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THEMES

- Definitions of virtual reality
- Representation and simulation
- Ethics of video games

“It is true he studied computers, but he is not a philosopher.”
-- relative of Walaeed Hasayin, who was detained in the West Bank for his Facebook posts. Reported in The New York Times, 11/16/2010

“At first I thought he was looking at pornographic sites and chatting with girls. That would have been normal and none of my business.”
-- Internet café owner Ahmed Abu Asab, where Mr. Hasayin spent time online
DEFINITIONS

- Four elements in virtual reality
  - A virtual world
  - Immersion
  - Sensory feedback
  - Interactivity

- Virtual reality: “a three-dimensional interactive, computer-generated environment that incorporates a first person perspective.” (p. 362)

- Computer simulations: models (not necessarily realistic or interactive)
Brey (p. 365) writes that it is a big mistake to “call anything in virtual reality real and to start treating it as such.” DISCUSS

- Almost real
- Imaginary

- Simulations versus “ontological reproductions”
  - The latter have the same value or effects as their real-world counterparts
- Reproductions: physical and institutional entities
  - GIVE SOME EXAMPLES OF BOTH TYPES
DISTINGUISHING VIRTUAL AND REAL

- If virtuality and reality are not opposing constructs, simulation/reality and representation/reality are distinct but blurring.

  - DISCUSS examples from multiple media

- Representations *become* reality for us when they are all the reality we know.” (p. 367)
ETHICAL ISSUES (1) – DESIGN

- **Misrepresentation**
  - Falling short of standards of accuracy
  - Promises not fulfilled

- **Biased representation**
  - Selectivity
  - Stereotyping
  - One-sided fantasies

- **Indecent representation**
  - Virtual pornography
  - Two sides to the argument
  - What role does “harm by offense” play
  - Depiction of real persons (see 11/15/2010 NYT)

ETHICAL ISSUES (2) – USE

- Can actions in VR be unethical?

  - Single user [actions that are unethical in real life are unethical in virtual environments.]
    - Moral development harm (emotional transferance)
    - Psychological harm (to third parties)
    - Bad habits harm (virtue ethics and the good life)

  - Multi-user [some actions that are unethical in real life may be unethical in virtual environments.]
    - Brey falls back on ambiguity
    - Limitations on physical impact on real world
    - The psychology of role playing

• Brey, “Virtual reality and computer simulation” (2008)
ETHICS OF COMPUTER GAMES

- Big business ($19.6 billion 2009; $21.4 billion 2008)
  - Call of Duty: Black Ops - $360 million first day sales

- Case against: addiction, aggression, maladjustment
- Case for: pleasure, creativity, fantasy acts

- Value proposition:
  - No question of social construction of reality
  - Do video games influence the values of the players?
  - Do those values translate to behavior in the real world?