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Articles

Discourses and Semantic Tropes of the Philosophical Explication of Video Games

Vaizdo žaidimų filosofinės interpretacijos diskursai ir semantiniai tropai

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Abstract: The article explores one of the most remarkable and dynamic phenomena of modern technoculture – video games. It reconstructs the genesis of the philosophical discourse on video games, exposing the main difficulties arising in making the definitions. Special importance is attached to the critical comparative analysis of the major strategies for the philosophical explication of video games. With the aid of the method of comparative-historical reconstruction and a structuralist approach, the essential correlations between the essential definition of a video game and the ontological systems of Plato, the Gnostics, G. Berkeley, E. Kant, as well as post-modern philosophy was established. The research results in formulating a model-integrative definition of a video game.

Keywords: Video games, Narratologists, Ludologists, Game studies.

Summary: Straipsnyje tiriami vaizdo žaidimai – vieni išskirtiniausių ir dinamiškiausių moderniosios technokultūros fenomenų. Tekste rekonstruojama filosofinio diskurso apie vaizdo žaidimus genezė, atskleidžiamos esminės kliūtys, kylančios beieškant apibrėžimų. Ypatingas dėmesys skiriamas pagrindinėms vaizdo žaidimų filosofinio aiškinimo strategijoms ir jų kritinei lyginamajai analizei. Pasitelkę lyginamosios-istorinės rekonstrukcijos metodą ir struktūralistinę prieigą, nustatome esmines sąsajas tarp vaizdo žaidimo apibrėžimo ir ontologinių Platono, gnostikų, G. Berkeley'io, I. Kanto bei postmoderniosios filosofijos sistemų. Šio tyrimo rezultatas – suformuluotas integratyvųjį modelį atitinkantis vaizdo žaidimo apibrėžimas.

Keywords: Vaizdo žaidimai, Naratologai, Ludologai, Zaidimų tyrimai.

In the early 21st century, video games became a prominent part of mundane culture, having put competitive pressure on cinema in the realm of mass screen culture. Video games in the modern world not only act as carriers of artistic and aesthetic values and historical memory, but also transmit present-day cultural and political ideologemes. At the level of public perception and cultural status assessment, video games are often stereotyped as something entertaining and unserious, therefore they still cause doubt and need legitimisation as an object of philosophical discourse. Yet, it is the philosophical approach that enables one to significantly expand the semantic horizons of understanding video games, exposing new facets of their essential interpretation as a polymorphic and multidimensional phenomenon of modern technoculture.

It is necessary to point out that the USA and some European countries have taken certain steps to legitimise video games as an object of scientific research. Thus, in the early 21st century, there appeared the Center for Computer Games Research (IT-University of Copenhagen, Denmark), the Digital Games Research Center (North Carolina State University, the USA), and the Digital Games Research Association (DIGRA); it was also the time when "Games Studies", the first specialised and most authoritative scientific journal dedicated to a multidisciplinary study of video games, came out.

'Game studies' becomes the name of the wide-ranging line of research in the humanities, specialising in the integrative study of video games. It not only marked the scientific institutionalisation of video games but also confirmed the necessity to work out a special scientific meta-language for their explication (Vetushinsky 2015: 41–60). It is within the framework of game studies that video games gain scientific recognition and their serious analysis in a broad cultural context begins. Given the ever-increasing cultural role and place of video games in modern screen culture and numerous social practices, their integrative philosophical analysis is definitely characterised by scientific relevance and novelty.

The study presented in the article focuses on the variety of philosophical explication discourses and the semantic grammar inherent in the tropes of the ontological definition of video games. The paper aims to reconstruct and carry out a critical analysis of the existing modalities in the philosophical discourse on video games, to reveal the multi-level structure of the attributions of the video game as a complex phenomenon of cyber culture, and to explore the video game in the broad semantic context of historical and philosophical experience in order to formulate its philosophical definition.

Method

The methodological toolkit of the study is conditioned by the complex, essentially nomadic nature of its object, which combines an objective software-technological base and a categorical set of in-game rules on the one hand and the procedural non-predetermination and experience of subjective virtual-game practice on the other.

To the central methods of the research refer the dialectical method, the methods of historical-philosophical, comparative and cultural-contextual analysis, interpretation, abstraction and idealisation, enabling one to fully determine the discourses of the philosophical explication of video games. To trace its genesis, the method of comparative and structural-functional analysis is applied. The method of typologisation and some principles of the structuralist approach are used in considering various modes of the philosophical definition of video games. Finally, the study used methods of phenomenological and hermeneutic reconstruction, as well as the method of fractal analogy, which is part of the synergistic approach.

In general, it is necessary to point out that depending on the analysed discourse of the philosophical explication of video games and particular research objectives the methodological kit is adjusted while the integrity and consistency of the research narrative is preserved.

Results

Before carrying out a comprehensive study of the discourses of the philosophical explication of video games, it is reasonable to focus on clarifying the key concepts of the research. To ensure the validity of the research, it is important to outline the semantic definiteness of the "video game" concept, considering that it does not have a well-established academic status of a cultural-philosophical notion, and a certain contextual freedom of its use and the variety of semantic synonyms blur the boundaries of the definition of the object under analysis.

In modern academic discourse, as well as in everyday communication related to video games, various terms denoting this phenomenon are in use – "computer games", "digital games", "electronic games" etc. Taking into account the phenomenology and characteristic features of the cultural phenomenon in question, its most appropriate designation is "a video game". At the same time, it seems quite acceptable to use the term "a computer game," although this will inevitably require an expanded understanding of the "computer" characteristic as the entire complex of software applications. It is also necessary to point out that in game journalism and everyday discourse the platform distinction between "computer games" launched on personal computers (PCs) and "video games" (or "console games") launched on game consoles connected to external devices outputting the video signal has been commonly made since the late 1990s. Therefore the term "video games" may be perceived as semantically narrow and failing to embrace the whole set of "electronic gaming products". Nevertheless, this terminological choice is quite justified, and its additional argumentation will stem from the logic and content of the definition of a video game further on.

Many of the existing definitions of a video game suggested by Russian researchers are based on the computer-virtual character of

video games, when they are treated as a manifestation of virtual reality (Aslanov 2014: 27–29; Gootman 2009; Kamankina 2016). Therefore any explication of video games inevitably tends to correspond to the idea of virtual reality. The latter has a lot of tropes of definition going back to medieval scholastics and the problem of universals. In the late 21st century, under the influence of the popularisation of digital screen technologies in mass culture, the virtual was philosophically 'rediscovered' by G. Deleuze, who drew upon H. Bergson's intuitions (Massumi 2014). Deleuze defines the virtual strictly ontologically, as "a reality dimension" which simultaneously contains the ability (power) for existence. Virtual reality per se may be defined as "a special space-time continuum created by means of computer graphics and sound effects and fully realised in the individual's psyche" (Bychkov 2007: 369–374). Remarkably, the individual placed in this multimedia computer simulation is in a number of cases capable of subjective activity while interacting with objects of virtual reality, whose key characteristics are "engenderedness", "relevance", "autonomy", and "interactivity" (Nosov 2001). Lastly, such contemporary researchers as R. Diodato, B. Massumi, and P. Montani shaped the discourse of philosophical theories of virtual reality. In particular, considering the relationship between the virtual and the actual, B. Massumi treats the problem of perception from an ontologically different angle, viz. as distinguishing between the modes of reality in the movement of emergence, which results in new forms of experience. The scholar concludes that the virtual entirely depends on creativity, therefore its ideal and universal definitions cannot exist as they have to be reconsidered in each particular case of the emergence of the virtual (Massumi 2014). Diodato (Diodato 2012; Diodato 2014) and Mondani (Montani 2010; Montani 2012) shaped the discourse of aesthetic interpretation of virtual reality as a special interactive sensibility and imagination. This knowledge about virtual reality determines the semantic framework for the philosophical discourse on video games and their complex explication.

Interestingly, most Russian researchers as a rule do not see any problem with defining a video game as a cultural phenomenon, which in this case is rather indicative of unjustified axiomaticity and non-criticality towards it. Yet, the American scholar I. Bogost rightly points out to a number of objective difficulties posed by a comprehensive definition of a video game (Bogost 2015: 79–99). Particularly common in this respect are reductionist tendencies in delineating the understanding of the essence of video games without taking into consideration their polymorphic multidimensionality and unequal multi-level ontological status. On closer scrutiny, however, it becomes obvious that virtual reality on the whole and video games in particular are not merely a product of modern computer technologies, but also a complex phenomenon whose explication goes beyond the language of technological description. Here, resorting to a broader (i.e. humanitarian), philosophically substantiated context of working out the definition is inevitable.

In general, the ontology of video games evokes interest as its explication has many remarkable and seemingly unexpected intersection points with the historical-philosophical discourse. For example, exposing the semantic tropes of the essential discourse on video games will necessitate referring to the ontological systems by Plato, Aristotle, the Gnostics, J.S. Eriugena, G. Berkeley, E. Kant, M. Heidegger, structuralism, and post-modern philosophy. In our view, this philosophical background is absolutely necessary to exceed the scope of stereotypical and technologically centrist definitions of video games and the whole virtual space as existing in the public consciousness.

Thus, there exist a number of conceptual strategies of the ontological definition of video games which at the same time act as the gnoseological modes of their explication. The first is the structural-metaphysical conception, which proposes an extremely generalised, substantially oriented view on a video game as a formal structure. It gave rise to two major authoritative lines of modern research into the ontological definition of video games – narratological and ludological.

The first line of research, which takes its name from the notion of "narrative", implies the treatment of a video game as a variety of text or, using E. Aarset's terminology, 'cyber text' (Aarseth 1997) telling the recipient (i.e. the gamer) a story. According to J.F. Jensen, instrumentally and at the level of narrative forms this story is atypical (Jensen 2005). More specifically, it consists of three rhetorical parts – verbal, visual, and procedural (gameplaying activities) and is characterised by an original and even unique peculiarity: the situation of perceiving and interpreting the video game narrative is simultaneous to the moment of its creation, i.e. playing during a game session. Yet, despite this formal distinction a video game was first of all defined as text. Moreover, in this case the narratological approach to studying video games has a gnoseological aspect to it as it is a manifestation of a certain "understanding mode" and "cognitive perspective" of the projective view of the world on the whole and the structural matrix of its interpretation (Aarseth 2004).

In this case narratologists view video games through the prism of linguistic post-structuralism based on the strong tradition of literary studies and criticism. This obviously results in the reduced understanding of video games as a software-based and visualised on the screen interactive story, or a virtual-immersive text. Correspondingly, the ontology of a video game is constructed via the explication of the narrative concept and exposing the system of narration in general, which are extended to the interpretation of the metaphysics of a video game.

On the other hand, the ludological line of research (from the Lat. "ludus" – "game") rightly claims that first of all far from all video games have the narrative component, or it can be secondary, merely enhancing the immersive effect. Secondly, at the formal level, due to the peculiarities of time flow and interactivity in video gaming practices, a direct conversion of a game into a story is impossible (Juul

2001). Finally, much as the narrative in "adventure" video games is important, it does not determine their essence unlike game playing itself. Without the play component, i.e. a standardised at the level of the program code set of interactive procedural actions of a gamer in virtual reality, the game cannot exist.

Correspondingly, when defining video games, ludologists emphasise the play component (Frasca 1999). Using the basic principles of J. Huizinga's play theory, the researchers define a video game as a set of rules and their procedural realisation through gameplay, i.e. the process of playing (Vetushinsky 2015: 41–60).

Yet, with all due respect to Huizinga's play theory, which can be characterised as cultural-historical, it is unreasonable to indiscriminately apply it to the whole set of gaming phenomena. Most of the features of playing singled out by Huizinga (Huizinga 2016) are rather optional and as a rule they accompany video gaming practices but do not determine their essence. Moreover, the virtual typology of video games uniquely transforms the traditional interpretation of the time-space continuum of a game.

As a result, similar to narratologists, ludologists reduce video games but in this case to the theoretical concept of the game in general. At the same time, the peculiarities of the ontological status of video games proper and of their procedural disclosure and immersive mechanism are completely ignored.

It is noteworthy that analysing the discussion between narratologists and ludologists through the prism of history and philosophy, one can notice its similarity to the dispute between materialists and idealists (Vetushinsky 2015: 41–60) in their attempt to answer "the fundamental question of philosophy". It is clear that narratologists, who are looking for sense and meanings, do it from idealistic perspectives, while ludologists, who emphasise the phenomenological givenness of video games, are obvious materialists. Basically dialectical, their differences form a common semantic continuum of the formalist definition of video games (McManus 2006: 363–372; Frasca 2003). Thus, narratologists are similar to ludologists not only in their reduced interpretation of video games but also in the attempt to derive their ontology from an extremely general, and in many respects speculative system of texts or procedures / rules (Bogost 2015: 79–99).

For all the importance of narratologists' and ludologists' contribution to the formation of the academic discourse of the ontology of video games, both were seriously limited by the aforementioned tendency to formalist reduction. It resulted in excluding from the explication of video games many of their unique characteristics as well as in levelling the specific in order to comply with the formal system.

Awareness of the limitations of both the narratological and ludological understanding of video games led to the creation of another strategy for their ontological definition, which tried combining both approaches. In particular, it was noted that the narrative and procedural elements of a video game are characterised

by different degrees of reality. Accordingly, regardless of the specific video game and the ratio of the narrative and gameplay components in it, "some part of it is always more real than the other" (Bogost 2015: 79–99). This, in turn, raises the question about the nature of these realities and also sets the prerequisites for the emergence of a hierarchy in the ontology of a video game, in which some of its levels of existence are more fundamental (or real) than others. However, this platform, which is largely based on the narratological-ludological tradition, did not produce any serious breakthrough in understanding video games.

Next, the "Copernican coup" in the philosophical discourse about video games takes place, making the subject (the player) the focal point in the definition of a video game, thereby forming a fundamentally new strategy for constructing the ontology of video games. Up to this point, the "segregationist" (in J. Juul's terminology) approach dominated the definition of video games as media procedural-informational structures which are independent of the player. Now the gamer figure emerges as an essential element of a video game actualising its narrative and procedural parts. The game becomes possible in the situation of a "meeting" or active merging between the subject, game rules, and narrative. Moreover, this subject-centric line quickly became predominant. In its extreme form, it exposes the ontological impossibility of a video game beyond the player, identifying it as the gamer's epiphenomenon. In other words, "games exist as long as the players occupy and revive by reaffirming their formal characteristics in accordance with their specific personality characteristics and game contexts" (Bogost 2015: 79–99).

Obviously, this standpoint is fully aligned with the Berkeleian ontology, since here emphasis is laid on the fact that in a video game, actually and phenomenologically, there is only what is directly included into the focus of a gamer's sensory perception, while the rest of the world is held in the game code due to the programmer's will. Further on, the Berkeleian interpretation of the ontology of the game world implies the possibility of Kantian approach to considering the existence of a video game as existing exclusively in the "thing-for-us" aspect, in which it is given to the gamer through a priori structures of cognition.

On the one hand, this subject-oriented focus in the definition of video games made it possible to draw attention to the truly important component of the game – the player, emphasising its importance as an implementer of the whole game practice, giving it genuine existence. On the other hand, there is also a subjective-idealistic reduction of the video game to a "weak-willed shell" which is ontologically completely dependent on the gamer. In this case, the video game turns into an exclusively subjective experience. It is obvious that this approach distorts the angle from which the video game is considered, leaving out or essentially devaluing all its objectively gaming characteristics.

Finally, I. Bogost and N. Montfort suggest a new strategy for explicating the ontology of video games using on a multi-factor digital

media research concept (Montfort 2009). It is based on the ideas of "technological determinism" and "scientific naturalism", which build a dynamic concept-definition from the total of the sets made up by the fundamental parts of an object that are in a non-linear system of coherent relations (Bogost 2015: 79–99).

Thus, at first the researchers pay attention to the technological aspect of the video game, pointing out that the game itself is a "computational artifact", a kind of operational machine code (software), whose launch always requires some hardware – a platform, i.e. the figurative "computer". At the same time, despite the fact that the hardware formally has an instrumental function, just being a technological condition for the realisation of a video game, it also acts as a physical constraint for the program – in particular, by determining the possibilities and limits of its audiovisual manifestation. Consequently, the immanence of a specific electronic video game platform is emphasised, which makes the hardware an indisputable element in the structure of the certainty of a video game existence (Bogost 2015: 79–99).

In turn, the program code of the game in itself has indefinite dynamic substantivity. It is not constant in relation to one and the same game, but varies depending on the platform on which it is played. For instance, two versions of the same game launched on fundamentally different in terms of their architecture game consoles PlayStation 3 and X-box 360 will differ significantly in their code, even though the gameplay, game mechanics, audio-visual, and narrative components may be identical.

Further on Bogost, proceeding from the multi-focus approach to video games, singles out a wide range of quite acceptable modes of their definition. First, a video game can be understood as a specific operational and assembly code, i.e. a variety of software. Secondly, at the physical level, it can be interpreted as a flow of radio frequency modulations arising during the execution of the program. Thirdly, the video game is a certain system of rules and mechanisms corresponding to the given narrative. Finally, a video game is a subjective experience, the player's personal psychological experience of the implemented gameplay (Bogost 2015: 79–99).

Each of these definitions is, in its own way, correct and semantically relevant, but at the same time limited by the local focus of exploring the essence of video games, which in reality always turn out to be something else, going beyond the presumed boundaries. In this situation, it is impossible in principle to derive the ontology of a video game from either one particular definition or an arithmetic sum of such definitions. Therefore Bogost proposes relying on the "flat ontology" by L. Bryant (Bryant 2014), the "irreducibility" theory and the concept of "disorder" by B. Latour (Latour 2014), as well as the concept of "multiple correlations" by H. Harman (Harman 2011) to build a new dynamic model of understanding video games. Video games always exist in a situation of multiple relationships and dependencies between the subject, the platform, the information carrier etc. At the same time, they do not create a hierarchical system,

remaining within the framework of horizontal correlations. It is important to note that none of the possible definitions is prioritised or dominates the others. As a result, Bogost comes to understand the ontology of a video game as a "mess" which is ineradicable at the level of rational articulations of chaos and non-formalisable connectedness of essentially different elements that represent a paradoxical existential unity (Bogost 2015: 79–99).

In general, video games fit in well with the postmodern grammar of explication. It is no coincidence that E.V. Galanina stresses the fact that video games originate from postmodern culture (Galanina 2017). The nature of video games may indeed be defined as a variety of simulacra organised within the framework of a developing and dynamically open rhizome structure.

Obviously, this conceptual basis formed by the principles of postmodern philosophy makes a positive discourse on the absolute ontology of video games problematic since it will invariably fall into numerous local structures that are not adequately reduced to each other and are in non-linear correlation. In many ways, therefore, the idea of "multiplicity of ontologies" (Vetushinsky 2016: 1511–1516; Galanina 2017) of video games, in which there are no claims to building a common, unified ontological model, is being developed.

According to this concept, each concrete video game contains its own ontology – its own physical model with special characteristics of space and time, its own rule- principles of in-game interactions and plot lines, as well as its own telos and inner meaning (Juul 2003). "Virtual worlds exist in accordance with their inherent properties and laws, the logic of the game itself" (Galanina 2017). Simultaneously, the simulacrum nature of the virtual existence of a video game, which is found in a series of permanent formations and variabilities, is stressed, which is conceptually based on the ideas of G. Deleuze and B. Massumi's theory of virtual reality. Thus, we are now dealing with a set of local ontological systems whose explication is actually nothing but a description of the characteristics of a particular in-game virtual world (Vetushinsky 2004: 44–61). This approach is quite adequate for the study of the specifics of concrete video games, yet, it does not appear to be directed at understanding the phenomenon of a video game in its entirety. Here an incorrect substitution of the search for absolute, universal structures and principles of the existence of a video game for the explication of private game architectures occurs. All this absorbs and semantically blurs the initial intention of the philosophical interpretation of the ontology of video games. At the same time, the question arises whether the attempt to determine at least some universal and stable denominators of video games explication is legitimate at all. After all, it is quite possible that it is merely "a metaphysical anachronism", a tribute to the philosophical tradition of the past, which is not quite relevant to the modern-day interpretation of reality (including virtual reality). Yet, as we see it, holding on to this idea and refusing to raise these questions means heuristically limiting the scope of potential strategies for defining and investigating video games from the philosophical and ontological

standpoint. Therefore, pursuing the goal of determining a universal ontology of video games, one should bear in mind that phenomenologically, several existential structures can be identified in any game.

The first is the virtual-immersive world of the game per se, in which all the actual gameplay practices are carried out. And outwardly, from the mundane-phenomenological point of view, it is this world that is a video game in its self-evident givenness.

However, at that very level of external manifestation, we know that the gamer is the subject element of the game. His/her gaming subjectivity is expressed on two levels: first, beyond (before) the game, when he/she acts as the initiator of its start, the force making the virtual space of the game materialise – in this case the person has absolute subjectivity; secondly, within the game itself, where it is the gamer who is the main agent of the gameplay, although here his/her subjectivity may already be partially limited by the in-game rules and the structure of the narrative.

Finally, the third phenomenally given structure of the video game is the hardware platform on which the game is implemented. With all its formal technological instrumentality, it is also absolutely necessary for the execution of the game. Moreover, it is necessary not only for the actual launch of the game, but also as an external interface, a communication tool connecting the gamer with the virtual world of the game. It is the platform that mediates the human being's entering the game and activates the mechanics of his/her in-game activity.

Meanwhile, by comparison with the video game the platform has an external status of being, it is always essentially taken out of the framework of the game and is transcendental to it. The platform, on the one hand, acts as the implicit, transcendental aspect and the Other of the game, but at the same time invariably remains its necessary condition and fundamental being. In this respect, the player has a different, more complex ontological status. It both contains the transcendental in relation to the game, being its subject-volitional, semantic reason, and acts as the immanent essence of the game as its internal actor.

In addition, it is necessary to take into account at least two non-phenomenological causal-essential bases of video games, which are not obtained through the direct experience of gaming, but are the indispensable elements in the structure of the ontological definition of video games. These include, firstly, the actual operational code of the game, "written" in a programming language, and secondly, the figurative game designer (or programmer), who at the program level creates the source code of the game, which contains all the systems of rules, narrative tropes, and possible play practices.

This seemingly non-linear ontological disposition can be quite adequately explicated through a model projection of a number of historical and philosophical concepts. Thus, the designated structural elements – the game world, the gamer, the platform, the program code, and the game designer – can be represented in the form of philosophical categories inherent in the ancient intellectual tradition,

such as phenomenal being, the locomotive god, demiurge, logos, form, and matter.

The world of the game per se is something that, albeit virtually, exists and is immediately manifested, and thus can be identified with what exists phenomenally. The player in this model acts as a kind of deity, whose arrival and actions activate and concretise the whole game world, and secondly, determine the in-game time, which, as a rule, is conditioned by the gamer's volitional acts. Simultaneously, the player acts as the subject of explication of the logos as an in-game necessity that accommodates game rules, ultimate goals and meanings (Vetushinsky 2016: 1511–1516). One should bear in mind that the gamer essentially does not create the game world, but only makes it virtually real, realising the potential written by the programmer into the operational code of the game. Accordingly, the game designer in this situation turns out to be the demiurge, a fundamental gaming subject akin to Plato's demiurge, for instance. He perceives the idea of the game through the programming language which acts here as a kind of "informational matter" creating a digital matrix of the "game body". However, after creating the game, the programmer, in the manner of the primary deity of the Gnostics, "leaves" the game as a potential awaiting the arrival of a "younger deity" – the player. The platform plays the role of a modulating shift-shaper that converts the "informational matter" to virtual phenomena.

All this generates several frames of existence of a video game, partly comparable to the structure of the universe in Eriugena's ontology, where four levels of nature can be distinguished: "uncreated and creating" – the programmer, programming language and partly gamer, "created and creating" – the game world, "created and non-creating" – the operational code, "uncreated and non-creating " – the platform.

At the same time, it is necessary to point out that this projection of antique and mediaeval philosophical concepts does not lay claim to being the final answer to the question about the video games ontology. It rather aims to demonstrate the existence of other tropes of video games explication, which differ from those established in contemporary games studies and which rest on classical philosophical and metaphysical constructions. Moreover, the aforementioned levels do not form a clear-cut hierarchy, which explains why in determining the existential nucleus of video games one cannot stay within the bounds of the classical philosophical paradigm. They are rather present in the form of nomadic modes of existence of the video game, which is already a clear reference to postmodern discourse. In this sense, we do not deny the legitimacy of the postmodern model of defining video games; instead, we want to point out the possibility of its reconciliation with the classical model. These strategies for video games explication may complement one another, adding a new dimension to their philosophical interpretation as a multi-faceted screen-virtual practice, which is in dialogue with a number of semantic layers of culture.

Conclusion

The presented study exposed a variety of discourses of the philosophical explication of video games, in which they are defined as interactive cyber text, a virtual gaming practice, a subjective gaming experience, a program code etc. At the same time, the relevance of all these semantic certainty tropes of the historical-philosophical tradition from ancient classics to postmodernism is revealed. Summarising the above, it is possible to delineate the semantic certainty of video games, which, however, due to their dynamic development, will be objectively incomplete and require further investigation. The understanding of the video game presented in the article is conceptually based on the ludological strategy, but at the same time takes into account the technological innovation and semantic polymorphism of this gaming practice, which is currently at a stage of formation and cultural constitution. Therefore, in the most general sense, a video game can be defined as a virtual-interactive and immersive-multimedia practice carried out within the framework of a program system of rules and meanings. This is a strictly frame-model definition which requires further clarification and disclosure in the context of a multidimensional, cultural and practical consideration of video games.

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