

Virtual *Taksu*: Construction of Animation Aesthetic Terminology With Balinese Local Wisdom Concept

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted in a manner to answer whether *Taksu* which have, traditionally, Balinese people believed as a way of achieving aesthetic quality through spiritual appreciation, providing opportunities for the *Taksu* appreciation in any other ways or contemporary way. The method used was to conduct scientific discourse that involves professional animators and animation researchers. The subject of the discourse was how *Taksu* represented on virtual entities. Instrument used was an animation that its form reproduced from an act or performance of a dance that is believed to be *Metaksu*. The elaborated knowledge of the discourse is then summarized and expressed descriptively. Research on *Taksu* in animation has never been done. Through discourse analysis conducted in this research, it was found that *Taksu* could be represented in the work of animation. This explorative research resulted in the construction of 'Virtual *Taksu*'—terminology that was elaborated virtual aesthetic concept with Balinese local wisdom concept of aesthetic. *Virtual Taksu* term as research findings is a novelty aspect of this research. It can be described as a concept to identify any issue related to Balinese aesthetic concept that is existed in virtual world.

Keywords: *Virtual Taksu, Discourse Analysis, Representation, Aesthetic in Animation, Balinese Local Wisdom*

1. INTRODUCTION

Aesthetic values in postmodern aesthetic experience interesting dynamics, that has been sought after by many researchers. There is a variety of commodification and aesthetic banality happened in contemporary world. This event is actually also occurring in Bali. Art(s) experiencing decadence, the transition from sacred art to the art of the profane. *Taksu*—a cult/spiritual value as a "determinant" of aesthetic quality by Balinese people, its measure nowadays slipped to material matters. This issue was also delivered by Dibia—as a professor of performance art, in scientific papers on Anniversary XI, and XIII ISI graduation ceremony, Saturday, July 26th, 2014.

Taksu—as Balinese local wisdom concept of aesthetic—is etymologically derived from the Sanskrit word '*Caksu*', which means radiance. *Taksu* is very close to the world of Balinese art, both in performing arts, fine arts, literary arts and architecture. Dibia, states that having a talent, physical ability, or technical knowledge and sufficient understanding in a particular field is important for every actor in the profession. It enables them doing the job well and right. But only with the blessing of the

Omnipotent *Hyang Widhi Wasa*, in the form of *Taksu*, one will be able to display its superiority in producing or creating the best quality work in the field of his profession [1]. Dibia's opinion seems to refer to the construction of the meaning of "professionalism". The term "professionalism" originates from English, but its meaning has been used by pre-modern Balinese people in the form of the word '*Taksu*'.

In the midst of artistic passion in Bali, complaints about the disappearance of *Taksu*, no new achievements, the art of offering turned dominant into the art of the consumption material. Dibia reminds that the immaterial *Taksu* in the midst of the life of modern society is increasingly drawn by heavy flow toward the material so that impressed a little excessive. Dibia said that given the declining output quality (artwork and graduates) of art colleges in recent years, talks on *taksu* activation are very important [1].

It turned out that the practice of banality is indirectly supported by the market, namely the ordinary people or tourists as a spectator. The audience, who do not know the background or preparation rituals behind the presence of a performing art, often can not distinguish the art performances—that were really well prepared to achieve *Taksu*—with those by who are not well prepared. Manipulation occurs, an artist who "pretend" her/his

"Taksu" was able to give the impression that the lay audience read as "Me-taksu". This event example shows in *Ngurek* act, which is lots of actor manipulate the act to get the mood that spectator seek. If these falsehoods, or affectation can be read as a "truth", then the question arises, whether to allow "reproduce" *Taksu* in a form of other representation, in ways that common in the contemporary era?

As technology develops, performance art develops rapidly in terms of appearance on stage [2]. Performing arts that are displayed live on stage have an aura or aesthetic value that is different when displayed on a screen (television) or smartphone screen that varies in audio and visual specifications [3, 4]. From this phenomenon, the question will arise, whether dance performances that are believed to be *Metaksu* will have the same value or quality of *Taksu* if displayed on a TV screen or smartphone?

Since the late 1970s, a number of authors, both Balinese and foreign writers, have begun to include brief discussions on *Taksu*. Short descriptions of *Taksu* are offered, for example, by Ana Daniel in Bali "Behind the Mask" and "Bali Sekala & Niskala" by Fred B. Eiseman. However, after 1990, more and more foreign researchers were interested in exploring *taksu* problems, such as "Voices in Bali" by Edward Herbst talking about *Taksu*. In addition, also Margaret Coldiron in his book entitled "Trance and Transformation of the Actor in Japanese and Balinese Masked Dance-Drama" or Liza Gold in "Music in Bali". From several studies that have been done, no one has ever linked or researched about *taksu* in animation

This research attempts to answer whether *Taksu* – which, traditionally, the Balinese people has trusted as a means for achieving an aesthetic quality through spiritual appreciation – can be given a chance in contemporary means or ways. In the discourse will be discussed about how *taksu* representation can be present in a virtual entity.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research procedure begins with carrying out the study of theories and concepts related to: *Taksu* concepts; aesthetic ontology related to *Taksu* (auratic art, interpretation and identification of art, and representation); Balinese traditional aesthetics specifically related to animation (motion art) namely performance art (dance); virtual aesthetic concept; and postmodern theory.

The vital research instrument used as a media discourse is an animated video as a result of the reproduction of Hanoman dancers' movements that is claimed and believed to be 'Me-taksu'. The resource person will answer a number of questions related to discourse material that is also contained in the results of the animated video. Resource persons consisted of professional animators and animation researchers.

The criteria that must be fulfilled by resource persons as professional animators are: (1) Animators are Balinese who are Hindus who know the concept of *Taksu*; (2) experienced working in the world of animation (2D or 3D) for at least 1 (one) year; (3) has worked on animation projects on an international scale. The criteria that must be fulfilled by the resource persons as animation researchers are the same as the criteria for resource persons as

professional animators in points 1-3. The difference points in the period of experience in the world of animation is at least 3 years. Specific criteria that are considered to have important added value are sources that have written books about animation.

Respondent who met the criteria as researcher animators was: I Putu Gede Aryantha Jaya. Respondents who met the criteria as professional animators were: I Gusti Agung Komang Oka Sudarsana, Wayan Joniartha Siada, I Gusti Putu Yudha Sanjaya, I Gusti Ngurah Mahardika (Igen), Dewa Gede Bagus Satria (Dode).

The results will be evaluated through discourse analysis to address how *taksu* can be represented virtually in animation. Elaborations on the resulting knowledge will then be summarized and conveyed descriptively.

This study will be conducted using qualitative research methods, which is directed at conditions of study subjects were strongly associated with objects and materials research discussion. The approach used is deductive interpretive. Qualitative interpretive draw conclusions from things that are general became a special nature. Evidence of culture will be interpreted into values. *Taksu* concept will be studied with the paradigm of cultural studies in the postmodern aesthetic concept, an aesthetics ontology (philosophy of art). The research model can be found in Figure 1.

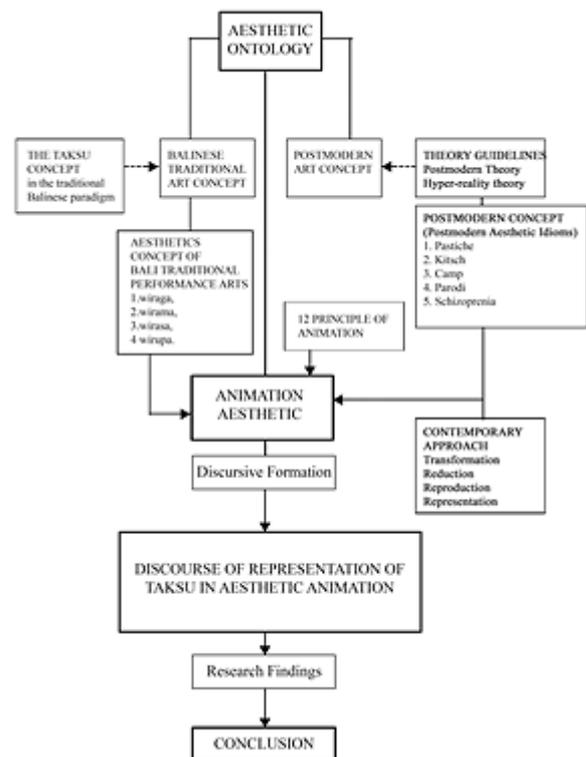


Figure 1 Research Model

3. RESULT

Taksu, is a terminology, the concept of life, and the philosophy of art as a representation of spiritual strength and a peak energy that is needed in all aspects of life (social, religious, and cultural) in Balinese Hindus. Dibia reveal, the presence of *taksu* provide intellectual ability

and creativity that allows a person to show their best work and services (professionalism).

Related to statements regarding professionalism as a form of *taksu* practice implies a theory that the successfulness of *Taksu* representation on an object is determined by the subject. *Taksu* professionalism as a form of practice are attached to the subject. This is reinforced by the results of Laksemi's research that the appreciation of *Taksu* determined by the artist (subject), works (object) and appreciators (observer). Postmodern idiom approach which are close to *Taksu* representation practices in virtual entities is pastiche and kitsch.

There are two main questions related to the discourse of the existence of *Taksu* on virtual entities that are asked of respondents. The virtual entity chosen as a case study is an entity in animation. The first question was asked before the respondent saw the reproduction of the *Hanoman* dance video footage into an animated video (see Figure 2). The first question is: do you think there is *Taksu* in animation? In what form? The second question was asked after the respondent saw the reproduction of the *Hanoman* dance video footage into an animated video. The second question is: In your opinion, is it possible if a dance that is considered *me-taksu*, or a dance performed by a dancer that is considered to be *me-taksu* if used as an animation still displays *Taksu*?



Figure 2 Reproduction of Hanoman Dance performance (left image) into frame by frame animation (right image).

From the implementation of the discourse on *Taksu* in animation it was found that in the pre-animation preview stage, all the speakers revealed that there was *Taksu* in the animation. There are internal and external factors in realizing *Taksu* in animation. The dominant internal factor is from the animator both in terms of technicality and work attitude. External factors are the audience as appreciators. Another factor in the form of animation that is important is the perfection and integrity of the elements of animation (audio-visual), including the application of animation principles properly.

Table 1 Taksu In Animation Discourse Result 1

Resource Person	FIRST QUESTION, Pre-Animation Preview	
	do you think there is <i>taksu</i> in animation?	IN WHAT FORM?
I Putu Gede Aryantha Jaya	Yes I do	<i>Taksu</i> is the same as professionalism. Perseverance, skills and the results of the hard work of the animator will be reflected in the animation. We can see that as <i>taksu</i> .
I Gusti Agung Komang Oka Sudarsana	Yes I do	Audio, visual, movement, feels (<i>rasa</i>) and aura within

Resource Person	FIRST QUESTION, Pre-Animation Preview	
	do you think there is <i>taksu</i> in animation?	IN WHAT FORM?
Wayan Joniartha Siada	Yes I do	Technical quality and perfection of animated motion reflect <i>taksu</i> levels. the smoother the movement the more the animation <i>metaksu</i> .
I Gusti Putu Yudha Sanjaya	Yes I do	<i>Taksu</i> form involves 3 aspects, namely the animator, the animation work itself and the people who enjoy it (the message from the animation is conveyed to the audience)
I Gusti Ngurah Mahardika (Igen),	Yes I do	<i>Taksu's</i> tendency is about taste. If we feel there is something extraordinary about the animation we are watching, then the animation can be expressed as having <i>taksu</i> .
Dewa Gede Bagus Satria (Dode)	Yes I do	Depending on the form of animation whether 2D or 3D because it can differ in how to appreciate it. If in 3D, as long as the animator applies the principles of animation properly the animation will act <i>metaksu</i> .

Table 2 Taksu in Animation Discourse Result 2

Resource Person	SECOND QUESTION, Post-Animation Preview	
	In your opinion, is it possible if a dance that is considered <i>me-taksu</i> , or a dance performed by a dancer that is considered to be <i>me-taksu</i> if used as an animation still displays <i>taksu</i> ?	
I Putu Gede Aryantha Jaya	Depending on how well the animation created is able to represent the dance movements. If the animation created does not have sufficient technical quality, <i>taksu</i> will not be present in the animation.	
I Gusti Agung Komang Oka Sudarsana	This is very possible because of the support of animation technology that is very adequate. An example is the motion capture technology that continues to develop.	
Wayan Joniartha Siada	In dance besides there is motion (visual aspect) there are also sounds like music and sound effects. If the unity is not represented intact, the resulting animation will not be <i>metaksu</i>	
I Gusti Putu Yudha Sanjaya	Still, if the message implied in the work remains and the community can reach the same meaning.	
I Gusti Ngurah Mahardika (Igen),	If we feel that when we watch the dance, we can get the same feel when watching the animation, then the <i>taksu</i> is successfully transferred. Don't forget that watching a crowd full of live shows is different from just watching alone.	
Dewa Gede Bagus Satria (Dode)	Depending on how the technique is used. Is the procedural method by utilizing the expertise of many animator manuals or using advanced technology? In my opinion the animator's role in transferring <i>taksu</i> is still dominant and important compared to using technology	

The insight gained from the results of the discourse on the existence of *Taksu* in animation is: Virtual entities as objects produced by subjects (creator) will produce the *aura* that has a very high aesthetic value (*me-taksu*), as long as the subject exercise the process of creating the (art)work with *Taksu*.

Virtual Taksu is constructed from various terms and contains values, concepts and theories from the world of virtual and aesthetic science. Various terms related to virtual *Taksu* terminology such as *sekala* (reality / material world), *niskala* (beyond reality immaterial world), *wiraga* (basic movement of body parts), *wirama* (motion dynamics and tempo), *wirasa* (facial expression) and *wirupa* (element that gives clarity of character). There is divinity, spirituality, energy, inspiration and the values of auratic art. Representation theory, identification and interpretation of art, and aesthetic phenomena also helped to construct the *taksu's* virtual terminology. The concept of *Taksu* representation on virtual entities is the basic concept underlying this *taksu's* virtual terminology (see Figure 3).

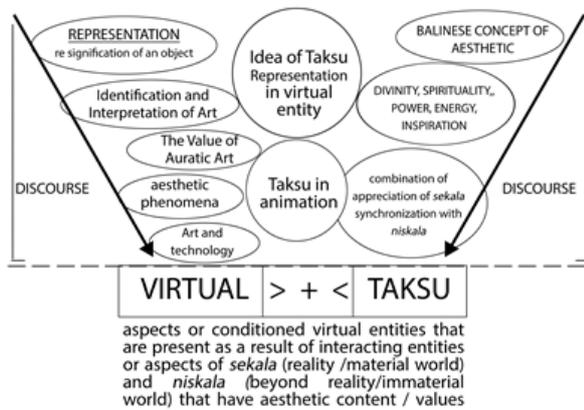


Figure 3 Construction of Virtual Taksu terminology

4. DISCUSSION

This discussion will start from understanding the concept of representation, the concept of *Taksu*, then opened the discourse about the philosophy of art which may provide insight that can see the opportunities to realizing representation of *taksu* in virtual entities. Study on the philosophy of art related to *Taksu* will be elaborated on the understanding and knowledge of Arthur C. Danto, Walter Benjamin, Wayan Dibia, and also the concept of postmodern aesthetics as part of the zeitgeist of cultural studies.

4.1. Virtual Entity and Virtual Aesthetic

In case the existence is abstract, which means essentially that the entity is or has been a product of the mind or imagination, we call it a "virtual entity". Virtual entities are thus entirely detached from any physical reality. They typically belong to concepts, thoughts, perceptions, illusions, categories, or abstractions [4, 5].

Virtual aesthetics are related to aesthetic values built by virtual entities. The aesthetic value in question is also related to the scope of aesthetic values in general. Smitheram states that we are able to feel or experience the sense/aesthetic value with all senses, meaningful interpretation and emotional involvement as a whole [6].

4.2. Representation

Representation is the process by which an object is captured by the someone senses, then go into mind to be processed. The result is a concept/idea that will be delivered by the language/disclosed back in. In short, the representation is the process of re-signification an object/phenomenon/reality whose meaning will depend how a person is expressed through language. Representation is also very much dependent on how the knowledge possessed by someone who did such representation [7].

Representation, usually, is understood as an illustration of something that is accurate or distorted reality. Representation does not just mean "to present", "to image", or "to depict". "Representation" is a way of interpreting what is given to the object described. The old concept of representation is based on the premise that there is a gap of representation that explains the difference between the meaning given by the representation, and the meaning of the actual object described. This occurs between the representation and the object being described. Contrary to that standard understanding, Stuart Hall argues that representation must be understood from the active and creative role of the person of the world.

Discourse and the framework of intangibility are about how people give meaning to things or things and how they become meaningful, not only if they exist (physically). Stuart Hall asserts that without language, definition cannot be exchanged. Different media use different language marks, but without words, there will be no representation; Without representation, there will be no meaning [7].

4.3. The Concept of Taksu

The Balinese tend to see *taksu* as a concept closely related to Balinese Hinduism. Dibia reveals so far there has been no *Taksu* formula or limitation agreed by many people in Bali. Possibly due to the complexity of the concept and transcendental nature of *Taksu* in Bali. Dibia also revealed the term *Taksu* has an abstract and concrete meaning. The first meaning is the power or the ultimate energy to improve intellect. The word *Taksu* is also used in the name '*Sanggah Taksu*' as one of the places of worship in every house of Balinese Hindus. *Sanggah Taksu* is believed to give strength and confidence to the Balinese Hindus in carrying out their profession [1].

Zoetmulder's findings are revealed in Dibia that the words in Old Javanese (Kawi) closest to *Taksu* are *Caksu*, *Caksuh*, and *Chaksur* which all come from Sanskrit [1]. It means light, eyes, seeing ability, the ability to understand, and perceive things. The other two related words are *Diwyacaksuh* and *Dibyacaksus* which means having a strong natural perception. From the disclosure of these etymological studies suggests that the impact of *Taksu's* presence can be captured through perception. Dibia tried to study *Taksu* through the scientific works of I Made Bandem, Frederik Eugene deBoer, Edward Herbst, and Liza Gold.

In conclusion, there are three important things that *Taksu* related to: divinity and spirituality, power or energy, and inspiration. These three things are the starting point of this study concept in view of appreciation regarding the *taksu* quality of aesthetic value of virtual entities.

4.4. Interpretation and Identification of Art

Arthur Coleman Danto has his own thinking in describing something as an art. In art as it is in life, it is quite easy to ignore the things that are not in accordance with the spontaneous hypothesis that guides perception. In life, where perceptions are directed to survival and guided by experience, we form visual field structures in such a way as to move anything that does not fit our scheme to a nonessential background or space [8]. Danto concluded that not all things (objects, activities) can be considered art. The determination of a thing can be called art or not is related to the context, and how we interpret it.

His thoughts on this subject were sparked by an exhibition by Andrew Warhola (Andy Warhol), Pop Art artist, entitled Brillo boxes and other works (1964), and Marcel Duchamp's everyday artwork. Artwork has properties that not possessed of ordinary materials, but they are not visible.

Things become art through the possibility of interpretation. If something does not allow interpretation, or does not need it, it is not a work of art. Thus, the art effect is not based on a sudden, thought-free impulse, as Lyotard thought. According to Danto, interpretation plays a role in constructing aesthetic value in the work, but not all objects that are claimed as works of art can be easily interpreted aesthetic value, to a level where the objects/activities are judged as works of art.

Interpreting means showing the connection between the work and the material substrate. In the process of interpretation often observers-independently, or influenced by the thinking of others, or a group of people-construct their own meaning of the work so that it requires a connection between the work and the material substrate. Often the title of the work becomes an important starting point for interpretation [9].

Danto later added that a work of art can be defined not by an intrinsic aesthetic quality alone, but also by the minds of similar communities of artists, art dealers, collectors and historians-in the world of Fine Arts-who understand certain works of art in a general understanding of history with a set of theories.

The things that need to be underlined from Danto's thinking is about the context, and the value of the art that can be constructed. This Danto disclosure could provide an explanation of the phenomenon of ordinary people who see "not well prepared" art performances as well prepared (*Taksu*). Danto's opinion supports the possibility of "manipulation" of "*Taksu* aesthetic value" in contemporary ways.

4.5. Auratic Art

In the discussion of this auratic art, Walter Bendix Schönflies Benjamin's ideas will be presented, which represent the thinking of the Western world, and the thought of Wayan Dibia, which represents the thought of the East. This discussion is also supported by a review of previous research literature by Sang Ayu Ketut Laksemi that discusses *Taksu* in architecture.

Benjamin complained about the emergence of works of the new art (industrialist), which he deemed not to have what previously always marked the work of art, that is a

typical *Aura*. Benjamin defines aura as "the unique appearance of a distance, however close".

Aura appears at a special moment, happens once, and cannot be repeated. *Aura* is formed by the dimensions of space and time. In this *Aura* is still living the sacred meaning that previously possessed artwork through its attachment in the cult ceremony. The aesthetic experience called Benjamin will be lost through the possibility of mass technical reproduction. "Even in the most perfect reproduction, something disappears: the origin and the present of art (its existence is only in the place where it is present).

In his anxiety, Benjamin's ambivalence is evident in this aura. Unlike the world of art that he considered as starting to lose the aura, the political world is considered capable of presenting an aura that had originally existed in the art world. In Benjamin's writings, *Schriften*, translated into English literature *Illumination* [10], Benjamin reveals that fascism succeeds in the staging and recycling of political life so that war can be a work of art but also the annihilation of others, and of oneself.

Thus, many consider war as a sacred duty. The pleasure of war is interpreted as a first-class aesthetic pleasure. *L'art pour l'art* at the peak of its perfection. Precisely because it is not political, the art of auratic helps to strengthen the situation. It absorbs the observer, demands it to be immersed in art, and at the same time leaves the world as it is. The art of auratic requires complete attention of the observer and instead of giving it grace. The gift in the form of putting the observer on the site of the aesthetic event, by presenting the aesthetic event only to the observer. Therefore, the art of auratic is very social.

Dibia reveals, as a concept, deeply rooted in the sacred territory of Balinese Hinduism, *Taksu* combines the ideas of the real world (*Sekala*) and the unreal world (*Niskala*). With the public perception of this spiritual power still diverse, the presence of *taksu* is largely determined by technical and physical abilities, mental and moral maturity, and spiritual power. Because it is believed that the *Taksu's* decisive source is *Niskala* or the world above us. This world also known as 'the beyond reality' world. Most people in Bali get their *Taksu* through a ritual procession involving prayer and offerings of offerings to God and other gods.

All and every person, young or old, male or female, from different degrees of social status have equal opportunity to gain this sacred power. With the presence of *Taksu*, artists and other professional actors will be able to demonstrate their best ability to satisfy their clients and customers, or for government officials and politicians to gain their *Charisma*.

Taksu is a temporary force; Its existence and its manifestations, its comings and goings occur in a short time. Dibia reveals, currently there is no prescription that can guarantee *Taksu* ownership process, and there are many ways that can be taken by local people to get *Taksu*. Any way and strategies taken, there are certain moral conditions that are required for a person to reach this peak energy. Dedication, confidence, and honesty are some of the keywords to get *taksu*. Completing the knowledge given by Dibia, Laksemi in his research results revealed

that *taksu* appreciation is determined by artist (subject), work (object) and appreciator (observer) [11].

Walter Benjamin who closes the possibility of aura reproduction in physical artwork has not revealed specifically the possibility of aura transfer in the reproduction of the work of live art that is reproduced into a virtual form in digital animation. An example that can be discussed further is the work of recording dance performances that transformed into digital animation works.

4.6. Postmodern Aesthetic

About Aesthetics, from the past to present is a dominant understanding in culture and cultural appreciation in Indonesia. The question is whether the art should be guided by the idea of universal beauty, or should it pay attention to the splendor of the idea of beauty and the level of appreciation of the beauty of the immediate environment?

The notion of aesthetics as a philosophy in its principle has placed at a one-point dichotomy between reality and abstraction, and between beauty and meaning [12]. Aesthetics no longer listens to the conventional beauty, but has shifted toward a discourse and phenomenon. Assessing that today's aesthetic practice is different from past, progressive, rational, and serious aesthetic practices, today aesthetic practice has shifted to new eclectic, irrational and ironic approaches.

Piliang sees five postmodern aesthetic idioms of postmodern aesthetic discourse, including: pastiche, parody, kitsch, camp, and schizophrenia [13]. Such aesthetic concepts have been widely used as models for the loading of meanings, as well as anti-meaning [14]. The related postmodern idiom in this discourse, related to the discourse of the transfer of Balinese version of Balinese dance art into an animated form of kitsch, and pastiche.

The idea of searching the possibility embodying *Taksu* representation in a virtual entity is actually a postmodern idea or practice. Some concepts related to it are the concept of *Simulakrum*, representation and deconstruction [15]. The representation itself represents the idea that in the development of technology and the situation of society without insulation, a sacred thing has moved much into the profane order.

Deconstruction is one concept that also tries to dismantle the established order to see wider development potential [16]. It could be, if open opportunities *Taksu* representation in virtual entities, then the community, especially the field of related professions can take advantage of appreciation *Taksu* with more pragmatic.

5. CONCLUSION

Adaptations process of transforming performing arts (dance) into the form of digital animation has the possibility to create an *Aura* that gives aesthetic experience for the observer as long as considering various aspects of sensory interaction between the observer and the presentation of performing arts. The construction of virtual *Taksu* terminology creates definition that virtual *Taksu* is aspects or conditioned virtual entities that are

present as a result of interacting entities or aspects of *Sekala* (reality/material world) and *Niskala* (beyond reality/immaterial world) that have aesthetic content/values.

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