Virtual reality technology and Ethics

Since the rapid development of VR (virtual reality) technology, there is a new product called Oculus Rift has been invented, which is a headset with virtual reality technology. As more and more people give their attention to this product, more and more ethic problems appeared. There is an article called “Virtual reality, the death of morality, and the perils of making the virtual ever more real”, which written by Sebastian Anthony, talking about an ethic problem that created by VR technology.

In this article, Sebastian claims that VR technology may induce the death. Since humans are living in an era of “ultra-high-resolution displays” with 3D audio and advanced artificial intelligence, Sebastian states that it’s very possible for designers to create a virtual world that looks like the real world. Otherwise, because of the technological advancement, it will be harder and harder to distinguish the real world from virtual world in the future. In this case, Sebastian says VR technology may cause people’s ignoring of their physical and emotional needs and dying by exhaustion. If some real-life experiences can cause people’s physical and mental disease, Sebastian considers that the experience in virtual reality also can trigger these responses.

Furthermore, Sebastian claims that abusing of technology, irresponsible developer and other indirect issues may cause VR-related problems in the future, if the game developers didn’t use VR technology in a right way, it’s easily to induce people’s physical or emotional harm, the risk of using VR outside the safety is unimaginable. Since there are some cases that the babies are died from neglect while their parents are concentrating in virtual world, Sebastian thought that it will be worse as the VR
technology becomes matures. At last, Sebastian states that developers and VR users must adhere to some codes of virtual reality ethics and morality, there should be some policy systems to keep VR users out of danger and restrain the developers and reminds users that they are in the real-life.

This article is interesting because this is a real issue that will be happen in the future and relating to humans health since Oculus Rift will become more popular than right now. There was a scenario in the movie called “Inception” that a lady suicide by jumping out from a skyscraper because she cannot discern dream from real world, so if Oculus Users cannot discern virtual from real, the casualties by using Oculus is unimaginable. Otherwise, there might be more crimes taking place while Oculus becoming popular, which is also relating to our class, either in the real world crime or cybercrime. Since Oculus makes users really focus on the image in the headset, if criminals try to attack them in the real world while users are in the Oculus world, they cannot defend themselves. Furthermore, if hackers seed viruses in the Oculus users’ system, the mental damages to users are enormous. For example, there is a situation happen usually in our PC lives and make people be scared, which is a viruses that will display horrible pictures on the screens suddenly while people are playing games with all attention in. As Oculus will display images to users really close, the users that focus on the Oculus world would be scared by these horrible pictures into death. What’s more, if people are died by watching horrible movie or playing horrible games while using Oculus, who should be considering guilty? The Oculus Company? The movie editors and game developers or users themselves?
At last, in my opinion, I think there will be some changes in the future. Like what Sebastian said in the article, there will be something that can help the users to separate their identity whether in the real life or in the virtual life in the future, And also, there should be many new laws and new policies comes out to restrain the VR users and developers when VR technology becomes mature. Moreover, for avoiding the coming out of cybercrime, Oculus Company need to always test their product, update their safety programs and set out some emergency solutions while the users were being hacked. Since the Oculus Rift has not be in sale right now, this issue will not be outdated in a short-term. After people start to use this product officially, more and more VR-related issues and criminals will happen in the future.
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