



# The Logic of Morality in the Network Society: A Criticism

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**Abstract.** This paper aims to offer a critique on the treatment of morality and moral problems in the network society through the use of alternative explanation. The main argument advanced in this paper is that despite augmenting human abilities to organize and integrate, technological progress in the network society have continued to diminish the individual's ability to understand complex phenomena such as morality while offering no concrete solution to the myriad of moral problems that have existed for some time. The paper concludes that the persistent suppression and exclusion of true morality as opposed to a simulacra of morality from peoples' lives in the network society is not caused by the level of sophistication achieved in technology per se but by the logic governing the network society, which reduces people's understanding of complex phenomenon as well as magnifying and facilitating deviant acts and practices in society. As a solution, the paper recommends a restoration of the people's understanding and the re-introduction of moral virtues in people's lives as a way of restraining the irrational and deceptive character of the network-capitalism's logic without closing any doors to the progress achieved in science and technology.

**Keywords:** Network Society · Simulated Reality · Morality · Moral Virtue

## 1 Introduction

The process of globalization and developments in information and communications technology have changed the way people live in the global community in the 21st century. The high-speed spread of information and interconnectedness between locations that were previously separated by time and space have forced people to adapt to the new rhythm. The world has now become more open and the opportunities created by the new changes seemed limitless. On the other side of the spectrum however, these new changes also gave rise to 'new' threats and challenges that range from the prevalence of cyber-crime, fraud, hoax, criminal activities mediated through social media, hacking, personal data theft, abuse of personal data, unauthorized tapping and piracy to radicalization, terrorism and cyber-terrorism [1].

According to sociologist, Manuel Castells, the roots of the global community today lies in a new social structure called the Network Society [2]. This new community was created around 1975 through the interaction of three independent processes that occurred

concurrently: the information technology revolution, the socio-economic restructuring of capitalism and socio-cultural movements that developed in the 1960s largely in the United States and Western Europe. However, in addition to those processes, the rise of the new society was also facilitated by other changes or forces including globalization, the diminishing of nation-state's sovereignty, the crisis of patriarchy and achievements in the sciences [2]. While the Internet constitutes the backbone of this new society, academics like Ronald J. Deibert and Lawrence Lessig have warned that cyberspace is not a neutral or empty vessel. How cyberspace is structured is crucial to the issue of identity, human rights, security and governance [3].

Furthermore, Deibert explained that although world governments have tried to regulate cyberspace the reality is no one knows for certain where cyberspace will take us [3]. There is a pressing need to explore Deibert's statement further since the new challenges and threats that appear in today's global society exist at a time when the infrastructures to guarantee the establishment of an ideal society have been forgotten, lost or destroyed. The late French philosopher and sociologist, Jean Baudrillard, in his work *The Consumer Society* warns us that the consumption system, a model of late-capitalism that currently dominates life in the West and facilitates the creation of the network society and simulated reality, which is being exported to the rest of the world through globalization, never intended to establish an ideal society from the start [4]. On the contrary, the system operates by destroying principles and values of humanity and traditional morality and substituting them with the principles and values of its own [5]. The problem is, according to Baudrillard, this system is based on the principle of the manipulation of signs hence, the system, its values and principles have been compromised from the start with elements of manipulation and deception.

One of the main issues that rarely receive attention in the midst of the adulation of the economic and technological progress is morality and its significance in people's lives in today's society. Some people may think that discussions on morality have lost its relevance since they will only end up in moral deadlock or because morality has never contributed significantly to the economic, scientific and technological progress. However, there are still others who place a high importance on the issue of morality highlighting the evolution and spread of criminal activities and the permissiveness of deviant social behaviors found in societies and communities [6].

The weakening of morality's significance in the West has been a subject of concern for many philosophers such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Stocker and others for the past several decades [7, 8]. In a tone similar to Baudrillard's, MacIntyre [7] explains that the language of morality used by the world today, specifically by the West, is in a state of grave disorder. He also said that what the world has at present is a simulacra of morality in the sense that they keep on using the main concepts of morality when in fact they no longer understand its substance or core be it theoretically or practically [7]. Furthermore, according to MacIntyre [7] the rise of emotivism in the sphere of morality in the contemporary era is not an ideal solution to the weakening of moral life in the West knowing it will only complicate efforts in resolving persistent moral problems since now everyone is given a stronger footing to defend their own attitudes and values without having to provide a strong evidence or reason.

This article will discuss the consequences of simulated reality on a number of moral cases and their possible solution. Here the concept of network society and the system of consumption will be used interchangeably for the purpose of simplification. As previous research have found [6, 9, 10], this article identifies that one of the main causes of the moral problems found in the contemporary setting that ends in moral deadlock is the sharp difference in values, attitudes, interest or life purpose found among people. However, the article also contends that another factor is at work to complicate the resolution of moral cases in the network society and that is the presence of simulated reality. To overcome the problem, this article proposes that we reverse the effects of the simulated reality by strengthening peoples' understanding of reality and reintroduce an element of unity or similarity to tame the differences without erasing it completely. This article believes that the rise of behavioral deviations and criminal activities in the network society today is a consequence of the absence of commitment among members of the community to uphold ethical and moral principles caused by them not understanding their reality, purpose in life and the importance of virtue.

## 2 Research Method

This article uses alternative explanation through critical thinking to reach its main arguments. In philosophy alternative explanation is used when the purpose is to discover as many explanations as possible regarding a problem, issue, event or phenomenon even when a strong and credible explanation has already existed or when the existing explanations are seen as lacking credibility or weak [11].

The main advantage of using this method is its ability to generate a rich collection of explanations that may be completely different from the accepted version [11]. While critical thinking refers to a person's ability to examine and evaluate whatever he or she hears, see or read before he or she decides on a choice or forms his/her opinion on an issue [12].

## 3 The Network Society and Simulated Reality

According to Castells [13], networks have become the new social structure of the global society and the logic of networks now has the ability to modify the operation of production, human experience, power and culture. Information technology forms the new material basis for the network society and the dominant processes and function in today's information age are organized around networks.

Castells defines a network as a set of interconnected nodes, while a node is "the point at which a curve intersects itself" [13]. What a node is depends on the kind of networks we are talking about for example a node may be the banks and lending institutions in the network of global financial flows. Furthermore, networks are also open, capable of expanding without limits by including new nodes providing they share a same language or code. A social structure that is based on networks therefore is highly dynamic and open to innovation.

Networks are suitable instruments of a capitalist economy that thrives on innovation, globalization, and decentralization. This is why Castells says that the network society

is a capitalist society. The capitalist mode of production shapes social relationship over the entire planet [13]. However the new capitalist mode of production differs from what we found in the past in two ways: it is global and it is structured around the network of financial flows.

The networks according to Castells are managed or connected through switches. The switches become instruments of power and the switchers become the power holders [13]. The switchers are made up of a diverse range of capitalists, though Castells reject the presence of a global capitalist class. These switchers and the codes or language used by the networks become the main source in shaping, guiding and misguiding societies. However, Castells explains that above the diverse range of capitalists there is a faceless collective capitalist made up of financial flows operated by electronic networks. This faceless collective capitalist does not respond to the law of supply and demand but it responds to “turbulences and unpredictable movement of non-calculable anticipations induced by psychology and society, as much as by economic processes” [13].

The networks also affect various areas of life, including culture and politics. In this type of society cultural expressions are uprooted from history and geography and mediated by the electronic communication networks in different forms. Politics also becomes increasingly played out in the media. As Castells said “leadership is personalized and image-making is power-making” [13]. This has profound consequences on the whole political landscape.

The network society thus represents a qualitative change in human experience. The material foundations of the society, space and time are being transformed, structured around the space of flows and never ending time. The social construction of a new form of space and time develops a “meta-network” that switches off non-essential functions and elements [13]. In this new system, although people, locations and activities still exist physically yet their meaning disappears, absorbed into the logic of the meta-network where it produces values, cultural codes and designate power. For most people the new network society appears as somewhat irrational and disorderly characterized by automation and random sequence of events determined by the uncontrollable logic of markets, technology, geopolitical order, or biological determination.

The analysis of network society by Castells ties up with the analysis given by Baudrillard on the system of consumption and simulated reality. Castells [2] explained that the culture of the society that characterizes the network society is called the culture of real virtuality. This culture owes its existence to a form of alternate reality known as simulated reality. The concept of simulation was first popularized by Baudrillard in his work, *Simulacra and Simulations*. The concept explains how a sign or an image in life evolves from something that reflects or represents the reality outside (nature) to something that distorts or hides the reality outside. Understanding the evolution of signs is crucial in this context, since people live in a world of signs. A sign could be anything from human beings and their activities to the objects and processes in nature. In the past, the relationship between a sign and its meaning is governed by a strict rule where each sign refers to one thing. This type of relationship resulted in a particular view of reality and a particular type of reality. According to Baudrillard, this marks the first stage of the journey a sign takes to become a simulation [14]. In *Simulacra and Simulations* [14],

Baudrillard explained that a sign needs to go through several stages before it becomes a simulation. Those stages are:

1. A sign/image reflects or is an honest representation of the reality outside
2. A sign/image covers and distorts the reality outside
3. A sign/image covers something that does not exist in the reality outside
4. A sign/image does not have any relation to any reality
5. A sign/image becomes a pure simulacrum

According to Baudrillard, the simulation stage begins with the third stage. Nonetheless, one may argue that the beginnings of simulation have its roots in the second stage which is a distortion of the first stage. This means that simulation has never been completely separated from the first stage. Its origin lies in the distortion of the external reality.

Simulated reality is the brainchild of the network society. It is a reality constructed by the signs of reality that have been cut off from their natural referents [14]. The signs are then able to represent anything and carry any meaning. They become signs that can be exchanged with other signs randomly. Baudrillard warned that simulation is more dangerous than a common lie. With a common lie, the principle of reality is still protected and truth can be recovered. A person merely needs to uncover the lie to find the truth. In simulation however, the principle of reality has disappeared and the truth could no longer be found. This is because simulation is its own truth. Baudrillard also said that simulated reality is beyond the reality of good and evil [14]. It attempts to destroy polar opposites such as right-wrong, good-evil, old-young, rich-poor, beautiful-ugly, intelligent-stupid, fact-fiction and black-white.

This is why Baudrillard said that when we encounter a situation where two opposing poles could no longer differentiate from one another, we are in the presence of simulation.

While some people have welcomed this new development arguing that now they finally have the freedom to interpret the anything according to their own preferences, others have lamented the separation of signs from their natural referents, treating it as a negative phenomenon that is detrimental to how people understand themselves, their reality and the world around them. They also argue that as people become more and more subjective, their ability to detect dishonesty, deception, error and manipulation and to respond to differences around them weakens. This reminds us of a phenomenon called solipsism. Solipsism occurs when a person only uses his/her experience as the sole basis to assess the world around them [15]. This person will think that his/her experience is more superior to the rest and will try to reduce the importance of other people and their experiences before they can be incorporated into his/her own experience. Subjective preferences make tolerating differences a formidable task. Hence subjectivism and solipsism offers us a reduced and limited picture of the world. Anything that is not in agreement with a person's subjective values or preferences will be regarded as non-existent, inferior or a threat that needed to be destroyed.

From Roy Bhaskar's critical realism perspective [16], someone who reduces reality to his/her own experience or views the world from a limited perspective is deeply problematic since the world and its problems such as terrorism and morality have a complex and multi-dimensional character. The mismatch between the limited perspective

and the complex character of reality or the world do not help in solving its problems. On the contrary it facilitates its evolution and further aggravates the problem.

Another negative consequence of the separation of signs from their natural referents is the weakening of a person's ability to think critically and evaluate mistakes/errors or detect and talk about dishonesty, deception and manipulation seriously. This concern is voiced by Ruth Groff who criticized the post-positivistic perspective in epistemology [17]. According to Groff, the ability to identify errors, dishonesty and other forms of deception/manipulation is a crucial skill and key to liberating people from social structures that are corrupt, restrictive and abusive. This is because people like Groff realized that a social system can sometimes have structures that are characterized by alienation, domination and abuse [18]. This is one of the most concerning aspects of the simulation system especially due to its impact on morality and on the overall quality of life. The core of morality is to know which act is good or evil and to know what is right or wrong. However with simulation in full swing, how are we to discuss moral problems seriously.

## 4 Moral Problems and Issues in the Network Society

In the past moral problems have had the reputation of being formidable and difficult to resolve. They usually end up being settled through either a compromise or war. Though many scholars tend towards a compromise to resolve moral problems, its effectivity has also been questioned. Today there is no definitive way of settling moral problems. As a result moral problems have been suppressed or overlooked to give way for capital accumulation, technological progress and human freedom.

But ignoring moral problems may not be in the best interest of the network society as it can morph into an unpredictable and alien threat. A good knowledge of moral problems is therefore necessary for the survival of the network society. Here we discuss some of the moral problems found in today's societies.

### 4.1 *Moral Weakness and Moral Blindness*

Discussions on morality have always been linked to discussions on what is good or evil, what is right or wrong or what is the right action or what should one do in a given situation. What is right will generally be regarded as good and conversely what is wrong will be associated with evil. A strong understanding of good and evil is hence crucial to the study of morality. An understanding of good and evil used throughout this article would be inspired by the thought of Aristotle. For the Greek philosopher, what is good is something that brings people a step closer to achieving eudaimonia (happiness of the soul) while what is bad or evil has the opposite effect of distancing people from achieving the happiness of the soul [19]. Without a clear understanding of the concepts of good and evil, people's understanding of the events around them would be clouded and this will obstruct their decision making process. A case in point would be the loyalty shown by Nazi officials to their leader Adolf Hitler that culminated with the Holocaust. The example shows that loyalty, which in essence is a positive virtue or something that is encouraged in Aristotelian ethics can morphed into a vice when a person lacks serious commitments to uphold a moral principle or does not have a strong grasp of what is right

or wrong or what is good or evil and is unable to perceive and understand the overall context of the act or event.

According to Elizabeth Rapaport [20] the Nazi case described what one would call a moral weakness or a moral blindness. A person is said to be morally weak when that person has the ability to act according to a moral principle that he accepts but fail to do so. Rapaport gave five indicators that show whether a person has accepted a moral principle and that violation of one of these indicators is an indication that that person is not serious in accepting the moral principle [20]. The indicators are making an effort to observe the situation that might be relevant to the application of our moral principle, making an effort to think about which moral principle could be applied in a particular situation, making an effort to act according to his/her moral principle, making an effort to ensure our moral principle is consistent with one another and making an effort to accept all moral principles that are derived from a particular moral principle that he/she has accepted [20].

Meanwhile there are four steps a person must take to apply a moral principle to his/her act. They are: first, the person must make sure he/she has all the relevant moral facts pertaining to a particular event or case. Second, the person must decide which moral principle applies to the case in question in light of the facts obtained. Third, the person must decide correctly what steps he/she must take. Lastly fourth, the person must follow his/her decision and commit the act [20]. Failure to execute one of the steps above may result in moral weakness.

Furthermore, Rapaport [20] explained that moral weakness could be manifested in several different forms such as when a person lacks the courage to act or fails to act, a phenomenon she calls spinelessness. Other manifestations include carelessness in action, ignorance of the obvious facts pertaining to an event or case, feeling as if a moral principle only applies to other people and not to oneself, refusing to admit that another person has violated a moral principle that he/she had accepted even in the face of strong evidence and moral blindness.

In the discourse of morality, often we come across concepts such as moral blindness that have been interpreted differently by different scholars. Bernard H. Baumrin [21] for example defines moral blindness as a condition where person A knows that an act is right or good yet he fails to do it without any particular reason. For Baumrin, moral blindness is associated with a kind of gap in action. Meanwhile, Elizabeth Rapaport [20] explains that there are two types of moral blindness. In the first type, a person fails to realize that he must accept a less general principle that is actually derived from a more general principle that he has already accepted although he might know that the less general principle originates from a more general principle [20]. For instance, person A accepts the moral principle that racial discrimination is wrong and admits that if discrimination is wrong then discrimination against colored people is wrong as well. However, it turns out person A fails to realize that he should not discriminate against colored people. In the second type of moral blindness, a person fails to realize the inconsistencies of two moral principles that he/she has accepted [20]. In this type, the moral agent does not realize even though another person has explained it to him/her that the two principles he hold are inconsistent and that he must discard one of them. For example, person A has accepted the principle that laws that support racial discrimination are wrong but at the



same time person A also accepts the principle that the citizenship rights of the colored people must be limited to a degree.

In addition to the two understandings above, moral blindness is also sometimes understood as a particular condition. Leonidas Donskis explained that moral blindness refers to a condition found in contemporary society that is characterized by insensitivity to human suffering. Moral blindness is also associated with a breakdown in one's moral sense [22]. Moral sense can be defined as a capacity that enables a person to sense rightness/wrongness in an instant. It is sometimes called moral intuition.

In *Moral Blindness: The Loss of Sensitivity in Liquid Modernity* [22], Donskis explained the difference he found in the character of evil in the past and in modern times. In the past, evil took on a much clearer form. Today, we no longer know what evil is and where they are. Evil is so widespread, haunting people and their lives. However according to Donskis there are two manifestations of the new evil. The first is insensitivity to human suffering and the second is the desire to rob someone's privacy by revealing their private secrets [22]. Donskis also warned that in this era, evil is no longer limited to wars or totalitarian ideologies. It is present when someone fails to take action in the face of other's sufferings or when someone refuses to understand others or when someone ignores the violation of ethical principles [22]. Evil is also present when politicians and government officials ignorantly destroy the lives of people, when they believe that they are moral persons because they have fulfilled their responsibilities, when the state sees its people only as statistical units, when statistics are more important than human lives and when the political and economic strength of a country towers over its people even when the state uses the rhetoric of defending humanity [22]. Donskis postulated that what causes people to be unaware of the new evil today are mental blocks in their minds, which takes the form of forgetting people, refusing to acknowledge people who are different from us, alienation from the people and the preference for prioritizing virtual friendships than direct face-to-face friendships [22].

More according to Donskis, the new evil, which has robbed people of their individuality and dignity could not be fixed by political correctness, forced tolerance or multiculturalism, which in his view, is nothing more than an excuse to sanction unjust practices and the degradation of humanity that has evolved into a new class system, modern slavery and social apartheid under the pretense of cultural uniqueness and diversity [22]. He saw that this evil could only be fixed by returning a sense of togetherness as an alternative to the fragmentation and atomization that cause the sensitivity to disappear in the first place [22]. Zygmunt Bauman also appears to share a similar view. Although the process of individualization, which characterizes the contemporary society, never meant to be immoral, Bauman said that it does nevertheless gave rise to a condition where moral evaluation and judgment and moral regulation are no longer needed or given a place in society [22].

Moral blindness is really not a phenomenon unique to this era. However the most concerning element today is the level of advancement and sophistication of the information and communication technology and the strong economic influence that have pervaded almost all aspects of human life. These changes allow for moral blindness to evolve, mutate and spread globally in a very short time.



## 4.2 The Inversion of Right & Wrong, Good & Evil

Another issue in morality that we encounter today in the context of simulated reality is the possibility of inverting the values of dichotomies or polar opposites such as right-wrong, good-evil, old-young or intelligent-stupid. However to limit the scope of the discussion to the topic of morality, the article will only consider the polar opposite of right-wrong and good-evil.

The separation of a sign from its natural referent coupled with the duplication and reproduction of the signs of reality, supported then by the post-positivistic paradigm found in epistemology and moral relativism or emotivism, dichotomies or polar opposites such as right-wrong and good-evil now become up-rooted from their origins in the external reality (nature). When this occurs and when the objectivity of physical and external reality is being questioned or met with skepticism, the foundation of the dichotomies becomes shaken. As a consequence, people will experience great confusion in understanding themselves and the world around them since they are drowning in a myriad of interpretations and meanings, without knowing which one is right or wrong. This confusion then opens the door for the exploitation of the dichotomies, which may take the form of an inversion of values. What used to be known as right, when freed from its roots and foundation, can now be inverted and regarded as something wrong and vice versa.

In its essence, the inversion of right-wrong and good-evil is an inversion of its values. If in the past, using drugs and narcotics is considered a crime, today some countries have allowed the legal sale of narcotics in small amounts. In this era it is also getting easier for someone to kill another person (not because of self-defense or emergency) and escape punishment and be perceived not as a murderer but as a hero or a victim of some past abuse who needs to be forgiven. While at the same time, activists who voluntarily risk their lives to defend truth and justice have been arrested, murdered, and branded as traitors, terrorists or enemies of the state.

The most worrying aspect of simulated reality is the potential of simulation to dissolve all dichotomies and polar opposites and when the dissolution is not able to be executed fully, simulation will try to invert the values of the dichotomies of right-wrong and good-evil [14]. However both will be detrimental to humans. With the dissolution strategy, what is good or evil and what is right or wrong have been mixed together making it difficult for people to differentiate one from the other. Some scholars such as Jean Baudrillard [5] saw that after the dissolution occurs, there is no longer a need for dichotomies. As dichotomies become more and more irrelevant in human lives, Baudrillard warned that, simulation will achieve total victory and this will mean disaster for humans, humanity and the world [5]. Nonetheless Baudrillard's view on the importance of dichotomies does not reflect the reality on the ground. Although he was right about how simulated reality facilitated and supported the dissolution of dichotomies and spread global confusion, at present total dissolution has not happened yet. What is currently occurring today is an inversion of the dichotomies' values and even then simulation could not guarantee total inversion due to a number of reasons such as the presence of natural referents or foundation that can still be found and recovered in external reality (in nature) and returned to the original signs and the fact that we still do not have a perfect knowledge of how the human mind, moral intuition and moral sense work [23].

Due to these difficulties, the system of simulation has attempted to use another tactic by hijacking the dichotomies, by preserving the outer appearance of the dichotomies such as the categories or concepts of 'right' or 'wrong', 'good' or 'evil' but changing its substance with something completely different. This would undoubtedly cause serious issues in morality. Today in the United States for example, physician-assisted suicides have been made lawful in a small number of states while in the past such phenomenon would be rendered immoral and against the law [24]. However, even when physician-assisted suicide has been legalized in some states, the majority of the states are still choosing to outlaw the practice. This shows how difficult it is to 'transform' an act, event or practice that is morally questionable from the beginning to something that can be morally regarded as right or good or at least morally accepted.

### 4.3 Moral Deadlock

Another moral issue that needs to be addressed is moral deadlock. Deadlock occurs when two parties possess different moral outlook on a particular act or event that prevents an agreement between them. According to Ronald D. Milo, disagreement in morality often can be resolved after the opposing parties reach an agreement on the non-moral facts pertaining to an act or event [25]. Nonetheless there are cases where the disagreement persists even when both parties with different opinions have agreed on the same facts. For Milo, this represents what we might call a moral deadlock and it must be differentiated from radical moral disagreement.

Those who see moral deadlock as similar to radical moral disagreement tend to view moral deadlock as being caused by a difference in standard or basic principles and moral values among two or more parties. Those with different moral principle and values tend to select different facts causing their arguments to be in sharp contrast with the other party and hence achieving an agreement is something close to impossible. Hence moral deadlock ensue not from a difference in belief but in the attitudes that reflect those beliefs [25].

However this argument has been rejected by a number of scholars who like Milo think that the probability for radical moral disagreement in particular total radical moral disagreement is very small among those who are able to think logically [25]. They saw that the facts used to judge whether an act is right or wrong could not be selected at random. Hence not all facts could be submitted as evidence to support an act. There are certain facts that could directly prove the rightness or wrongness of an act. Those who reject the existence of such facts are basically trying to avoid or reject discussions about the morality of a particular phenomenon or act. This was what led Milo to differentiate moral deadlock from radical moral disagreement, especially total radical moral disagreement [25]. For him moral deadlock is better seen as a species of internal moral disagreement, which means that moral deadlock occurs in groups that have similar standards for moral evaluation while he understood total radical disagreement as disagreement between two sides with very different moral standard or criteria. But if both sides have different standards or criteria then, according to Milo, we are no longer talking about moral agreement or disagreement [25].

According to Milo [25] moral deadlock in internal moral disagreement could occur due to three reasons: first, moral deadlock occurs because of a conflicted moral standard

that is manifested in different attitudes for example when a person experience a conflict as he evaluates which is the best action, to tell his friend the truth about his illness or to lie to his friend to protect him from stress [25]. Second, moral deadlock may occur due to exceptional cases and limitations such as when a person kills another person when his/her life is under threat. Lastly, third, moral deadlock occurs due to a difference in the application of a moral standard such as in cases of abortion. Most people would almost immediately agree that killing another human being is an evil or bad act but their opinions differed when they are asked to judge whether this rule also applies to a fetus in the mother's womb [25].

## 5 On the Road to Moral Virtue in the Network Society

Seeing how varied moral problems can be, can network society and developments in information and communication technology offer some solution? The obvious answer would be yes yet the reality is not as straight forward. True advancements and progress in human civilization have always had a multi-dimensional character. It has never been limited to just one or two dimensions. Least of all it has never been determined solely by the amount of suffering caused by one group of people on others or by the sacrifices that society must make. Regretfully the advancements and achievements of the system of consumption, globalization and information and communication technology seemed to be made on the sacrifices of important aspects of society and life itself, such as truth, morality, humanity and critical thinking abilities.

The achievements reached by the system of consumption and network society appear to rely very heavily on the material dimension of human life, not on the developments of values of humanity and the human soul. If they do claim that they have achieved progress in these areas, the claim could not be fully trusted since the logic used by the network society favors the material aspect of the world and life from the onset. The characteristic flaw of this type of logic is it reduces people to physical entities and numbers and it is in the habit of reaching a conclusion without being supported by strong facts or evidence, which prompts further questions, suspicion and at times controversies while the issue of morality is more related to the non-material aspect of life such as values, principles, beliefs and the importance of leading a good life.

Morality relates to the internal dimension of the individual and in the exercise of moral judgment and evaluation, the individual must display the ability to think critically and able to perceive things and facts clearly. However in the context of simulated reality and the network society in general, it is precisely this ability to perceive things clearly and think critically that have come under attack. By reducing morality to subjective expressions of feelings, preference and taste, then moral problems such as moral blindness, moral deadlock and moral dilemma would eventually be harder to resolve. This is because without the initial reduction of morality into feelings and preferences, these issues have been known to be quite complex. In the example of moral blindness where a person still kills other people even when he/she knows that killing is an evil or bad act, we see the first level of complexity of the issue where it relates to the internal dimension of the individual. But there is another level or a second level of complexity that serves to make the problem more difficult to resolve and that is the effect of the external dimension

on the individual. Hoffrage, Krings and Palazzo [26] see moral blindness as an unconscious and temporary phenomenon experienced by an individual. It is triggered by three things namely the use of euphemistic language, experience that prompted decisions to violate ethics that reside outside of the decision maker's consciousness and the uprooting of decisions from their moral dimension. Nonetheless, how are we to fix this situation if we are only able to see one side of the problem? Or how do we resolve a case of moral deadlock when our understanding of an act or event has been obfuscated by simulation or personal interest?

Alasdair MacIntyre saw that the rejection of classical Greek philosophical tradition during the Renaissance era marks a crucial moment in the weakening of morality's influence in the West [7]. In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre said that the rejection must not be regarded as a moment of celebration as claimed by the liberals but as a moment of loss [7]. The disappearance of telos in human life has led the liberal or emotivist self to be dispossessed of a criteria or standard to evaluate human conduct. As a result, human beings can no longer differentiate which social relations are manipulative and which are not [7]. This is because now in the liberal or emotivist self, all judgments are seen as expression of attitudes and choices that are not controlled by a criteria, principle or value. However for MacIntyre, the expression of attitudes, choices and tastes characterizes something more primitive than obedience to criteria, principles or values [7]. Here MacIntyre's view again mirrors that of Baudrillard's when he criticized the logic used by the system of consumption. Both agree that the logic underlying the liberal and consumption system is a primitive logic.

As the world becomes more open and interconnected, the ability to understand each other, to care for one another and to tolerate differences should have improved as well in a scale that is unprecedented from what we experienced in the past. But what we encounter in reality with the rising cases of intolerance, hate crimes, discrimination and radicalization, shows that we still have a long way to go. Following Baudrillard, globalization has not fostered better respect and tolerance for different cultures and values but it forces the universalization of the West's system of consumption upon the world [27]. Globalization works to place the West's consumption culture as the dominant culture of the world while other cultures are subsumed and integrated into it. However there is a serious problem with this scenario. The system of consumption is manipulative and reductive by nature. It views the world from a solipsistic perspective, a perspective that believes only his/her culture and values matters while other cultures and values are not as important. This system sells alluring dreams to the world such as to uphold peace, democracy, human rights and eradication of poverty without the needed infrastructure to achieve such aims. Behind all the rhetoric is the desire to impose the system of consumption and its values on the rest of the world. In the rare occasion of finding a country that refuses to integrate itself with the system of consumption and the network society, the country will suffer repercussions that range from being isolated from the rest of the world to war. The question is then how are we supposed to expect an improvement in our moral life when the dominant system currently ruling the world intentionally reduces the significance and role of morality in society?

Furthermore, the creation of a simulated reality in today's era also complicates moral life since with simulated reality an act or event could be easily constructed and reconstructed at the whims of a particular person or group. In a simulated reality all aspects to an act or event such as the perpetrator, victim, types of act, justification, motives, background or the overall context of the act can be constructed and reconstructed to suit the interest of a particular party. If a moral judgment is made on a constructed or reconstructed act or event then the judgment would be misleading or wrong because the judgment is of a simulated act or event, not the real one. This is what paves the way for the inversion of categories such as good-evil and right-wrong. A simulation needs to be created to destabilize the situation and promotes wide-spread confusion for the inversion to occur successfully. Without simulation inversion would fail since in reality facts are still attached to values. Hence the separation of facts from values has produced grave consequences for morality in the West because the separation strips a moral principle of its rational basis. Previously it was the strength of the facts presented that would support a moral principle. Now there is nothing to support it.

However this does not mean that we should dismiss all the progress achieved by the system of consumption, globalization and the network society. On the contrary the progress in science and technology must be maintained and supported. Yet on the other hand, the progress must not be allowed to continue under a system that utilizes a manipulative and reductive logic because the consequences would be dire for the world. Baudrillard has warned us through his simulation stages that if simulation is not brought under control or subjected to regulation, then it will evolve into a pure simulation where it destroys all natural referents or nature itself. To prevent this catastrophe simulation needs to be placed under control and regulated. This is where morality plays a crucial role. It gives human conduct direction and control to ensure that a person's conduct does not cross over the limits and threaten his or the planet's survival.

Hence so long as the role of morality is still being side-lined, we must be suspicious of the system of consumption, globalization, network society and simulated reality. The reason is because all the progress produced by the system is never meant to create an ideal world. The idea of ideal is closely associated with morality or with what is good and evil as quoted by Baudrillard. Furthermore, the moral problems that have been with us for a long time today will continue to evolve and become more complex and harder to resolve.

Looking at the present situation there is then a need to return the significance and relevance of morality into peoples' lives. We must be reminded again about the importance of having a purpose in life, a goal or a telos as understood in the classical philosophical tradition to correct the condition of the liberal selves who MacIntyre described as hollow and ghostly in character [7]. This is such because these hollow selves do not operate according to a certain criteria and we do not know their moral positions although they are able to criticize any event or conduct. Therefore two solutions are needed to reform the hollow self namely one, we need to correct the manipulative logic underlying the system of consumption and globalization in the West. This is needed to contain the development of the simulated reality and open the space for the creation of an ideal community. Secondly, we need to re-emphasize the significance of virtue in the individual's life.

Through these measures, we hope to inspire people to regrow the seeds of love for virtue from within the individual and motivate them to act virtuously without any pressure.

One of the main strengths of virtue lies in its essence, which is considered as a moral substance, not merely a moral instruction or command to do a certain act. The other strength of virtue comes from its commitment to produce a particular disposition or character that is excellent (or at least close to it) and enduring in humans [19]. This excellent character needs to be taught to future generations and developed noting its ability to withstand the negative desires in humans, which currently fuels the system of consumption and simulated reality. This is such because regulation and instruction comes from an external source while negative urges and the tendency for virtue come from the same internal source that resides within the individual. Aristotle's stressing on the importance of human character then becomes a crucial point in our struggle against the logic and world of simulation. The logic of simulation works by first weakening peoples' characters and turn this state into a permanent state over time. However, if the individual's character can be rebuilt through virtues then he or she would be less vulnerable to manipulation and deception thereby loosening simulation logic's influence on the person.

## 6 Conclusion

Transformed human life in a scale that has never been envisioned in the past. However, such achievements should not blind us of the fact that things in reality are a far cry from being ideal. Although there have been many positive effects, these advancement and achievements have also introduced several negative effects that have never been seen in the previous eras. Furthermore, progress achieved in the economic, political, social and cultural spheres have the potential of complicating resolution of old problems. This is clearly visible for example when we are discussing moral issues and problems.

To date the progress in information and communication technology has been unable to offer concrete solution to the myriad of moral problems that have existed for quite a while. The progress in technology on the contrary appears to magnify and facilitate deviant act and practices in society. However upon closer inspection we observe that the cause of the prevalence of deviant acts and practices in society and the difficulties in resolving moral problems lie not in the progress of technology but in the inability of the liberal selves-in the conception of Alasdair MacIntyre-to adapt to the speed of the development of technology and knowledge or science. The primitive self becomes incompatible with the sophisticated technological machinery and infrastructure of the network society. Under a heavy cloud of simulation and plagued by confusion and subjective self-interest, this self is only able to perceive a particular and trivial use of the technologies but fails to recognize the overall benefit of such technologies and its potential for furthering the cause of humanity.

When the liberal self is then confronted with enduring moral problems and issues, the self becomes ill-equipped. This is because such moral problems could only be addressed by those with a strong grasp or understanding of themselves, the world around them and their purpose in life included in this is a strong understanding of good-evil, right-wrong and virtue-vice. Therefore to resolve the moral problems and issues of today and prevent

the spread and development of deviant practices and behaviors in society we need to implement a two-tiered solution simultaneously: first at the global order and secondly at the national and individual level. At the heart of the solution is a call to stop following the Western-style system of consumption blindly and to encourage people and societies to develop their life purpose and goals that is a reflection of their own cultures and character that embraces or prioritize the importance of virtue in the state, community and individual's life without closing any doors to the progress achieved in science and technology abilities.

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