

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The purpose of metaphysics: Apology of excess

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Abstract

This article consistently elaborates the extra-contextual nature of metaphysical knowledge. Metaphysics is seen as a semantic construction of culture that produces a certain type of thinking, memory, and identification: that is, subjectivity, and sociality as an ethical and axiological model of interaction with the world and the Other. The paper argues that metaphysics is a kind of orientation in space and that culture is a semiotic way of world orientation, or collection of spaces into an intelligible structure, a specific characteristic of human existence in the universe. Indeed, metaphysics through the space of culture allows one to experience the universe empirically as unity, to assume the presence of meaning. Based on the analysis, the paper summarizes the definition of the phenomenon of culture as a specifically human way of mastering space and controlling time, consciousness as a topology of reflective practices, and virtual reality technology as a space of pure metaphysics.

KEYWORDS

boundary, immersive reality, metaphysics, space, technology, virtual reality

What is metaphysics? What is its purpose and usefulness? In current humanitarian discourse, the term “metaphysics” provokes heated discussions, often with an emotional connotation: “The question of the need and usefulness of metaphysics as a field of knowledge focused on extremely general concepts and fundamental thoughts remains open most of the time. There have been eras, including our own, when metaphysics has evoked a real aversion among the intellectual elite” (see Lazarev 2022).

Perhaps metaphysics is an archaic product of our collective consciousness, the relevance of which is highly debatable in today's context. Indeed, there is a significant challenge in

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legitimizing metaphysics as the most fundamental metanarrative of our mentality, especially in the age of advanced technologies, robotics, and AI, when the world of human existence is rapidly evolving and making it difficult to predict the stable foundations of such transformations. So, what is metaphysics, what is its purpose in general, and what is its significance in the particular context of our time? Is it justified to claim that metaphysics serves as an a priori method for systematizing ideas about the external world? Does the issue of unity correlate with the problematic field of metaphysical knowledge at all? Cultural artifacts are invariably concrete, while metaphysical theories are inherently abstract. It is indeed true that “[t]he highly abstract and speculative nature of rationalist metaphysics made it a natural target for the criticisms of empiricist thinkers” (Loux 2006, 5). So, what precisely constitutes the subject of metaphysics? The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* suggests the potential absence of unity within metaphysics. Previously provided definitions of metaphysics no longer suffice, and questions regarding its foundation and purpose demand more precise elucidation.

Our aim here is to emphasize the necessity of metaphysical tools in the analysis of processes and phenomena at any level of complexity, as well as to justify the understanding of metaphysics as a systemic principle of organizing the worldview of people from different historical epochs and various cultural contexts.

1 | THE METAPHYSICAL ABILITY OF “STEREOSCOPIC VISION”

Metaphysics is a means of uncovering universal knowledge about the world, yet its content is shaped by specific cultural influences. Ancient Greek metaphysics, in line with rational and conceptual thinking in general, emerged within a democratic system. In this context, principles and postulates of worldview were open to discussion and debate, giving rise to the categories of ancient metaphysics. The primary objective of these discussions was to reflect the practices of social and cultural life within a broader cosmological framework. In a certain sense, a democratic social structure characterized by citizen freedoms enabled the ability to choose and alter starting points for perception and analysis of objects, fostering competition among principles and orientations of interpretive practices. Hence, the primary insight of ancient metaphysics lies in the question of transcendence, or the reasoned process of moving from the actual state of things to the realm of duty or desire, from the concrete to the abstract. Indeed, the issue of transcendence not only implies a hierarchical structure in the world but also shapes the direction of meaningful goal setting in human life. In other words, within ancient culture, metaphysics serves as a means of reconciling the human and the divine, the earthly and the sacred, the transient and the eternal. Consequently, the definition of metaphysics is twofold: it serves both as the study of the first causes of being and as an argument for the unity and stability of the universe as a whole, as well as the essence (substance) of individual things.

Through the concept of transcendence, metaphysics simultaneously merges the general and the specific (Loux 2006). Considering this, we can describe culture as a uniquely human capacity for perceiving essence, which is actualized through *paideia* (socialization and education). Perceiving essence in this context signifies a stable core of meaning within a phenomenon, contrasting with the kaleidoscope of various perspectives and assessments. It is the field of culture that serves the function of semiotic marking for a multitude of objects in reality. For example, traffic rules regulate the flow of traffic, and the awareness of these rules by each participant in traffic makes the subsequent dynamics of the involved actors predictable and foreseeable. Similarly, metaphysical theories of a specific historical era or a particular cultural field determine the way an object is localized, interpreted, and evaluated. Continuing this analogy, experienced drivers are unlikely to recall all the rules of the road; at a certain point, formalized knowledge transforms into almost intuitive abilities to make the right decisions in unfamiliar

circumstances. In the terminology of Hubert Dreyfus, such a tuned-in mode of perception, or “intuitive expertise,” is called the “Gestalt”: “Competent performance is rational; proficiency is transitional; experts act irrationally” (Dreyfus 1988, 36). Such “a ‘holistic’ understanding of it, for which the part is to be viewed as part of a whole, operating as a background—[is] an idea with which standard AI research didn’t seem to be familiar” (Maggini 2013, 5). In other words, intuition of the whole does not dissolve into a multitude of individual components and variations of activity; it is grounded in our communicative abilities shaped within a specific semiotic cultural field and is a metaphysical capacity of human cognition.

The human capacity for learning is truly remarkable and often appears almost supernatural. While many people may be impressed by the achievements of AI, it’s important to recognize that the human ability to learn and understand the world is even more profound: “Neural networks, for example, typically require at least 5,000 samples per class for a standard classification problem to get near human-level performance on a task, which is far from achieving parity with even basic human comprehension” (Lieberman 2021). And young children may easily find a difference between species of animals after being shown a few images, contrary to AI. The causes of this phenomenon may be called “transcendent abilities (creativity, imagination, insight, etc.)” (Pauleen, Rooney, and Intezari 2017). All of this represents freedom in the amalgamation of ideas and the conception of a whole, along with the potential for acceptance or rejection by society (a competition of various opinions and discourses). That’s why discussions in society are so vital, not only as an expression of the freedom of will as a democratic value but also as the starting point for reflection, a form of “stereoscopic vision,” and the dialogic or dialectic structure of our thoughts. The fundamental metaphysical principles of this dialectic phenomenon can be aptly explained through spatial allegories and intuitions.

2 | SPACE AND TIME AS THE FOUNDATIONAL METAPHYSICAL INTUITION

The fact that the term “metaphysics” appears in a particular local context does not mean that its application is limited to that context. On the contrary, metaphysics deals with knowledge at the highest level of abstraction. The establishment and recognition of boundaries constitute a fundamental epistemological procedure, enabling us to distinguish among various things and phenomena. Differentiation, which involves defining the essence of a phenomenon through the identification of its ontological boundaries, represents a rejection of mythological isomorphism on one hand and marks the commencement of philosophical reflection on the other. The Sophists convincingly demonstrated the arbitrariness of opinions, while metaphysics argues for the substantiality of essence. In essence, metaphysics asserts that individuals possess the capability to transcend the confines of a given context to access essential meaning. Consequently, existence is a state that goes beyond itself. Metaphysics aims to uncover the underlying logic governing these occurrences. It’s not hard to observe that all these terms—metaphysics, transcendence, existence—fundamentally presuppose a form of spatial intuition.

The problem of space, its orientation, and marking within it is a recurring theme in philosophical discussions. The content of this category has evolved from being abstract, amorphous, and of background significance, as a necessary precondition of existence (Johansson 2020), to space as a somewhat organized and meaningful construction of the world, such as the “Heidegger-inspired world-disclosure argument” (Maggini 2013, 22), or the necessity of localizing Being as presence (Calvi Rollino 2022), or the primary intuition inherent in the very sense of the world itself (Malpas 2006). Space is “a crucial point, since the space that is opened up through one’s being able to connect regions and directions in that space with one’s own bodily orientation is not subjective, but objective—as it must be if action and perception is to be effective in our engagement with things,” even at a higher

theoretical level (Malpas 2006, 17). “[E]ven supposedly ‘theoretical’ engagement, of the sort involved in contemplation or deliberation must be ‘spatialized’ in a similar way—even theory requires its own location and orientation” (17). In other words, the spatial orientation abilities instilled during the initial stages of human socialization and enculturation establish a coordinate system for focusing on objects of observation, their perception, and analysis. According to this perspective, the focal point of world perception is grounded in a specific spatial metaphor, which varies with each era (the intuition of the circle in ancient Greece, the cross in medieval Europe, the Cartesian coordinate system during the Enlightenment, and the surface in contemporary times). These spatial coordinates are complemented by overarching worldview principles. So, Foucault (1972) introduces the term “Heterotopia” to denote the deterministic influence of context on the perception of objects, while Derrida proposes the intellectual procedure of “différance” as a “switching of focus” in cognition or the aspiration toward an imaginary (spatial) multiple localization of different manifestations of an object (like the frames in a video, for example).

Let's summarize these types of logical correlations. Metaphysics is a term, science, or form of knowledge that supposes and aims to describe existence as a unity of its space/time and meaning coordinates/contradictions. In this context, transcendence refers to a tool or ability of intelligence to analyze a plurality of concrete phenomena through the prism of essential unity or the meaning of abstract speculations. As a tool, transcendence comes into play by bridging the gap between a concrete object and an abstract concept or by making a qualitative leap from the plurality of perception to the unity of essence (attributive or necessary meaning). As an intellectual ability, transcendence implies the presence of “background knowledge” acquired through the processes of learning, socialization, and enculturation. This is why the human mind always has reasons for accurately distinguishing among classes of objects, while AI does not.

3 | PLURALITY OF METAPHYSICAL KNOWLEDGE AS INTERNAL CRITICAL PATTERN

Since the mid-twentieth century, metaphysics has endured a tumultuous period of relentless criticism (Fisher 2017). The absence of axioms makes criticism an inherent feature of metaphysics as well. This represents a sort of “typical pattern” (De Vriese 2008), a cyclical or circular connection between premises and conclusions. The inclination to relinquish the metaphysical justification of truth has led to the development of deflationary models of cognition, which are dubious in their intentions and effectiveness due to the proliferation of knowledge without commensurate quantification (Steinberg 2020). Like a fragile compromise, the specific adaptation of metaphysics to the modern world tends to interpret it as a metanarrative—a grand narrative concerning truth, essence, identity, freedom, and so forth (Heller 2004). Postmodern criticism of metaphysics elevates the social techniques of determining universal categories to an absolute level. Consequently, the semantic construction of modern culture assumes the form of the “metaphysics of absence” or an impersonal ontology, akin to how it functions in the methodology of “hard-core science.”

In the first half of the twentieth century, the primary objective of analytic metaphysics was to formulate and defend realism against highly speculative abstractions. The most compelling argument in favor of the existence of the external world and our accurate perception of it is the simple fact that humanity continues to thrive (Popper 1972). Advocates of naturalistic concepts argue that only theories with observable consequences are true (McLeod and Parsons 2013). Perhaps this is why critical theory strives for a metaphysically neutral approach to methodology; in other words, it seeks effective techniques of knowledge without broad abstractions (Reeves 2016).

But is a reverse step possible? From abstraction to concreteness? How does abstract knowledge relate to concrete actions? The essence of this connection is shaped and structured by corresponding abilities and exercises, which reflect the implicit metaphysics of the mind and knowledge (Frost 2019). Consequently, any practical knowledge is inherently metaphysically motivated. The postmodern era, characterized by the “great synthesis,” unsurprisingly generates arguments in favor of amalgamating natural sciences with metaphysics and theology (Thomas 2009). The justification for such a combination lies in the hierarchy of genus-species entities, the critical analysis of which contributed to the development of the philosophy of science. Consequently, it is not surprising that criticism of metaphysics is often accompanied by calls for the reformulation of its methodology, specifically advocating the transformation of the intellectual tradition into an empirical one, thereby giving rise to a new form of metaphysics (Hindess 2014). As is well known, Strawson proposes distinguishing between descriptive and revisionary metaphysics: “Descriptive metaphysics aims to describe our metaphysical commitments. Revisionary metaphysics aims to revise them by replacing them with a better set of commitments” (Strawson 1992, 19–20). He convincingly argues that not only contemporary philosophers but also experts in empirical cognitive sciences actively employ the metaphysical method in their research, often without explicitly acknowledging its presence or recognizing it as such (Cacchione and Rakoczy 2017). By the way, Strawson also regards the spatiotemporal localization of individual objects as the starting point for abstract thinking and cognition, and their mutual correlation (what I refer to as “marked semiotic space”) shapes the architecture of one's worldview (Das 2020).

Idealists believed that everything in the mind should have a mental or intelligent nature, should be available for understanding in some way; in other cases it couldn't be perceived and accepted by us (Van Inwagen 1993). At the same time, the analytical split of modern philosophy develops the meditative functions of metaphysics, which explains the connection between naturalistic theories and the ethics of human society (Meijer 2018). The nature and essence of this connection is far from an unequivocal definition, but its presence forms a clear perspective of important philosophical explorations for the world community. The division of analytical metaphysics into naturalistic and non-naturalistic is carried out according to the obviousness and persuasiveness of the consequences of its ontological statements and the nature of the correlation with the scientific methodology of knowledge (Maclaurin and Dyke 2012). Hence, naturalistic metaphysics serves as an intellectual endeavor, its value endorsed by society, and it offers practical applications. Conversely, non-naturalistic metaphysics aims to enhance theories by improving their clarity, precision, coherence, and persuasiveness. In some instances, descriptive (or naturalistic) metaphysics may be deemed an illusion of universal knowledge (D'Oro 2013). Such claims, however, would be an exaggeration. The boundaries of the universe delineate the space of existence, while the boundaries of culture define the space that is accessible for human perception and understanding of reality.

Describing metaphysical knowledge as monolithic is challenging; quite the opposite—metaphysics as a philosophical discipline presents a plethora of meaningful theories and valuable ideas. The pluralism of metaphysical theories is frequently criticized as an indication of pseudo-realism, unprovability, and the fallibility of its propositions. This diversity can be understood as a complex of discourses that are functionally or heuristically equivalent (Allen 2018), each of which holds ample potential for comprehending the world as a whole and its individual phenomena. If ancient Greek metaphysics was a “stereoscopic vision” of an object from different points of perception/opinion, then modern metaphysics makes it possible to stereoscopically see the dynamic essence of an object from different spaces/grounds of cultural contexts.

4 | METAPHYSICS AS THE ART OF SETTING BOUNDARIES

Metaphysics, as an exceptionally abstract means of understanding the world, serves as the battleground for philosophical conflicts between speculative realism, which aims to impartially comprehend the world, and phenomenology, which confines knowledge to the realm of subjectivity (Girardi 2017). The challenge of conceptualizing phenomenal quantities stems from the metaphysical categorical pair of quantity and quality, as well as the inability to provide demonstrative ideas about certain of our phenomenal sensations (Lam 2019). Hence, bridging the divide between the phenomenal and the physical world necessitates a metaphysical approach. While Heidegger suggested transcending metaphysics or the necessity for its authentic evolution, he effectively gave rise to the articulation of negative metaphysics (Alweiss 2007), when universals are not absolute, not identical across different cultural contexts, but on the contrary the uniqueness of the semiotic context (the spatiotemporal locality of a particular culture) becomes the basis for the “maturation,” development, and elucidation of universal principles. So, “[a]s a result of the existential direction of non-classical philosophy, the ethical-aesthetic ontology of personalism constitutes the structural core of non-classical metaphysics” (Ihnat'yev 2012). In other words, contemporary metaphysical theories involve a reinterpretation of the meanings of universal and original concepts, the general and the particular, and a shift in research focus toward diversity.

In modern discourse, “universal” denotes an effective connection between knowledge and practice, the reproducibility of which establishes the essential foundation for technological applications and production. Nevertheless, the distinction between pure science and metaphysical understanding can be exemplified using the following powerful metaphor: “You could say that scientists are striving for a super-high-resolution photograph of the world. Instead of a photographer, our metaphysician would be something like the Impressionists” (Bryant 2017).

This metaphor brings to the forefront the concepts of context and boundaries as procedures for organizing time and space, introducing order, defining the focus of perception, and evaluation. So, metaphysics, as a method of cognition, is an operation that deals with a boundary or a limit. In other words, metaphysics is an intellectual procedure for discovering/establishing boundaries, legitimizing them, and potentially subjecting them to further examination. The semiotic space of our life world marked by metaphysics, or the orientations and emphases established and defined by metaphysics, are subsequently accumulated by other sciences as a methodological toolkit, an epistemological foundation, and a paradigmatic framework for research practices.

It is evident that all Western European metaphysics constitutes a challenge confronting “the bad infinity” (Kolman 2016), the aspiration to grasp the intellect, establish order, and consequently conquer the space-time horizon. The concept of space presupposes the subject's capacity to organize the diversity of external objects and the potential for further localization of the object within a specific coordinate system. Culture serves as an arrangement of space into an intelligible structure, the ability and activity to name the surrounding dimensions, directions, and objects, a unique strategy for transforming chaos, or an optical prism for a meaningful perspective on the world. This represents the specific nature of human existence in the universe, the path of human beings in the world. When metaphysics explores the world (or space), it transforms into ontology; when it emphasizes the unchanging aspect over time, it preserves its distinctiveness (Heidegger 2008). In essence, metaphysics delves into the foundational limits of life and thought. On the other hand, ontology focuses on life in its existential forms and modes. Metaphysics deals with delineating the boundaries of the nominal sphere, indicating possibilities for modes, and defining areas where only pure intelligibility, or transcendence, holds validity. Ontology deals with the extension of modes in which meaning is expressed through various dimensions: space-time, substance-accident, possibility-probability,

thus becoming a substantial entity. Metaphysics, by postulating and invoking ontology, moves from the spatial dimension of pure presence to elucidate an intelligible construct, an essence. Essence represents the objective of a person's connection with the world. In ancient metaphysical contemplation, a gap is postulated between being as spatially manifested and essence as an intelligible construct. Consequently, an individual perceives an object as existing within the existential horizon of presence. Essence, serving as the authenticity of meaning, represents the "ego" as an object of transcendence—this forms the ontology of the object.

Building upon the above, space serves both as the realm for the localization of the "ego" and as the domain of transcendence. The reciprocal shifts between transcendental and existential intensity shape not only nominal spaces but also their physical manifestations, influencing the potential for direct experiences and the sensation of a stable, "grasped," and "inhabited" world. Consequently, humans mold and construct their functional world in a spatially adaptable manner, infusing the entities of things with the constructiveness of metaphysical meaning and value.

Allow me to elucidate this argument. Sensation is substantiated through the concept of boundaries. Metaphysics serves as a methodology for defining these boundaries. In metaphysical understanding, the universe forms a unified spatial context. Physics scrutinizes a specific context, whereas metaphysics explores what is presented as a unity to establish meaning. Physics investigates the world and arrives at its foundation as emptiness. On the other hand, metaphysics delineates boundaries and examines something in its entirety, as a factual entity with an essence or significance. Physics leads to the concept of the nonexistence of space as a unity.

The dialectical principle of contradiction between simplicity and complexity manifests itself in the concept of space. On the one hand, the concept of space implies a certain unity, the essence of the core that preserves the entirety of the object's values. On the other hand, space must be comprehended as heterogeneous, multilayered, encompassing numerous modes. It involves an act of thought by the transcendental subject to perceive space as something unified. A suitable exploration of such an interpretation falls under the realm of metaphysics or ontology. If our focus is on diversity, then a shift toward empiricism and the methodologies of the natural sciences becomes inevitable. Regardless, the substance of natural sciences is constructed based on the principle of description. In contrast, metaphysics establishes a semantic framework for the execution of epistemological procedures and offers a key to interpreting space as a meaningful reality—even in the case of descriptive metaphysics, where discourse progresses from the specifics of a cultural field to the revelation of higher-order abstractions.

The observer's task involves elucidating the structure of space, including aspects like coordinates of distance and relationships. Is there a definitive structure to the universe? We cannot say for certain. Clearly, the potential for such a structure exists. Metaphysics, as it navigates the realm of culture, enables us to empirically perceive the universe as a whole (meaning unity and the establishment of a structure), allowing us to postulate the presence of meaning.

Metaphysics serves as a condition and a presupposition for understanding "being" as the limit of our knowledge about the world. When a coherent model of the world is lost, reflection becomes impossible. Therefore, physics requires a partnership with metaphysics to reflect upon these boundaries, which involve comprehending space as the domain in which humans can "be" and can establish connections between the subject and the object, subjectivity and sociality, personality and culture. Humans demarcate the ecumene, embracing it as a fundamental existential concept. The method for investigating an entity involves uncovering its inner essence, accomplished by creating a distinct facet of reality known as the semiotic space, or culture, which serves as a realm of signs and symbols.

Metaphysics exists within philosophical texts that are embedded in specific cultural contexts. The uniqueness of metaphysical knowledge is reflected in the approach to philosophical inquiry. For instance, Plato's body of work represents a quest for precise terminology, Kant's

theories emphasize the syntactical correlation of arguments within a philosophical system, and Nietzsche's concepts encompass the pragmatics of expression and the art of influence. Respectively, Plato's metaphysics allows us to comprehend how the figures of ancient myths evolved into symbols of Western culture, such as Oedipus, Apollo, Dionysus, Ariadne, and the labyrinth. Kant's philosophy demonstrates the construction of a context and the architecture of the human world, akin to Goethe's *Faust*, which depicted the entire universe from a human perspective. Nietzsche's writings express a novel perspective, characterized by diversity, a theme also found in the texts of authors like Jorge Luis Borges and Umberto Eco (2002). So, metaphysics, as a method, serves as the systematic formalization of various modes of thought (Barris 2015). The coherence of the focal point in the perception and analysis of worldly phenomena essentially legitimizes a broad spectrum of cognitive and evaluative procedures and practices. It is essential to recognize that the content of these procedures and practices inherently lacks uniformity and identity. Consequently, the diverse “real contradictions” identified and articulated by formal logic effectively mirror the pluralistic nature of objective reality: “As a final note, let me suggest that we ourselves consist partly in awareness and in activities of sense-making, and that the reality of sense for which I have argued is in our case therefore also a matter of our ontology, and so of metaphysics in the sense of the structure of reality and not only of its study. This is a case where the reality of sense and reality in the more fully ontological meaning coincide” (Barris 2015).

In other words, through the concept of transcendence, metaphysics reveals a transition from the known to the unknown, from the certain to the uncertain, and from the existing to the desired. This mechanism serves as a means of cultural creation and as a tool for generating a new ontology, thereby creating a new space for human habitation, whether it be virtual or immersive reality.

So, the history of metaphysics bears witness to a consistent and meaningful process—if not the internalization of space and time, then certainly the logical emphasis on their anthropic definition and measurement, which becomes particularly noticeable in the context of the philosophy of culture. Therefore, it is reasonable to define culture as a distinctly human way of comprehending space (perceiving it as ordered and meaningful) and mastering time (the semi-otic field of acquired knowledge and experience). Consequently, consciousness can be seen as a topological framework of reflective practices.

Metaphysics is a cultural semantic construct that shapes a particular form of thinking, memory, and identification. In contemporary times, metaphysics, as a philosophical methodology, has the task of “reopening the future of technology” (van Tuinen 2020). According to the principles of this semantic construct, humans transform the natural environment and create an artificial one, such as immersive virtual reality (VR).

5 | “PURE” OR UNLIMITED METAPHYSICS OF VIRTUALITY AND VR

The philosophy of virtual reality (VR) is often associated with the principles found in Plato's works, and cyberspace as a whole is sometimes seen as “Platonism in action” (Heim 1994). This perspective is rooted in the metaphysical concept of space and how humans perceive it. In Plato's philosophy, there's a concept known as *metaxis*, which refers to the dual set of spaces in human existence: the profane (or mundane) and the sacred (or divine). It's clear that such a hierarchical view is not as relevant today. Yet the idea of the complex nature of human orientation in both the physical and virtual worlds, along with a comparison of their respective values, continues to be relevant (Savin-Baden and Falconer 2016). We speculate that the complexity of human orientation in the world is a result of our free will. Free will entails the ability to choose something that does not yet exist, as in the terminology of Sartre, where

nothingness comes into human consciousness in relation to the world. For example, animals also use semiotic signs, but primarily for physiological needs like finding food or a mate. For humans, a semiotic object can hold much deeper significance than basic physiological needs. For instance, a national flag may represent a value more important than health or even life itself, or a masterpiece of art may induce irreversible changes in mentality. It's precisely this capacity to choose, particularly the choice of values, that affirms our humanity. Therefore, the principles of perception and orientation in real and virtual space will vary. In this context, metaphysics can be seen as a "tabular space" that encompasses a multitude of existential horizons. What exactly is virtuality, and how does it transition from physics to metaphysics?

The concept of virtuality encompasses two contrasting meanings. Originally, virtuality referred to something potential, unrealized, or linked to virtue, emphasizing a different mode of presence. With technological advancements, the term "virtuality" has come to mean "digital, computerized, and networked phenomena" (O'Shiel 2020). Both of these interpretations possess a transcendental nature. The first perspective, from a physical standpoint, views the dynamics of the world as "creative evolution" rather than mechanical repetition (Bergson 2001). The second, rooted in technology, highlights the capacity to recreate the world, where teleology is actively realized (Varela, Thompson, and Rorsch 1991). Thus, virtuality represents a transcendental creative capacity driven by the specific needs and goals of humans. This type of activity is inherent to our nature and our brain functionality (Gallese and Metzinger 2003). The concept of "real space" (Katell et al. 2019) for human inhabitants encompasses both the material and the virtual dimension of reality, with a metaphysical focus on reflection. This argument is closely linked to the understanding of virtuality as "potential cultural perception" (Hayles 1999), in which all our interactions with the world are influenced by informational patterns. Thus, virtuality serves as "a crucial conceptual and experiential bridge between the fully real and present (the perceptual) on one side, and the fully unreal or absent (fantasy or imagination in the narrow sense) on the other" (O'Shiel 2020).

Hence, we regard VR technology as a tool for actualizing transcendental ideas and ideals: equality and freedom, beauty and eternity, knowledge and power. There is a view that soon, with the advancement of technologies, the divide between the virtual and the physical realm will significantly diminish (Steffen et al., 2019), and perhaps we are the last generation capable of clearly distinguishing between offline and online (Floridi 2007). The capacity for immersion in VR gives rise to arguments comparing it to a spectacle, simulation, or imitation of the natural world. The issue of simulation has generated significant resonance in postmodern philosophy (see Baudrillard 1983, Derrida 1982) and is still used for the explanation and analysis of VR. Floridi (2007) discusses "the era of simulation" and the process of "re-ontologizing" culture, attributing the alienation of humans from nature and social communication to digitality. It is difficult to argue that the development of technology is leading to the growth of "cognitive ecology" (Steffen et al. 2019), creating more space for human activity and personal freedom. The primary concern in this case arises from the involvement of human subjectivity in another, unpredictable environment. If "machines keep us at a distance" (Pappin 2012), VR technologies immerse us in the image, much like a metaverse or a Sims game. The nature of this image extends beyond mere mimetic reproduction, so VR is more than just imitation or simulation. I posit that VR represents a new frontier for understanding the world and the human self.

With VR technologies, we can create an environment characterized by "non-direct perception" (O'Shiel 2020), offering stereoscopic viewing and the ability to perceive an object from various perspectives within its temporal and spatial dynamics of activity. This "transversal optics" (Serres 1968) is the result of what Leibnitz termed "not a necessary logic but a procedural code of civility at the interface of mind and technology" (van Tuinen 2020). The products of human creativity, or *ars combinatoria*, are an outcome of cultural development within the semiotic space. When we create a semiotic space using tools of technique and technology, we essentially establish an alternative mode of representation,

offering our cognitive abilities limitless avenues for operations. Indeed, VR constitutes a realm of pure metaphysics, and we require it because “[a]n orienting metaphysical realism is a pragmatic commitment maintained because of its functionality” (van Tuinen 2020). It is “pure” in the sense of vanishing boundaries, where the appearance of phenomena is as constitutive as their essence, and there is no distinction between the “map and territory” (Baudrillard 1983). Typically, a map reflects an already existing territory—a logical progression in understanding the world. In VR, we create the territory based on an imagined map. This represents not only an entirely different level of human freedom but also a potentially uncharted realm of consequences. The history of metaphysics can be considered a precursor to human existence in a virtual space, or at the very least a precursor to the post-human era, or Augmented Intelligence (Negarestani 2018). Hence, the emergence of the term “metaphysics” and this knowledge methodology was not a coincidence.

6 | CONCLUSIONS

Metaphysics, since its inception and throughout its long, meaningful, and productive history, has served as a form of orientation in space. It is not a coincidence that the terms “metaphysics” and “ontology” are often used interchangeably. Metaphysics is a method of inquiry, a quest for a logically structured and ordered existence. Therefore, the primary motive behind metaphysical knowledge is the human desire to inhabit a space filled with meaning and symbolism. Language, symbols, and values may seem redundant from the perspective of basic survival, but they constitute the essence of human identity, whether in terms of subjectivity or of sociality. All attempts to criticize and negate metaphysics reflect a desire to eliminate this perceived redundancy and address the ontological uncertainty surrounding the essence and existence of human life. The rejection of metaphysics often stems from a desire for simplicity, akin to the sentiment “It’s good to be a baobab!” Such a strategy, however, is perilous in today’s technology-driven and technology-dependent society, digital culture, and existence in the metaverse.

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