Chapter 1
Transformation and Development of Identity and Society With Virtual Learning

Andrew G. Stricker

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4184-0554

The Air University, USA

Cynthia Calongne
*Colorado Technical University, USA*

ABSTRACT

The transformation of human experiences with virtual learning enables unprecedented forms of communication, connection, interaction, and mobility supporting new forms of selfhood and society. The ways people perceive, think, and interact across virtual and physical spaces are fundamentally changing the mind, identity, social interactions, intellectual boundaries, and ways of knowing and learning in society. This chapter introduces and explores philosophical claims for helping to interpret and shape the transformation and development of identity and society with virtual learning.

PERSPECTIVES OF THE GOODNESS FOR USING VIRTUAL LEARNING TO TRANSFORM THE SELF AND SOCIETY

Increasingly, people are very likely to spend each day spanning across physical and virtual spaces via electronic devices augmenting the human mind through means to digitally interact, communicate, and learn. The making and shaping of interconnected physical and virtual spaces in daily life introduces prospects for asserting the authority of goodness for transforming the self and society. One transformational perspective is to take Plato's metaphysical beliefs and assert the image of the Good with prospects ahead for shaping the interconnection for improving lucidity, diminishingly self-centered attention, and capacity for human growth. Though this perspective is not necessarily theistic, is does suggest the importance of moral, spiritual, or metaphysical beliefs for shaping the interconnection and developmental impact on a

Figure 1. Scene of public well in virtual 3D Pompeii
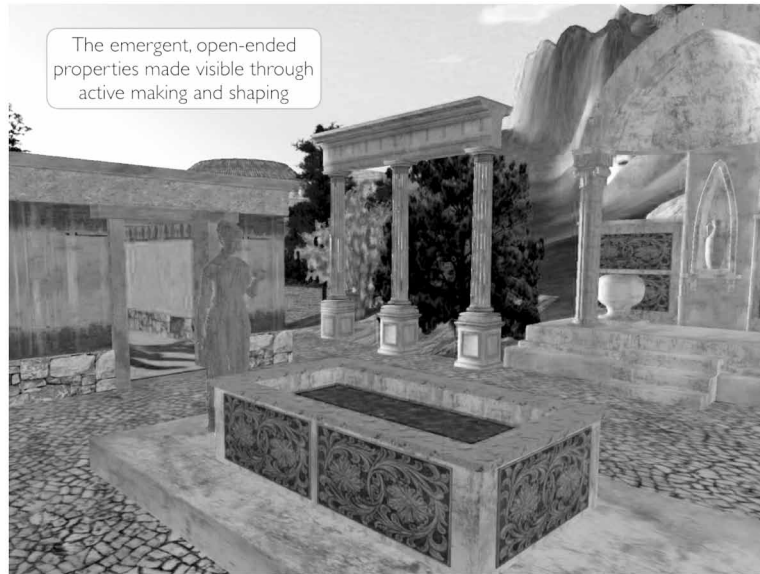
person's identity across physical and virtual spaces. This perspective, of course, would imply a person-shaping good external to human experience.

Another transformational perspective is centered on Descartes and Locke whereby the claim is made that the reality of the interconnectedness of physical and virtual spaces is simply what people make or project onto it as a matter of science. This so-called Anglo-American analytical philosophical claim brings with it a form of pragmatism for thinking about shaping the interconnection but also introduces anthropocentric humanism. Given these two polar claims, there is yet a third claim introduced by Heidegger. Under Heidegger's claim, the nature of the world (in whatever form it takes across physical and virtual spaces) becomes. In essence, the nature of becoming involves properties of shaping and revealing. There is an essence to the reality of human experiences. This essence is what Heidegger describes as the space of meaning. This space spans all spaces. Under this claim, within the space of meaning there are emergent properties not entirely subject to human will but becomes increasingly visible through human activities.

The space of meaning makes a claim on people through intrinsic worth. With this philosophical claim there is the introduction of a teleological perspective whereby a position is taken that there is an underlying purpose in nature, with its emergent, open-ended properties, made increasingly visible to people through active making and shaping. The adoption of this claim by educators would bring awareness that while people can make and shape the future of virtual learning environments, spanning physical and virtual spaces, there is sobering acknowledgement nature makes demands too. Heidegger described the role of people in the space of meaning as "shepherd of Being." This perspective introduces a sense of stewardship for the means to flourish in the world. Conversely, this claim also suggests poor stewardship would lead to diminished or disastrous prospects for people. The interpretation of this stewardship role takes place through discourse, stories, and other ecological- cultural sharing and passing on within and across generations.

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