

# ABSTRACTS FOR PHENOMENOLOGY, HERMENEUTICS AND EXISTENTIALISM FOR GAMES

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# TO HOUSE OR NOT TO HOUSE: GAMING HOUSES AS AMBIGUOUS ENVIRONMENTS INSIDE THE ESPORTS ECOSYSTEM

ALESSANDRO FRANZÓ

The hypermodernity (Ascher, 2005) we live in is characterised by dematerialisation and virtualisation trends affecting our accelerated societies. Among the changes that contemporary technologies brought, the digitalisation of games and the subsequent emergence of a competitive scene concurred to generate the current esports ecosystem (Alaimo et al., 2020), counting millions of followers and revenue. This contribution delves into one of its most peculiar phenomena: gaming houses, i.e., “co-operative living arrangement[s] where several players of video games, usually professional esports players, live in the same residence” (‘Gaming House’, 2022). Through a qualitative analysis of their inhabitants' daily grind, the paper will reflect on how their socio-material matrix gives birth to an ambiguous workplace, pushed and shoved between a multifarious set of needs, desires, activities, and materialities. Caught between work and play, seriousness and levity, materiality and virtuality, the gaming houses represent a unique environment that relies on multifaceted duplicities, or better, on a layered ambiguity that profoundly influences productive practices and spatially displays the complex network of actors (and their moves) that form the local backbone of the esports ecosystem. Thus, gaming houses are an entangled assemblage actualising the ontological doubleness of games through their network of virtual and material nodes, standing on the edge of a new frontier of play and work: a fluid territory where associations are transformed into valuable relations that may blow over the standard categories, like “house”, “work”, or “game”, that we use to orientate in our chaosmotic reality (Guattari, 1992).

Bio

I am alessandro franzó (he/him). After graduating in Clinical Psychology at the University of Padua, I enrolled in the Network for Advancement of Social and Political studies (NASP), coordinated by the University of Milan. During my PhD in Sociology and Methodology of Social Research, I am looking at gaming houses, i.e., esports structures that aggregate players and other professionals to give space to their efforts toward professionalism. Focusing on the embedded ambiguity of games, my project made me question the role of play in human (and non-human) experience, highlighting the potential that a “playful” approach may have inside different social dimensions.

## ON ZUGZWANG: GAMES AND EXHAUSTION

RAINFOREST SCULLY-BLAKER

As designed worlds which are taken up by independent actors, video games are an ideal site for understanding how people navigate systems larger than themselves. In this paper, I draw parallels between the rule-based systems of video games and the systemic, real-world crises of labour, wealth disparity, and ecological collapse to investigate how these playable media objects both reify and subvert the dominant logics of neoliberal capitalism. To do so, I engage with literature

from critical theory and game studies alongside writers and activists who champion rest, all centered around a repurposing of the term *zugzwang*.

In chess, *zugzwang* refers to a position whereby the obligation to make a move places a player at a disadvantage. Coaxing someone into such a position is a path to victory on the chessboard, but in the context of the larger rule-based systems we navigate daily, I see *zugzwang* as a model and metaphor for how exhaustion has become a fixture of everyday life where it *exhausts* minds and bodies, thereby serving as an obstacle to meaningful systemic change.

My contention is that by naming *zugzwang* and accounting for how exhaustion prevails in everyday life, we can develop ways to overcome these material conditions. As objects of leisure, video games are often seen as a means of temporarily escaping one's material circumstances, but this glosses over the myriad ways that these media objects are created and consumed. With *zugzwang* and exhaustion defined, I devote the rest of this paper to discussing designers and players whose actions connect the experiences of gameplay to those of the exhausting status quo.

It is my hope that through deepening our understanding of how to change video games from within, we may begin to understand how to do the same in the larger, more oppressive games of everyday life.

## BIO

Rainforest Scully-Blaker (he/him) is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Tampere University's Centre of Excellence in Game Culture Studies. He earned his PhD in Informatics from the University of California, Irvine in 2022 and has also worked as a Visiting Lecturer in Game Design at Uppsala University, Campus Gotland. His research is concerned with critical approaches to the study of games and those who play them, and he is interested in exploring how play can both uphold and dismantle hegemony.

## VIDEO GAMES AS SELF-CULTIVATION

### ANTTONI KUUSELA

Video games have been a polarizing subject: Either they are vilified or praised, in both cases for various reasons. One aspect that has not been much explored is their self-cultivating aspect. In my paper, I will first examine a case study in which video games were seen as a way of self-cultivation, Christopher Goto-Jones's book *Virtual Ninja Manifesto*. I will shortly present Goto-Jones's main argument how video games, specifically so-called "martial arts video games (MAVs)" like *Tekken*, *Street Fighter* and *Mortal Kombat*, can be approached as a medium to the moral cultivation of the player. Next, through an examination of the philosophy of Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, with an additional look at the philosophies of self-cultivation found in Japanese traditional arts, and in dialogue with the thesis of Goto-Jones, I will present my own theory of self-cultivation through video games. Lastly, based on my theory, I will argue that not only MAVs, but also other sort of games can be approached as ways to self-cultivation. I will take as an example the so-called "Soulsborne" games developed by the Japanese company FromSoftware. In my paper, I will argue

that Soulsborne games and potentially other sort of games too, compared to MAVs, can serve as better ways towards self-cultivation, since they lack the element of competitiveness found in MAVs. Without this element, I will argue, the player is freed to a holistic engagement with the game's world. Further, I will contend that through this holistic engagement the player can cultivate the Buddhist virtues of right mindfulness, right action, right concentration, and right effort, among others, which are at the root of the theories of self-cultivation in Japanese philosophy.

## BIO

I am a doctoral student at the University of Jyväskylä. My research focuses on modern Japanese philosophy and Japanese Buddhist philosophy. In my research I apply the concepts and ideas found in these strands of philosophy into various areas, including education, aesthetics, and ethics. Three of my papers have been published in the philosophical cultural magazine *Paatos*. Additionally, two of my papers have been accepted as conference papers and are to be held in September at the conferences of the *European Network of Japanese Philosophy* and the *International Society of East Asian Philosophy*, respectively.

## PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE VIDEO GAMES SECOND-PERSON TYPE OF THE NARRATIVE

FILIP GOŁASZEWSKI

According to *Homo Ludens* (1938) - classical work by Johan Huizinga – the whole culture can be understood as a game. This perspective opened the field for game studies although Huizinga himself could not anticipated the invention of the video games. He also did not adopted any phenomenological tools in his investigations. In my speech I would like to present the phenomenological approach to video games, in particular to their narrative structures. Based on the examples – *God of War*, *What Remains of Edith Finch*, *Heavy Rain* and some others – I will try to describe the specificity of the video games narrative. The initial hypothesis is that video games present the very rare – at least in a narratological sense- type of a second-person narrative. Mieke Bal claimed that second person narratives happens very rarely in the field of literature. Examples of this type of narrative may be the prose by Italo Calvino and Michel Butor's novel *A Change of Heart*. I will argue that in case of video games this is the only possible type of a narrative. However, to understand the specificity of a video game second-person type of a narrative, we cannot limit our analysis to the textual field. Only when we approach the video game as a whole – with its audiovisual structure – we are able to grasp the originality of the presented narrative. In my investigation's I am going to refer to the observations by Wojciech Sikora presented in his recently published book titled *Phenomenology of a video game in the perspective of Roman Ingarden's ontology of the work of art* (2023). In particular I am going to adopt Sikora's observation about the intentional structure of the video game consisting different layers (for example visuals, language, presentation of objects).

## BIO

My name is Filip Gołaszewski. I have a master's degree in philosophy (University of Warsaw). Recently I have finished my PhD thesis titled *Phenomenology, Truth and Narrative - a study of the philosophical relationship between Hegel and Husserl*. Now I am waiting for the reviews. I have actively participated in 35 conferences (in Poland and other countries) and published 10 articles in Polish. I have translated Nicolas de Warren's book *A Momentary breathless in the sadness of time – On Krzysztof Michalski's Nietzsche* to Polish (Phi Knygos 2021). I also conducted two research queries in the *Husserl Archives Leuven*.

## POSTHUMAN ENCOUNTERS: EXPLORING RELATIONAL ONTOLOGY IN SINGLE-PLAYER COMPUTER GAMES

YU HAO

This research explores the relational ontology of single-player computer games within the conceptual framework of posthumanism and new materialism. Departing from traditional formalist understandings of computer game ontology that consider games as “rule-based systems” (Juul 2003, 36), “procedural systems” (Bogost 2007, 4), or “designed objects” (Sicart 2009, 22), the study emphasizes a posthumanist performative perspective that emphasizes the intricate relationships between players and games. It examines computer gameplay as relational entanglements in two dimensions: the entanglement of human and technology and the entanglement of matter and meaning.

In the context of human-technology relations, the study critically examines the phenomenological approach often used to characterize these relations in games research (e.g., Leino 2010, Gualeni 2015, Gualeni & Vella 2020, to name just a few). Through a new materialist lens, this research highlights how the phenomenological approach can exhibit residual humanism, centering on the intentional structure and assuming humans as the measure of all things. Instead, inspired by Braidotti's (2019) posthuman knowledge formulation, the study positions computer game players as prominent examples of posthuman subjects and computer games as instances of post-natural objects. To illustrate this perspective, the self-playing game *Mountain* (2014) is used as a compelling case study.

Central to Barad's (2007) agential realism is the entanglement of matter and meaning. In the context of computer games, the research primarily focuses on the material dimensions of computer game artifacts and the player's body, exploring how material reconfigurations and discourse formations are mutually entailed. Through an in-depth examination of bodily production and discursive construction within the game *Mountain* (2014), the research further attends to the more-than-human elements in games in order to decenter the player as the central axis of game interpretation.

## BIO

Yu Hao (Morgan) is a PhD Candidate at the School of Creative Media, City University of Hong Kong. Her research explores the convergences of digital games, media philosophy, and posthumanism, with a specific emphasis on critical animal studies. She has presented her research at leading international conferences such as DiGRA (2022; 2023), CHI PLAY (2021), International Society for Intermedial Studies Conference (2022), Games & Literature (2023). She is also a current board member of Chinese DiGRA.

## THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF DISGUST IN RELATION TO THE PLAYER EXPERIENCE

### KACPER KARWACKI

Video games, as a medium, compared to different audiovisual media, struggle with evoking a feeling of disgust, understood as a strong physical sensation repulsing one from the object (Mennighaus, 2003). Using the concepts of *degout* (Battaile, 1985) and *nausee* (Sartre, 1938), I'd like to elaborate on the characteristics of the phenomenology of disgust in video games.

Firstly, I will discuss the social element of disgust relating to multiplayer games. The sensation of *degout*, which emerges from social norms on what acts are considered disgusting, can arise only in games with a community around them (i.e. MMO-s, multiplayer games, speedrunning community). I'd like to propose that a sensation of *degout* cannot be evoked in single-player experiences.

Secondly, I will elaborate upon the Sartrean concept of *nausee*, understood as an individual sense of disgust coupled with the theory of analogon (Sartre, 1936), defined as a mental image of an object. During the experience of a piece of a medium, we conjure an analogon of ourselves, that allows us to experience said object – a character in a film is an analogon of a viewer, an avatar is an analogon of a player. I propose, that despite a similar character of experience, the phenomenon of a video game lacks the sense of disgust, compared to the medium of film. Acts of body horror, or intense gore, which are disgusting in films, are not disgusting in video games. Moreover, said acts can be the point of an experience, exemplified by fatalities in *Mortal Kombat*, where they are seen as a „reward” for the player.

Lastly, I will discuss that a sense of disgust, similar to a sense of failure (Juul, 2013), can emerge from his experience (Kubiński, 2014).

## BIO

My name is Kacper Karwacki, In October, I will be a second-year student in Philosophy and Liberal Arts at the University of Warsaw. Before that, I graduated from the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) in Law. I am a Chairman of the student games research club „ALEA” operating under the faculty of Liberal Arts. My interest in game studies centres around the topics of phenomenology, aesthetics and existentialism in relation to the player experience. One of my goals in the future is to create a game studies faculty in Warsaw.

# ‘YOU WALK INTO A TAVERN’: SHARED IMAGINATIVE SPACES IN DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS

ØRJAN B. KINES, JUAN DIEGO BOGOTÁ, DAVID EKDAHL

In this paper, we analyse the experienced, imaginative processes that can characterise a game of Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) - a tabletop role playing game (TTRPG) in which a group of people, playing imagined characters, set out on joint adventures in a collectively imagined world. Our analysis of D&D, in contrast to traditional solipsistic conceptions of imagination as individualistic internal representations, proceeds from classical and contemporary phenomenological descriptions of imagination. Phenomenological accounts are notably characterised by a rigorous pursuit in delineating imagination from perception, whilst still acknowledging the possibility for shared imagination. However, unlike recent phenomenological attempts at accounting for shared imagination primarily with reference to normativity, we here argue that what especially makes shared imagination feel shared in the case of D&D is the game’s ability to impose quasi-perceptual structures on the participants’ imagined engagement. In the case of D&D, the participants not only experience playing together (thus undergoing a we-experience); they experience partaking in an intersubjective, imagined world beyond the scope of any one player’s imaginative powers. Serving as a paradigmatic case of shared imagination, we thus focus on three distinct dimensions of D&D: the quasi-objective, explorable space constituted during the game, the embodied and embedded structure of player- and character agency within the imagined space, and finally the intersubjective and distributed imaginative dynamics at play in a typical D&D session. Our results are significant not only to studies into D&D, TTRPGs, and possibly other kinds of games, they also matter to the growing philosophical discussion on what makes shared imagination possible in the first place.

## BIOS

Ørjan B. Kines is a music teacher and practice researcher. He’s currently working on his PhD in professional praxis doing empirical and philosophical research in music education. Particularly, he is investigating instrumental practices and the relationship between materials and musical agency in musical practices by applying ecological and 4E perspectives. Kines has a broad interest in topics intersecting with music like creativity, imagination, aesthetics and materiality. When not working on his PhD, he is a music lecturer at the Faculty of Education and Arts at Nord University, Bodø, Norway.

Juan Diego Bogotá is a philosopher. He is currently doing his PhD in philosophy at the University of Exeter, in the United Kingdom. His main research revolves around the possibility of integrating phenomenology, enactivism, and the Free Energy Principle within a single approach to study life and mind. His interests include phenomenology, the philosophy of cognitive science (especially 4E approaches) and the philosophy of mind.

David Ekdahl has a background in philosophy and sports science. His main research areas are embodiment and virtuality. He is also engaged in the ongoing issue of how to integrate philosophical phenomenology with empirical research. Between 2017-2021, funded by the Danish Ministry of Culture, Ekdahl has worked with high-ranking esports practitioners in order to illuminate the significance of the body to specialized comportment in virtual spaces. From 2022 to 2023, funded

by the Carlsberg Foundation, he will be responsible for the research project 'Shelter from the Norm', exploring the significance of online spaces to autistic people. As of 2023, Ekdahl is an Assistant Professor at Aarhus University. Ekdahl's research has been presented across the public sphere, including on national television and before the Danish Parliament.

## RECONSIDERING DREYFUS: CHALLENGES TO THE NOTION OF EMBODIED INTELLIGENCE IN THE AGE OF REINFORCEMENT LEARNING

JOSHUA D. FAHMY HOOKE

Hubert Dreyfus' central claim in *What Computers Can't Do*, is that human intelligence relies on embodied and contextually sensitive know-how. For Dreyfus, AI systems cannot incorporate and understand subtle contextual elements in their environment. Without the background knowledge accumulated through experience, AI systems have a limited capacity to comprehend and respond appropriately to dynamic situations, especially in gameplay. However, consider DeepMind's AlphaGo. AlphaGo is an AI program developed to play the board game Go, known for its complexity and strategic depth. In 2016, AlphaGo defeated the world champion Go player and "introduced innovative and valuable strategies to the Go community." With the ability to master the complexity of Go, "AlphaGo fulfils the criteria for creativity . . . producing novel, and surprising valuable solutions to problems [in the game]." AlphaGo succeeds using deep neural networks and Monte Carlo tree search algorithms. It uses deep neural networks to evaluate board positions and make strategic decisions, while the Monte Carlo tree search enables the program to discover possible moves and anticipate future outcomes.

In this paper, I explore the development of Reinforcement Learning (RL) and the limitations that Dreyfus imposes on AI. RL challenges Dreyfus' claim that the distinctive feature of human intelligence is contextual sensitivity and adaptive ability. RL does not need a predefined class of appropriate responses to generate knowledge that leads to successful gameplay. RL's machine learning discovers how to interact with its environment to maximize a cumulative reward signal. My conclusion is that AI and AGI enterprises rely on goal-oriented rationality, evaluating the success of their performance through outcome-driven and efficiency-driven initiatives. Problematically, Dreyfus' account of know-how also measures human intelligence on a success model of performative action. For this reason, Dreyfus' account is vulnerable to future AI systems that rival or surpass human action or in-game performance.

### BIO

Joshua is a Ph.D. candidate at Memorial University, Canada, specializing in metaphysics, phenomenology, and epistemology. His dissertation, titled "Martin Heidegger's Concept of Truth: The Guiding Force of *Aletheia*," explores the roots of *Being and Time* by tracing Heidegger's early phenomenological development in the *Frühe Freiburger Vorlesungen*, 1919-1923. Joshua has presented at numerous conferences, including the Canadian Philosophical Association, the Canadian Society for Continental Philosophy, and the Joint Session of the Aristotelian Society and the Mind Association. He also has publications in classical German thought, ranging from Kant to Heidegger.



# RECLASSIFICATION OF VIRTUAL SOCIAL ARTIFACTS: EXAMINING THE ONTOLOGICAL STATUS OF GAME OBJECTS WITHIN SOCIAL ONTOLOGY

KUMRU AKDOĞAN

As virtual reality blurs the line between reality and fiction, one question arises—the ontological status of game objects. Chalmers (2017) and Juul (2019) have underlined the importance of categorizing game objects ontologically. However, in the philosophy of gameplay, such classification of game objects remains relatively unexplored.

Virtual Social Artifacts (VSAs) are digital entities that transcend traditional boundaries, existing both within virtual gaming environments and the tangible social world. These encompass a diverse array of objects, such as in-game currency and virtual property, which hold significance in both realms. I delve into the ontological nature of VSAs within video games, approaching the topic from a social ontology perspective. The term VSA is introduced here as a conceptual framework to encapsulate these digital entities. My approach to categorizing game objects within this study focuses on selecting objects that either exist in both the real world and the game world or possess a counterpart in the real world.

The significance of adopting a social ontology perspective in examining these digital entities lies in the recognition that game objects have a place within the realm of social ontology as social objects. Another pivotal aspect of the inquiry revolves around assessing whether the ontological status of these social objects undergoes a transformation when they take on the role of VSAs. Specifically, whether these objects shift from being considered abstract entities to assuming the classification of ordinary objects.

In this paper, I challenge the commonly held belief that VSAs possess an intrinsic abstract nature. Instead, I draw upon Edward Zalta's modal characterization account of essence for abstract objects (2006). I argue that VSAs are better categorized as ordinary objects. This reclassification isn't only significant in itself but also facilitates a reassessment of these digital entities' ontological status and their roles within virtual worlds and the broader social object framework.

## BIO

I am Kumru Akdogan, currently pursuing my master's degree at Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) as a second year master student, originally from Turkey. I gained my bachelor degree in philosophy in Turkey from Middle East Technical University (METU). I'm mostly working on metaphysics of grounding, philosophy of mind and social ontology. I have a strong inclination towards social ontology, particularly in the realm of social objects and their manifestations. I'm also interested in the intricate relationship between game objects and social objects within virtual reality.

# SOMAESTHETIC EXPERIENCE OF AUGMENTED BODIES AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT IN AND THROUGH DIGITAL SCIENCE-FICTION GAMES

ASKA MAYER

Within digital games located in the broad narrative context of highly technologized environments and science-fiction, the implementation and representation of human augmentation is a typical element to diegetically pick up the game mechanics of skill adoption and related player decisions. In examples as *System Shock* and its spiritual successors, this implementation is however not only used as a diegetic explanation but is further made a key-element of the game's discourse on bio-modification of the human body. Further, players are not only confronted with the general processes of decision-making and digital embodiment, but also a visual and narrative representation, which is aimed at evoking emotional reactions and reflections within the player. This interplay of embodiment, digital presence, as well as emotional and somatic reactions marks the point of origin for the following research.

Starting from the representation and implementation of augmented bodies in *System Shock* (1994/2023), *Prey* (2017) and *SOMA* (2015), the proposed presentation will explore the experience of and interaction with them based on the four elements of control, violation, (dis)alienation, and empowerment. The analysis of these experiences is conducted with a focus on the som-aesthetic qualities of these aspects and framed by Max Rynnänen's concept of 'somavision', as well as Mario Perniola's philosophy of media comprehension.

With *System Shock* and *Prey* this research puts a specific focus on the game design concept of Immersive Sim, motivated by the concept-typical implementation of body modification in connection with branching narratives and alternative solutions, intensifying the commodification of bodily choices of players into ludic decisions. The additional example of *SOMA* provides a further perspective on the radical loss of agency in experiences of augmented bodies and ludic action, while explicitly dealing with techno-political myths of posthuman hybridity.

## BIO

Aska Mayer (M.A.) is a Doctoral Researcher within the interdisciplinary research field *CONVERGENCE of Humans and Machines* at Tampere University, working on an exploration of human augmentation in/through/as games. Within the doctoral research, an emphasis is put on the multidisciplinary combination of Game Studies, Phenomenology and STS to analyse potential applications of and approaches to human augmentation as playful action. Additional research interests include idea-historical approaches to digital games, philosophy of the neo-baroque, and apocalyptic media culture. Since September 2023, Aska Mayer has been an affiliated researcher at the Game Research Lab Tampere, as well as at the COE Gamecult.

# “IT’S A VIBE!”: THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF VIDEOGAME ATMOSPHERE

ANDREA ANDILORO

In this presentation, I foreground "atmosphere" as a crucial phenomenological concept for evaluating player experience. After scrutinizing recent advancements in the relatively underexplored field of video game atmospheres (Fizek, 2022; Zimmerman, 2021; Zimmerman & Huberts, 2019), and considering seminal contributions from atmosphere theorists such as Gernot Böhme (2017) and Tonino Griffero (2014), I advocate for an interpretation of atmosphere that aligns with Heideggerian phenomenology (Heidegger, 1962). Specifically, I approach this topic from the vantage point of being-in-the-gameworld, where atmospheres serve as the affective modulations of worlds that players inhabit. As such, atmospheres are both experiential and existential in nature.

Exploring video game atmospheres through the lens of being-in-the-gameworld involves reflecting on the elements that lend consistency and coherence to a player's multifaceted experience, which encompasses affective, embodied, and cognitive dimensions across various ontological planes. Atmospheres, in this context, emerge as mediating entities between the player and the gameworld, shaping the parameters through which phenomena appear to players in specific ways. Rather than merely immersing themselves in a game, players engage in a process of attunement to a gameworld atmosphere, which is experienced as a holistic continuum of 'looking-sensing-feeling-moving.'

Informed by Jan Slaby's post-phenomenological work (2018), I conceptualize game design as an atmospheric arrangement comprised of various components across different ontological domains that gives rise to gameworlds to which players direct their care. These components, which include mechanics, graphics, art style, hardware interface, heads-up display, soundtrack, level design, narrative, and/or dialogue, exist in mutually affective relations, giving rise to a particular atmosphere that the player attunes to. Employing this framework, I conclude with an examination of three types of attunements: a techno-instrumental attunement exemplified by Minecraft (Mojang Studios, 2009), a contemplative attunement as seen in Proteus (Key & Kanaga, 2013), and a poetic attunement as illustrated through The Long Dark (Hinterland Studios, 2014).

## BIO

Andrea Andiloro is a Ph.D. candidate at the Centre for Transformative Media Technologies at Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, Australia. His research interests revolve around the phenomenology of videogame atmosphere in its affective and spatial dimension. He teaches game studies, user-centred design, media studies and science & technology studies.

# KALEIDO-SCOPING EXPERIENCE THROUGH VIDEOGAMES

EMMA GRAU I CABRÉ

The aim of this paper is to explore how playful experiences impact our worldly experience, by means of a comparison between features and effects of kaleidoscopes and videogames.

While the first are modern scientific inventions reduced to entertainment, and the later are contemporary forms of entertainment relying on advanced technologies, both involve playing with sophisticated artifacts made to direct the (implicit and real) user's scope to viewscapes artificially crafted through technical combinations of moving forms, which, despite fragmentary on their own, appear as unitary wholes. Both have been described by creators as sources of enjoyment *and* knowledge or thinking, and have influenced hopeful worldviews *and* chaotic behavior through curiosity for the images they offer — rather, we help them produce with bodily actions and perceptive engagement.

Thus, analogical analyses and conclusions rest on their technical procedures (involving physical agency), user reactions (active, inertial, inquisitive, transgressive), and massive receptions (and ingrainment in popular imagery).

These three factors offer historical perspectives to hermeneutical and ethical ambiguities currently discussed regarding ideological implications of (video)gaming, as the weight of creativity and alienation in mechanized fun and aesthetic pleasure, or how quotidian entertainment distorts or informs our understanding of broader reality, science and history.

I suggest that, like Brewster's kaleidoscopes, videogames like *Assassin's Creed Odyssey*, *NieR: Automata* or *Ocarina of Time* create unified but ever-changing images of time's flow and reality's order by harmonizing inconclusive data into dynamically organized shapes, which users dialogically live/create/recreate as meaningful, informative, coherent experiences (Benjamin's *Erfahrung*) or the opposite (irreflexive, disgregated *Erlebnis*). This duality inheres the technical and visual speed of gaming, and depends on users' degree of mental agency during recreational processes.

Our examples show game-user interaction itself *can* encourage wide-ranging reflection; I deem resulting, play-enhanced agency of experience to be what poetess Vardill called «*the best Kaleidoscope for thee*».

## BIO

I graduated from my Philosophy studies at University of Barcelona in June 2022. My main area of research is history of philosophy. I am coursing Classical Studies, a Master in Medieval Cultures next year, and translated Tommaso Campanella's *Syntagma* for Tecnos editions. Specifically, however, my interests focus on *playful* in the history of ideas, from Plato's use of humor to Victorian entertainment or Game Theory. I currently work for the Catalan Society of Philosophy. There I am also organizing a cycle of seminars on videogame philosophy, which I teach as well in Japonia, a Japanese school certified by my university.

# A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE HOME IN GONE HOME

JOHAN BLOMBERG

The home is a peculiar type of place. It is a clearly demarcated location distinguished from other places which separates those that belong there from those that do not. The border of belonging is sacred: any violation is an abuse of the property and its inhabitants. The importance of home and its sense of belonging is highlighted in trespassing, as well as in homelessness, both regulated by legislations (e.g., having a legal address is considered a requirement of being part of the society). Most importantly, the home serves as a gravitational center in life, where one lives “at home” with every other location in relation being “an away”, which Levinas (1969[1961]) considers as fundamentally linked to distinctions like that between interiority and exteriority.

In this talk, I explore the place experience of the home in *Gone Home* (The Fullbright Company, 2013) by appealing to phenomenological accounts of the home as found in the works of mainly Heidegger (1971) and Levinas (1969[1961]). The game is set within the confines of a family home, to which the protagonist returns from overseas to her family’s newly acquired house. The binary logic of the home is thus defied, where she is simultaneously at home and away. This provides the player with a meaning structure for their spatial exploration of an empty home resided only by traces of the family, their past and the former residents. I argue that *Gone Home* thereby can be seen as thematizing the temporality of the home as always in a never-completed process of becoming a place, which I connect to the phenomenological concern for time and space and their intimate relation to one another.

## BIO

Johan Blomberg is a senior lecturer in General Linguistics and a reader in Cognitive Semiotics at Lund University. His research is mainly concerned with the dialectic relationship between human experience and semiotic resources, most notably language. In doing so, he has worked on phenomenological issues concerning the relation between experience and representation, which he has also applied to video game research.

# HOW PLAYERS FEEL TRANSGRESSIVELY: HERMENEUTIC ANALYSIS OF EMOTIONS

NADEZHDA GERASIMENKO

In 2007 Espen Aarseth proposed the concept of *implied player*. Based on the term “implied reader” (Iser, 1974), this concept describes an ideal, non-existent person, who plays a game according to all its rules and mechanics (Aarseth, 2007). It is important to note that Aarseth’s implied player is a rational subject, who does not experience the game on an emotional level. I argue, however, that adding emotional dimension to the analysis of implied player’s experiences can help researchers to know more about the way games and players coexist.

As an example, I have analyzed mobile video game “Dogotchi – Virtual Pet” (Mawges, 2017). The game is designed to remind the player of “Tamagotchi” (Bandai, 1996-present): rules, mechanics and, obviously, name of the game itself are all very similar to the ones of the original franchise. Just like in a “Tamagotchi” game, player gets a pet and takes care of it.

In order to describe implied player’s emotions, I have used the Expanded Game Experience model (Kultima, Stenros, 2010). For each of the stages mentioned in the model (information retrieval, enabling, preparations, gameplay, afterplay) I have highlighted the dominant emotion that the implied player is experiencing.

After that, following Aarseth’s logic, I have suggested that real players could have other emotions on any stage of their experience and, therefore, play/feel “Dogotchi” transgressively. A small autoethnographic study proved my point – formally speaking, I as a player did all the things that the game wanted me to do, but, nevertheless, my act of play was transgressive, because I did not feel the same emotions as the implied player.

Partly this distinction can be explained by the fact that I as a player have a certain level of *emotional literacy* – I know, what game ‘wants’ me to feel and how it tries to get an emotional reaction out of me. As a result, I acknowledge the need to feel instead of actually feeling.

This research highlighted two topics that I find rather interesting. It showed, firstly, that maybe a lot more people play transgressively than we think – as the transgression itself can be located not only in player’s action but also in their emotions. Secondly, that the roots of transgressive (emotional) play can be found in a specific emotional literacy – knowing of games and their structures that might stop the player from getting too engaged in a game.

Upon further research empirical studies on players’ emotional interactions with games can be conducted.

## BIO

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