



Moral parallax: challenges between dignity, AI, and virtual violence

Paralaje moral: retos entre dignidad, IA y violencia virtual

Pablo DE LA VEGA¹

Universidad Rafael Landívar

Red Internacional ALEC

Guatemala, Guatemala

<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-7547-170X>

padelavega@url.edu.gt

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Abstract: Virtual reality is not only a prowess of technological advancement and AI, but also an element that extends the horizons of human existence and complicates the way of approaching various phenomena of the physical world, for example, violence. Its practice in virtuality leads to a series of challenges, especially when virtual reality is considered as genuine reality. This text delves into virtual violence, the influence of AI on it and the problems that its conception implies. To analyze this phenomenon, *parallax* is proposed as a concept that helps to understand its development. This theory invites us to see violence in different ways, thus influencing the vision of morality in the virtual world. Although these reflections outline difficulties, a position is proposed that invites to urgently address the need for an applicable morality to virtual and physical fields, emphasizing dignity as the purpose of human practices.

Keywords: moral parallax, violence, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, dignity

Resumen: La realidad virtual no sólo es una proeza del avance tecnológico y la AI, sino también un elemento que extiende los horizontes de la existencia humana y complejiza la manera de abordar varios fenómenos del mundo físico, por ejemplo, la violencia. Su práctica en la virtualidad lleva a una serie de desafíos, en especial cuando se considera la realidad virtual como genuina realidad. Este texto profundiza en la violencia virtual, el influjo de la AI sobre ella y las problemáticas que su concepción implica. Para analizar este fenómeno se propone el *paralaje* como un concepto que ayuda a entender su desenvolvimiento. Esta teoría invita a ver la violencia de distintas maneras, incidiendo así en la visión que se tiene de la moralidad en el mundo virtual. Si bien estas reflexiones perfilan dificultades, se propone un posicionamiento que invita a tomar con urgencia la necesidad de una

¹ *Master of Arts* en Filosofía por la *Hochschule für Philosophie*, Múnich, Alemania y Máster en Estudios Avanzados en Literatura Española e Hispanoamericana, *Universitat de Barcelona*, España. Profesor universitario de pregrado y posgrado en varias universidades de Guatemala en el área de filosofía, literatura, epistemología y ética. Ha sido consultor de Naciones Unidas y formador de docentes en el área de lectura y pensamiento crítico. Miembro de ALEC y Ocupa Internacional. Es autor de numerosos artículos en temas de ética, filosofía de la mente, epistemología, inteligencia artificial e historia de la filosofía.

moral aplicable a los terrenos virtuales y físicos, haciendo énfasis en la dignidad como finalidad de las prácticas humanas.

Palabras clave: paralaje moral, violencia, realidad virtual, inteligencia artificial, dignidad

Résumé : La réalité virtuelle n'est pas seulement une prouesse du progrès technologique et de l'IA, mais aussi un élément qui élargit les horizons de l'existence humaine et complique la manière d'aborder divers phénomènes du monde physique, par exemple la violence. Sa pratique dans la virtualité entraîne une série de défis, surtout lorsque la réalité virtuelle est considérée comme une réalité authentique. Ce texte approfondit la violence virtuelle, l'influence de l'IA sur celle-ci et les problèmes que sa conception implique. Pour analyser ce phénomène, la *parallaxe* est proposée comme concept permettant de comprendre son évolution. Cette théorie nous invite à voir la violence de différentes manières, influençant ainsi la vision que nous avons de la morale dans le monde virtuel. Bien que ces réflexions soulignent des difficultés, une position est proposée qui nous invite à aborder de manière urgente la nécessité d'une morale applicable aux terrains virtuels et physiques, mettant l'accent sur la dignité comme finalité des pratiques humaines.

Mots clés : parallaxe morale, violence, réalité virtuelle, intelligence artificielle, dignité

Resumo: A realidade virtual não é apenas uma façanha do avanço tecnológico e da IA, mas também um elemento que amplia os horizontes da existência humana e dificulta a forma de abordar diversos fenômenos do mundo físico, por exemplo, a violência. Sua prática na virtualidade acarreta uma série de desafios, principalmente quando a realidade virtual é considerada uma realidade genuína. Este texto investiga a violência virtual, a influência da IA sobre ela e os problemas que sua concepção implica. Para analisar este fenômeno, a parallaxe é proposta como um conceito que ajuda a compreender o seu desenvolvimento. Esta teoria nos convida a ver a violência de diferentes maneiras, influenciando assim a visão que temos da moralidade no mundo virtual. Embora estas reflexões delineiem dificuldades, propõe-se uma posição que nos convida a assumir urgentemente a necessidade de uma moralidade aplicável aos terrenos virtuais e físicos, enfatizando a dignidade como finalidade das práticas humanas.

Palavras chave: paralaxe moral, violência, realidade virtual, inteligência artificial, dignidade

Introduction

In December 2023, anticipated almost two years, the announcement of *Grand Theft Auto VI* caused a global shock among the fans who were awaiting the sequel of the famous video game. This sixth version, to be distributed in 2025 –more than a decade after the prequel– incorporates virtual *avant-garde* elements, making the narrative more *real* and thus achieving a highly immersive world (Small, 2023). Despite the recreational nature of the game, reality here remains complex. The video game invites users to enter a felonious world, impersonating a criminal character (in this sixth instalment, with the avatar of Lucia, first female protagonist), and carry out a series of tasks through the streets of Vice City. These activities are both punishable on a small scale –such as fighting, street racing and theft– to more violent actions – such as armed robberies, multi-step heists, shootings, drug interactions, kidnappings and even torture–, inviting to frequent transgressions of the law during the development of the storyline. All these actions are framed in a rude language, insolent behaviour and excessive (even misogynistic) sexualization that characterizes the plot of the entire game.

It is striking that a story with despicable acts, which incite violence and allow criminal actions, is one of the best-selling video games in history. Its prequel, *Grand Theft Auto V* –or GTA V, following the famous acronym of the video *game*–, has sold over 190 million copies. Adding this data to the previous versions, the total is over 410 million copies sold. Meanwhile, net earnings exceed USD 781 million with the latest installment and more than USD 8 billion since the saga began (Alt, 2023). However, the focus of consumption and exposure of the video game is more alarming. For example, surveys conducted in Great Britain show how seven out of ten GTA gamers came into contact with the game when they were underage (Pheby, 2023). It is therefore surprising that the dynamics of access to video games seem to be unmediated, making young people more inclined to enter the criminal virtual worlds of video games.

It is worth mentioning that GTA is not the only video game of its kind, adding a large number of computer games that recreate acts of violence –being called Violent Video Games (VVG)–, in particular, various action games and other subgenres. For example, violent role-playing video games (RPGs), among which first-person shooters (FPS) stand out, such as the *Call of Duty* series; or the Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) like *League of Legends*. The actions in these video games would be punishable and considered immoral in real life. Here stand out a complex issue, because although the inappropriate acts are performed through a fictional character and often affecting other avatars or non-player characters (NPC), the act *per se* is still being performed. Simultaneously, this invites a rethinking of the limits of reality. If it is possible to reproduce the events of this physical world in a virtual world, with similar effects under similar causal conditions, is there a difference in the actions one performs in the physical world and in the virtual world?

This question leads to a broad and critical approach to the problem. For this purpose, it is investigated how virtual reality constitutes a genuine reality, an extension of the existing horizons that complicate the way of addressing various problems, in this case, violence. Thus, AI is delved deeper into the metaverse enhancer, which leads to a series of challenges that will be sketched, comparing virtual reality with physical reality. Thus, AI is explored here as an enhancer of the metaverse, which leads to a series of challenges that will be sketched, comparing virtual reality with physical reality. To analyse this problem, the idea of parallax is proposed and how this perspective invites to see violence in different ways, thus influencing the view we have of morality. Although these reflections outline difficulties, a position is

proposed that invites us to urgently consider the need for a morality applicable to virtual fields.

I- Virtual reality as genuine reality

With this type of video game, virtual reality acquires unparalleled dimensions, where the dynamics allow a realistic experience of events, enhancing the effects of the environment, improving graphics and details (such as rain, lights, sounds, driving, etc.), allowing the recreation of practices and experiences that are so similar to reality. Even, following the example of GTA VI, we can see a curious fact: This sixth installment of the video game will have its own in-game social media system, with social networks available for avatars. (Denton, 2024). This way, we can interact with viral influencers (and probably become one yourself), get likes in live videos, and create digital communities of interaction. This shows how the use of the smartphone breaks the barrier of physical reality and extends to virtual reality. All these examples show how the so-called fiction, even if it is made of algorithms and pixels, recreates a large number of dynamics that take place in the material world (even allowing the creation of digital worlds within digital worlds).

It is worth mentioning that the current configurations of video games make them virtual realities (VR). VR can be defined as “an immersive, interactive, and computer-generated space” (Chalmers, 2023: 189) and, thus, it is an imitation of the physical world and its activities, but with a computational base, consisting of binary algorithms and an architecture of electrical circuits. Virtual reality is able to recreate the experience of the physical world and its respective effects, as well as the intellectual thought and analysis that arises from interaction in the material (in this case, virtual) world. This refers to the fact that thought is articulated in the same way as if it were in an empirical relationship with everyday reality and, in the same way, cognitive processes seek to resolve the challenges that virtuality presents. As can be seen, elements that were previously of exclusive physical competence are now possible in virtual reality, thus allowing human dynamics to extend into areas that were not previously contemplated. All this complex scaffolding of facts and interactions are linked to build what is called *metaverse*: “a shared, computer-generated world in which people socialize, work, and play” (Chalmers, 2023: 185).

With all these dynamics, virtuality is positioned as a new reality, a new metaverse with an unmatched ontological potentiality, whose advances and new paths are increasing as new technologies are developed and, with each invention, great advances are generated, as is the case with artificial intelligence (AI). From here arise countless possibilities to recreate human life in different spectrums, with different modalities and doing different actions, since the possibility of *simulating* physical reality allows virtual reality to be considered a genuine reality.

II- AI as enhancer

In recent years, AI has played a preponderant role for these new possibilities of reality, helping to improve the way humans appreciate and interact with digital environments. This enhancer characteristics can be seen not only in video games, but also in everyday applications in different human environments. For example, in the area of communication and education, with the famous Large Language Models: (Chat GPT, Bard, LLaMA); or, in mobility, with vehicles configured with Advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS) and self-driving cars (Avride Inc. and Tesla Autopilot). At the same time, AI has a strong impact at a professional level in work tools, such as in the area of architecture, through different programs that recreate

reality more faithfully (Lumion, SimX and VRPilot), or in the field of medicine, with programs that help identify health problems and their future consequences (such as Alpha Fold 2, Hippocratic AI and Visiopharm). Finally, it is worth mentioning that AI is present in revolutionary, cutting-edge technological projects, such as androids, i.e. anthropomorphic robots that seek to perform human tasks that require physical movement and intellectual ability (examples of these are the Apollo Apptronik or the Tesla Bot).

These examples show a dynamic relationship at different levels. The first is at a dual level: the interaction between humans and AI. This relationship problematizes in the epistemic, ontological and moral fields how to best achieve coexistence, understanding and application of AI. A second moment carries out the same reflection with another element: the environment. In recent decades, the relationship between human beings and their environment has been problematized in view of the challenges that the excessive and thoughtless use of natural resources has brought about, resulting in the accumulation of environmental problems that we have today and the search for short-term solutions.

A second level of dynamic relationship emerges by incorporating these three elements: the triadic interaction between humans-AI-environment. An AI used in support of good practices can lead to a reflective analysis on human actions and how we influence the environment, better understanding the knowledge we have about our surroundings, what constitutes it, and which rules should govern a moral coexistence with what surrounds us. Here the environment acquires a lot of significance, however, given the virtual advances, it must be clarified which environment we are referring to: a physical one or a virtual one. If the first is mentioned, the impact of technological applications as tools for coexistence can be appreciated. Thus, AI can serve as an enhancer of the understanding of the physical environment, achieving better controlled mediation and allowing for finding reliable solutions to the problems that human beings face in their daily lives, such as climate change and other environmental challenges, understanding demographic development and commercial products that affect the distribution of goods, among others. However, this aspect is very different when the environment is virtual and the place where the human being lives is a world of binary format and algorithmic foundation, representing unknown places and fantastic landscapes, where each space in the environment is made up of a large number of bits. This is where AI builds and shapes the environment in such a way that it simulates true physical aspects, enhancing the quality of VR as genuine reality. As Nachez and Schmoll mention:

The realism of computer infographics animation and immersion then weaken the boundary between the game situation and reality. This boundary is in principle clear, materially defined by precise limits: the environment in which the player finds himself, the time of the game and the virtual space where one plays. But this objective definition does not answer the question of the risks of overflows of the game into real life, at the psychological and behavioral levels: would there be a risk of confusion, of a non-differentiation, in the mind of the player, the latter being able to take the real world for a playground –and possibly behave like a predator there? Would the practice of these games be transforming the youth who indulge in them into a horde of new barbarians

who will make the world of tomorrow dangerous to live in?²
(2003: 7).

Nowadays, the progress of AI is such that it is able to simulate a whole world, with its phenomena and dynamics. Video games are the quintessential example of this potential. This aspect that so closely links AI with the environment, highlighting its creative nature, means that the problematization is directed towards other phenomena, especially the immersive nature that complicates the interaction between the human being and the virtual world.

1. Sketching the challenges

If the proposal of virtual reality is accepted as a genuine reality, i.e. an alternative and enhanced reality, where its elements have existing character and its actions substantive validity, it is feasible to question whether the normative statutes governing the physical world should be accepted in a symmetrical manner. This is meant to emphasize the moral status that can be analysed from the triadic relationship between humans-AI-environment. Returning to the GTA example, to what extent would it also be acceptable to carry out criminal acts in a virtual world? This question can be examined in different ways. Below, a reflective proposal is made through sketching some challenges that recreate the questions about moral normativity in the virtual world. To do this, three cardinal questions are proposed: 1) How to conceive virtual violence? 2) Is virtual violence non-violence? And 3) Does virtual violence have a real influence on physical reality? Resolving these questions will provide insight into the dilemmas that arise when analysing human dignity in virtual realms.

First question: How to conceive virtual violence? An act of virtual violence is used to refer to types of violence that are not experienced physically and are directed at different characters in virtual environments (Hartmann et. Al., 2010). Any action that corresponds to harm, the use of excessive force to subjugate another and affect their dignity as an individual is considered violence. This definition applies to the physical world, and it is extensible to the metaverse. In VVG, this dynamic is a common part of the narrative, where advancing in level or achieving an objective involves exercising violence towards the elements of the video game (NPC) or the avatar of other players. The most common example is the need to kill another character, a practice that occurs more frequently in shooter games (FPS). This leads to postulating different dilemmas.

A classic query to address the problem is to pose a question about its realization and, to do so, what has been called the *gamer's dilemma* is used (Luck, 2009³). When

² Translation of: “*Le réalisme de l’animation infographique et de l’immersion fragilisent alors la frontière entre la situation de jeu et la réalité. Cette frontière est en principe claire, définie matériellement par des limites précises: environnement dans lequel se trouve le joueur, temps de la partie et espace virtuel où l’on joue. Mais cette définition objective ne répond pas à la question des risques de débordements du jeu dans la vie réelle, aux niveaux psychologique et comportemental: y aurait-il risque d’une confusion, d’une non-différenciation, dans l’esprit du joueur, celui-ci pouvant prendre le monde réel pour une aire de jeu – et s’y comporter éventuellement en prédateur? La pratique de ces jeux serait-elle en train de transformer la jeunesse qui s’y livre en une horde de nouveaux barbares qui rendront le monde de demain dangereux à vivre?*”. This and future translations are made by the author of this article.

³ The Gamer’s dilemma is analyzed by Luck in a striking comparison. He raises the question of why killing is seen in an acceptable way in a video game, while child molestation is not, having a negative connotation, both in physical and virtual reality. His argument identifies

faced with actions that involve taking the life of an opponent, the question may arise: is it immoral to kill in a video game? “The standard response to this question is no. This is because no one is actually harmed as a result of a virtual harm. Such an outlook seems intuitive, and it explains why millions of gamers feel it is perfectly permissible to commit acts of virtual murder” (Luck, 2009: 31). If this answer is analysed, certainly, nobody is *actually harmed*, although it is more accurate to say *physically harmed*⁴. Here we see a separation between a) the raped and b) the act of raping, and thus two different attitudes that can be analysed. Here we see a separation between a) what is violence and b) the act of violence, and thus two different attitudes that can be analysed. Here we can see a separation between a) what receives the violence and b) the act of violence and, with it, two different positions that can be analysed.

Following the first argument, many may argue that the object that receives the violence does not constitute an entity *per se* (physical, tangible, fruit of the real world) and therefore does not constitute a damage to the dignity of any living being. Considering this position would mean valuing differently the validity of acts in the virtual world, having another moral status in the metaverse. However, if the position is the second proposal and, with it, the validity of the act itself is highlighted, it would be punishable to commit an act whose moral status is questioned for affecting the dignity of an individual, regardless of whether it is carried out in a physical reality or a virtual reality. Here we can see a distinction and a varied possibility of visions.

At the same time, this analysis leads to the second question: Is virtual violence non-violence? And non-violence refers to whether what is done in video games should be considered in a different way than what is normally considered violence in physical world and all its negative connotations. This approach would be in line with the first argument of the previous question, except that, instead of considering only the object at which the violence is directed (the *virtual object*), the act would also be assessed at a similar level: virtual violence would not be considered violence *per se*. This statement is complex. What is it then that is done in virtual worlds, encouraging harm and affecting the development of other individuals in the metaverse? Just a “*Darstellung von Gewalt*” –*Representation of violence*– (Nagenborg, 2005: 755).

This response drastically changes the conception of the ontological level used in the metaverse, since the *representation of violence* would be a derivative of acts of violence that does not (apparently) have an equivalent impact to violence in the physical world. Being a representation, it is prone to be misunderstood, ignoring its symbolic function for recreational purposes, often pedagogical and always virtual (artificial). This is because “a representation is *context realistic* to the degree that it represents a situation that could plausibly occur” (Anderson and Milan, 2023: 52), which leads to the understanding of virtual reality as true reality. This raises a third question: Does virtual violence have a real influence on physical reality? In other words, is it possible to influence human attitudes, consciously or unconsciously, through the repeated exposure to frivolous violence in the virtual world, thereby

weak points in this argument and analyses how the position will depend on how violence is taken

⁴ Luck makes an interesting distinction to define the term, establishing that the murder must not be to another player, but to the NPC, i.e. that “the character that is virtually murdered is controlled by the computer, rather than another game player” (Luck, 2009, p. 31). Other characteristics that he highlights are the need for the character not to be revived (as is usual in video games) and for both to be adults (both the NPC and the person whose avatar commits the murder).

encouraging its practice in the physical world? If yes, there would be a *causation argument*:

Probably the most common objection to VVGs is that they have (or risk) bad effects. According to the Causation Argument, video game violence is morally bad because it causes players to be more aggressive and violent, which is bad both for the players themselves and for those who are therefore more likely to be victims of their aggression and violence (e.g. classmates, family members, coworkers) (Andersson and Milam, 2023: 52).

But is this position true? There are many objections to this position, criticizing whether there is actually any kind of influence, since there is no conclusive evidence that shows how violence in virtual reality (especially in VVG) is linked to violent acts in the physical world (Ferguson and Kilburn, 2010; Goerger, 2017). Given the variety of positions, several are commonly used to justify the validity or invalidity of an act in the virtual world and their corresponding arguments to emphasize its influence on the physical world. These include social acceptability, likelihood of influence and the playing for goals (Luck, 2009).

The first aspect is the extrapolation of what is not accepted in everyday social relations. This is a striking critique of virtual violence, considering that virtual and physical violence move on the same level, being exactly the same, however, it is reduced to popular norms and often without criteria (dogmatic, traditionalist and orthodox morals). The second aspect is more critical. There is certainly a likelihood of influence of the virtual violence in the physical world (Anderson et al. 2010). However, it is very difficult to identify the extent of this, and even to doubt the immoral nature of violence in video games (Luck, 2009). As has been argued, there is certainly a differentiation in the ontological spheres and resources, and the practice of violence, in its *representative* character, does not seek to inflict harm for harm itself, but rather to serve as a tool to achieve some goal in the video game.

However, considering this separation and always adducing the ontological differentiation and the environments of realization would suppose a *straw man fallacy*, since this moves away from the theses that have been previously exposed. If *virtual reality is genuine reality*, there must be a more forceful type of relationship that interweaves the punishable aspect of violence, affecting both the physical and the virtual world. Focusing too much on the ontological differentiation or the world in which it takes place would be moving away from the question to be dealt with and arguing from other elements (hence the fallacy). Therefore, this statement that assumes the genuineness of virtual reality returns to the second argument of the first question, where what is reprehensible is the act of violence itself and not the ontological nature that it affects, which, thus understood, can be of different types.

In supporting this argument, one must then see the parallels that violence presents in its various spheres. While in the virtual world of video games violence is made for recreational, educational and leisure purposes or as elements that are added to the levels of the narrative, extrapolating these ends to the physical world would trivialize violence in an alarmingly dangerous way. This text has sought to argue that violence is violence regardless of the context, however, it is recognized that the development of violence varies in functions depending on the virtual or physical context, which makes its analysis problematic and invites further investigation. This phenomenon of variation can be called *parallax*. Next, a proposal will be made on how parallax influences the moral vision of virtual worlds.

2. Parallax and violence

Žižek in his work *The Parallax View* (2009) delves into the conceptualization of parallax. This is considered as “the apparent displacement of an object (the shift of its position against a background), caused by a change in observational position that provides a new line of sight” (Žižek, 2009: 17). This definition allows to apply its meaning to the analysis of virtual violence, thus outlining a change in the *observational position* of morality, allowing a wide scope for further study. Žižek proposes an analysis of the phenomena that involve “the confrontation of two closely linked perspectives between which no neutral common ground is possible” (2009: 4). This is called by him a *parallax gap*, following the reflection of the Kantian antinomy⁵, which accounts for the contradiction present when trying to link one element to another.

The Slovenian philosopher's analysis presents a conceptual framework that focuses on the gap that separates perspectives, sees its applications in different fields of knowledge today, and interprets these dynamics as arguments that continue to position dialectical materialism as an ideal analysis for social, economic, cultural, and political relations. Although it is not intended to present Žižek's dialectical stance here, one sees the richness in the use and application of the concept of parallax, which can be used as a way of understanding violence in virtual worlds. Žižek identifies different types of parallax gap: the ontological difference, the scientific parallax and the political parallax⁶, which can be applied to the examination of violence in virtuality. As seen, the parallax involves a change in perspective that has been previously taken and presents a new insight to understand violence or transform their understanding.

The parallax takes into account the common paradigm developed throughout history, of which it represents a change in positioning and point of enunciation. Violence has always been considered negative due to the harmful, aggressive and brutal nature of its use towards human beings, often causing irreversible damage and greatly affecting their dignity. Here is the historical positioning: damage through behaviour and specific actions against a physical entity (Michaud, 2014). Although the separation between the act *per se* and the entity concerned is relevant, this relationship does not take on such importance as it always takes place in a univocal way, in one direction and in a single ontological field. Incorporating AI and the metaverse leads not only to a change in the ontological horizon but also in the observational position, which begins to question the nature of virtual violence.

The change of the ontological horizon has been mentioned in the previous sections. Virtual reality is a genuine reality allowing the expansion of the frame of reference of existence and the *loci* of human life. This ontological horizon has been extended as an unparalleled possibility and potentiality. However, as it expands, there is the cracking of material ontological supports and the respective understanding that derives from it. One of the most powerful aspects of this change in the ontological

5 According to Kant, this is “the series of conditions for a given phenomenon in general, and I conclude from the fact that I always have a self-contradictory concept of the unconditional synthetic unity of the series on one side, to the correctness of the opposing unity, of which I nevertheless also have no concept” (KrV, B 398).

6 “First, there is the *ontological difference* itself as the ultimate parallax which conditions our very access to reality; then there is the *scientific parallax*, the irreducible gap between the phenomenal experience of reality and its scientific account/explanation (...) there is the *political parallax*, the social antagonism which allows for no common ground between the conflicting agents” (Žižek, 2009: 10).

horizon is the realistic quality of the metaverse, thanks to AI. This realism is alarmingly immersive, “experiencing it just as we experience the physical world” (Chalmers, 2023: 39). Thus, violence, understood as the affectation on another material entity, becomes the affectation on another entity, regardless of its virtual or material nature, since it is the same reality. This pushes for a change in the observational position and the emergence of parallax. Notwithstanding, violence is not seen in the same way. No damage is inflicted in the same fashion, and it is not recreated with the same repercussions. Violence in virtual worlds is transformed and, with it the way in which it should be considered, as well as the motivations for its occurrence and the normative statutes that govern it. Alongside this derives to recognize a transformation in the moral view of violence in virtual worlds, i.e. a *moral parallax*.

3. Parallaxic morality

One of the points to consider with virtual violence is the motivation for its realization. This is usually due to the plot of the video game, where violence must be exercised. However, this brings a series of parallel problematizations, criticism usually given to the metaverse: actions in VR are commonly subordinated by programming, diminishing up to the totality human autonomy. In metaverse “we’re not exercising any sort of autonomy; we’re just along for the ride” (Chalmers, 2023:313), even though this ride involves violence. This change has a macro impact on the observational position, therefore, how could an act that is forced to do, not by a coercive entity but by the total reality, be punishable? Since autonomy is greatly diminished in virtual worlds, the coercion that virtual reality exerts on gamers must be emphasized, which leads to questioning the critical status of their acts and, thereby, violence.

In the physical world, free will and choice are what allow violent acts to be judged and punished, knowing that there is a legal and normative framework which penalizes these practices for the harm inflicted on other individuals, especially their dignity. In the virtual world, these statutes change, as the regulatory framework is decimated by the *ontological obligation* to exercise violence. This can be called an *ontological obligation*, since, if it is not applied, the player does not move on to the next level and suffers the consequences of not exercising it, that is, the player loses the video game, affecting the existence of the avatar. As seen, there is an alarming parallax that, from one point of view, condemns violence and its effects, but from another point of view, must be practiced to sustain virtual existence. This leads to an antinomy: should violence be accepted and, therefore, used, or punished and avoided? This is a *moral parallax*. At the same time, this parallax allows to appreciate an oscillation:

Philosophy seems to oscillate between two approaches: the transcendental and the ontological or ontic. The first concerns the universal structure of how reality appears to us: which conditions must be met for us to perceive something as really existing? “Transcendental” is the philosopher’s technical term for such a frame as defines the coordinates of reality; for example, the transcendental approach makes us aware that, for a scientific naturalist, only spatiotemporal material phenomena regulated by natural laws really exist, while for a premodern traditionalist, spirits and meanings are also part of reality, not only our human projections (Žižek, 2021: 107).

This oscillation returns to the first cardinal question (how to conceive virtual violence?) and its respective arguments that are positioned according to what receives the violence or the act of violence. Based on Žižek's analysis, trying to make a transcendental approach from parallax falls into the accumulation of problematizations that have been drawn previously. By considering violence from the normative framework that comprehends reality in a wider view, it can be understood in different ways. This is to encourage the resolution that violence should be considered as such according to who receives violence. From virtual practice, not affecting a physical entity, it could be accepted, its definition and application questioned, and even valued within positive aspects. However, if the ontological approach is considered, applying the expansion of the confines of reality in the virtual realm, being the same extended reality, it is meritorious to consider any kind of violence as a negative act and then question the motivations that govern the realities that lead to these practices. Thus,

the most plausible moral objection to VVGs is that some of them generate or perpetuate morally objectionable norms of appropriate violence—i.e., norms of when violence is an appropriate response to a situation. This objection suggests that violence is indeed problematic, but also that it is one dimension of a more general moral concern (Anderson and Milan, 2023: 52).

4. For the predominance of dignity

Although these perspectives invite to see the moral parallax and the respective effects that this causes in the conceptions of right and wrong, morality must predominate in its transversal statutes in favor of those ideals that allow dignity in all reality, but at the same time recognizing different levels of action and affectation. This is what makes virtual violence objectionable, because it is *per se* a wrong act, and being or acting in that way is punishable (Anderson and Milan, 2023). It must be recognized that the way in which virtual violence affects human beings is very different from how it occurs in the physical world. However, the effects can be very similar, for example, after an act of violence a player may feel guilty of having acted wrongly (Hartmann et al., 2010), or the abuse of an avatar or a digital body may affect a player emotionally (Lin and Latoschik, 2022).

Even though today's society is dominated by the degeneration of values, it is important that developers of virtual worlds become aware of the negative influence they exert by allowing thoughtless practices that incite violence and allow new levels of action to affect human dignity. While, as indicated, eradicating violence is absolutely a utopia that is difficult to achieve, both in the physical and virtual world, it is worth recognizing the repeated practices to reach the abolition of violence, especially the one which affects vulnerable populations. This is where AI can be seen as a transformative element. Also, various initiatives seek to apply the use of AI in the metaverse for the best and most harmonious interaction between individuals and digital environments, thus achieving that AI serves for Social Good, this is, “making possible and facilitating the attainment of socially good outcomes that were previously unfeasible, unaffordable, or simply less achievable in terms of efficiency and effectiveness” (Floridi, 2023: 142).

Therefore, it is imperative to start looking for standards of dignity for the virtual world. Just as in the physical world violence is not allowed, it should not be allowed in the virtual worlds, avoiding that these practices carry greater negative effects. At the same time, one must avoid falling into conceptual parallaxes that make moral

meanings more ambiguous and confusing. While the entertainment, recreational and educational character of certain practices is recognized, virtual actions must be transformed to see in them the potential to exert a good influence on the practice of morality and the conception of human dignity. Given this broad development of virtual possibilities, the physical and the artificial must work hand in hand to always recreate a harmonious coexistence of all its members. There is still much to think about artificial intelligence and the metaverse, but as technology advances, discussions and positions must also be more profound, seeking to assert the dignity of every individual in every reality.

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