that forms intelligible reality;
- number is used for characterization of faculty of human mind to think and conceptualize permanent and complete abstract ideas;
- number is viewed in connection with cosmos, life, justice, goodness, beauty, virtuality and hyperreality;
- number is characterised by such concepts as *measure, proportion, harmony, infinity and finitude, one and multiplicity, universal and particular*;
- number - universal constitutive element that gives possibility to understand and interpret different cultures and societies;
- correlations of numbers are implemented as instrument for transformation of uni-

¹ All references to the *Enneads* are in standart form. Therefore (VI.6.9.) indicates the ninth chapter of the sixth tractate of the Ennead six.

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versal order in sensitive world.

These philosophical stances are applicable for both activities – imitation and simulation. In Antiquity imitation of absolute numbers to sensitive world, society and art is the main downcast movement, while differently from imitation, simulation develops and moves horizontally as self-generated force in the same reality. It does not seem that imitation and simulation are never absolute opposites - the differences between them are seen in several aspects - relation to reality, direction of numeral movements and presence of mimetic and representational functions. How do we represent reality? In *Simulacra and Simulation* Baudrillard gives characterization of four kinds of representation: 1) Reflection of a basic reality in image is characterised as an activity of imitation that is measured as a good appearance. 2) Masks and perversions of basic reality are characterized as evil appearances. 3) An absence of a basic reality in representation “is the order of sorcery”. 4) Representation of its own pure simulacrum that “is no longer in the order of appearance at all, but of simulation”. Representation about what Baudrillard writes concerns human’s world, human’s activity and moral attention. Imitation is a more comprehensive activity than representation – it indicates realms or hypostasis from One to many from absolute cosmic numbers till infinite multiplicity. In such an approach representation is considered as a kind of imitation that retains options of how to represent and what to imitate. In the context of antiquity imitation is given not only as a human’s faculty but also as an ontological force of cosmos.

Baudrillard suggests that simulation is opposed to representation and the difference between imitation and simulation is seen exploring principle of equivalence: “Representation starts from the principle that the sign and the real are equivalent (even if this equivalence is Utopian, it is a fundamental axiom). Conversely, simulation starts from the Utopia of this principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value, from the sign as reversion and death sentence of every reference. Whereas representation tries to absorb simulation by interpreting it as false representation, simulation envelopes the whole edifice of representation as itself a simulacrum.”²

Simulation as well as imitation relates to reality in different ways, it depends on what is thought by reality. Reality as being actual existence always changes its horizons from real objects to images and words, from intellect and emotions to signs and images, from signs to signs, etc. Faculty of ancient cosmos to be imitated is not more real than hyperreality with its functions of simulation - they both are realities of philosophical environments of different cultures. Ancient cosmos shows a referential model from the numeral order of heaven to human and nature, from one to multiplicity, while hyperreality activates a new reality of numeral correlations from multiplicity to multiplicity, and, in such a way, maintains simulacrum. Simulacrum is not unreal but exchanging in itself including performativity where ‘real’ and imaginary merge and signs and numbers refer back towards other signs and numbers functioning in one and the

² Baudrillard, Jean, *Simulacra and Simulations* // Baudrillard, Jean, *Selected Writings* / edit. by Mark Poster, Stanford University Press, 1988, P. 170.

same virtual place of existence: "Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal."³ The following notions are considered identifying features of simulation:

Simulation is a special kind of imitation dedicated to hyper-realities and a self-referential coding system characterized by flux of signs and numbers without references to objects and other realities. Simulative actions create self-referential numeral networks, and simulation of numeral correlations provide and maintain functions of self-generated hyper-realities. Simulation shows that distinction between object and representation, thing and idea is rejected - the real world is replaced with constructed world of simulacra. As an example of real simulacra Baudrillard mentions Disneyland: "Disneyland is a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulation.⁴ The Disneyland imaginary is neither true nor false; it is a deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real."⁵

The main difference between imitation and simulation confirms an existence of two realities: one is concerned with human's activities that imitate nature, cosmos and the other peoples and make references from intelligible to sensitive, from the perceptual world to the intelligible; another is hyperreality with its own realm that is without references to real human life and activities. Imitation, differently from simulation, insinuates by human activities and is concerned with mimesis in various activities: language, art, politics, knowledge. In *Poetics* Aristotle writes that imitation is natural to man from childhood and human is the most imitative creature in the world who learns at first by imitation.⁶ Ancient philosophers give the main characteristics of imitation - imitation is thought in the sense of mimesis and representation uniting both: human faculty that is applicable to education, language, art, state and society as well as metaphysical linkage between cosmos, human and society.

Imitation of number is a particular form of philosophical contemplations, artistic creation and the supreme (highest) form of imitation - it refers to intelligible entities, order of cosmos and organization of state. In *Republic* Plato writes: "They (philosophers) come to the contemplation of the nature of numbers with intellection itself, not practicing it for the sake of buying and selling like merchants or tradesmen, but for war and for ease of turning the soul itself around from becoming to truth and being."⁷

Ancient philosophy concerns several aspects of number from cosmic dimensions till sensitive and calculative world reaching different realms of human activities - de-

³ Baudrillard, Jean, *Simulations* / transl. by Phil Beitchman, Paul Foss, Paul Patton; Semiotext(e), 1983, 159. P.

⁴ *Ibid*, P. 27.

⁵ *Ibid*, P. 29.

⁶ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1448b1-5 (Aistotle. *Poetics* // The complete works of Aristotle: the revised Oxford translation / ed. by Jonathan Barnes. Princeton (New Jersey); Princeton University Press, 1995. 2 vol.xiii, 2487 p.)

⁷ Plato, *Republic*, 525c // The Collected Dialogues of Plato: Including the Letters / ed. by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Princeton (New Jersey); Princeton University Press, 1999. xxv, 1743 p.)

mocracy and politics, music, harmony of spheres, sounds, rhythm, relationship between cosmos, music and mathematics, etc. Pythagoras suggests that physical world is fundamentally mathematical. "He says that all things are numbers; and certainly apply number propositions to bodies just as if they were made up those numbers."⁸ Numbers about what Pythagoras talked are corporeal (geometrical) but not material. In any case, number is the result of philosophical contemplation - "true number", "substantial number" dwells in intelligible realm. The key to the Pythagorean system is the notion of unity in multiplicity: "Number is derived from Unity; and numbers, as we have said, compose the whole sensible universe"⁹, it makes symmetry, beauty and harmony. Mathematical principles are the base of visible and audible world and earthy music is the audible imitation of the harmony of heaven spheres. In this position Plato complements with Pythagoras: "We are going to question about harmony. The (who harass the strings) do the same thing the astronomer do. They seek numbers in these heard accords."¹⁰

In *Timaeus* Plato shows that the Cosmos is rational and purposive - a result of imitation of eternal and mathematical order, manifestation of intellect; it frames co-existence between One and many, comprises four entities: Unlimited, Limited, Mixture of Limited and Unlimited, Cause. Demiurgos creates world exploring typical mathematical operations: "He took the three elements of *the same*, *the other*, and *the essence*, and mingled them into one form, compressing by force reluctant and unsociable nature of the other into the same. When he has mingled them with the essence and out of three made one, he again divided this whole into as many portions as was fitting, each portion being a compound of the same, the other, and the essence."¹¹ Numbers exist in Universe and consequently in human minds, thoughts and speeches. In *Republic* Plato writes: "The numbers about which are talked are only capable to being conceived in thought, and cannot be dealt with in any other way."¹² Human imitates cosmic numbers and patterns in accordance with their natural faculty of imitation.

Number as intelligible principle measures time, movement and eternity: "When he (Demiurgos) set in order the heaven, he made this image eternal but moving according to number, while eternity itself rests in unity; and this image we call time (..) that which is immovably the same cannot become older or younger by time (..) these are the forms

⁸ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1083b16 (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* // The complete works of Aristotle: the revised Oxford translation / ed. by Jonathan Barnes. Princeton (New Jersey) ; Princeton University Press, 1995. 2 vol.xiii, 2487 p.)

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.986a.

¹⁰ Plato, *Republic*, 531c. (Plato, *Republic* // The Collected Dialogues of Plato: Including the Letters / ed. by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Princeton (New Jersey); Princeton University Press, 1999. xxv, 1743 p.)

¹¹ Plato, *Timaeus*, 34b-37c. (Plato, *Timaeus* // The Collected Dialogues of Plato: Including the Letters / ed. by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Princeton (New Jersey); Princeton University Press, 1999. xxv, 1743 p.)

¹² Plato, *Republic*, 526a (Plato, *Republic* // The Collected Dialogues of Plato: Including the Letters / ed. by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Princeton (New Jersey); Princeton University Press, 1999. xxv, 1743 p.)

of time, which imitates eternity and revolves according to a law of number. (..) The sun and moon and five other stars, which are called the planets were created by him in order to distinguish and preserve the numbers of time."¹³ Number as a measure of time and eternity is perfect, corresponding to intelligible realm; it differs from geometrical numbers that relate to the sensitive world and matter: "The cycle of a divine is contained in a perfect number, but the cycle of a human race is expressed by a geometrical number, on which depends the good or bad quality of the births."¹⁴ Knowing of number is the highest knowledge, it shows hierarchy of all that is, order of heaven, matter and human, it gives understanding of limited and unlimited, one and multiplicity.

Plotinus, like Plato, sees Universe as becoming and eternal structure composed of Hypostasis from the Absolute One to multiplicity and sensitive world. Alongside with the contemplation of three Hypostases, namely, One, the Intellectual Principle, Soul and individual Souls, Plotinus gives detailed and comprehensive analyses of number. In the current study is concerned only with an aspect that stimulates to think about ancient cosmos in the context of simulacra where intelligible entity creates intelligible reality.

The Intellectual Principle is a self-directed and self-reflexive activity, thus, the Intellectual Subject is identical with its object and in such a way the object is located within Intellect and becomes part of it. Intellect and the object of thinking provide for a complex co-existence where Intellect is not filled with objects, but is fused together with images, with the subject and with the object. "Number is a direct production of the Intellectual – Principle." "In the Intellectual the Beings are determined and with them Number, the number corresponding to their total." (VI.6.2.)

Levels below Intellect also are generated by a causative-generative sequence. "The first question is whether Number can exist in and of itself or is dependent upon things – Two beings something observed in two things, Three in three; and so of the arithmetical One, for if this could exist also before the divisions of Being" (VI.6.9)

Substantial number of intellectual principle is number moving itself and determines the existence of multiplicity: "Thus Number, the Primal and true, is Principle and source of actuality to the Beings". (VI.6.15) Monadic number performs sensible multiplicity and arithmetic calculation.

Several Plotinus expressions stimulate to think about relationship between self-sufficient intelligible principle of ancient cosmos, from one side, and simulacra as self-generated intellectual chain of numbers, from other side. "Substantial number" makes resonance with algorithms and numeral codes of hyperreality, and "monadic number" shows chain of multiple numeral modifications in virtual reality.

Baudrillard creates new condition of society that have not ground - that is hyperreality, simulacra determined by the force of the code of numeral correlations. Baudrillard

¹³ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

¹⁴ Plato, *Republic*. Book VIII, 546b. (Plato, *Republic* // The Collected Dialogues of Plato: Including the Letters / ed. by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Princeton (New Jersey); Princeton University Press, 1999. xxv, 1743 p.)

gives examples of consumer objects as codes and shows how one numeral correlation of signs is constituted by structural relations with other signs. Self-referentiality of signs stimulates separation from real objects, coding systems manage society by signs and digital logic of code. Signs simulates signs, numbers simulate numeral codes - in such flux of data subjectivity of human is deconstructed. In culture dominate simulations, objects that have no foundation, no origin, no reference where the process of signification is a gigantic simulation model of meaning.

The most profound simulation is shown as the chain of simulative functions from one simulacra to another: "The real is produced from miniaturized units, from matrices, memory banks and command models - and with these it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times."¹⁵ Such simulation is based solely on flux of information: its aim is maximum speed of data and total control. Numeral codes generate new and new numeral correlations operating in one and the same reality of simulacra, there are not references to other realities - texts creates texts; signs create signs; numbers creates numbers; money creates money, art creates art etc.

Baudrillard rejects theories about referentiality and corresponding truth, that comes from ancient philosophy. Work "Simulacra and Simulations" Baudrillard starts with quotation of Ecclesiastes "The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth - it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true." In Baudrillard's philosophy is seen how the real world transforms into global simulacra, how appearances seem more real than the world of nature, people and objects, how number realizes a status of method that generates global hyper-reality in which relations of real life are transferred into signs without references to another reality.

Conclusions

Concept of number shows two different models of society: one is hypostatic -coming upwards and downwards with reference to another reality and respect to corresponding truth; the other is a horizontally generated multiplicity - the deconstruction of the real into details without references to another reality and rejection of corresponding truth. However, there are common stance: Ancient Cosmos as well as Hyperreality are created exploring typical mathematical operations where numbers justify stability and clear order of created realities. The question is: How we see number in reality?

In ancient philosophy number is contemplated as a universal order of cosmos, society, art and human, imitation of cosmic number connects intelligible essence with sensitive world and particularities - human in their life imitates higher reality.

In postmodernity number is transformed from measure of harmony to coding systems, algorithms and self-generated forces of hyperreality, simulation binds self-generated numeral correlations and coding system without references on another realities.

¹⁵ Baudrillard, Jean, *Simulacra and Simulations* // Baudrillard, Jean, Selected Writings / edit. by Mark Poster, Stanford University Press, 1988, P. 167.

Number insinuates into different realities, binding or breaking cosmological, social, personal and other realms. If in antiquity numbers are adherent from heaven to the particularities of every-day life (from One to multiplicity) then in postmodern society numbers function from intelligible reality to the hyperreal constructions, from multiplicity to another multiplicity, from one to another simulacra.

Ancient philosophy can be acknowledged as the most obvious realm of imitation; however postmodern philosophy is dedicated to description of the simulative activities – the virtual realities can be considered as the most demonstrative example of simulation.

Relations between one and multiplicity develop different modifications in different philosophies: metaphysical, ethical, musical, political, etc. In antiquity these relations justify the eternal order of Cosmos and human life – one emanates multiplicity and particularities. In postmodern descriptions of simulation multiplicity is seen as endlessly reflected visions and multiplications, as reality that produces properly serial forms and transforms human life to self-generated flux of data and numeral codes.

Philosophical analysis of number shows that we are in the age of simulation constructed through calculative and fabricated environment and in such a way justifies new metaphysics and new ontology - reality becomes network of images and signs without an external referent. Human creates the dynamic energy-creating world without boundaries between real and virtual.

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