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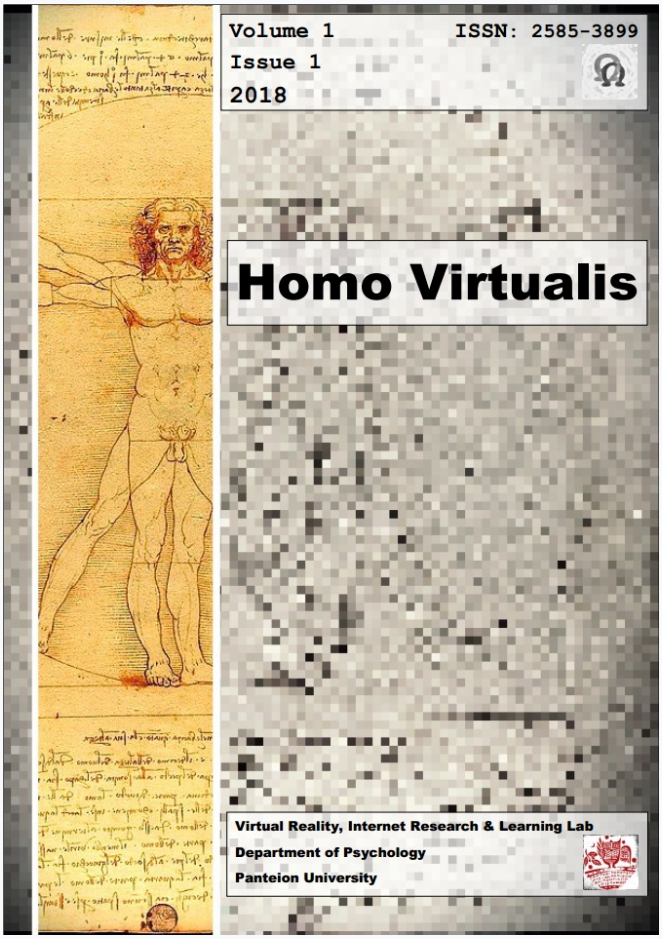


## Editorial: Homo Virtualis Inaugural Issue

*Konstantinos Koskinas*

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# Editorial: *Homo Virtualis* Inaugural Issue

**Koskinas Konstantinos**[1]

***Homo Virtualis*** is the conception of a humanity of sciences, cultures and socialities powered by the communicative technological innovations. Cyborgs, robots, avatars and virtual communities imagine, construct and create their lives within new technosocial or sociotechnical environments.

Plato's cave and his world of shadows describe, for the first time and from a philosophical perspective, the difference between reality and virtuality. In this allegorical Platonian story the relation between the real as natural and the virtual as real, perceived concretely or abstractly by human cognitive system, is questioned.

Leonardo Da Vinci's "Vitruvian Man" reflects a model for the ideal human proportions based on a 2-D to 3-D geometrical representation of its time. An ideal human model can be described according to the limits of a given environment. Though, *Homo Virtualis* expands that hypothetical ideal human model, escapes the ideal human proportions, and goes beyond the limitations of natural environment by taking advantage of the technological developments and the emergent virtual, cyber environments.

From a Heideggerian perspective, humans produce technology both as organizational method as well as products per se, through artifacts, tools and means for survival, adaptation and evolution to the natural environment and organizational systems.

The virtual presence and existence is the evolution of Homo Sapiens (the wise man) and *Homo Erectus* (the moving man) towards an efficient living organism that goes beyond his wisdom and the known natural/social environment, takes advantage of his technological opportunities and augments his socio-cognitive capacities through creativity, collective and collaborative social spaces, social interaction and social learning and heads on a society of knowledge by promoting equal access to information resources. People and communities, geographically based or virtually only, share, produce and consume digital artifacts, construct and deconstruct their selves and co-create habitus in a continuum of space and time mediated by communication technologies, that more and more function as organizational models and paradigms.

Socio-technical or technosocial ecosystems operate by and for their creators, social relations resample old ones and new pro-social or a-social ones come forth, power relations and power structures exceed their limits and re-shape on neo-primitivistic levels, neo luddism and the denial of technology struggle with freedom of expression, acceptance of difference and respect of otherness.

[1] Editor in Chief, *Homo Virtualis* Journal. E-mail: kkoski@panteion.gr.

The construction and development of networks that substitute or simulate social relations give “birth” to *Homo Virtualis* where communicative skills meet artificial intelligence, social life emerge through social simulation applications, visualization and virtualization technologies promote and expand social sciences research, and boost big data analysis, robots and learning machines search for the equation of emotions. Social computing and computational social sciences integrate the levels of individual and social interaction with technological realities, enabling new understandings on the abilities and expansion of human thought and bodies.

Reality and imagination, art and science, body and mind, morality and law, liberty and authoritarianism, both as communicative expression and life artificially reconstruction, have emerged with new forms and content, as well as inter-relations, in the virtual worlds. This new human dimension presents many contradictions and the need for practical solutions, which advance the experience of life. A new conceptualization of economy that highlights digital and virtual relations which contribute to the emergence of new currencies and new finance and secure the transactions between and within economic entities, thus creating a “brave” new economic virtual reality.

New academic disciplines emerge, informed by social computing and computational social sciences, which, however, lack of any comprehensive theoretical understanding that will transcend metaphysical futurology, depicted mainly in science fiction analysis and presentations, into a system of theory and praxis that will come out solely from the analysis and understanding of these new artificial and virtual ecologies. To this direction, academic disciplines focus on a closer collaboration between different thematic areas updating the methodological agenda with *multi-*, *inter-*, *intra-*, and *trans*-disciplinary perspectives. However, the lack of a common understanding to the transitional human subject and the sociocultural phenomenon is obvious.

*Homo Virtualis* aims to evolve and expand the concept of *Virtuation*, the capacity and ability to create and reproduce forms and content of human relations, in artificial environments, that allow and enhance telepresence, according to the aesthetics, the morality and the skills of the user, in ways that support self-realization and expression, free, transparent / anonymous communication and information access.

Virtuation as a core theoretical and empirical category focuses on how virtual reality, augmented reality, net reality and artificial intelligence, are inter-related and connected in the human tele-experience, which is not limited by the boundaries of time and place and is constituted within cyberspace. Conventional social institutions and concepts, such as society, history, politics, and culture are undermined and, at the same time, empowered by virtuation practices, which allow humans a quantum leap and human existence, a *Homo Virtualis* existence within and beyond cyberspace. A new theoretical but grounded to empirical data approach for virtuation can dynamically contribute and offer input to the open discussion between different academic disciplines aiming to describe and understand *Homo Virtualis* as a new state of human being.

Konstantinos Koskinas

Editor in Chief

**Notes on Contributors**

Konstantinos Koskinas is Professor of Sociology on Virtual Political Communities, Department of Psychology, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Athens, Greece. He is the founder and director of the *Virtual Reality, Internet Research* and *eLearning Laboratory*.