

Chapitre 9

Between the living body and the lived body of the video game player

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Introduction

This study seeks for an aesthetic and esthesiological of the player subject body of video games. For this purpose, it is based on emersiological theory suggested by philosopher Bernard Andrieu (2014, 2016), in subjectivation and empathy theory proposed by Serge Tisseron (2013) as well as on theories about virtualization of Pierre Lévy (1995) and Gilles Deleuze (1996).

Emersiology emerges as a new field of philosophy, mainly connected to studies of the body and its aesthetic manifestations of movement, such as dance, among others. It seeks to understand the discontinuity between the so-called “living body” and “lived body”, taking a starting point from the argument of delay of 450 milliseconds (ms) existing between the work of the brain and the nerve transmission to consciousness, the living body's perception capacity. In other words, the lived body is always lagging in face of the living body.

Lived body is the one embodied with senses and meanings, the body constructed socioculturally, which endorses a history, a meaning of conscious and unconscious movement. It would be the motricity, virtuality (in potentiality). The Living body, on

the other hand, can be interpreted as the current body, which performs its driving action at this precise moment. It would be the mobility of current time of its performance and updating (result of potentiality).

It is understood by body esthesiology a science of senses (Merleau-Ponty, 1995), in which it is broadened a positivist view about the “sensation”, in one-dimensional causal stimulus-response relation, becoming sensation and, therefore, esthesiology, as something that embraces the way in which a human being shapes his/her body scheme and intercorporeality as an ontological and existential dimension (Andrieu & Nóbrega, 2016). Thus, emersiology seeks, through esthesiology (by expressing sensations, feelings and corporal experiences), phenomenology and interface of the living and lived body, to overcome philosophical and psychoanalytic and scientific ideas. By creating a new “comprehensive perspective of corporeality which gathers these dimensions in a discontinuity process between the living body and its living experience” (Andrieu & Nóbrega, 2016, p. 372 – our translation).

Towards this scenario, it is possible to understand, yet in a simple view, emersiology as the science that studies the way in which the living body adapts the lived body to action, as immediately as possible, seeking to mask the disparity of time between them. This adaptation is not intentional, it is subconscious and results from pre-driving ecology incorporated in habitus, “guided by sensory schemes elaborated in the course of an experience and which provides this intuitive and spontaneous character to an action gesture” (Andrieu, 2014, p. 7 – our translation). In other words, the living body makes gestures and decisions imperceptibly, for a better adaptation to environmental changes found. The living body feels, suffers, enjoys, even before it becomes aware of the lived body, which is consciousness, demonstrating to be a mode of subjectification.

Comparing to phenomenology of conscious perception, there is a fact that one is not in direct contact with one's own sensations since they are activated in the body without even realizing it. As stated earlier, there is a delay in body awareness, and what is perceived at first, in the phenomenological

narrative, would be “a perceptual deformation of the content that emerges unconsciously from our brain [...]. This filter of consciousness changes the quality and intensity of the first sensation that arises in the body.” (Andrieu, 2014, p. 5 – our translation).

All biological modifications of the living body remain unnoticed until the moment when the consciousness becomes aware of emersive signs, through sensibility. There is the living body, as an organism, connected to the world by the somaesthetic system, in which the ability to use (usability) or affordance releases permanent and self-regulated information, which happens even with the consciousness of the living body asleep, as well as in waking state and the usual automatic gestures of daily life. This kind of conscious without knowledge is at the same time alive in the body (Andrieu, 2014).

1. Subjectivation and empathy in digital worlds

Another element, to which this study is based on, is the psychological / psychoanalytic theory of subjectivation and empathy, embracing here the work *Subjectivation et empathie dans les mondes numériques* headed by psychiatrist Serge Tisseron *et al.* (2013). For the authors of this work, social relations in the digital / virtual worlds associate with the work of transformation and appropriation of personal representations, just as in the physical relations of the present time, meant to be real. In this sense, again the corporal experiences demonstrate to possess the key for the understanding of what happens with the player real body, boosted by the rhythm of the gestures imposed by gameplay (series of actions and experiences provided by video games), imaginary bodies, multiple, embodied by avatars, a body of a previous online meeting, in a recognizable virtual community which the other comprehends, through an empathy process, due to gameplay of the same games amongst the players.

In this scenario, the concept of empathy places the body at the center of experiences, naturally becoming a guiding thread, leading to the concept of subject and consequently highlighting

the importance of intersubjectivity and subjectivation processes. The essence for this understanding is in the way each one appropriates personal experiences, in which virtual spaces appear as an increasingly important place in these processes (Tisseron, 2013). It is worth mentioning that even the imaginary worlds of some video games, with no apparent connection with our daily reality, promote a better encounter with the “real” world by participating in the subjectivation process of the player as a person, in her/his understanding of “being” in the world.

Each person appropriates of events which occur to them, giving these their personal representations, always seeking a better control of their psychic reality and environment, influenced by the culture to which they are immersed, in a process of resistance and modification of the controls institutionalized by society (Verzoni & Lisboa, 2015). Thus, subjectification is a work of creating a self for oneself mediated by others, in which empathy is fundamental.

In opposition to sympathy which presumes a moral affinity and sharing the same emotions, empathy is not an emotional contagion, there is a certain affinity in it, connected to the ability to put yourself in other's place, to comprehend the others' feelings, an altruism. Tisseron (2013) suggests the existence of three levels of empathy, which are named: direct empathy (or empathetic identification); reciprocal empathy; and reciprocal and mutual empathy (or intersubjectivity).

Direct Empathy (Empathetic Identification) is that one which occurs directly between human beings and as well as in certain animals, such as superior monkeys. It can be defined as the ability to change your point of view without losing it. It is composed by two elements: emotional empathy (it consists of imagining what one could experience and partially feel in the other's place); and cognitive empathy (it consists of imagining what the person would think, if you were in the other's place).

Reciprocal Empathy, in its turn, reveals a moral choice and an ability to visualize a representation of the other's inner world, in a mutual recognition. These reciprocal acknowledgments have three complementary components: narcissism (recognizing in others the possibility of self-esteem); the object relationship

(possibility of love and being loved); and belonging to a group (recognizing the other as a subject of right). These three components are based on the categories of Psychoanalysis which the philosopher Honneth (2007) calls “recognition”, understood under three dimensions, i.e. loving, right and solidarity recognition (Tisseron, 2013).

And finally, Reciprocal and Mutual Empathy (Intersubjectivity), which can be understood as the desire to be approved by the other, validated by the eyes of others. Something that can be seen since early childhood, when the baby seeks approval from himself in his mother's eyes. Such empathy follows us for life. Nowadays, new digital technologies arise as a privileged support for expression and performing, that is, for intersubjectivities.

2. The body in video games¹

Three perspectives are proposed here for human body classification in video games. The first perspective is the one, *Subjectified Body*, which a body is elevated to potency in virtual environments, promoting new subjectivations which are updated to his/her real body. This is a notably observable process in the practice of Social Network Games – SNG (Kato & Igarashi, 2016), which can be classified in: *Multiplayer Online Battle Arena - MOBA*; e *Massively Multiplayer Online Game - MMOG*. In these video games, people interact online, and another reality is simulated in virtual environments, usually fanciful and with battle in a figurative field or like today's society, in a perspective of another reality.

The second is about the *Objective Body*, in which the body uses its own equipment and tools for immersion in virtual worlds. One huge current and near future trend in the market are Virtual Reality - VR devices, usually in the shape of glasses attached to *headsets*, providing an increasingly realistic immersion in cyberspace. It is also worth mentioning the

¹ Based on a theory of our publication (Araújo & Freitas, 2018).

Augmented Reality (AR) technology, which consists of a technological interface for interacting with the virtual world which surpasses the player subject archetype or any object to the virtual world or even includes characters and/or virtual objects in imagery of the real world, which they all interact with one another. Specifically, about video games, gestures of players are used for physical / virtual interaction (Henderson & Feiner, 2010), taking a significant evidence *Pokémon Go* game, by Japanese company *Nintendo* in partnership with Niantic, released in June 2016 for android and iOS systems, becoming a huge disseminator and popularizer of RA for a broader audience. This game piques the interest of Physical Education so it promotes an active displacement of players.

The third one, *Digitalized Body*, it consists of a process in which one can analyze the technological evolution of the video games industry, since the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, when the body was represented by a few bits and pixels, proceeding through the digitization of bodies in the 1980s (second half) and first half of the 1990s. The progress and mastery of the use of polygonal graphics in the late 1990s and 2000s, promoted a 3D paradigm, up to current representations, with motion capture, body imagery and speech of actors who compose the characters, together with the graphic creation of high definition, approaching photorealism. Such representation accompanied the evolution of possibilities of interaction of the player's body, as well as gameplay, establishing an increasingly significant interaction and immersion, promoting the constitution of the body culture of movement and also the constitution of the player's body, both subjectively and physically, mainly with the advent of exergames, active video games that use body movement, activity and physical exercises (Araújo *et al.*, 2011).

The elevation of the subject-player's body to potency, in a virtualization process, as well as the updating of this body in the player's intentional movement, in order to interact and overcome the challenges of the game, are immediate and almost simultaneously occur. In fact, the scheme of physical interaction artifacts with the digital worlds, like Microsoft's *Kinect*, is precisely of an experience as close as possible to a

real / current experience. For Lévy (1995), the virtual is not opposed to real, but to the current, and virtualization is understood as an enhancement, a problematization which allows solutions, updates. Real and current would be just two different ways of being in time space, since the virtual tends to update itself at the moment of present time. By following this line of thinking, virtualization, a process of virtual dynamic, can be seen as an inverse movement of updating, an identity mutation, a displacement of the ontological center of the object under consideration, in which instead of being defined mainly by its current features, the being begins to find her/his essential consciousness in her/his problematization. (Lévy, 1995) This concept of complementation and “antithesis / thesis”, of becoming between the current and virtual, was developed by Deleuze (1996) in what he called “plane of immanence”.

To Deleuze, there is a circuit which the current and virtual interchange, in a process that he calls “crystallization”, which makes them practically indistinguishable. It is comprehensible it would be impossible to escape this becoming, what refers to another becoming, what occurs between the living body and the lived body, as according to Andrieu (2016) a body knows itself through expression of the living body in the lived body (emersiological theory base). When the brain of the subject-player, the main entity of body's immersion in the world, thinks of a reaction to a certain action perceived as necessary by the living organism and its somesthetic apparatus in video games, her/his conscious living body addresses the stimulus to activate the movement of the fingers on a joystick or the movement of the muscle groups necessary for a given exergame, this reaction often occurs automatically, in the shape of an automatic gesture, derived from the emersive gesture (a pre-motive reorganization), which from the emotional awareness can happen in a controlled way, in the form of voluntary gesture.

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