Revisiting the Magic Circle for Critical-Ethical Reflection through Artistic Installation Game

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses how scholarship on moral decision making can inspire and inform the creation of ethically notable games. Following the method of artistic research, we describe the design of the installation game *I Don't Know Who I Am*. The paper showcases that the creation of a thought experiment space, in combination with metaphoric embodied interaction, can encourage players to engage in critical reflection on a 'messy' problem such as the human-technology relationship. In addition, the application of an artistic research method indicates that the format of the installation game, and in particular the 'bleed' of the game space into everyday life, can provide a powerful tool for connecting an ambiguous narrative to the players' lived experiences.

Keywords

artistic research, installation games, thought experiment, game metaphor, critical-ethical reflection

INTRODUCTION

Ethically notable games have received widespread scholarly attention in recent years (e.g. Sicart 2011; 2013). Especially with the growing popularity of multi-branched narrative games such as *Detroit: Become Human* (Quantic Dream 2018) (Holl and Melzer 2021). A key feature that characterizes many ethically notable games is their mechanic of a moral dilemma, which guide players to reason and critically reflect on cultural, moral and social issues, and gain insights by steering the game in a specific direction (Zagal 2009). For instance, as a much-quoted example, the game *Papers, Please* (Lucas Pope 2013) encourages players to explore the complexities of sociopolitical issues such as immigration by requiring them to weigh system rules against their own conscience, through an ongoing series of dilemmas (McKernan 2021).

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Although ample research has addressed the formal and aesthetic characteristics of ethically notable games (e.g. Daneels et al. 2021), few studies have explored the creative processes and design decisions that shape such games. This paper follows Sicart's (2013) line of thought that in-game decision-making processes can help players develop their capacity for autonomous moral reasoning - especially if choices are designed in such a way that there is no 'correct' or 'incorrect' outcome, but rather, the cultivation of values is put at the center. We aim to extend Sicart's line of thought by exploring how the sensory, embodied and narrative characteristics of games can contribute to this development of autonomous moral reasoning. In order to achieve this, we apply an artistic research method that revolves around the artistic practice of the first author. Artistic research is a rapidly growing academic field that puts the creation of art works at the heart of the investigative process (Butt 2017). The artist-researcher engages in an iterative cycle, whereby phases of creation are interchanged with phases of reflection, enabling continuous finetuning of a work (Coessens et al. 2009). An advantage of artistic research is that it produces tacit knowledge: knowledge on the codes of a medium that is contained within the material and aesthetic qualities of an artefact, and that can be recognized as such by other practitioners (Borgdorff 2012). In this sense, artistic research is highly suitable to translate academic and theoretical insights into practical knowledge that can inform and inspire future professionals, educators or artists (Leavy 2015), and combine the philosophical and scientific insights to inform the ethical issues in our everyday life (Hui 2021). Notable examples of artistic research in a gaming context such as Jenova Chen's experimentations on using flow theory as an inspiration for creating adaptive mechanics (Chen 2007), have demonstrated a large potential of this new research methodology.

This article will discuss the design of the installation game *I Don't Know Who I Am*, in a dialogue with the broader formal and structural design elements beyond moral decision making in ethical games. In recent years, installation games have emerged as a new artistic form, that blends gaming and artistic expression (Ji and Malliet 2025). These games are able to evoke players' autonomous emotions more strongly through the creation of physical environments, multi-sensory experiences, and bodily interactions, compared to purely audiovisual works (Frome 2013). Notable examples include *The Night Journey* (Viola et al. 2018) and *Pain Station* (Reiff and Morawe 2001). Although installation games have many unique characteristics, there are similarities with other game forms that explore hybridization of the real and virtual worlds, often referred to as pervasive games. One interesting quality of both is that they break the so-called magic circle, so that the game space 'bleeds' into the real world, and vice versa, which can initiate a sense of deep player engagement, combining emotional, cognitive and physical involvement (Montola et al. 2009). *I Don't Know Who I Am*, an installation game created by the first author, invites players to reflect on how contemporary technological phenomena participate in shaping desire and subjectivity. Through thought-experiment and metaphor, the game opens a rational and emotional space for ethical reflection on the industrial aesthetics and symbolic systems that shape individuation in the digital age. This article aims to inspire game designers to think more diversely about moral game design, positioning games as effective tools for addressing social and ethical questions.

This paper is structured as follows. First, we will discuss two style figures that have inspired the design of the installation game *I Don't Know Who I Am*: the thought experiment (which can guide players to engage in the philosophical proposition through intuition and reasoning) and the metaphor (which bring the embodied

understanding of help players connect their gaming experience to real experiences). The third section will discuss specifics of the game's design, in order to showcase the potential of moral reflection beyond the magic circle. Finally, in the fourth section, we will focus on the pitfalls that need to be paid attention to when creating installation games from a design perspective and look forward to future directions.

THE THOUGHT EXPERIMENT AND THE RATIONAL MIND

The thought experiment, as a widely used device of the imagination in philosophy, explores the causal relationships between concepts under hypothetical circumstances, in order to speculate on the possible results or antecedents of events (Yeates 2004). It is often used to challenge existing views, promote decision-making, strategy formulation, as well as solve problems and stimulate new ways of thinking (Aronowitz and Lombrozo 2019). Schulzke (2013) proposed that, although games may not strictly follow the structure of traditional thought experiments, the mixture of narrative and gameplay elements can be interpreted as models of philosophical problems. As such, games can function as narrative thought experiments, in which players participate, reflect, and explore the possible moral consequences of certain actions through intuition and reasoning. This mechanism not only allows players to experience abstract philosophical propositions, but also encourages them to reflect on cultural meanings, values and moral conflicts that connect their experience of the real world (Brown 1993).

For instance, the game *September 12* (Frasca 2003) constructs a narrative thought-experiment space that draws attention to the logic and consequences of counter-terrorist violence. In this fictional scenario, players can launch missiles to destroy targets, but the explosion will cause the death of innocent civilians. This triggers grief and anger among the survivors, who then turn into new terrorists. Players need to work their way through a series of events for which there exists no solution, and as such, the game does not present them with a 'good' or 'bad' outcome. This places the process (rather than the outcome) of critical-ethical reflection at the center of the experience. Through its counterfactual scenario, the game transforms the real-world moral issue of 'fighting violence with violence' into a philosophical proposition. Instead of offering a binary moral choice, it presents a circular moral dilemma that is abstract (a self-reinforcing vicious cycle may not occur exactly in reality) but relates to our daily life as it presents the unintended consequences and ethical ambiguities often embedded in real-world violence interventions. The game encourages players to use intuition in combination with reasoning, to reflect on and question this philosophical assumption, through both action and observation.

A similar example is *The Stanley Parable* (Wreden and Pugh 2013), which guides players to think deeply about the philosophical tension between free will and deterministic control. The players' task is to explore an absurd office environment under the guidance of a narrator, who attempts to control their moves. When faced with a critical decision, players can choose to obey the narrator's instructions and follow the preset path or move in another direction towards unknown paths. Each decision leads to a different ending, inviting players to reflect on whether their actions are truly autonomous or already accounted for within the game's design. The consequences that *The Stanley Parable* attributes to the players' choices predominantly relate to the voice-over and aesthetics of the environment, and through its short playing time, the game makes it easy to explore alternative paths. As such, the game provides another example of how the experience and process of moral

reasoning, rather than its outcome in terms of 'good' or 'bad', can encourage players to cultivate their moral values. Through a fictional scenario that externalizes the experience of obedience and rebellion, the game presents a narrative thought experiment that simulates a philosophical proposition: Are our choices free, or illusions within a preconstructed system? It invites players to reflect on the moral dilemmas that individuals face in real life - how they find a balance between external narratives (authority, rules) and autonomous will - and reveals how this tension shapes our cognition and behavior in everyday life.

These two examples demonstrate how thought experiments mechanics in ethical games can construct complex processes of moral reflection. Rather than simply presenting a moral decision-making mechanism, these games create immersive scenarios where philosophical propositions that stand between reality and game space, are actively engaged with. We argue that narrative thought experiments in games have the potential to translate ethical reflection into meaningful engagement with the social, political, and cultural challenges of contemporary life, inviting the player to practice their moral reasoning and intuition.

METAPHOR, THE FANTASY WE LIVE BY

The metaphor is not only a poetic or rhetorical form, but also a conceptual system that has a profound impact on the way we experience the world, as a technique that paraphrases complex concepts in an easily understandable way (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). While Lakoff and Johnson focus on metaphors from a linguistic perspective, this conceptual mechanism has potential extensions into audiovisual media, for instance, games (particularly in artistic contexts), where the metaphor becomes an affective design tool (Möring 2016). Fahlenbrach (2016, 175-176) argues that "it is by creating audiovisual metaphors anchored in our minds, that creators of game spaces can enrich their affective structure with metaphoric gestalts that imply not just embodied associations and cues, but also more complex emotional and cognitive ones". This suggests that audiovisual metaphors in games do more than present ideas; they create sensorial and emotional bridges to abstract concepts, enabling players to transform complex moral, cultural, or social issues into understandable 'fantasies'.

For instance, the art game *The Marriage* (Humble 2007) uses minimalist visuals to metaphorically represent the emotional dynamics of a love relationship. The player controls two blocks of different colors with the mouse. In order to maintain the existence of the two blocks, the player must balance various activities to increase the size and opacity of each block. As Möring (2016, 276) observes, the game does not simulate the experience of love itself, but rather "the spatial precondition of our metaphorically structured understanding of love," through the interaction of abstract geometric bodies in a spatial environment. In this way, the metaphorical system in the game invites players to experience complex emotional states not through narrative or dialogue, but through embodied navigation of an affective space.

This idea of metaphor as an embodied design principle is further expanded in installation games and interactive art environments, where players physically engage with physical environments, through a combination of multi-sensory experience and bodily interaction (Ji and Malliet 2025). In installation art, the interplay between symbols, senses, and the body often entails using simple metaphors that provide a multi-layered emotional understanding of real-life phenomena (Kwastek 2015). For example, in the artwork of *Tatlin's Whisper* (2008) by Tania Bruguera, mounted police

officers control the behavior of the audience, forcing them to move through the museum space in a disciplined fashion, simulating the bodily performance of power through deterrence and coercion. The police officers act as metaphors for real-life executors of power, while the passive reactions of the audience symbolize the obedience and oppression of individuals under an authoritarian system. Here, meaning is not presented through visual representation alone but is transferred through the participants' embodied engagement with space, authority, and their own reactions. As Clancey (1997, 1) notes, the understanding in such contexts is constructed through "what [they] perceive, how they conceive of their activity, and what they physically do, develop together."

Applying these principles to game design, we forward the use of audiovisual metaphors as catalysts for engagement with complex social, cultural, or political phenomena, not only through symbolic interpretation, but especially through embodied, sensorial experience that can make abstract phenomena be comprehended emotionally.

I DON'T KNOW WHO I AM, A CASE STUDY

In this section, we describe the design rationale of the installation game *I Don't Know Who I Am,* exploring its potential for ethical reflection and its capacity to extend the game experience into players' everyday lives. *I Don't Know Who I Am* is part of an ongoing artistic investigation developed by the first author as part of a PhD research that is situated at the intersection of critical-experimental game design, philosophy of technology, and artistic research.

The game critically engages with the technological phenomenon of online manipulation, in particular the use of algorithms and digital infrastructures to influence individual cognition, decision-making and behavior without complete transparency (Susser et al. 2019). In everyday life, online manipulation invisibly impacts individuals' behaviors through such mechanisms as targeted advertising, false information or personalized content, causing to make decisions outside of their free will (Keeling and Burr 2022). Drawing from Bernard Stiegler's (2014; 2015) philosophical notion of *Symbolic Misery*, *I Don't Know Who I Am* positions this online manipulation not only as a behavioral issue, but as part of a larger crisis of individuation shaped by industrial aesthetics and symbolic systems centered on audiovisual media. In this context, we listen to the same music, consume the same social media content, live in algorithmically filtered lives that are no different from others, and in this process, we are gradually losing the singularity that represents who we are. Stiegler (2014; 2015) argues that contemporary marketing systems have created an artificial aesthetic apparatus that standardizes our sensory experience around replicable taste and pleasure. This libidinal management turns our desire into a calculable, governable force, limiting the capacity for subjectivation (Agamben 2009; Foucault 1977). Online manipulation thus becomes part of a wider apparatus that governs attention and desire, restricting how we feel, think, and act within digital and physical spaces. In this context, the question is no longer 'What do we produce?', but rather, 'Do our desires still belong to ourselves?' (Ji 2025).

Rather than presenting a moral dilemma with right or wrong outcomes, the game intends to encourage players to reflect on how technology affects us and, ultimately, how we can use it in a more critical way based on the philosophical propositions of online manipulation and *Symbolic Misery* (Stiegler 2014; 2015). Although *I Don't Know*

Who I Am is currently in further development, it has already gone through several iterative cycles of creation, playtesting, and adaptation. We will analyze its potential to break through the magic circle and how the use of thought experiments and metaphors can assist players in reflecting and acting beyond the game experience in the ethical game context.

The Design of *I Don't Know Who I Am*

Game Mechanics

The game is designed for a single player. The experience begins with the player watching a five-minute video featuring a monologue by a cow named Bow (players are left in a state of relative uncertainty whether Bow is effectively a cow or not). During this phase, there are no interactive options; players can only immerse themselves in Bow's narration. After watching, the player will face a dinner plate filled with grass (real grass), with a bottle of soy sauce placed next to it. At this point, the player faces a choice: to eat the grass with soy sauce or not. Regardless of their choice, the player subsequently participates in a conversation with the designer to reflect on their experience. In later iterations, we envision this conversation to be replaced by an interactive mechanic, so that the game can be more easily attuned to specific contexts without requiring the presence of the researchers. After this reflective-narrative intervention, the player receives a gift: those who ate the grass receive a Bow-themed cow sticker, while those who did not are given a small bundle of grass. The game experience concludes with a final video of the image of Bow as a cow.

Game Narrative

Bow does not know who he is. His monologue reveals identity loss, self-doubt, and absurd conflicts of desire. Although he knows that his nature is to eat grass, he is a bit ashamed to admit that he prefers to eat lamb (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Bow shamefully admits that he prefers to eat lamb.
Source: Created by author 1.

Bow also reflects on the meaning of life, wondering whether his existence is just to 'produce milk' or has a deeper value (Figure 2). His narrative reveals a sense of

powerlessness towards the outside world and deep existential anxiety in self-mockery and humor.

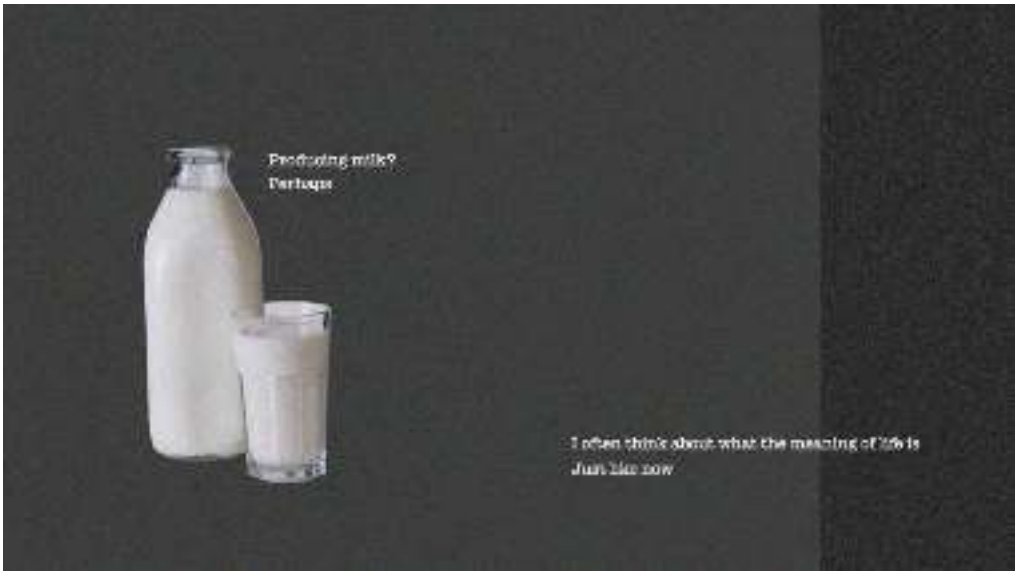

Figure 2: Bow questions about the purpose of life.
Source: Created by author 1.

Bow's feelings for another cow, named Aow (Figure 3), are a running thread throughout the narration - he would secretly watch 'cow porn (Figure 4)' and fantasize about intimate moments with his crush Aow.

Figure 3: The image of Aow.
Source: Created by author 1.

Figure 4: The cow porn.
Source: Created by author 1.

He would also secretly observe her and imagine what she would look like in a wedding dress (Figure 5). But he is afraid that his 'non-cow desire' will be discovered and rejected by Aow, which further deepens his anxiety.

Figure 5: Bow's imagination of marrying Aow.
Source: Created by author 1.

While expressing his own desires, Bow tries to establish an emotional connection with the player. He suggests that the player could 'eat grass' and even suggests adding soy sauce to make it taste better (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Bow invites players to try eating grass (an image simultaneously presented in the physical game scene and the game narrative).
Source: Created by author 1.

In this monologue, Bow tries to find his own position and establish a friendship with the player. He invites the player to go to the beach to eat grass together, hoping to find a trace of companionship (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Bow wants to become the player's friend.
Source: Created by author 1.

The Analysis of *I Don't Know Who I Am*

The game as thought experiment

Through three interconnected stages, *I Don't Know Who I Am* constructs a narrative thought experiment that examines the ethical crisis of online manipulation, reflecting

a deeper loss of individuation shaped by artificial desire and symbolic systems. Unlike other moral games, *I Don't Know Who I Am* shapes moral reflection through three stages: watching, acting, and dialoguing—each stage deepening the player's engagement with philosophical inquiry and testing moral intuitions and reasoning at a rational level. Informed by the philosophy of technology, the game offers more than a fictional narrative—it invites players to engage critically with how their desires are technologically structured, transforming gameplay into an active space of philosophical inquiry.

Stage one: Narrative experience
The game begins with a fictional situation in which the player is invited to immerse themselves in the perspective of Bow, a cow who resists eating grass (as he should do), but instead scrolls through Instagram, and fantasizes about a wedding with Aow. This absurd and ambiguous story setting functions as the first step of the narrative thought experiment, aiming to test the origin of the player's desire: when in the unconscious state, does their desire originate from themselves or do they draw it from others (Lacan 1998)? As the story is narrated, Bow reveals his own conflicted desires while repeatedly, though briefly and distractedly, questioning the player: *Will you eat the grass?* which further strengthens the temptation of the player's own desire. In the process of watching the monologue, the narrative serves as the 'libidinal management', that is, placing the unified aesthetic experience shaped by artificial desire in the player's experience to sell replicable taste and pleasure (Stiegler 2014). Through this first stage, the game begins to blur the line between the player's internal motivations and external symbolic conditioning.

Stage Two: Ethical-existential disruption
The second stage interrupts narrative immersion with an ethical dilemma: the player is invited to eat grass with soy sauce. Grass, in this context, becomes a symbolic object—a mirror of Bow's internal conflict and testing the player's autonomy. The dilemma does not operate at the center of moral reflection but instead situates desire within a space of philosophical inquiry. Whether the player chooses to eat the grass or not, the act becomes the representation of manipulation—an expression of resistance or a sign of being governed by external apparatuses.

Stage three: Reflective dialogue
The third and final stage transforms the player's experiential ambiguity into a process of clear philosophical reflection. In the dialogue, the participants are guided to reflect on their playing experience through a conversation with the designer. If the player has chosen to eat the grass, the dialogue will guide the player to think: *Did I eat grass out of my own desire or was it influenced by Bow's ambiguous narrative? Why did eating grass become my desire? Did the desire to eat grass appear before or after seeing the video?* These questions reveal a relationship between individual desires and external manipulation: Are the acts we make ever truly autonomous? How is our desire constructed and mediated? If the player has chosen not to eat the grass, the dialogue will guide the player to think: *Why did you not listen to Bow's advice? What parts of the video do you think are trying to shape your desires?* This question presents the context of online manipulation, exemplifying that our behaviors are impacted within or without our free will.

After players answer the question, the dialogue guides them to answer the key philosophical and ethical reflection: *Who designed this game? You cannot see the*

designer because of the screen (technology)—so when you chose to eat or not eat the grass, was it truly your own desire, or were you responding to the designer's intention? This question aims to open up reflection on how invisible structures, such as systems and algorithms, may shape our desire in invisible ways. By making the presence of the designer part of the narrative thought experiment, the game shifts from a personal choice to a broader philosophical proposition: In a world increasingly governed by symbolic and technological apparatuses, how can we distinguish between autonomous desire and desires that have been shaped for us? In doing so, the play experience moves beyond the narrative monologue and into a space of critical and ethical reflection about desire and manipulation in the technological age.

The game as metaphor

Metaphor one: Bow's loss of individuation

As the game narrative shows, Bow's monologue is riddled with the anxiety of self-confirmation and conflicting desires, which serve as an audiovisual metaphor for the experience of self-loss in technologically mediated environments. Bow's images, voice, and absurd behavior not only present narrative content but also activate emotional and sensorial associations that mirror the psychological conditions of social media users' algorithmically shaped desires. By emotionally resonating with Bow's absurd yet familiar struggle, players are invited to project their own experiences of loss into the fictional space. In this way, the game triggers an emotional connection that enhances the affective contrast between the second and third stages of the narrative thought experiment.

Metaphor two: the sensory experience of eating grass.

Players do not only face the choice of 'whether or not to eat grass', but can also touch, smell and taste the grass through embodied experience. This sensory experience blurs the boundary between fiction and reality, integrating metaphors into experiential mechanisms, allowing players to internalize philosophical thinking, into a sensory and emotional experience. This disharmony between senses, behavior, and narration further strengthens the connection between game metaphors and everyday cognition (Gregersen 2016). The interaction directs the players' reflections away from the abstract cognitive level of the thought experiment into their body experience, making it more tangible and specific (Varela et al. 2017). For example, when players face unconscious consumption behavior in the future, they may associate it with the experience of 'eating grass' and rethink their motivations, or when they smell grass in nature, it may revive their memory and critical reflection on the technological shaping of desire (van Campen 2014).

Although metaphor is not extensively described here, it plays an important role in shaping the narrative thought experiment. By constructing metaphoric elements, the game helps players connect sensory experience and emotional engagement with the gameplay, deepening their critical and ethical reflection, and extending the experience into the future.

Breaking the magic circle

Rather than centering on a certain outcome of a moral choice*, I Don't Know Who I Am* constructs a narrative thought experiment that creates a space for deep philosophical and ethical reflection. Through the interconnected stages of watching, acting, and dialoguing, the game gradually deepens players' engagement with complex social

issues of online manipulation and the loss of individuation shaped by artificial desire and symbolic systems. By integrating embodied metaphors, it strengthens the emotional and bodily connection between players and the game. While computer games create a closed "magic circle" confining players' actions and moral judgments within a fictional avatar and virtual space, this game intentionally breaks those boundaries. By involving players as themselves in embodied sensory experiences and moral reflection, it blurs the line between the game world and the real world, enabling philosophical inquiry to extend beyond the screen and into players' lived experience and future.

DISCUSSION

The consideration of *I Don't Know Who I Am* from a designer's perspective

The relationship between game design and moral reasoning

Sicart (2011, 36) pointed out that the relationship between the ontology of games and morality is "not about how we inhabit a world, but how that world allows us to inhabit it". If a game is just a set of rules, then the values carried and interpreted by these rules constitute its moral connotations. As game designers, we are not only the transmitters of moral values, but also, to some extent, the judges and shapers of morality, who contribute to the formation of players' moral cognition and values. When designing moral games, we do not only need to construct moral dilemmas but also reflect on whether the moral concepts we convey are appropriate and effective. The purpose of *I Don't Know Who I Am* is not to force players to eat grass, but to encourage them to connect their engagement in the game to their own actions and cognitions in the social-technological reality. The core meaning of the game is to simulate the moral system underlying our use of technology, providing players with a platform and opportunity for reflection. In this sense, the results of the playtests conducted so far, are promising, as a majority of players based their decision-making on either their involvement with the narrative, or a perceived connection with prior life experiences. Nonetheless, a smaller group of participants approached the game from a systemic perspective, aiming to expose the logic of the rule system, hereby taking personal distance from the game message. Further iteration and playtesting, preferably within other player populations, will be needed to uncover whether this is related to the fact that the test was performed with game designers, who are often oriented towards obtaining a meta-level awareness of the mechanics (e.g. Zagal 2010).

The challenge of distinguishing game space from real space

In the design of installation games, the game space and the real space are integrated, which can make it difficult for players to distinguish between both, making them too immersed in either one of them. In *I Don't Know Who I Am*, reflective dialogue plays an important role in making this distinction. By guiding players to re-recognize their own identities, players can realize the role they play in the desires of others, which breaks away from the game narrative and returns to the level of real self-cognition. We observed that many participants found it valuable that the connection between the game metaphor and their own selves was made explicit, as this removed a sense of confusion about the absence of a virtual avatar – which is often their frame of reference in computer games. This underscores the importance of providing clear

feedback about the moral foundations of in-game choices, as proposed for instance by Zagal (2009). The inclusion of an educational-discursive dialogue in the final phase not only helps players to clarify the boundaries of different spaces in terms of emotion and cognition, but also effectively guides their critical-ethical reflection. It moreover showcases new avenues for integrating the game within pedagogic environments, where an educator is present to provide context and connect the game objectives to learning goals (e.g. Van Eck 2006).

Ensure players' informed consent

Sicart (2011) proposed that the rationality and morality of game rules depend on the free acceptance and consent of players. Only when players actively accept the rules and take action can the reality of the game occur. This principle is not only applicable to videogames but becomes crucial in installation games. Especially in situations where players directly participate with their own identity and body (which the playtest demonstrated most of them did), clearly informing players in advance of the experience content, participation process and potential challenges, is key to ensuring the morality and rationality of the game. Informed consent not only respects the free will of players but also ensures that a safe space is created where ethical values can be communicated, experienced and discussed.

Future development

This study aims to encourage diversified thinking in future research on moral games from a designer's perspective. By transforming daily behaviors or phenomena into game mechanics with metaphoric meanings, games can guide players to deeply participate, on the cognitive, emotional and embodied level, and help them understand complex social, cultural and philosophical issues. The interactive mechanisms described in this paper can be extended to issues such as environmental ethics, social equity, and political conflicts, showcasing that games can operate as artistic expressions and as catalysts for social change simultaneously (a thought already elaborated on by Flanagan, 2009). Informal observations made after playtesting revealed that several hours after the experience, some of the students were still discussing the reflective foundations of the game, which leads us to identify a further potential for including a larger, accommodated, discussion space, where different identities, social groups, cultures and political views can gather around certain discussion topics.

In summary, this research highlights that installation games constitute a growing academic and artistic field, and an interdisciplinary form that can promote interdisciplinary cooperation and interaction, especially between fields such as art, psychology, sociology and philosophy. This showcases that artistic research into game design is a promising research discipline which can contribute to finding new thinking paths for solving such 'messy problems' as the "permacrisis" (Janik and Vella 2022).

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