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New Media Techniques

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Virtual Reality: A Vessel of Compassion

Virtual reality is an extremely effective tool in our world full of new media and is not at all exploitative. With virtual reality the world of the subject one is learning about is suddenly three dimensional rather than two dimensional. The Syrian girl, highlighted by Chris Milk in the Tedtalk, is no longer a screen away, she is right in front of you- you are in *her* world. Entering the world of another human and experiencing it in a 360 degree arena adds an extra layer of empathy in one’s emotional complexity. For example, there is a difference between donating money to starving children in third world countries and actually hand delivering the food to starving children in third world countries. Creating this first hand experience and being immersed in their world is a major building block in understanding the life of another human. Virtual reality is an essential tool to teach people about the value of empathy and love.

The idea that the medium of virtual reality has the potential to exploit delicate situations in the name of entertainment is difficult for me to understand. I do not believe that a person can look into a VR headset and see a war torn country and not feel compassion and empathy. It might be marketed as entertainment at times but at the end of the day it is to bring humans closer together not farther apart.