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The Parable of the Virtual World

Our Dasein resembles playing in a virtual world.

The players are outside the virtual world, as are the creators and presenters. The players are facing the contents of the virtual world. They directly understand the contents and can respond by acting or abstaining.

Usually, the players are so intensely and steadily concentrating on the virtual world that they are completely taken up in it. They are identifying themselves exclusively with their avatar and its well-being in the virtual world, and it does not come to their mind to leave the game. Their basic playing situation "from outside" is something they are not aware of.

That the players nevertheless gain this external view onto the virtual world while playing, is a rare exception. Normally, it occurs only when they get called from outside, or when they fail in the game: then they may get thrown back on themselves. But this happens infrequently, for the virtual world is systematic and its system can be intuitively explored and made directly understandable. Once a part of the system is understood, one can normally trust it and will not fail in it.

A player may also gain the external view on amicable terms by managing on his own to surface from the game in the virtual world. Still, during the game, rather nobody is doing this. To concentrate both, on the contents of the virtual world and, at the same time, on the situation outside and vis-à-vis the virtual world, is impossible.

What is different in the real world:

To play in the real world, the players don't need any devices, no screens, speakers, headphones, microphones, computer mice, keyboards, joysticks, motion sensors. Instead everything in the world comes to them directly, and they are acting directly with their determinations and automatisms.

The perception of the players in the real world has more channels. In addition to the channels to the "external" world, there are those to the internal, that is, bodily and mental worlds. Besides the perception of the external world through the senses, there are inner perceptions of the positions and movements of the body and body parts, of the bodily well-being or pain, and, finally, the perceptions of the mental world: the thoughts, ideas, procedures of thinking, remembrances, the inner images, inner language, feelings, moods, emotions, motives, inhibitions, the purposes, and the will. All this we perceive, it occurs to us in the real world.

A virtual world may be very rich, if it has been developed by a large team with a large budget. Even richer can a virtual world be, if it is conceived in such a way, that all players – possibly millions – are given the possibility to build, within a framework of rules, individual, partial worlds; and if it is furthermore conceived in such a way that every

player can perceive what the other players have built, so that they can copy from them and build on their achievements. Such a world is permanently growing, and that is not different in the real world.

What is different in the real world, is the absence of rules. There is no limit that may not be transgressed or circumvented in exploring a new piece of world – at the risk of failure. And so, billions of people – all mankind – have for millennia contributed to building the real world, and every human has been in the position to choose parts, copy them for building and extending his own world, and thereby in return enrich a little, or advance by a large step, the world available to everybody. As a result, the real world appears to us as downright infinitely rich – a richness for free.

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