

*If you can do it for entertainment, you can do it for research: On the moral permissibility of simulating sacrificial dilemmas in VR*

VR technologies were quickly established in the recent years as a reliable and potentially game-changing experimental tool, a unique test-bed for immersive experimentation with sacrificial moral dilemmas. Many researchers choose to perform experiments in VR, as a more readily accessible alternative than fMRI neuroimaging technology. However groundbreaking the results of such experiments might be, VR simulations raise a number of poignant ethical issues: the highly realistic simulations can cause psychological harm to the experiment's subjects by exposing them to potentially traumatic situations. Some argue that it is a priori morally impermissible to simulate sacrificial dilemmas in VR by holding that moral permissibility is a transitive property in the case of VR simulations and their real-world equivalents. Furthermore, enhancing the ecological validity of moral-dilemmas experiments cannot hold precedence over any proof-of-harm towards the participants in the study.

In my treatment of this problem, I intend to provide an account for virtual action and its ability to inflict harm on the action doers. Secondly, I argue that simulating sacrificial dilemmas in VR cannot be a priori morally impermissible. If there are no morally salient features that deem such virtual experiences impermissible altogether, than performing virtual sacrificial actions as part of an experiment is not impermissible. In other words, *if you can do it for entertainment, you can also do it for research*. Nonetheless, I will hold that there is at least one situation in which the moral impermissibility thesis holds: in the case of subjects who suffered from moral injury.