

# The Concept of Hyperreal

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## Abstract

The concept of hyperreal is a widely discussed and controversial topic. While some people might argue that such thing as a hyperreality does not exist, others are convinced that our reality is already being replaced by simulation. The term itself can be defined as an inability to distinguish reality from simulation.

The problem that we are confronted with is the assumption that our society is moving towards a hyperreal world, creating its own reality and basically replacing the real by simulations and authentic copies. In my research I look for reasons why our society reconstructs and simulates a reality that does not exist and try to determine the effects caused by this behavior.

Firstly, I discuss parts of Jean Baudrillard's book "Simulacra and Simulation" by defining the terms and then comparing it to the book "Travels in Hyperreality" by Umberto Eco. Simulacra are simulations or copies of things that either had no reality to begin with, for example Disneyland, or things that used to be real but do not exist anymore. Simulation, on the contrary, refers to copies or representations of things that exist in reality. In his work Baudrillard illustrates how people are not able to distinguish simulation, for example that of a bank robbery, from reality. He argues that a simulated bank robbery would have to be set up just as a real one and thus would also be punished as a real one. Furthermore, the author mentions the Watergate scandal as an example of how truth, or reality, has to be proven by simulation, in this case the lies of political parties.

Since all three authors mentioned above talk about Disneyland, I take a more exact look at this specific example. In this place fantasy is replicated and made reality. People seem to feel like in a real dream world, even though they are aware of the fact that everything is just a

simulation. Umberto Eco argues that the visitors' conscience of unreality only increases their need for simulation. Other possible reasons for this behavior are for example that people want to escape from the unpleasant reality.

Lastly, I analyze whether this phenomenon of the replacement of reality by reproduction affects people in a negative or positive way. It can indeed be dangerous to run away from reality into a reproduced world such as video games, which become closer and closer to reality as technology advances. However, positive effects that are triggered by hyperreality can also be observed. Happiness and hope can be stimulated by giving people the impression that everything is fine, even though their country might be at war, for example. In this case the government and media could hide unpleasant events from the public in order to not get people depressed and concerned.

As a conclusion I can say that the concept of hyperreal plays a very important role in our daily life. Technology allows us to create artificial worlds inhabited by robots with artificial intelligence, making it easier to reproduce reality and simulate things that are even more authentic than their original. As for our society, it should use hyperreality prudently, as it could be fatal in a case in which certain institutions use this concept to gain power.