Introduction

Gwon Un-kyong does a variety of things on her AfreectaTV stream 'Un-kyong World' (윤경월드 -

http://afreecatv.com/dbsrmd2). She plays video games, talks to her viewers about her life and answers

their questions, streams herself going to the store, concerts, and other 'special' locations, eats and cooks,

and basically lives her life. She is most famous for her choreographed kpop dances, which get thousands

of views on Afreeca and her YouTube channel. Un-kyong allows you into her world and gladly lives it

for her audience.

Rather than the dystopian nightmare of *The Truman Show* or *Big Brother*, in the age of social media and

Internet streaming people choose to be watched and watch others for monetary gain, personal connections

in an age of atomization, a feeling of empowerment as both consumer and producer of content on a

variety of media sources, or just entertainment that somehow feels different than traditional sources of

media consumption. Though this paper will reflect on how AfreecaTV and Korean Internet livestreaming

are part of this new media, it is not primarily focused on this general condition of Web 2.0. Academic

work on social media privacy and new technologies oscillate between luddism and utopianism and are

already well covered as a general trend of neoliberal consumerism and 'immaterial production.' The lack

of privacy and the new forms of media consumption implied in Un-kyong World are banally obvious to

all parties involved and imply no dystopian angst or revolutionary anti-hierarchical media. Un-kyong

gladly gives out her information and her audience gladly gives her 'balloons' (AfreecaTV's monetary

donation system) in the hopes of being personally addressed. Neither party takes their roles very seriously;

Un-kyong plays a hyper-cute caricature of herself while the audience constantly mocks itself for being

losers.

What makes Un-kyong interesting is the very structure of her stream. When Un-kyong dances, her stream

immediately dances along with her. By this, I mean that different people in chat coordinate the

movements of her dance with the)) and ((symbols. Her stream, like every other, has unique 'memes' that

have accumulated from various experiences, and her audience is regimented by donation, subscriber status, and general knowledge of the usual schedule and Un-kyong's personal details. In streaming her own life, Un-kyong has done the opposite: she has created an entire world with its own language, hierarchy, conduct, and existence. Though Un-kyong appears to be allowing viewers to participate in her life, in Un-kyong's World nothing exists outside the screen. The allure is more accurately described as the ability to be in proximity to Un-kyong in a way that exceeds any possibility in real life. Centered around Un-kyong is an entire phenomenology, in which the mode of perception is structurally reinforced by the very nature of AfreecaTV. This paper, then, explores how participation in an AfreecaTV channel is ontologically unique. How does the language of a stream form and how does it self-perpetuate? Rather than the horizontal media promised in 'convergence culture,' how do new hierarchies form and how do different levels of the structure fit into it? Un-kyong World is not just a self-contained world, it is an 'author-function' that mediates the macro structures of wider Internet culture, Korean culture, and the postmodern conditions of late capitalism and the micro structures of Un-kyong's personality, the individual motivations of her viewers, and the nebulous distinction between active participation in 'convergence culture' and passive consumption. By focusing on her stream as an ontologically unique technology that implies a certain mode of perception, this paper can avoid the limitations of phenomenology that elevate individual perspective as constitutive or its generalized form in elevating Korean culture as wholly unique and irreducible and also avoid the broad-brush object analysis that sees AfreecaTV as another essentially undifferentiated object in postmodern consumer culture or capture of new technologies by commodification and branding. Most importantly, it avoids the extremism of declaring new technologies either liberating or oppressive, focusing instead on Internet streaming as something ontologically unique, can be analyzed in its newness without the judgment of historicism. AfreecaTV, as a network of 'worlds' that are phenomenologically unique but ontologically identical, is what I will call a '*stream machine.*'

This paper will trace out what constitutes a stream machine: audience as the elements, Broadcast Jockey as author-function, and AfreecaTV as machine. Through analyzing two streams, this paper will find the elements that are contingent to each stream and which elements are structural to AfreecaTV as a machine. From this, a micro-level picture of what AfreecaTV is can be used to look at the macro-level: what elements of Korean culture are absorbed by AfreecaTV and which are modified by it and how postmodern ideology is expressed with relative autonomy by AfreecaTV and within each stream. Through a comparison to Twitch.tv, the American equivalent, the strength of our model will be made clear: the contingent elements of each will be shown to be the result of technology and not culture while the particular common elements will be shown to be the result of technology and not postmodern ideology. While these remain useful ways to analyze media, this paper will explore why for the rapidly moving technologies and cultures of the Internet, a focus on machines illuminates many essential features that would otherwise be inscrutable. Finally, this paper will begin to think about the use value of its analysis beyond AfreecaTV: how elements of stream machines exist in all media forms and how attempts to interact with these forms, whether politically, economically, or sociologically, must take into account the ontologically unique aspects of AfreecaTV.

Theoretical Background

Louis Althusser famously uses the concept of 'mise-en-scene' to theorize ideology as a play. Everyone has their parts that they act out, and though they have relative autonomy within their role, they can never break out of the structures imposed by the play itself. For Bertolt Brecht as well, the revolutionary response of the theater actor is to become self-aware of one's own role in the theater of ideology and by doing so make the audience aware of their own passive role as spectators. Thus, ideology has two structures: the phenomenological level, in which individual ideological 'apparatuses' have their own structures and impose them in relatively autonomous ways, and the structure of ideology, which precedes any individual apparatus and is constitutive of ideology itself. Clearly, in the concept of 'mise-en-scene' the theater is the ontological structure of ideology while the play is the phenomenological structure of

ideologies. This concept allows us to think of different structures as relatively autonomous but nevertheless related in a system of determinations. For example, a play can be anything: an opera, a musical, a farce, etc. Within the form of a play, forms can be created that not only are completely new but undermine all previous ideas about what a play is. However, there is nevertheless something called a play that defines the ontological limits of all of these possibilities. Even the most self-referential plays and revolutionary plays, like Brechtian drama, are revolutionary precisely because they make these limits visible. An individual play can redefine what is and isn't a play but the concept of 'play' will always adapt to this new definition and reform as a coherent concept. Thus, ontology determines Being 'in the last instance,' meaning that ontology is only perceptible in its phenomenological effects and yet remains their ultimate condition of existence.

If we want to understand what a play is beyond its individual existence as differentiated stagings, we thus need to ask: what are the conditions that allow a play to exist? The stage, the actors, the audience, the music, the curtain, the script, etc. are all historically contingent elements. Most importantly, what is the condition that allows us to conduct our investigation in the first place? This is not a genealogical project but rather an immanent one, as the history of these elements is allegorical. The search for the 'first' play is in reality the search for the condition that made our conceptualization of a play possible. As Fredric Jameson makes clear about our investigation:

> "The idea is, in other words, that if interpretation in terms of expressive causality of
> allegorical master narratives remains a constant temptation, this is because such master
> narratives have inscribed themselves in the texts as well as in our thinking about them;
> such allegorical narrative signifieds are a persistent dimension of literary and cultural
> texts precisely because they reflect a fundamental dimension of our collective thinking
> and our collective fantasies about history and reality" (Jameson 1981, 34).

Jameson thus asks us to do two things beyond empiricism: "always historicize!" (Jameson 1981, 9), meaning find the universal elements of our social relations (determined in the last instance by our mode of production) in their concrete manifestations, and to find the sublime moment within our own allegorical investigation in which self-reflection on our concrete existence becomes "praxis itself" (Jameson 2004, 178) and we can perceive ontology beyond phenomenology. Where Martin Heidegger calls for an investigation of 'being-in-the-world,' meaning that Being precedes phenomenology but is only perceptible to it, Jameson, in dialectical fashion, asks us to find this Being in the concrete conditions of our social relations. We will expand on this later, but we can say that the task of our investigation is to discover 'Being-in-relation-to' some concrete object, whether it is a media, a political movement, an economic system, a linguistic norm, etc. The concrete object we will analyze is the AfreecaTV stream as an allegorical object that captures the entirety of the postmodern social relation. But in order to do this we must distinguish between investigating narratives and investigating objects that transmit narratives, e.g.; machines.

Whereas narrative is the mediating element between concrete Being and Being-as such, in the language of media a third element appears: technology. Based off Felix Guattari's concept, Thomas Lamarre develops the concept of a machine as an alternative to essentializing, and narrowness of culture-focused analysis and economistic, undifferentiating analysis of globalized postmodernism. Instead, a machine is a mechanical structure that 'underdetermines' a range of possibilities. For Lamarre, "a thinking machine is a heteropoietic process in which human thinking happens differently than it would otherwise, in another flow of material forms and immaterial fields." (Lamarre 2009, 301). A machine is not a structure that pre-determines everything that can happen; rather it is "a material limit for a force, which makes for a field of possibilities" (Lamarre 2009, 25). Whereas in the field of ideology, narrative or epistemological method are the object of investigation that contain the traces of ontology, machines in the field of media are the specific object of investigation that "remains in a metaphoric register, a virtual surface which overrides any specificities of its media formation" (Friedberg 2004, 184). Thus, thinking about media as a machine

allows us not only to think of streaming as a mode of perception that goes beyond AfreecaTV or even Internet streaming (for example, how does perception of the "postmodern technological condition" (Lamarre 2009, 170) resemble an AfreecaTV stream? How does the semiotic structure of a stream imply the possibility of an entirely new symbolic order? Our conclusion will begin to think about these questions) and instead "lay[s] the ground for approaching [social, cultural, or economic] questions" (Lamarre 2009, 302) in the field of media analysis.

To put it more plainly, our task is threefold. First, to find the empirical reality of the object of our investigation, in this case AfreecaTV streams. This allows us to find the phenomenological elements that constitute Un-kyong World as a truly complete world of self-contained meanings and affects. Second, through this investigation we can uncover the elements of an AfreecaTV as an ontological structure. This takes place through an investigation of these elements: what are the concepts and symbols that are only comprehensible in the world of Un-kyong? We move away from an investigation of elements into an investigation of their existence as elements: what is a meme? What is an Internet stream? What is a community? Finally, we can move from this into conceiving of the universal elements behind AfreecaTV by investigating our investigation: what universal elements do we perceive in our investigation? If the same investigation was conducted in a different cultural context, what elements would emerge as universal? What does participation in this investigation itself reveal about the universal and contingent elements of AfreecaTV?

Meng's World

Two examples of AfreecaTV streams should make these levels clear: audience as producer, Broadcast Jockey as author-function, AfreecaTV as machine.

Meng[1] streams a few times a week. Her stream mostly consists of her interacting with the audience; either sitting in a computer chair answering questions from the stream chat or taking kakaotalk calls from random viewers, the large majority of whom ask some variant of if she has a boyfriend. What is surprising about her stream is that it lacks any real function. She doesn't play video games, doesn't do kpop dances, doesn't travel the world, or do anything that could be isolated as some entertaining element in the sense of traditional media. Like Un-kyong, the appeal of Meng is spending time in her world, which is limited to a chair and a wall. Beyond this wall is a door that serves as the inverse of the computer screen. The viewer is immobilized within the screen and only glimpses Meng's room when she moves the webcam herself. The door, then, is where Meng appears to disappear into a void until she comes back into Meng's world. Specifically, when Meng goes off-screen through her door the viewers wonder what she is doing, when she will come back, and of course what is beyond the door. The appeal of Meng is twofold: the close proximity to a beautiful woman in an isolated space, along with the direct dialogue between Meng and the viewer, motivates both a personal connection to Meng from the comfort of home and the ability to enhance this connection through commodified attention (balloons and chocolates buy a variety of responses and zoom-ins to Meng's face); the community of Meng's channel has its own community and pleasures deriving from this sense of interpersonal relations. The community both responds to Meng in a direct, anti-hierarchical manner and hits on her when she violates the anonymity of text for kakaotalk phone calls (which is made fun of by the community itself and used by Meng for humorous effect).

Thus, Meng's channel is the true realization of Axel Bruns's concept of Produser: a consumer-distributer-produser fusion who blurs the line between them. Produsage is "the collaborative and continuous building and extending of existing content in pursuit of further improvement" (Bruns 2008, 21) and produsers are categorized by anti-hierarchical and collaborative creation, open-ended and never finished creations, and a focus on developing social structures along with the content that defines them. (2008, 21-23). Bruns' defines the four features of Produsage: "1) Open participation and communal evaluation; 2) Fluid

[1] 맹- http://afreecatv.com/luivos

heterarchy and ad hoc meritocracies; 3) Palimpsestic unfinished artifacts in a continuing process 4) Common property and individual rewards" (2008, 24-28). Taken to an extreme, Meng's channel has no content at all; it is entirely about a community and an interpersonal connection experienced through a technologically mediated normalcy. From this perspective, the absolute creativity and lack of hierarchy of produsage is fully realized in an AfreecaTV stream. Whereas Elizabeth Bird protests against the concept of produsage because most consumers remain passive, consumers are still less powerful than corporations and the brands that define them, and the lack of penetration into the third world (Bird 2011), none of these seem to hold up against Meng's stream. At least on the surface, there is nothing but participation in Meng's stream, or at minimum observing others' participation. Without content and without corporate influence, Meng's stream appears to be an entirely self-contained and horizontal space. Further, as we shall see later, this space transcends cultural and geographical limitations, as the examples of Twitch.tv and douyu tv show (American and Chinese AfreecaTV respectively).

In terms of community, Nancy Baym lays out five categories to evaluate online communities: "sense of space, shared practice, shared resources and support, shared identities, and interpersonal relationships." (Baym 2010, 75) And Meng's stream exhibits these like any other online community: Her stream has both the literal space of her stream, in which emoticons, balloons, and memes gain meaning, and the metaphorical space of her face that remains the center of the stream wherever she travels. Shared practices and shared identities, such as dancing along while she sings using emoticons (in particular a hand emoticon shaped like a hand that is utilized whenever she says "Bang!"), donating certain amounts of balloons that have different significance, and memes shared between her stream, different AfreecaTV streams, and the wider Internet culture signify authenticity and belonging. While support and relationships are lacking compared to a traditional community, this reflects the unique nature of streaming as both community and entertainment.

Jin Ahn and Young Choi analyzed the AfreecaTV community and affirmed these observations. Analyzing Muk-bang (eating food on stream) as a kind of 'food porn' in which a forbidden pleasure is shared

between viewer and streamer (Anh & Choi 2016, 11), they then move from this to all streaming as an affective pleasure through community, or what they call "full-time intimate communities" (Anh & Choi 2016, 15). For Ahn and Choi, streams are communities that both result from social alienation and create new forms of alienation when in-groups are divided or attempt to exclude newcomers. In their research, they found people watch streams for the person-to-person connection (one viewer talks about how he says hello to viewers he recognizes while admitting it may appear childish[2]) and/or for the Broadcast Jockey star power (one fan claims he feels a personal connection to his favorite streamer Ebong[3]) (Anh & Choi 2016, 36-37). But behind the superficial appeal of viewing streams as fandoms, they conclude that AfreecaTV streams are instead 'existential spaces' (Anh & Choi 2016, 46) in which anonymity allows the formation of transient, creative identities. Ban Ok-suk and Bak Ju-yon, instead of focusing on alienation, focused on pleasure in their study of AfreecaTV, which analyzed stream communities in terms of 'flow theory.' They found that within the community space of an AfreecaTV stream, enjoyment and concentration, a sense of belonging and control, and a unique sense of space and time are enabled through the community (Ban and Bak 2016). What makes AfreecaTV unique then is not its communal enjoyment that characterizes all 'fandom' activities, but that each stream has its own sense of 'immersion' in the flow experience while AfreecaTV in general can be characterized as a media that produces this enjoyment and fully immersive pleasure.

All of this shows that at the level of phenomenology, AfreecaTV is the most advanced realization of the 'virtual communities' that were envisioned at the dawn of the Internet. Participating is both a direct connection to an individual and participation in a community, and its content appears to be entirely creative and anti-hierarchical. We can even go further and say that Meng's stream, and by extension all

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[2] "핑크색(열혈 팬) 같은 경우에는 솔직히 그 색이 되려면 어마어마한 돈이 들어가잖아 요. (채팅방) 올 때부터 이 사람이 인사를 안 했는데도 다들 인사를 하게 되죠. 네, 그 런 게 있어요. 길들어 있죠. 솔직히 말하면. 어떻게 보면 유치하게 생각할 수 있는데 그냥 권력구조가 딱 잡혀 있어요."

[3] "애봉님이든 팬분들이든 그 사람들이 진심으로, 진짜 나를 반가워해주고, 내가 들어 가서 말을 건넸을 때 사람들이 나를 받아주고 나를 인정해주는 거 같은, 그런 하나의 사람으로서 인정해주는 것 같은 느낌을 받기 때문에... 사실은 그래서 들어가는 게 아닐까요?"

others, are completely autonomous sites of pleasure, both the pleasure of resistance to the alienation of virtual identity and the pleasure of self-creation anonymity provides, in addition to the sense of belonging and absolute mastery over a self-contained world of norms, rules, symbols, and rituals gives. While this new form of community can be alienating to some, it is clear that from the perspective of the community, they are the future which describes "the way all audiences will interact with media from now on" (Bird 2011, 503) as "a new kind of cultural power [is] emerging as fans bond together within larger communities, pool their information, shape each other's opinions, and develop a greater self-consciousness about their shared agendas and common interests" (Costello and Moore 2007, 140). Thus, from a phenomenological perspective, it is not a question of judgment, "as we are already living in a convergence culture" (Jenkins 2006, 212), but an exploration of how this new form will lead to new forms of "creativity, innovation and well-being" (Leadbeater 2008, 6).

It has been stressed repeatedly that from the perspective of phenomenology an AfreecaTV stream is a creative community of produsers and that this is a completely correct assessment from a certain epistemological method. As previously stated, a focus on empirical experience leads to either the utopianism of Jenkins, Leadbeater, Bruns, Ban and Bak, and many others, or a focus on the failure of actual experience to live up to these utopian schemes as in Bird, Ahn and Choi, Verstraete, Stevens, etc. Based on our previously outlined model of epistemology, there is an inherent limit to the very debate about convergence culture, produsers, fandom, and other new forms of community. Henry Jenkins is explicit in this: "If we focus on the technology, the battle will be lost before we even begin to fight. We need to confront the social, cultural, and political protocols that surround the technology and define how it will get used" (Jenkins 2006, 212). For Jenkins, a focus on technology represents a pessimism and luddism that not only characterizes the past instead of the future, it is in its very form outdated as it cannot keep up with the speed of new culture. Ultimately, an entire new form of politics (and scholarship) is implied by convergence culture, in which "politics…becomes an act of mapping a certain collectivity (of

subjects and objects) that is unfinished, inclusive, mobile and that sees 'here' in relation to 'there' or possibly elsewhere as well" (Verstraete 2011, 544) and one either keeps up with this or becomes a relic.

But if we stress machines as a form of technology that represents "less a concrete, bounded thing or technology than a self-sustaining series, or indeed…a constant flow of things that glues us to the franchise" (Verstraete 2011, 544), which, in the words of Lamarre, underdetermines a field of possibilities, we can keep up with the speed of AfreecaTV without getting lost in the euphoria of its flow.

So-na's World

From the perspective of phenomenology, Yu So-na[4] appears to fill the expectations of convergence culture even further. Her stream chat moves so fast that it is literally unreadable except when many people post in unison. Rather than a convergence across medias, watching her channel is itself a convergence of different entertainments. The promise of postmodern 'exploded vision' in which "any element in the image may serve to direct a line of sight; any element may generate a field of potential depth. Density of information, a sense of tightly packed elements with potential depth, begins to take precedence over movement within a world. At the same time, because this is a moving image, the sensation is one of information incessantly rising to the surface" (Lamarre 2009, 133-134) perfectly describes the normal viewing experience, in which multiple chats, a variety of images, other programs, other streams, multiple websites, and branded images all coexist on a flat plane.

But there is something fundamentally missing from this picture. Of course these brands and images are not neutral but part of postmodern capitalist commodification, but even on the level of So-na's stream, this phenomenology doesn't explain what's really happening. Whereas Meng's stream is casual and lacks any 'purpose', it's clear that So-na considers streaming to be a professional activity. She wears a Hanbok, has a professional microphone in view, and has a screen door background. Rather than appearing as amateurish, it is the amateurish quality of these things that enhances her power as 'authentic' to her fans.

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[4] 유소나 - http://www.afreecatv.com/nila25

A common meme in chat is a prayer to So-na, in which her first name 'So' is combined with 'men', a shortened version of the English word 'amen.'[5] Often put in a form with dashes between 'so' and 'men' as to be noticeable on the fast moving chat, what is remarkable about this meme is how specific to the chat it is. The esoteric nature of its combination of English and Korean, the specific form it takes in the chat (which are spread on the Internet as things someone can copy paste into different streams with modification, known as 'chat spam'), and its purposelessness except as a noise among other noise, shows that the purpose of the chat is not communication at all. Whereas in smaller streams a community can form, as AfreecaTV streams become more popular they become more and more hierarchical. So-na will often point to the chat and say "I love you, please subscribe[6]" and a flood of subscriptions, donations, and chat messages praising her will follow.

When we focus on the technological limits of AfreecaTV, we find that the speed of So-na's stream does not enable some new mode of perception or community; it instead means that the only way to communicate at all is through money. Of course, the more money one gives the more attention one will receive from So-na, and even the self-mockery of Meng's stream is not possible when the only way to actually communicate in the chat is if So-na herself stops the chat, reads aloud a message, and responds (which of course sets off a flood of responses). A meme found in the chat, 'sasuga mangsang sujjang dudududu,' combines many obscure linguistic codes: Japanese word 'sasuga' meaning wonderful or praiseworthy, the phrase 'master of imagination' and the slang for trembling.[7] Again the obscurity and level of mastery of various signifiers for belonging to this stream community is remarkable, but the purpose is not communication except in the basic sense of belonging. The purpose remains acknowledging So-na and being acknowledged by her, and obedience to the norms of the community are

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[5]소ㅡㅡㅡㅡㅡㅡㅡㅡㅡ멘 소ㅡㅡㅡㅡㅡㅡㅡㅡㅡ멘. 소ㅡㅡㅡㅡㅡㅡㅡㅡㅡ멘
소ㅡㅡㅡㅡㅡㅡㅡㅡㅡ멘
[6]사랑이 봤다서 구독
[7]ㅅ ㅏ ㅅ ㄱ ㅏ 망상 수장 ㄷ ㄷ ㄷ ㄷ

more for So-na's sake, either in case she notices, to keep up with others vying for her attention at hyperspeed, or simply to keep the chat active as part of the experience of the stream.

Bird criticizes studies of produsers and convergence culture for ignoring that most fans do not participate in fan communities, if they do it is often useless information, and that money remains a motivator rather than any kind of revolutionary community spirit (Bird 2011, 504). She calls for taking into account the "vast range of online participation" and criticizes scholars for focusing on substantive forms of user-created content because it is easier to study (2011, 505). She is not wrong, and scholars of convergence culture often get carried away in proclaiming all media as fundamentally new. But as Meng's stream shows, from the point of view of the community the trends these scholars outline become truer. She remains trapped by the phenomenological viewpoint that accepts the premises of convergence culture theory as true. If we focus on the machine aspects of So-na's stream: what kinds of communication it allows, how it structures hierarchies, how it creates and reinforces a semiotic structure in its very technological makeup, we find that as the speed of media increases, noise becomes more prevalent and not less. If the chaos, hyperspeed, and esoteric language of AfreecaTV is the frontier of convergence culture and postmodern flat perspective, then So-na's stream machine shows that Internet streaming leads to increased hierarchy, less creativity and communication, increased inclusivity and obsession with authenticity, and less pleasure, sense of control, and sense of freedom. Most importantly, the power of money becomes even greater as it becomes the only form of individual communication.

Streams As Temples

This is very far from the utopianism of produsers in a convergence culture, but further analysis of So-na's stream makes it clear. From the point of view of the stream rather than its participants, AfreecaTV represents a pantheistic collection of temples involving what Adam Possamai calls 'hyper-real religion.' Instead of an anti-hierarchical community, our analysis of So-na's stream finds that it is a strict hierarchy of worship and pre-determined meanings in which the only means of communication is prayer and tithes.

Such a concept is not new to analysis of fandom. Fandom's themselves embrace religious comparisons, with such concepts like religious 'canon' being used to describe what is and is not authoritatively part of the 'universe' or 'continuity' of a convergent series of media.[8] Fans even refer to the author as the 'word of God'[9] and great debates in fandoms break out if meanings are contested, to the point in which attempts by a false God to alter canon are "heretical" (Lyden 2012, 778). But focus has been on whether such activities constitute religion or fandom, relying on an increasingly irrelevant separation of the two.

Adam Possamai states "a hyper-real religion is a simulacrum of a religion created out of, or in symbiosis with, commodified popular culture which provides inspiration at a metaphorical level and/or is a source of beliefs in everyday life" (Possamai 2012, 20). Markus Davidsen rightly critiques the false opposition between 'real' and 'hyper-real' religion, and redefines the term as 'fiction-based religion.' But rather than see all communities under a postmodern hyperreality as converging, he differentiates religion as non-fictional, avoiding the outdatedness of a fiction/non-fiction distinction by relying on the phenomenological claims of the practitioners (Davidsen 2013). Roeland, Aupers, Houtman, de Koning, and Noomen (2010) and Heelas (2009) criticize this concept for not taking into account the richness of New Age religion while Berger and Ezzy critique his description of witchcraft (2009) and Scheifinger (2012) argues this is only a Western, post-Christian concept. Even Michael Jindra (1994), who goes furthest in thinking about [Star Trek] fandom as a religious activity, relies on a nebulous concept of 'seriousness' to differentiate between religions and fan activities. What all of these critiques have in common, as well as Possamai's definition, is a focus on the phenomenological experience of fans and religious practitioners, even though the presumption of a hyperreal society makes such a concept incoherent.

But if we change the focus from perspective to technology, a whole new conceptualization appears. David Chidester defines religion as "the activity of being human in relation to superhuman transcendence and

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[8] http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/Canon
[9] http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/WordOfGod

sacred inclusion, which inevitably involves dehumanization and exclusion" (2005, viii). It's clear that definitions of hyperreal or fictional religion have gone between the focus on the supernatural and transcendental aspects of religion or the inclusion and exclusion from a community, both of which we have focused on in relation to AfreecaTV. But, as our discussion of ontology shows, in order to understand a stream machine we must focus on 'being human in relation to' as the essence of postmodern religion. Religion, rather than being the narrow property of churches or worshippers, becomes the very mode of Being in a world in which all meaning is arbitrary. While a streamer giving her viewers a semiotic structure may appear different than God giving believers a system of beliefs, in an age when God, belief, and believer are all commodities, from the point of view of the machines that structure these hyperreal religion, they are identical.

In her study of Joss Whedon fans, Judith Fathallah reaffirms this idea. She finds that the utopianism of early studies of the Internet were mistaken, and rather than the disappearance of the author or hierarchy, new hierarchies have formed. Instead, she relies on Michel Foucault's concept of an 'author-function (Fathallah 2014, 3) to find that the concept of 'authority' has replaced the author as individual or 'produser.' She finds that "the concept 'Author' retains more power than individuals' ability to wield it" (2014, 2) and thus "the Author is alive, but so is the scribbling fan, and the fans, en masse, may withhold or bestow legitimation through the operation of the author-function" (2014, 16).

Thus, AfreecaTV realizes what was only implicit in certain obsessive fan activities: the replacement of the author, the viewer, and the media with worship itself, worship meaning Being in relation to a source of meaning. Thus, a stream machine is a technological limit that structures Being in relation to a structure of meanings.

The value of using religion instead of other concepts, besides the adoption of its terminology by fans themselves, is that it makes clear the restrictive and exclusionary nature of streams. Whereas the focus on the stream community revealed a horizontal network that would eventually encompass all of media and

resist traditional, corporate forms of meaning, the focus on the limitations streaming imposes on this community, and further how these limitations structure the community itself, reveals that meaning, communication, and Being are entirely top-down, even imposing themselves on the real existence of the streamer against their 'streamer-function.' The camera, the Hanbok, the chat, the microphone, and the meme language are a prison for both viewer and streamer, and though the streamer remains the embodied signifier of meaning, it is reasonable to predict that this source of embodied meaning will become entirely virtual as stream machines encompass more media forms.

The Television as the Proto-stream Machine

Fredric Jameson develops these concepts in his study of video technology. Jameson finds himself caught in the same trap as the phenomenologists. An empirical, phenomenological study of postmodern video media finds its subject is "virtually impossible to reestablish on the basis of the isolated tape itself." (Jameson 1991, 73). In the postmodern age, any attempt at intentionality on the part of producer or consumer (or produser) is impossible to divine. Instead, an emphasis on machines allows us to escape this modernist trap of searching for meanings: "the involvement of the machine in all this allows us now perhaps to escape phenomenology and the rhetoric of consciousness and experience, and to confront this seemingly subjective temporality in a new and materialist way, a way which constitutes a new kind of materialism as well, one not of matter but of machinery." (Jameson 1991, 75)

As we have previously outlined, stream machines are thus the possibilities that structure the ontology of Being in technology. But a new, decentered subject emerges that establishes meaning: what memes proliferate, what kind of communication takes place, what kind of relationships emerge, etc. Just as in Un-kyong's, Meng's and So-na streams, the authenticity of streamer as participant is essential to structuring the 'author-function:' mechanical depersonalization (or decentering of the subject) goes even further in the new medium, where the auteurs themselves are dissolved along with the spectator (Jameson 1991, 74). By hyperreal religion then, we mean the construction of a space-time centered structured by a

stream machine and given meaning by an author-function. Each stream is its own religion but the technology of AfreecaTV itself constructs a space-time.

By this, Jameson hints at the kind of space-time of a stream machine: "the most paradoxical effects of this technological appropriation of subjectivity are observable in the experience of time itself. "Fiction" is what is in question here and that it can be defined essentially as the construction of just such fictive and foreshortened temporalities (whether of film or reading), which are then substituted for a real time we are thereby enabled momentarily to forget." (Jameson 1991, 76) Whereas the experience of watching TV is the beginning of a temporality that is not regulated by the rhythm of the capitalist work process that modernity ushered in, this only exists in relation to the television itself. Outside the screen of the television, life continues as modernity remains. But a stream machine is different. As Meng's and Un-kyong's stream makes clear, a stream machine is all encompassing: it' space is entirely limited to the face of the streamer and the strict limits of the chat and its hyperspeed temporality structures communication and Being itself.

Stream Machines

What is most fascinating about this analysis is that it is obvious and even banal to streamers and viewers. Un-kyong happily calls her stream her 'world' and all the streamers we have analyzed openly treat their streams as a way of Being-in-relation-to them. Rather than finding the world of hyperspeed communication terrifying or totalizing, viewers gladly participate in meme culture, and the concept of these worlds as religions wouldn't be particularly surprising to people in fandoms. Korean fans of AfreecaTV streams, rather than embracing the anti-hierarchical nature of anonymous 'flow,' exhaustively catalogue memes[1011] and mock other fans and themselves for being 'otaku' and 'shiptaku'[12] if they show

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[10]https://namu.wiki/ for a catalogue of all memes
[11]https://blog.naver.com/PostView.nhn?blogId=ehdals14541&logNo=220594335670&parentCategoryNo=1&categoryNo=&viewDate=&isShowPopularPosts=true&from=search for specific memes and histories of AfreecaTV streamers

too much devotion. The observation that the essence of investigating ontology must precede phenomenology is clear enough to the AfreecaTV viewers. Ahn and Choi repeatedly find the people they interview question their own participation in streaming, disparage other fans or themselves, or are themselves unclear why they watch streams and how they learned memes and languages that allow them to participate. In Jindra's famous study of Star Trek fandom, he finds that, "an astounding 80% of fans in one nonscientific poll taken at a convention said that some fans are "excessively and actively devoted." (Jindra 1994, 47) But what is obvious is usually so because it has so penetrated our daily lives that we simply accept it as the norm.

The fact that stream machines are perceptible and have gone so far in realizing the early trends that Jenkins finds in convergent medias and Jameson finds in television shows that they have penetrated far beyond AfreecaTV. Many countries are getting their own forms of streaming, from America's Twitch.tv and China's Douyu TV, and streaming is increasingly becoming important for new forms of media such as e-sports, fan-to-celebrity communication, and even politics. AfreecaTV is especially well known for its political role, such as in the 2008 candlelight protests or the mayor of Seoul using it as a platform to open meetings to the public,[13][14] and has been studied as a technology that limits old forms of politics and enables new ones. Beyond streaming, the space-time and mode of Being of AfreecaTV stream machines are proliferating. Twitter, with its 140-character limit, has become an object of study because of the overwhelming amount of data it contains, but the extreme limits the technology sets and its rapid tempo[15] clearly shares more than a passing resemblance to ontology of AfreecaTV. The rapid spread of cinematic 'universes' in Marvel, Star Wars, and DC Comics, particularly with focus on the totalitarian control Disney exercised in erasing the previous Star Wars 'canon' and strictly controlling the new 'canon,' shows the relevance of emphasizing the religious and hierarchical nature of AfreecaTV streams against

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[12]'십타쿠' – a combination of 10 '십' and otaku '오타쿠' (from the Japanese slang for someone obsessive, a loser, a NEET usually in the context of anime) meaning 'ten times otaku'
[13]See Dongwon, Jo. "Real-time networked media activism in the 2008 Chotbul protest." *a journal for and about social movement*s, Volume 2 (2): 92 – 102. 2010.
[14]http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20120425001057&cpv=0
[15]See Axel Bruins of produser fame's new book *Twitter and Society*

the phenomenological freedom and creativity of self-conceptualized fandom. The spread of 'Gamergate' and 'nerd culture' more generally show the rapid growth of stream machines into all aspects of life, particularly the ontologically rigid structures that create the poisonous, misogynistic 'echo chambers' of Gamergate and the bullying, identity obsessed stereotype of tumblr captured by the phrase 'social justice warrior,' which has itself become part of mainstream discourse through the alt-right. Going into all of these phenomena is far beyond the purview of this paper; what is significant is the traits that we have identified as the limitations stream machines pose: rigid hierarchy, absolute devotion to the 'author-function,' hyperspeed space-time and inability to communicate except as a collective, as noise, or as money-as-individuality, the spread of pre-given and uncreative signifiers known as memes in a complex, esoteric semiotic structure known as a 'world,' and the closure of this system as the determinant of Being-in-relation-to itself. Specifically, our analysis has allowed us to move beyond culturally-focused analyses of AfreecaTV, fandom, and hyperreal religions. Besides the use of this, as convergence culture becomes more encompassing rather than less, such analysis are less and less relevant. However, we have also avoided the broad analyses of AfreecaTV streams as commodities among an infinite number of others in postmodern consumerism. A focus on machines allowed us to generalize the technological effects of streaming while differentiating each individual stream as phenomenologically unique. Thus, rather than each stream being just another commodity or brand, each stream is itself a mediating object of analysis that reveals the entire ontological social relation that underdetermines it. We have only begun to investigate the infinite streams that each contains within them a unique world, a coherent and organized semiotic structure, and an allegorical representation of our very 'Being-in-relation-to' the world.