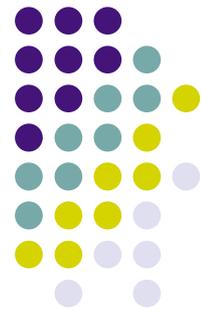# Computer Games and Reality: Transworld Identities

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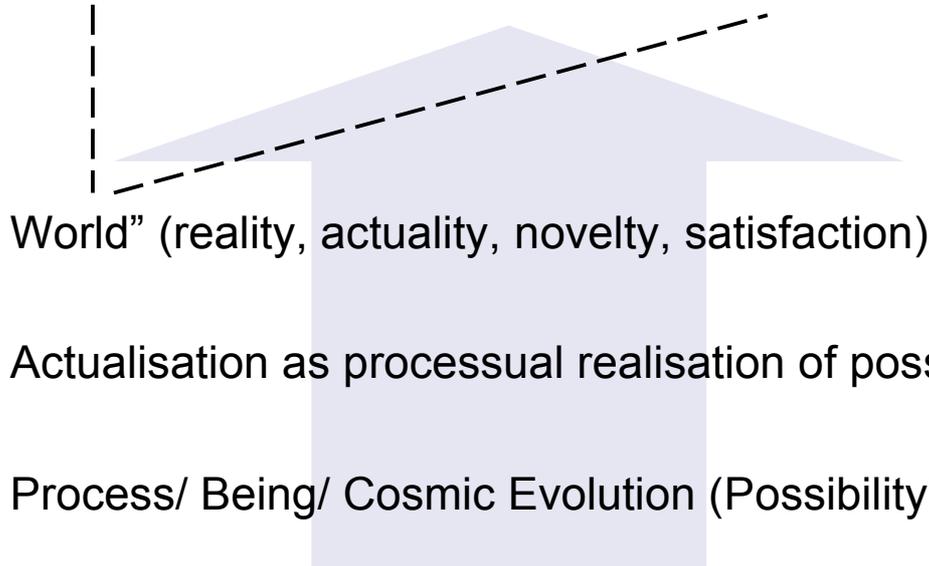
Reality: a continuous, autonomous, creative process

- C.S. Peirce: "[…] we may define the real as that whose characters are independent of what anybody may think them to be."

- "Synechism, even in its less stalwart forms, can never abide dualism, properly so called. […] In particular, the synechist will not admit that physical and psychical phenomena are entirely distinct, – whether as belonging to different categories of substance, or as entirely separate sides of one shield, – but will insist that all phenomena are of one character, though some are more mental and spontaneous, others more material and regular. […]"

Reality: continuous, autonomous, creative process

- A.N. Whitehead: "Cognition is the emergence, into some measure of individualised reality, of the general substratum of activity, poising before itself possibility, actuality and purpose."

- "The principle that I am adopting is that consciousness presupposes experience, and not experience consciousness. It is a special element in the subjective forms of some feelings. Thus an actual entity may, or may not be conscious of some part of its experience."

Actuality and Possibility

Past   Present   Future

"Subjectivity/
Feeling"

"Actuality" (general and particular here and now)

"Actual Occasion"

Concrescence

"Boundless Abstract Possibility" (Eternal Objects)

Continuum of Being & Becoming

Relationality of Self, Other and Being

Self (Subjectivity/ Feeling) — — — — — Other(ness)

World" (reality, actuality, novelty, satisfaction)

Actualisation as processual realisation of possibility

Process/ Being/ Cosmic Evolution (Possibility)

Ground and emergent value

- Peirce:
  - A sign is something that "stands to somebody for something, in some respect or capacity" (CP 2.228)
  - Ground: "some respect or capacity", "pure abstraction", a specific "quality or general attribute" (ibidem)
  - Ground as potential (cultural) value…
  - "Ultimate Source": unlimited semiosis & continuity

Hjelmslev and Peirce (Eco)

Content substance
Content form

Continuum/ Being

Expression form
Expression substance
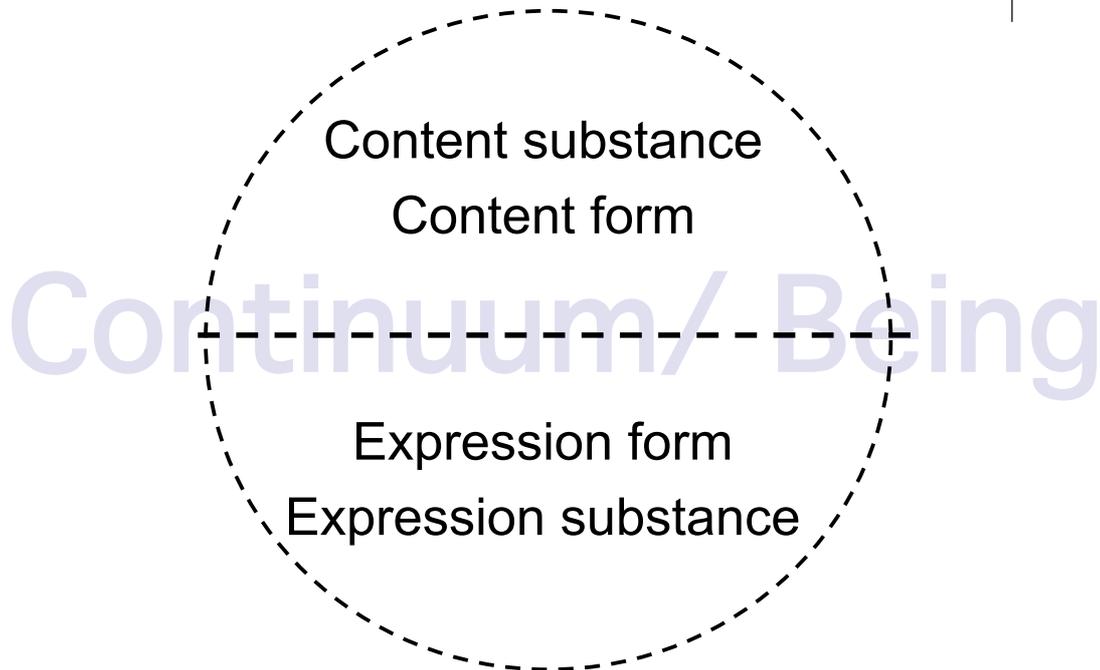
Semiotics and the Real

- Eco: "Kant and the Platypus"
  - Aristotle: "Being is/ may be spoken/ said/ speaks itself in many ways"
  - "Lines of resistance in Being"
  - However, we must "take" Being/ the Real World as a cultural (cognitive, emotional, sensory etc.) construct, since we cannot really "know it" in any other way
  - Our meanings and actions "emerge" throught our myriad cultural practices

Semiotics and the Real

- Eco: "Semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken to be a sign"
- "A sign is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else."
- "Semiotics is […] the discipline that studies everything that can be used in order to lie."
- Ideological discourses tend to "narcotize" certain aspects of reality, and "blow up" others at the expense of a wider, more "truthful", view of things.
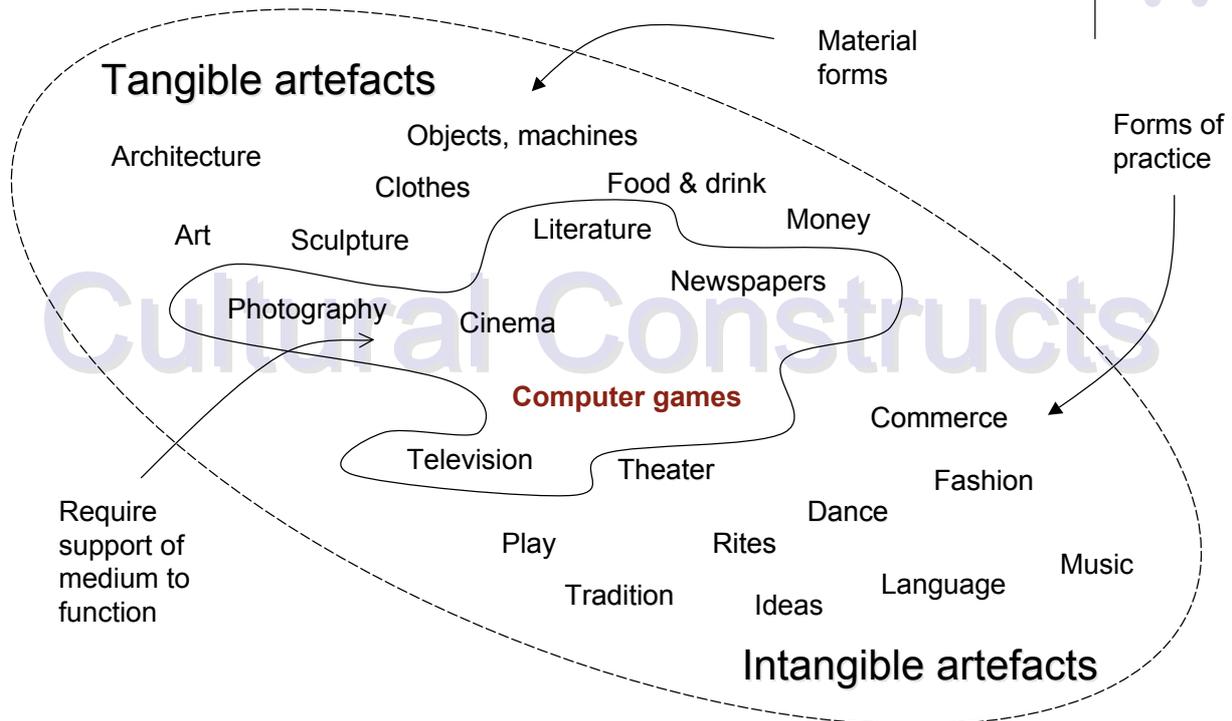
Reality

- Peirce: The Real as "that Object for which truth stands"
- But what is truth and what is fiction?
  - G. Bush/ D. Rumsfield:
    - 1. "Saddam Hussein must be 'taken out' because he is producing weapons of mass destruction"
    - 2 [But we note, up to now, no WMD's have been found…]
    - 3. "Well, in any case it was a good idea to get rid of Saddam because he was an evil dictator"
    - 4. "GAME OVER" 30 December 2006

Active Chemical Munitions Bunkers

Munitions Bunkers

Culture, constructs, artefacts

Tangible artefacts

Material forms

Architecture

Objects, machines

Clothes   Food & drink

Art   Sculpture   Literature   Money

Photography   Cinema   Newspapers

Cultural Constructs

Computer games

Commerce

Television   Theater

Fashion

Require support of medium to function

Play   Rites   Dance

Tradition   Ideas   Language   Music

Forms of practice

Intangible artefacts

Games and Fiction

- The culturally constructed "reality", and the "symbolic efficacy", of games (and play) depends on our (emergent) ability to "make-believe" - to create, narrate and relate meaningfully to, fictional possible worlds
- This requires "bracketing", suspension of belief, cooperative good will (c.f. Husserl, Eco)
- Or … successful "management" of the transposition and play of meanings and actions between actuality and possibility

Interaction, inference and interpretation of texts

- Eco: "Six Walks in the Fictional Woods"
  - Inference and interpretation permit construction of relevant/ meaningful "walks" through "lazy" narrative texts
  - Plot - deployment of characters, events in time and space
  - Fabula - a succession of textual states
  - Possible worlds and subworlds emerge and come into play as an effect of the interaction between reader, plot and fabula
  - The actual world can also be seen as a "narrative possible world", of which we are both readers and authors

Fictional possible worlds

- Eco:
  - "Small worlds", "furnished" with actors and objects with certain "properties"
  - "… alternative ways things might have been, not descriptions of these ways."
  - "… states of affairs … described in terms of the same language as their narrative object
  - "Finite, enclosed", "handicapped", "parasitic on the real world", must be "taken on trust"

Possible fictional worlds

- Are translatable into "world matrices" that …
  - "provide the possibility of comparing different states of affairs under a certain description" and
  - "making clear whether they can be mutually accessible or not and in which way they differ."

Possible and impossible worlds

- "We explore the plurality of *possibility* to find a suitable model for *realia*"
  - The Actual/ Reference world as we experience it is also a cultural construct, and thus a possible world
  - Fictional worlds (of texts), and subworlds (of their characters) activate
  - Doxastic worlds & subworlds (of desires, hopes, beliefs etc. on the part of empirical readers)
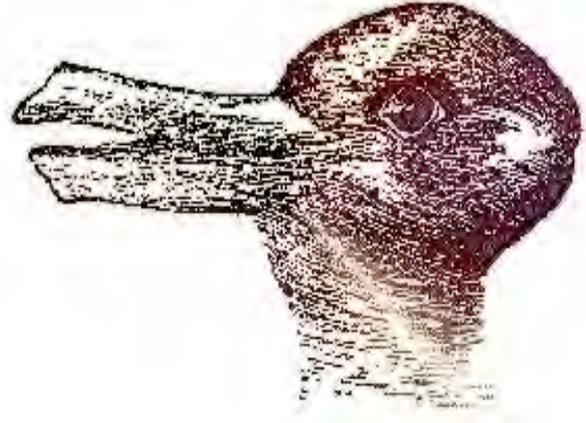
Impossible worlds

- Possible worlds are cultural constructs, but not all cultural constructs are possible worlds"
  - Self-voiding texts and self-disclosing metafiction (Dolezel)
  - Impossible figures: (Penrose, Reutersvard)
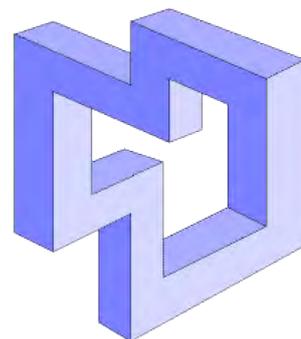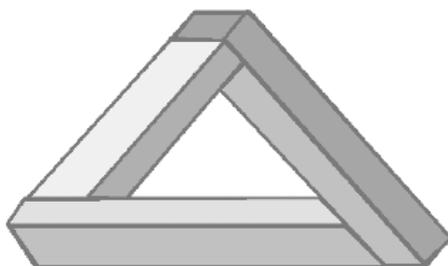
Seeing, believing and context

- Wittgenstein:
  - "Forms of life", "Language games": meaning as "use"
  - "Seeing as", "Believing that"
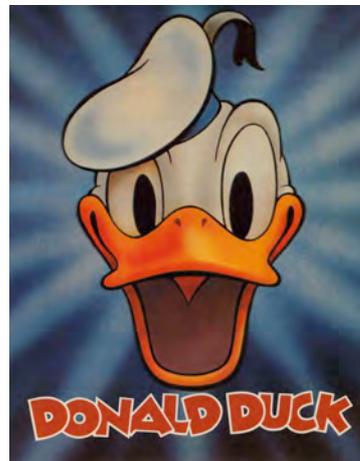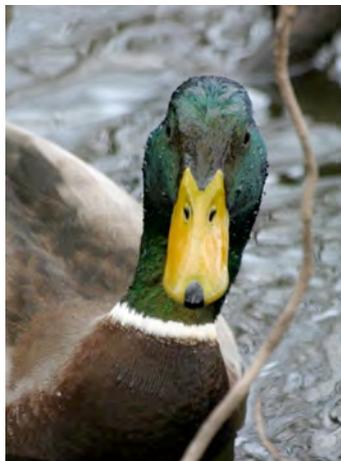

Transworld Identity

- The problem of transworld identity:
  - How to single out what "persists" over the course of different states of affairs in, and between, different possible worlds?
  - Shared textually essential properties (s-properties) are a condition for determining the potential for mutual *accessibility* between possible worlds.
  - Fictional necessity differs from logical necessity. Fictional necessity is an *individuation principle*.
  - There is the question of possible coherence and interpretability with respect to our experience of the actual world, which is also a possible world in becoming

Negotiating between Actuality and Possibility?

- Turner, Fauconnier: Conceptual Blending (in Parable):
  - To accept the actantial role of a talking duck in a parable, cartoon, game or other fictional narrative world requires the ability to see the significance and coherence (within the possible world and subworlds offered by the given narrative framework) of specific blends of semantic and pragmatic meanings between (at least) two experiential (or conceptual) spaces or fields, as a basis for the establishment of some degree of transworld identity.
  - Transworld identity emerges in the process of transposition and negotiation of forms of meaning (and action) back and forth between the realms of actuality and possibility.

Blending of actual and possible worlds

Colombine Game "Artist's Statement"

- Somewhere between April 20th, 1999 and September 11th, 2001, America entered into **a new, terrifying, and desperate era**. Citizens can no longer afford to believe the necessary illusions of modern society. In an age when hastily-formed scapegoats and false dichotomies of "good" and "evil" run rampant, SCMRPG dares us into a realm of grey morality with nuanced perspectives of suffering, vengeance, horror, and reflection. In the words of Harris' friend Brooks Brown, there are **no easy answers** to such a socially indicting tragedy.

Colombine Game "Artist's Statement"

- As humanity teeters precariously on the threshold of collapse⚡politically, ideologically, and environmentally, the days of comatose media coverage and a subservient populace cannot remain. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, through their furious words and malevolent actions, can be understood as **the canaries in the mine** foretelling of an **apocalypse soon** for those remaining to ponder their deeds. With Super Columbine Massacre RPG!, I present to you one of the darkest days in modern history and ask, **Are we willing to look in the mirror?**
- **Danny Ledonne, "Columbin"**