PSICOLOGIA CLÍNICA E PSICANÁLISE

"My life only happened on the Internet": Pedro's case in the perspective of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology

Francisco Raone Barbosa Saraiva*
University of Fortaleza - Unifor, Fortaleza, CE, Brasil
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4283-5797
Camila Souza**
University of Fortaleza - Unifor, Fortaleza, CE, Brasil
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5901-9182
Virginia Moreira***
University of Fortaleza - Unifor, Fortaleza, CE, Brasil
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2740-0023

ABSTRACT
The Internet has changed our relationship with time and also transformed experiences, developing new forms of subjectivation. In contemporary society, individuals are increasingly connected, which can lead to addictions such as Internet gaming disorder. This is related to one of the dimensions that underlies human existence: time. This work aims to understand, from the view of Merleau-Ponty's philosophical phenomenology, the experience of the lived time of Pedro, a young man dependent on Internet gaming. We use the single case study as a method, and we understand Pedro's addiction to Internet gaming as a phenomenon linked to the relationships established between him and the contemporary world, whether in the individual or collective sphere. These relationships are inseparable from the elements that make up Pedro's *Lebenswelt* (lifeworld), such as temporality. The time of the clock influenced the internal time and vice versa, denoting the indivisibility of the phenomenon inwhich there is only a sense of time because man is time itself.

*Keywords***:** Internet (addiction), time, existential phenomenology.

Francisco Raone Barbosa Saraiva, Camila Souza, Virginia Moreira

"Minha vida só acontecia na Internet": o caso Pedro na perspectiva da fenomenologia de Merleau-Ponty

RESUMO

A Internet mudou a nossa relação com o tempo e também transformou nossas experiências, fomentando novas formas de subjetivação. Na sociedade contemporânea, os indivíduos estão cada vez mais conectados, o que pode ocasionar em adoecimentos, tais como o transtorno do jogo pela Internet. Este se relaciona com uma das dimensões que fundamenta a existência humana, a saber: o tempo. Este trabalho tem o objetivo de compreender, sob o olhar da fenomenologia filosófica de Merleau-Ponty, a experiência do tempo vivido de Pedro, jovem dependente do jogo pela Internet. Utilizamos como método o estudo de caso único, e compreendemos a dependência do jogo pela Internet de Pedro como um fenômeno ligado às relações estabelecidas entre ele e o mundo contemporâneo, seja em âmbito individual ou coletivo. Relações que são inseparáveis dos elementos que constituem o *Lebenswelt* (mundo vivido) de Pedro, como a temporalidade. O tempo do relógio influenciou o tempo interior e vice-versa, denotando a indivisibilidade do fenômeno para o qual só há sentido do tempo porque o homem é o próprio tempo.

Palavras-chave: Internet (dependência), tempo, fenomenologia existencial.

"Mi vida sólo sucedía en Internet": el caso Pedro en la fenomenología de Merleau-Ponty

RESUMEN

La internet há cambiado nuestra relación con el tiempo y también ha transformado nuestras experiencias, fomentando nuevas formas de subjetivación. En la sociedad contemporánea, los individuos están cada vez más conectados, lo que puede ocasionar en enfermedades, tales como el trastorno del juego por Internet. Este se relaciona con una de las dimensiones que fundamenta la existencia humana, a saber: el tiempo. Este trabajo tiene el objetivo de comprender, bajo la mirada de la fenomenología filosófica de Merleau-Ponty, la experiencia del tiempo vivido de Pedro, joven dependiente del juego por Internet. Utilizamos como método el estudio de caso único, y comprendemos la dependencia del juego por Internet de Pedro como un fenómeno ligado a las relaciones establecidas entre él y el mundo contemporáneo, sea en ámbito individual o colectivo. Relaciones que son inseparables de los elementos que constituyen el *Lebenswelt* (mundo vivido) de Pedro, como la temporalidad. El tiempo del reloj influyó en el tiempo interior y viceversa, denotando la indivisibilidad del fenómeno para el cual sólo existe un sentido del tiempo porque el hombre es el tiempo mismo.

Palabras clave: Internet (dependencia), tiempo, fenomenología existencial.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the technological development provided by the convergence of information technology, electronics and other information channels was made more prominent by the increase in the use of computers and the Internet (Terroso & Argimon, 2016). The latter has become a complex networked system of communication that prevails in the contemporary world, being present in many devices, such as cell phones, televisions, watches, tablets and so on (Cruz et al., 2018).

The revolution that has occurred in the media since the rise of the Internet has changed not only how we communicate, but also how we learn, work and interact with others. The Internet is a tool that provides innumerable benefits in communication tasks (Terroso & Argimon, 2016, Felizmino & Barbosa, 2018) and has proved to be an important part of the process of human subjectivation, since it mediates our interactions with each other and with the world.

However, when the use of the Internet becomes harmful in the various spaces of everyday life (social, family, etc.), it can generate negative impacts on individuals (Terroso & Argimon, 2016, Felizmino & Barbosa, 2018). In regard to the compulsive use of the Internet, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (DSM-V) refers to online games, calling it Internet Gaming Disorder. It can be mild, moderate, or severe and occurs when the individual uses the Internet to engage in games, leading to clinically significant impairment or distress (American Psychiatric Association, 2014).

Although we recognize the importance of the DSM for research in Psychopathology, Psychiatry and Psychology and for health professionals, we understand that the symptoms and diagnostic classification are insufficient to understand the entire experience of the illness. In this article, we aim to contribute to the study of the lived phenomenon of dependence on Internet gaming. To this end, we turn to phenomenology as a lens through which we can understand the bases that enable unveiling this experience, one of them being time.

The experience of time is a prominent theme in studies in phenomenology due to its intertwining with subjectivity. The French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945-2006) had a radical approach to the intimate relationship between time and subjectivity, understanding it as a guiding thread that rooted the world (Melo et al., 2016). Time is a unique and undivided phenomenon that transcends the ticking of the clock because it is lived intersubjectively and is the basis of our existence.

In the experience of an illness, such as the dependence on Internet gaming, we find changes in the time lived by the subject, which makes it difficult for him/her to be in contact with the world, with the other and with him/herself (Tatossian et al., 2016). Within this gap,

there is an opening to the existential void and to the experience of halting the flow of becoming, which imprisons the subject within a compulsive use of the Internet.

In this article we aim to understand the experience of the time lived while being dependent on Internet gaming through the lens of the philosophical phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty. We make considerations based on a case study conducted with a volunteer participant of the DELETE Institute, the Technology Detoxification Initiative of the Institute of Psychiatry (IPUB) at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), which develops research and services for individuals who are dependent on the Internet.

Dependence on the Internet and Online Games

The concept of Internet addiction was first used by the American psychiatrist Ivan Goldberg in 1996 to define the pathological use of the tool as a diagnostic category, which he called *Internet Addiction Disorder*, represented by the acronym IAD. It was observed that the Internet-dependent individuals have a compulsive need to spend a great deal of time on the Internet to the detriment of other activities outside the online environment, being unable to control their time in front of the computer (Terroso & Argimon, 2016, Felizmino & Barbosa, 2018).

Also in 1996, the American psychologist Kimberly Young conducted, with university students, the first study to characterize the pathological use of the Internet. It used as a basis the diagnostic criteria for pathological gaming as described in DSM IV, which had its last revision published in 1994 (Terroso & Argimon, 2016).

In the initial studies, researchers believed that dependence on the Internet was a problem restricted to university students, a hypothesis that was soon refuted. New information technologies increasingly invaded people's lives and the number of activities mediated by the Internet also grew. In the present study, the pathological use of the Internet can be observed in any age group, educational level, and socioeconomic stratum (Picon et al., 2015, Felizmino & Barbosa, 2018, Cruz et al., 2018).

Because of the many practical uses of the Internet today, the diagnosis of addiction is often complex. Self-referrals in cases of Internet dependency have become more frequent but the patient usually does not report computer overuse (Young, 2011), since the Internet is spread out over a variety of electronic devices.

In addition to enabling rapid access to information and broadening connectivity through social networks, the Internet has also revolutionized the way gaming works. Until the

end of the 20th century, the user used to play by themselves on their devices. Now he/she interacts with people across the globe on the same online platform, which can contribute to a longer connection time (Picon et al., 2015).

This gaming format has become popular among children, adolescents and adults, as it allows the user to create their own reality in a virtual universe. In this context, one can express fantasies and desires and create new ways of social interaction (Gregorio & Amparo, 2018) by creating parallel worlds that are always active.

Technological development has greatly contributed to the improvement of electronic games, making images, sounds, movements and interactivity increasingly realistic, which enhances the player's immersion in the virtual world. These games can be used to facilitate learning and the development of cognitive, motor, affective and social skills (Picon et al., 2015).

On the other hand, damage to health, including dependence, can be detected in some situations (Picon et al., 2015). Dependence is often accompanied by psychosocial problems such as social phobia, mood disorders, sleep disorders, marital dissatisfaction, and professional exhaustion. Particularly in regard to the pathological use of online games, the risk of relapse during treatment is greater, given the Internet accessibility on a diverse range of gaming devices (Young, 2011).

Considering that most people lose track of time when browsing the Internet (Oliveira, 2017), we realize that the online game-dependent individual has a personal way of experiencing time depending on whether or not they are connected. To better understand this experience of illness, we will make some considerations about the notion of time through the philosophical phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty.

Time Lived according to the Philosophical Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) was a French philosopher, born in the town of Rochefor-Sur-Mer, who held a prominent place in the tradition of European phenomenological thought. Merleau-Ponty's philosophical phenomenology brings important contributions to the study of the experience of time, a concept considered one of the structuring bases of human existence with its intertwining with subjectivity (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2006, Melo et al., 2016).

To discuss the experience of time, Merleau-Ponty (1942/2006, 1945/2006, 1964/2014) starts from the philosophical writings of Edmund Husserl, founder of phenomenology as a

philosophical current. Husserl (1928/1944) sought to understand the process of formation of consciousness and recognized temporality as the founding frame of our subjectivation, since all our experiences happen between the before and the after.

Merleau-Ponty (1945/2006, 1964/2014) takes up this idea and develops it towards a philosophy of ambiguity. Since man and the world are mutually integrated, our experiences are lived at the heart of this engagement and are revealed in the continuous, transient and lasting movement of this relationship. We perceive this in everyday life by referring to the logic of the successive chain of past, present, and future (Prieto, 2015).

However, the main characteristics of the experience of time are transience and incompleteness, that is, time is continually reopened in the instant of now, which marks the future as a horizon of possibility, with the past losing its place and becoming a point of origin. Instead of adding to the present moment, future and past mix with it, creating a single experience, in synthesis and always in motion, for time is born of our relation to the factual world and the things that surround it (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2006, 1964/2014; Melo et al., 2016).

The ambiguity that composes the experience of time demarcates its intersubjective character, since it is simultaneously the subject and the world. We can experience time objectively, especially when it connects with factual reality. It is chronological time, which can be measured and quantified. However, time is not just a material object. Linked to becoming, it is also lived pre-reflexively and prior to the processes of rationalization. It is a vital time, immediate and tied to subjectivity (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2006, Prieto, 2015).

The distinction between chronological time and lived time, as presented earlier, reaffirms Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of ambiguity. On the one hand, we have the lived time that, prior to conscious reflection, reveals the movement of the becoming of our existence, subjectivating it. In contrast, in giving meaning to the experiences lived in the world, we have the possibility to rationalize them, objectifying the experience of time.

The constant balance between these two ways of experiencing time creates our relationship of intersubjective engagement with the world. However, there may be some mismatch between them, and experiences of mental illness demonstrate this difference, since there is often a clear deformation of the temporal perception of the subject (Sass et al., 2017), which will be discussed in Pedro's clinical case.

Method

This qualitative research was created through the methodological proposal of the single-case study, whose principle is the detailed investigation of the phenomenon studied (McLeod, 2010; Yin, 2015), namely: the time lived in internet gaming dependency.

From the case study, the researcher manages to obtain a holistic perspective of what is being researched, since this type of method allows for the in-depth investigation of a contemporary phenomenon "in its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context may not be clearly evident" (Yin, 2015, p.17), which occurs in the case of Internet gaming dependency.

In constructing a case study, it is up to researchers to explore a phenomenon delimited by a detailed collection of material (Yin, 2015) to achieve an in-depth study. The inclusion criteria for this study are participants of both sexes, over 18 years old, who considered themselves dependent on Internet gaming and consented to voluntary participation.

We opted for the discussion of Pedro's clinical case due to its relevance to the investigated subject, since the participant fits the inclusion criteria previously specified. The contact was made with Pedro through the DELETE Institute, the Technology Detoxification Initiative of the Institute of Psychiatry (IPUB) at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), which has been developing research and treating Internet-dependent individuals since 2013.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the following trigger question: "How do you experience time when you are connected to the Internet?". The interviews took place at the IPUB of UFRJ, where the DELETE Institute operates, in April 2017. We held two meetings with Pedro, not setting a specific duration, leaving him free to narrate his experience.

The interviews were recorded in full and transcribed verbatim for later development of the case study. The participant signed the Terms of Informed Consent (TCLE). This research was approved by the Committee of Ethics in Research with Human Beings of the University of Fortaleza (Coética), registered under the number 2,010,902. The fictitious name 'Pedro' was used to preserve the identity of the participant.

"My Life Only Happened on the Internet"

Pedro (a fictitious name) is a 23-year-old male living in Rio de Janeiro who has been dependent on the Internet since he was 17, when he started to play online computer games. At that time, in 2011, Pedro was in his 3rd year of high school and discovered *League of Legends*, a multiplayer electronic game released in 2009 which has been considered the most popular in its category since 2012. In this game, the player controls a character in a battle between two teams of five participants each (Bertran & Chamarro, 2016).

From then on, the time spent in front of the computer, measured by the seconds, minutes and hours of the clock, only increased for Pedro. On the other hand, when he was playing *League of Legends* on the Internet he did not feel the time going by, and he remained connected for more than 12 hours straight, every day.

> "When I was sitting at the computer, time did not exist. When I was there, I could stay the whole day. I only realized how much time I had spent when I needed something and got up from the chair to go to the bathroom or feed myself. To get basic necessities. When you are connected, time is lost. You completely forget everything."

The experience of time when playing reported by Pedro refers to the synchronicity between lived (or implicit) time and objective (or explicit) time. When Pedro is absorbed in what he is doing and loses the notion of time, he does not consciously perceive its passing except at the moments when this synchrony is disrupted so as to satisfy his physiological needs (Fuchs, 2013).

Online games, especially multiplayer games, in which participants can create and interpret characters in virtual realities (Bertran & Chamarro, 2016), favor this temporal immersion. Due to the strong sense of presence provided by the high interactivity of these games, the subject tends to be oblivious to offline events in favor of virtual experiences (Gregorio & Amparo, 2018).

In the 3rd year of high school, Pedro had classes in the morning and took a preparatory course for the university entrance exam for medical school at night. His time connected to online gaming was increasing, and he could no longer concentrate on his studies. He only thought about being online. Time did not seem to pass when he was away from the computer.

Before beginning to become dependent on the Internet, Pedro states that he had always been a good student and had never had problems with attendance or low grades. He failed to

enter medical school, despite having passed the first phase of the university entrance examination. The young man promised himself and his parents that he would study the following year, 2012, to pass the exam for Medicine. Pedro's dedication only lasted the first three months of the year and again his routine was affected by gaming.

"At my worst times, I used to go to sleep very late, 3 or 4 in the morning, sometimes 5. Then I would wake up around noon, 1 o'clock. Depending on the time I woke up, I didn't even have breakfast. It was lunch and then straight to the computer. This was messing up my routine a lot, but I carried on ..."

As King et al. (2014) remind us, the number of hours spent in front of the computer does not necessarily configure a pathological use of the Internet, but dependence is related to the function of use, when commitments are abandoned to play games online, for example. Internet addicts often neglect everyday activities, an attitude that can lead to problems such as failure at school (APA, 2014). In Pedro's case, he was clearly neglecting his studies in order to play.

Recessions and Relapses

Pedro's dependence on the Internet is marked by several attempts to start over and try to overcome what he calls "my problem". Again, he failed his medical school admission test, but so as not to "waste time", he used his admission test scores (at the High School National Exam, ENEM) to enter the faculty of Physiotherapy. In the first semester of college, his time spent with online games increased even more because, as he explains, he was not interested in the course he had chosen. Pedro managed, however, to complete three semesters before dropping out of college for the first time.

"I did the first semester really badly, it was terrible. I failed subjects for non-attendance. I passed the subjects that I managed to do until the end. But not the ones that I couldn't get to on time, because I didn't sleep right."

In the second semester of the Physiotherapy course, Pedro decided: "Let's give it a go!". At that time, he began dating a girl who encouraged him to study, even though she did not know about his problem with gaming. Dating helped the young man get away from the

computer and make better use of his time to study and do other activities. So as not to "portray a bad image" to the girl, he points out that he did "very well" in the second semester of the course and in the third did "relatively well".

Many of his actions, including his attempt to get over his "addiction", were because of someone else, in this case, his girlfriend. Here, we notice that the existence of Pedro, in his different dimensions, is constituted through his experiences with the world and with other people, in an intersubjective relation. This aspect reverberates in the experience of Pedro's time, since approaching the other (in this case, his girlfriend) is simultaneously a re-encounter with the factual world and a reopening of new possibilities on the horizon of his experiences (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2006).

In the beginning of the fourth semester. Pedro ended the relationship and also dropped out of the college, because he wanted to be a physician and not a physiotherapist. With a desire to pursue his studies, in August 2014, he returned to the medical preparatory course. The idea was to study full-time, but in about a month Pedro dropped out again because of gaming.

Despite Pedro's desire and willingness to act freely in his choices, we see him succumb to the impulses of habit, which occurs in situations of addiction (Mendl, 2017). It is a change of state interceded by the experience of time, as the subject distances him/herself from his/her own biography by breaking the unity of temporal synthesis. The present moment invades Pedro as the only possibility of his existence, to the detriment of the past and future (Messas, 2015, Mendl, 2017), which can be redesigned in virtual reality.

Existential Paralysis and Escape

As Pedro intensified his use of the computer, his relationship with his parents deteriorated. When he left school in the second half of 2014, his father and mother's opinion of him was one of disappointment, especially because of his neglect towards his studies. Pedro tried to hide his "problem" from his family, but said it was difficult.

> "My family would look at me... I would not say angrily, but with disappointment, you know? My father and mother were already disapproving my behavior. (...) By 2015, when my problem was already much worse, my parents tried to take things from me. Take the computer, take away the cell phone... But that wasn't working very well. Sometimes I would get it secretly, I could get access to it somehow."

Immersed for hours and hours in the world of online games, without realizing it, the young man practically no longer slept. Irrespective of the pathological use or not of the Internet, the strong connection between individuals and the new information and communication technologies deprives them of their right to rest and sleep. There is social pressure for such individuals to function continuously. Being available 24 hours a day during seven days a week, constantly online, seems to be an obligation (Crary, 2014), and Pedro went down that route by not being able to disconnect.

"It was 5 in the morning, and I was there, on my cell phone. Sometimes when I was very sleepy, I would take a nap in the afternoon. But it bothered me even more because it deregulated and compromised my sleep at night. Sometimes my father would give me an anxiolytic to make me sleep, but it would not work."

When he was left without his computer and cell phone, and consequently without any Internet connection and games, Pedro fell into crisis. Not only because he was disconnected, but because he felt a "reality check" when he realized this, his dependence only grew. It is an ambiguous movement rooted in the mismatch of Pedro's experience of time — since when he is online gaming, he is paralyzed in a virtual immersion of the pure present (Mendl, 2017), and Pedro is imprisoned in this movement.

A new girlfriend, at the end of 2015, gave the young man the opportunity to return to Physiotherapy in early 2016. Back to school, once again, in order to avoid displaying any problems to his girlfriend, Pedro tried to attend the classes but dropped out of the course again in the middle of the semester. His dependency had reached the point where he could no longer hide the problem from the people closest to him. According to him, dependency on the Internet has taken away the determination and motivation he had, turning him into a prisoner of himself.

"I used to say, 'Oh, I'm tired, I'm done, and I don't want to go.' Motivation and determination, in general, have been missing from my life for quite some time. (...) Determination had left me. It's funny ... All because of the addiction. I would say, 'I don't feel like it, I don't feel like it'."

Even seeing himself as an Internet dependent and feeling like he should seek medical and psychological help, the young man continued playing intensely, "paralyzed and doing

nothing effective in life." Pedro's dependency lacked "a historicity in the strict sense, and therefore the escape into an intoxicated identity constitutes an escape from oneself" (Mendl, 2017, p. 47). In his attempt to eternalize the present, distancing himself from the unitary synthesis of lived time, Pedro encounters a cyclical movement that always throws him into the immediacy of the present. His existence, crystallized in the time lived on the internet, loses the alignment with the factual world that surrounds it.

Time of Anxiety

Anxiety, understood as the expectation of something to come (Boris & Barata, 2017) is present in Pedro's life as a major obstacle since the day he looked at himself and found himself dependent on online games. It is considered to be one of the symptoms of the Internet gaming disorder and usually appears at times of withdrawal, when the subject is not playing, and may be accompanied by symptoms such as irritability or sadness (APA, 2014).

In Pedro's case, online gaming also became the temporary escape for his problems which, paradoxically, consisted of his dependency on the Internet. When connected, the young man feels disconnected from the "real world". There, in front of the computer, he plunged into the online games and forgot the unaccomplished goals, the arguments with his parents, etc.

*"*I was anxious to stay connected. And when I left the computer, I was anxious to get back on it. The Internet was like a temporary, momentary outlet *"*.

In Pedro's experience, anxiety is intertwined with the need to remain connected. The virtual world emerges as an alternative for his daily concerns and, in an attempt to act on the world, Pedro moves around in the game. Not being connected confronts Pedro's emptiness and anxiety, which are experiences a lived in the now (Boris & Barata, 2017).

Pedro's anxiety is experienced through feelings of stress and anger when he is not playing. Moreover, in 2015, the young man felt a strong pain mixed with a pressure on his chest that radiated to his left arm. His blood pressure was measured and he found out he is hypertensive.

> "I believe that the Internet has been the cause of my hypertension. I thought that someday in my life, I would have it. Because I have hypertensive parents, right? My addiction ended up anticipating a problem I shouldn't have now. When I had high

pressure at 16 for some other reason, I had to take some medicine to reduce it, right? My parents started taking medicine at 35, 40 years old...."

The young man recalls that, because of his addiction, he also had bad eating habitsand did not practice physical exercises. Another problem he reported was the physical pains caused by the long hours sitting in front of the computer, in addition to visual and mental fatigue. Even though he could feel his body "asking him to stop playing", Pedro continued pushing past his limits.

Despite his exhausted body, Pedro goes on playing because his bodily experience is intertwined with the changes perceived in the experience of time. Body and time are two existential dimensions superimposed by their shared intersubjective aspect. Merleau-Ponty (1942/2006; 1945/2006; 1964/2014) states that, because we have a body, we connect to the world and we are able to know it. Corporeity is the route that takes us into the world, and the experiences lived there are presented as a temporal extension (Melo et al., 2016). Pedro's immersion into the instant present of online games makes his bodily experience impregnated by the subjective now, distancing himself from the concreteness of the physical body that complains of pain and fatigue.

In the moments away from his computer, Pedro's anxiety increased, and the young man felt a kind of "disorganization" and "dislocation." He wanted the time spent on activities that were notrelated to gaming to go by quickly so he could return to the computer. He recalls that, in times of disconnection from the Internet, time "was not worth it", and it seemed to stand still. Concomitantly, in these moments, Pedro also experienced, in addition to the slowing down of time, a temporal pressure. That is, while Pedro played, time went by quickly. On the other hand, Pedro had awareness of chronological time in the hours of disconnection from the Internet. This kind of mismatch shows Pedro's strong involvement with online games. The virtual world of online games intertwines with Pedro's existence and constitutes his lived world.

The anxiety to return as soon as possible to gaming "accelerated" his lived time, which, simultaneously, was "slowed down" by not being connected. Moreira (2014) observes that subjects with anxiety experience alterations in their experience of time, something that could be observed in the speech of this young adult. The desire to be playing, even when not, contributed to the mismatches between Pedro's subjective and objective time.

"The time I spent online was so much more enjoyable than real-life time. The online world sucks you in completely. (...) Dependency on the Internet is very dangerous, indeed. However it is. So much addiction to games, social networking... Because, when you get in there, you lose yourself completely. You completely lose the notion of time. And your life is passing, passing..."

Regarding Pedro's temporal experience, in the way he was or was not connected to the Internet, the feeling of lived time was not only either accelerated or slowed down, but actually accelerated and slowed down simultaneously, which demonstrates its ambiguous character. The time on the clock influenced the internal time and vice versa, denoting the indivisibility of the phenomenon (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2006).

Between Apathy and Emotion

By the time he recognized that he needed help to overcome his dependency on the Internet in 2016, Pedro no longer felt pleasure in doing anything other than being immersed in online games. While the real world was a synonymous of apathy, the virtual world represented emotion. It was in front of the computer where the young man could have feelings of joy and anger, when he succeeded or not in a game, for example. Outside the Internet, in conversations with his family or friends, the world was not fun. When he was in these environments, he did not feel well, he could not concentrate and he only thought about going back to gaming.

"When you go into the real world, to live with people, it seems like you do not care. I used to be in some activity with friends and not feel any pleasure in being there. Everyone is there, really happy, partying, and you are there just to be there. You say, 'Cool!'. But you don't care, do you understand? You'll only actually feel emotion when you are there in the game."

Pedro's lived world, when distanced from online games, empties itself of meaning, and boredom emerges, since the impregnation of the present empties any possibility of future in its becoming (Mendl, 2017). Pedro started noticing that offline activities meant nothing to him when he started avoiding face-to-face contacts. "Others and circumstances are reduced to obstacles between him and the drug to be consumed" (Mendl, 2017, 44). The virtual friends

with whom he played on the Internet helped him making up for the lack of face-to-face relationships.

When he was immersed in games, notably in League of Legends, Pedro experienced a state that made him more present in the virtual world than in the real world (Gregorio & Amparo, 2018). It was as if he were "there" in the game environment itself, living experiences with the other participants through the characters chosen for the battles.

"My life only happened on the Internet when I was playing. The real world is lost. You surrender your life to the game. This addiction, this dependency on technologies is impressive. It is as powerful as a chemical dependency. It's the same, I guess. The more you give yourself to the virtual world, the less you are in the real world in relation to everything: relationships, professional, academic, family life ... everything."

In virtual reality, the feeling of presence occurs through immersion, when the individual is transported to the virtual world. However, this phenomenon is not experienced as a pathological reaction, but perceived as something natural due to the player's active position (Gregorio & Amparo, 2018). The pathology may appear in a way that the subject equates online relationships being preponderant to offline contacts, which is identified in Pedro's experience.

In Search of Help: Pedro's New Time

Pedro returned to Physiotherapy in the second semester of 2016. He only took on a few subjects so as to be able to deal with all of them, and applied to a voluntary internship at a clinic where several health professionals worked, including psychologists. He decided to seek help. He admitted that he had "a problem" and began psychotherapeutic follow-up. His psychological counseling lasted about four months, during his internship. He did not continue the "treatment", claiming lack of time because he intended to take on more disciplines in the next semester of college. Gaming was still interfering with Pedro's routine, but he did not drop out of college again.

During his vacations, with more free time, the young man spent more hours connected, playing until dawn again. Pedro's father had read about a group called DELETE from UFRJ in

a newspaper. As he wanted to help his son, whose suffering was obvious and also reflecting in the family context, he decided to take him to one of the group meetings in early 2017.

"On my first visit here, I was 'on edge' because I had only slept for an hour the previous night. I was playing on my cell phone until dawn. I was practically dragged there. But my father's initiative made sense."

Although Pedro did not continue psychotherapy because of college and, mainly, because he lives far from IPUB, at UFRJ, the young man is happy for having changed his perception of himself and his relationship with the Internet. He never had the habit of speaking about "his problem" to anyone, and now claims to have been able to do so. Through psychotherapy, he managed to share his suffering with different people and to accept that, change depended, above all, on him. Pedro could reclaim his experience, assuming a position of active subject and holding himself responsible for his existence.

"When you tell someone about your problem, other than your parents or your siblings, you seem to think better. They [the psychologists] warned me about my situation. (...) Nowadays, I am not undergoing psychotherapy because of lack of time, due to university. I took on disciplines from Monday to Saturday. If I had time, I would do it again."

When this study was carried out in April 2017, Pedro was studying subjects in his fifth and sixth semester. According to him, despite going to sleep between 11 P.M. and midnight and waking up at 6 A.M. to be in college at 8 o'clock, it was still difficult to "get used to his biological clock" because he had spent so many years "sleeping wrongly". We notice that Pedro attempts to balance his relationship with gaming and, concomitantly, over time redesign the intersubjective arrangement of his contact with the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2006, Fuchs, 2013).

The young man says that at the moment he needs to detach himself from "the things" that made him spend "hours and hours on the computer". Most of his time is filled with college-related tasks. When he feels like playing, Pedro points out that he tries to distract himself with other activities so that time passes faster. Thus, he manages to avoid contact with the computer. When talking about being able to control his time, the young man also reveals that he does not want to remove gaming from his life completely, just multiplayer online

games, because "they are addictive". Pedro struggles to break the cyclical movement that holds him captive to immersion in the instant now, resuming his experience in the factual world and his relationship with others.

> "When I have time and I want to play... I just want to have self-control". (...) "In the gaming world, lots of people are paralyzed because of dependence. The will to change comes individually."

As previously noted, the word "paralyzed" often appears in Pedro's speech . Generally, he uses the term to refer to the time he has lost while playing and to the projects that he has not yet been able to achieve because of his dependency on the Internet. As beings in the world, it is important to understand Pedro's life-world (*Lebenswelt*) from the description he gives of his experiences, which also include his home, family, friends, objects, etc., (Moreira, 2016).

Pedro intends to finish the Physiotherapy course and become a professional, but he still thinks about practicing Medicine. On the other hand, it is clear that, at the moment, he is only concerned with putting his life in order, taking care of his health: practicing physical exercises, eating well and paying attention to his blood pressure are the main objectives.

> "I'm sad about my time lost, but what can I do? This time is gone. You can't go back. I threw it away. Now, what I can do is to wake up and move on, live a new time. And that's what I'm doing..."

Pedro says he is happy because he is learning to enjoy going out with friends and he is getting better acquainted with his parents. The young man says that his experience has made him stronger and determined to better manage his routine and overcome his dependency on the Internet. Pedro says he wants to live other experiences away from online games, where time will continue to be part of his ambiguous and intertwined relationship with himself, with others and with the world.

Final Considerations

Through the phenomenological lens of Merleau-Ponty, we have been able to look at Pedro's dependency on Internet gaming as a phenomenon linked to the relationships established between him and the world. Relationships that cannot be separated from the elements that constitute the *Lebenswelt* of the human being, such as the experience of time.

Understanding the experience of Pedro's lived time, through a case study, helped us perceiving the intersubjective interweaving that exists between the man and the world. As we have seen, both in its subjective and chronological aspects, time has permeated all the aspects of Pedro's speech, directly or indirectly.

Although Pedro faces similar problems and shares the same world of other people, especially those facing the same problem, we should point out that each human being lives their own unique experience. In the case of Internet addiction, the lived experience of one subject will never be the same as that of another, although there may be common aspects due to us being rooted in a shared world.

The appearance of the word "paralysis" in Pedro's accounts illustrates how he experiences gaming dependency on the Internet and is present in his speech so that we can see singular aspects of his existence. In this context, the experience of time, an important dimension of human life, also appears ambiguously.

Regarding Pedro's temporal experience, in the way that he was or was not connected to the Internet, the feeling of time lived was not only either accelerated or slowed down, but accelerated and slowed at the same time. The time of the clock influenced the interior time and vice versa, denoting the indivisibility of the phenomenon, as defended by Merleau-Ponty (1945/2006), for which there is only a sense of time because the man is time itself.

New studies on the subject may help better understanding this phenomenon and its relation to the lifestyle of contemporary society. In view of this broad field of research, we argue that an approach to Internet dependency from a phenomenological understanding of time has much to contribute to the field.

References

American Psychiatric Association. (2014). *Manual Diagnóstico e Estatístico de Transtornos Mentais: DSM-V* (5a ed.). Artes Médicas.

Bertran, E., & Chamarro, A. (2016). Videojugadores del League of Legends: El papel de la pasión en el uso abusivo y en el rendimiento. *Adicciones*, *28*(1), 28-34. https://doi.org/10.20882/adicciones.787

Boris, G. D. J. B., & Barata, A. (2017). A angústia e ansiedade: Um esboço histórico-conceitual e uma perspectiva sartreana. In G. D. J. B. Boris & A. Barata (Orgs.), *Sartre Hoje: Vol. 2* (pp. 151-172). Fi.

Crary, J. (2014). 24/7: *Capitalismo tardio e os fins do sono*. Cosac Naify.

Cruz, F. A. D., Scatena, A., Andrade, A. L. M., & De Micheli, D. (2018). Evaluation of Internet addiction and the quality of life of Brazilian adolescents from public and private schools. *Estudos de Psicologia*, *35*(2), 193-204. http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1982-02752018000200008

Felizmino, T. O., & Barbosa, R. B. (2018). Idosos e dependência de internet: Uma revisão bibliográfica. *Revista Psicologia, Diversidade e Saúde*, *7*(1), 139-146. http://dx.doi.org/10.17267/2317-3394rpds.v7i1.1669

Fuchs, T. (2013). Temporality and Psychopathology. *Phenomenology and the cognitive sciences*, *12*(75), 1-30. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-010-9189-4

Gregório, G. S., & Amparo, D. M. (2018). O Brincar e o espaço potencial no ambiente virtual. *Ágora: Estudos em Teoria Psicanalítica*, *21*(1), 71-82. https://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1809-44142018001007

King, A. L. S., Nardi, A. E., &Cardoso, A. (2014). *Nomofobia: Dependência do computador, internet, redes sociais? Dependência do celular?*. Atheneu.

Melo, A. K. S., Araújo, V. V., Bloc, L., & Moreira, M. (2016). A Experiência do tempo em Merleau-Ponty: Contribuições para a fenomenologia clínica. *Interação em Psicologia*, *20*(1), 10-19. http://dx.doi.org/10.5380/psi.v20i1.32798

McLeod, J. (2010). *Case Study Research: In counselling and psychotherapy*. SAGE.

Mendl, S. E. (2017). Adicción a internet, tedio y temporalidad: Una perspectiva fenomenológica. *Psicopatologia fenomenológica contemporânea*, *6*(1), 37-51. http://www.revistapfc.com.br/rPRCwordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/037_051_Mendl.pdf

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2006). *Fenomenologia da percepção*. Martins Fontes. (Obra original publicada em 1945)

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2006). *Estrutura do comportamento*. Martins Fontes. (Obra original publicada em 1942)

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2014). *O visível e o invisível*. Perspectiva. (Obra original publicada em 1964)

Messas, G. (2015). A existência fusional e o abuso de crack. *Psicopatologia fenomenológica contemporânea*, *4*(1), 124-140. http://www.revistapfc.com.br/rPFCwordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/124_140_GMessas_final.pdf

Moreira, V. (2014). Merleau-Ponty and the experience of anxiety in humanistic phenomenological psychotherapy. *Self and Society*, *4*(3), 39-43. https://doi.org/10.1080/03060497.2014.11084363

Moreira, V. (2016). From essence to Lebenswelt as a method in phenomenological psychopathology. *Estudos de Psicologia*, *33*(3), 403-411. http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1982-02752016000300004

Moreira, V., & Bloc, L. (2015). O Lebenswelt como fundamento da psicopatologia. *Psicopatologia Fenomenológica Contemporânea*, *4*(1), 1-14. http://www.revistapfc.com.br/magazine/o-lebenswelt-como-fundamento-da-psicopatologia-fenomenologica-de-arthur-tatossian/

Oliveira, E. S. G. (2017). Adolescência, internet e tempo: Desafios para a educação. *Educar em revista,* (64), 283-298. http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/0104-4060.47048

Picon, F., Karan, R., Breda, V., Restano, A., Silveira, A., &Spritzer, D. (2015). Precisamos falar sobre tecnologia: Caracterizando clinicamente os subtipos de dependência de tecnologia. *Revista brasileira de psicoterapia*, *17*(2), 44-60.

Prieto, A. G. A. (2015). El tempo del hombre: Apuntes hermenéuticos. *Revista de filosofía*, *32*(79), 130-138. https://produccioncientificaluz.org/index.php/filosofia/article/view/19898

Sass, L., Pienkos, E., Skodlar, B., Stanghellini, G., Fuchs, T., & Jones, N. (2017). EAWE: Examination of Anomalous World Experience. *Psychopathology*, *50*(1), 10-54. https://doi.org/10.1159/000454928

Tatossian, A., Bloc, L. & Moreira, V. (Orgs.). (2016). *Psicopatologia fenomenológica revisitada*. Escuta.

Terroso, L. B., & Argimon, I. I. L. (2016). Dependência de Internet e habilidades sociais em adolescentes. *Psicologia do desenvolvimento*, *16*(1), 200-2019.

http://pepsic.bvsalud.org/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1808-42812016000100012

Yin, R. K. (2015). *Estudo de Caso: Planejamento e Métodos*. Bookman.

Young, K. S. (2011). Avaliação clínica de clientes dependentes de internet. In K. S. Young & C. N. Abreu (Orgs.), *Dependência de Internet: Manual e guia de avaliação e tratamento* (pp. 36-54). Artmed.

Mailing Adress

Francisco Raone Barbosa Saraiva

Avenida Washington Soares, 1321, Edson Queiroz, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil. CEP 60811-905

Endereço eletrônico(e-mail): raonesaraiva@hotmail.com

Camila Souza

Avenida Washington Soares, 1321, Edson Queiroz, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil. CEP 60811-905

Endereço eletrônico: camila.psouza01@gmail.com

Virginia Moreira

Avenida Washington Soares, 1321, Edson Queiroz, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil. CEP 60811-905

Endereço eletrônico: virginiamoreira@unifor.br

Notas (Notes)

* Master in Psychology, Laboratory of Psychopathology and Clinic of Humanistic Phenomenology (APHETO).

** Psychologist and Psychotherapist; Master in Psychology and Doctorate degree student in Psychology (UNIFOR); Graduate Professor in Psychology; Ph.D. Student at APHETO – Laboratory of Psychopathology and Clinic of Humanistic Phenomenology.

*** Psychotherapist; Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology (PUC-SP, Brazil); Post-Doctor in Medical Anthropology (Harvard Medical School, U.S.A.); Professor at the Post-Graduation Program in Psychology and coordinator of APHETO – Laboratory of Psychopathology and Clinic Humanistic Phenomenology.