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Anime and narrative bioethics: contemporary ethical dilemmas

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze anime narratives as representational devices of contemporary bioethical dilemmas from a narrative bioethics perspective. This is a theoretical-conceptual article with a hermeneutic-interpretive approach that articulates deliberative processes to examine the relationship between facts, values, and duties within symbolic contexts. anime, as a transnational cultural industry, constitutes a narrative laboratory in which tensions related to identity, corporeality, autonomy, and technology are presented, including issues such as cloning, euthanasia, and genetic manipulation. Through narrative imagination, these representations transcend fiction, opening possibilities for prudential judgment applicable to real and culturally diverse contexts. It is concluded that narrative bioethics contributes to the deliberation and resolution of dilemmas, while also supporting the formation of moral agents and guiding action in everyday life.

Keywords: Cartoons as topic. Animation. Narration. Bioethics. Popular Culture.

Resumen

Anime y bioética narrativa: dilemas éticos contemporáneos

Esta investigación tiene como objetivo analizar las narrativas del anime como dispositivos de representación de dilemas bioéticos contemporáneos, a partir de una perspectiva de bioética narrativa. Se trata de un artículo de carácter teórico-conceptual con enfoque hermenéutico-interpretativo, que articula procesos deliberativos para examinar la relación entre hechos, valores y deberes en contextos simbólicos. El anime, como industria cultural transnacional, se configura como un laboratorio narrativo donde se escenifican tensiones relacionadas con la identidad, la corporeidad, la autonomía y la tecnología, incluyendo problemáticas como la clonación, la eutanasia y la manipulación genética. A partir de la imaginación narrativa, estas representaciones permiten trascender la ficción, abriendo posibilidades de juicio prudencial aplicables a contextos reales y culturalmente diversos. Se concluye que la bioética narrativa contribuye a la deliberación y la resolución de dilemas, además de fortalecer la formación de agentes morales y orientar la acción en la vida cotidiana.

Palabras clave: Dibujos animados como asunto. Animación. Narración. Bioética. Cultura popular.

Resumo

Anime e bioética narrativa: dilemas éticos contemporâneos

A presente pesquisa tem como objetivo analisar as narrativas do anime como dispositivos de representação de dilemas bioéticos contemporâneos, a partir de uma perspectiva de bioética narrativa. Trata-se de um artigo de caráter teórico-conceitual com enfoque hermenêutico-interpretativo, que articula processos deliberativos para examinar a relação entre fatos, valores e deveres em contextos simbólicos. O anime, como indústria cultural transnacional, configura-se como um laboratório narrativo onde se encenam tensões relacionadas à identidade, corporeidade, autonomia e tecnologia, incluindo problemáticas como clonagem, eutanásia e manipulação genética. Por meio da imaginação narrativa, essas representações permitem transcender a ficção, abrindo possibilidades de julgamento prudencial aplicáveis a contextos reais e culturalmente diversos. Conclui-se que a bioética narrativa contribui para a deliberação e a resolução de dilemas, além de favorecer a formação de agentes morais e a orientação da ação na vida cotidiana.

Palavras-chave: Desenhos animados como assunto. Animação. Narração. Bioética. Cultura popular.

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Narrative bioethics in anime

Transnational cultural industry of a representational nature

Anime is an expressive art form with representational capabilities, through which the world is both reproduced and molded, acting as a symbolic mapping of reality. This cartography makes sense through its interaction with viewers, through the meaning they give it, and through the practices they engage in based on it. Within this framework, every way of conceptualizing the world is understood as a model, an abstraction. Even science produces representations that function as conceptual frames of reference, whether valid or not, to guide people's actions. However, representation in anime goes beyond simple shaping, since both the model and what is represented are inseparable parts of the representation itself. Furthermore, the role of those who consume these images is essential, since they are the ones who construct meaning based on language [1] and, at the same time, guide their practices according to those meanings [2].

Anime offers its fans, often referred to as otaku, the opportunity to draw insights, conduct analyses, and form opinions regarding situations related to everyday life, by providing them with symbolic elements that encourage them to consider themselves protagonists of their own reality. Anime narratives incorporate everyday dynamics that give rise to distinct forms of subjectivity, often far from Western or Eurocentric artistic standards. This representational nature is reinforced by the growing popularity of Japanese animation, which serves as a space of convergence where multiple meanings are expressed. This process strengthens the identity formation of the otakus, who see themselves as the bearers of their own discourse [3], while continually redefining themselves as a collective, subculture, or community.

However, the significance of anime is not limited to the local Japanese production scene, as it is now a far-reaching industry that produces and distributes content worldwide, having a decisive impact on global popular culture. This transnational nature broadens its appeal and facilitates the adaptation of its narratives to diverse audiences and cultural contexts, due to its narrative and aesthetic flexibility, which gives it remarkable symbolic power to engage audiences.

Throughout its storylines, the anime constructs scenes based on assumptions, exaggerations, or imaginary situations that challenge some of the notions associated with so-called Western common sense. In this way, these animated works make it possible to describe, examine, and even challenge the foundations of the apparent epistemological homogeneity that characterizes modern Western thought and its pretensions to universality. From this perspective, anime can be understood as a representational device that functions as a network of conceptualizations or models designed to convey phenomena in the world whose underlying nature is not directly perceptible [4].

Olivé [5] distinguishes between two types of representations. On the one hand, there are those of an objective nature, in which agents consider that descriptions of the state of the world faithfully reflect its concrete existence, regardless of beliefs, emotions, or attitudes. On the other hand, subjective representations, understood as particular ways of perceiving reality that influence both the actions of those who interpret it in that way and the social bonds that arise from those perceptions. In this context, beyond whether the portrayals created in anime can be considered faithful to reality or not, its fans attribute their own subjective interpretation to them, molded by each individual's unique life experiences and reading history, which ultimately gives these portrayals a particular and distinct purpose.

It can therefore be argued that both anime and theoretical models and scientific conceptualizations, as fictional forms of direct representation, are closely related to the artistic strategies found in disciplines such as literature, theater, and painting. All of them are based on creative principles that make it possible to abstract and make intelligible aspects of the real world [6,7], offering, through everyday fiction, *an imaginary description of real things* [8].

Anime is a creative description of the world that arises from an interpretive process, which in turn gives rise to new subjective reinterpretations crafted by each viewer. Therefore, by bringing together different ways of conceptualizing

experience, representation can expand or narrow the boundaries within which Western tradition conceives of the rational, the real, and the true. In this context, when discussing models, it is necessary to avoid deterministic views and to bear in mind the difference between asserting that A is B and treating A as if it were B. This distinction, which has its roots in Kant, points to the fact that experience does not relate to things in themselves, but rather to the representations we construct of them within the framework of experienced reality [4].

Thus, representation arises from the process of subjectivizing reality that occurs through lived experience. From this, a conceptualization of reality is developed, which is later interpreted and finally expressed. Consequently, representation is understood as the result of the interpretation carried out by those who assume the role of producers of meaning, transcending the idea of a simple reproduction of what already exists. Therefore, authors such as Hall [1] and Williams [9] have emphasized the importance of representation in the media and in popular culture as processes through which societies construct and transmit their identity.

It is important to examine how these representations give rise to narratives with such a compelling power to captivate millions of viewers around the world. Even people outside the Japanese cultural context have developed a strong connection to these everyday stories, which has led to a broad expansion of subjectivities that engage with Japanese tradition and project themselves toward the multiple worldviews that this form of expression and representation brings to life. In this context, anime has established itself as a prime platform for exploring bioethical dilemmas of great contemporary relevance, including cloning, euthanasia, genetic manipulation, and the quest for immortality, issues that spark controversy and open the door to critical analysis through the lens of narrative bioethics.

These issues take on particular significance when they intersect with narrative worlds influenced by technoscience, in which the relationship between identity, corporeality, and technology becomes central. This is the case in *Ghost in the Shell*, where the integration of the body and cybernetic systems destabilizes traditional notions of the self and consciousness. Through these configurations, issues related to autonomy, the continuity of the self, and the limits of humanity are brought into question, opening up ethical reflection on the redefinition of life in techno-scientific contexts.

Similarly, *Neon Genesis Evangelion* unfolds a narrative landscape in which technoscience not only shapes the environment but also permeates interpersonal relationships and the ways in which individuals understand their own existence. Identity conflicts, emotional tensions, and the search for recognition are all part of this plot, giving rise to deeply subjective experiences that challenge the relationship between the self and the other. In this way, technology becomes a medium that shapes experience, heightens vulnerability, and complicates the construction of meaning in times of crisis, broadening our understanding of bioethical issues from existential and relational perspectives.

Given the above, this article aims to analyze how anime narratives, as representational devices, shape and challenge contemporary bioethical dilemmas from the perspective of narrative bioethics, which integrates hermeneutic interpretation, moral deliberation, and symbolic experience. Furthermore, the study aims to examine the potential of anime as a space for ethical reflection, capable of influencing the formation of prudent judgments in diverse cultural contexts.

Anime narratives and narrative bioethics

In Japanese animated narratives, one can find metaphorical devices that encourage reflection on situations, albeit hypothetical ones, capable of illustrating everyday conflicts that call for bioethical solutions. That is why narrative bioethics is so important, both from a rational and an emotional perspective, as an approach that values the constant presence of narratives in the shaping of life—a presence that must be nurtured through inclusive and dynamic polylogical processes. Thus, through the creation and horizontal exchange of diverse axiological perspectives represented in narratives, it is possible to contribute to a

pluralistic worldview of society by addressing moral dilemmas from a casuistic-narrative perspective, according to Pinto [11].

In this regard, the author, based on Rocha [12], highlights the relevance of the stories addressed in the field of narrative bioethics, understood as methodological resources for the construction of morality in its theoretical and practical dimensions, and as moral vehicles that, through hermeneutic approaches to the narrative structures of human action, contribute to a principle-oriented bioethics characterized by ongoing moral deliberation.

Bioethical conflicts have found in narrative forms a space for contemporary deliberation, which, through metaphor and illustration, develop detailed descriptions of possible worlds. Here, narrative imagination is oriented toward a common sense that highlights its relevance to reflection on social issues, which, within a fictional framework, can contribute to decision-making in real-world contexts, prioritizing the value of existential experiences, often exploited by institutionalized social processes [13]. In this regard, imagination plays a pivotal role, as it transcends the abstract image, allowing the imagined *reality to become dynamic, giving rise to new images, new perspectives, and new experience, free from the constraints of facts* [14].

In addition to the case-based approach that characterizes narrative bioethics, one of its most significant and original contributions is the importance it places on interpretive aspects—which are at times mimetic and cathartic—that are capable of connecting the interpretation derived from a described, intangible reality with the experiential. This cut across the instrumental perspective of narrative, for, beyond the collection of narratives, the interplay between hermeneutics and the narrative storyline highlights the current controversies among diverse perspectives. The narratives focus on the concrete, the particular, and the importance of small stories, distancing themselves somewhat from broad determinism and embracing the uniqueness of individual experiences to enrich a universal perspective, which must constantly be in a process of back-and-forth [15].

Narrative transcends the simple illustration of issues or situations that require bioethical attention, as it constitutes a specific way of constructing knowledge and giving meaning to reality, in which values are made explicit and, at the same time, principles are reconstructed, promoted, disseminated, and reconfigured. It does not limit its scope to conflict resolution based on mechanisms or guidelines that must be followed according to regulations, since it can help justify moral decisions and actions within a shared symbolic framework, one that is open to interpretation from different perspectives and involves axiological principles that are often in conflict within human experiences [16].

From the perspective of narrative bioethics, it is possible to examine how bioethical dilemmas and conflicts that arise and are portrayed in different cultural contexts are illustrated and problematized. By transcending the field of animation as purely entertainment, anime narratives serve to illustrate situations that directly address individual and communal life journeys. These narratives are rooted in culturally diverse contexts and are projected onto Western settings located in peripheral sites of enunciation, where imaginaries take shape that transcend the dynamics of cultural consumption and function as subversive mechanisms in opposition to hegemonic narratives.

Narrative bioethics as a method

Methodologically, this article employed a qualitative approach of a theoretical-conceptual nature, grounded in a hermeneutic-interpretive perspective. This work is based on the analysis and synthesis of key authors in narrative bioethics, hermeneutics, and the theory of representation, through a critical reading aimed at identifying conceptual categories that enable us to understand anime narratives as settings for ethical reflection. In this regard, the study is conceived as a theoretical framework that, through the interpretation of narrative structures and their connection to contemporary bioethical dilemmas, establishes the potential of animations as a space for moral deliberation.

Various authors define narrative bioethics as a method from different perspectives. For example, Stys [17] argues that narrative bioethics is associated with storytelling from a literary perspective, emphasizing the possibility of a documentary

bioethics. Likewise, Barounis [18] views this bioethics as an opportunity to explore psychological spaces dominated by the dynamics of technoscience that influence medical experiences from the perspective of illness.

Although the concept of narrative bioethics has developed over time exclusively within the field of medicine, based on Ajana [19], and from an ethics applied to biomedicine, this concept encompasses a much broader field through hermeneutic approaches focused on narrative aspects, which transcend the boundaries of clinical bioethics to connect with different areas related to the medical humanities, literature, and philosophy.

Narrative bioethics is an ethical approach that focuses its analysis on narrative as a means of understanding ethical issues and moral justifications related to the life sciences and the technologies that impact them. Thus, for the author, this type of ethics is grounded in hermeneutics, given that interpretation is a fundamental element for understanding the phenomena under study, serves as a means of moral evaluation, and is also an ethical activity in and of itself. Therefore, narrative bioethics, as a transdisciplinary field powered by hermeneutics, is oriented towards action by approaching narratives from interpretive, deliberative, and dialectical perspectives, integrating processes of understanding and decision-making in the face of conflicts, problems, or situations that require bioethical responses [19].

For his part, Barton explains the importance of stories as tools that give concrete form to the inherent abstraction involved in ethical decision-making, thereby helping physicians who face bioethical dilemmas [20]. Likewise, the value of stories in their moral role lies in their ability to reveal implicit values by triggering reactions in individuals, appealing to their emotions, moving beyond passive observation, and encouraging emotional engagement among those who interact with the narratives [21].

Narrative has the power to give meaning and clarity to situations in the medical context, such as suffering and illness. In this regard, Thiele [22] defines moral imagination as the ability to place ourselves within narratives that present us with hypothetical realities and diverse possibilities for the future, thereby enabling us to analyze the associated risks and opportunities before they occur. This form of imagination has the ability to stir emotions and foster empathy through an understanding of other people's life experiences. Thus, narrative elements traditionally found in literature have been invaluable in helping healthcare professionals better understand phenomena such as death, illness, and pain [23].

Hawkins [24] argues that literature, through its narrative dynamics, is fundamental to the development of an intuitive form of knowledge, which he calls "epiphanic," related to bioethical education. Hence, narrative is the method par excellence for training health professionals with the aim of enriching their tacit knowledge.

According to Domingo-Moratalla [25], the problem with narrative bioethics lies in the fact that drawing on narratives can be mistaken for a lack of rigor. However, it is important to emphasize that both the soundness and rigor of research cannot be achieved solely through quantitative methods. When the problems or experiences being analyzed are incompatible with a mathematical deductive method, it is possible to achieve rigor in bioethical contexts by telling stories based on human experiences, while maintaining rigor, accuracy, and sincerity. The stories, therefore, have a positive impact on the development of the attitudes necessary for bioethics, giving meaning to the knowledge and deliberative processes that require a certain degree of sensitivity.

Thus, by understanding bioethics as a meeting place where multiple perspectives are possible, and by accepting itself as an additional perspective, we can grasp the importance of narratives. From a methodological and practical standpoint, these narratives teach us to adopt different perspectives, keeping in mind that each perspective is a way of constructing a story. They also help us become comfortable with the existence of many different viewpoints, recognizing that a single event can be understood and interpreted in multiple ways.

The deliberative method allows us to consider different perspectives in order to reach a decision with the greatest possible prudence and responsibility. This leads us to step back from our own perspective, trying to see things from different viewpoints, familiarizing ourselves with perspectives and narratives that enrich our understanding as we put ourselves in the other

person's shoes, and offering us the chance to accept that perhaps we are not right. That is why it is important to raise awareness through narratives while drawing on their connection to hermeneutics. For the author, the conceptual precision of this narrative bioethics is achieved through hermeneutic bioethics.

In bioethics, what is more important than knowing is asking ourselves what to do with what we know. The method in bioethics carries a historical weight that demonstrates how deliberation is, par excellence, the methodological hallmark of this transdisciplinary field. This is because bioethics must go beyond the mere recognition of judgments to understand how to form a judgment depending on the specific context, and thereby become competent in the exercise of making judgments while strengthening the capacity to judge. Therefore, it is essential for the deliberative method to foster attitudes such as dialogue, reflection, respect, and critical thinking, so that it can be truly substantive and not merely an instrumental, step-by-step guide filled with preconceived and external positions. This approach to bioethics is grounded in narrative, contributing to the development of a distinct method that moves away from empty opinions or discourses and avoids falling into deductive reasoning. Hence the importance of this narrative dimension from the perspectives of liberation and hermeneutics [25].

According to Almazán [26], based on Moratalla and collaborators [15], the interpretive processes associated with the deliberative method in decision-making tend towards a critical hermeneutics, as they recognize the importance of narratives and challenge positivist positions that advocate for instrumental reason rooted in a scientism that overshadows the possibilities for deliberation, relegating intention to the margins of beliefs and desires, leaving no room for rationality. Criticism of dogmatic positivism does not necessarily mean going to the other extreme. It is not a matter of rejecting all forms of rationality, since without it, deliberation would not be possible. That is why it is important to advocate for narrative reason grounded in an ethics of responsibility, or perhaps "bioethical narration," as the author puts it.

Narratives are fundamental to the deliberative method, for without them deliberation would be very precarious and susceptible to reproducing dogmatic practices. The narrative reasoning that unfolds in the exercise of deliberation leads to inevitable processes of interpretation that create tension between universal criteria, perhaps very close to moral relativism, but always in the presence of rational reflection on duties and values.

Meanings transcend the descriptive level, drawing on a symbolic rationale that accepts the symbol as a means of connecting with reality and, consequently, as something that has limits. Thus, narrative bioethics is not only a method for resolving moral conflicts or ethical problems; on the contrary, given its anthropological nature, it transcends theoretical and practical reason to embrace symbolic reason as a complement to human reason and is closely aligned with value-based judgment. Therefore, it acknowledges that assertive reasoning is always influenced by subjective judgments, which arise from the experiences of those who interpret and engage in the practice of reasoning. Human beings cannot detach themselves from their desiring nature, thereby preventing themselves from attaining absolute truth and, as Almazán says, generating only power relations and ideologies surrounding the truth they hope to discover. The deliberative methodology grounded in facts, values, and obligations is very clear when confronting biases that can lead to a disconnect between the analysis of events and the narrative. That is why it is important to remain vigilant to avoid reproducing situated values and interests while believing that one is constructing objective knowledge.

Almazán believes that imagination is essential to the deliberative process, since making the right decisions requires a different way of thinking and feeling [26]. This approach is both a method and an attitude, as it conceives of the other as a participant in the deliberative process and as a constitutive element of deliberation itself. Thus, the emphasis shifts toward considering multiple perspectives, which requires placing oneself in the other's position within a dialogue whose possibility rests, inevitably, on the imagination [26].

In the deliberative method, it is essential to show respect for diverse interpretations of the same narrative, while valuing narrative diversity through different conceptions rooted in plural

cultural perspectives. It is within the deliberative process that various narrative statements are articulated. According to Escríbar [27], these statements will foster a true universality, one that is critical, vigilant, and open to any transformation consistent with ethical principles. Thus, it is in the horizontal interrelation of diverse perspectives, and in their acceptance, that what the author considers to be a universal ethical criterion emerges.

According to Gracia [28], the deliberative method is based on argumentative decision-making processes that shift from approaches centered on full rationality or quantitative procedures toward a framework of probabilities and degrees of desirability of possible outcomes. Thus, it is much more firmly grounded in reasonableness, which allows for the opening of dialogical processes. The author bases his argument on philosophers such as Searle and collaborators [29] and Leder [30], who argue that the rationality of a classical model is insufficient to fully address what lies behind the reasons for acting, inviting further reflection on what is meant by deliberation. From this perspective, hermeneutics plays a fundamental role as a school of thought, insofar as it distances itself from claims that presuppose a single correct interpretation and recognizes the diversity of readings to which every text is open. This approach leads to the appreciation of multiple interpretations that, in a complementary way, broaden our understanding of phenomena.

Rationality is argued to be understood as an opportunity for dialogue and exchange, rather than a mechanism aimed at obtaining absolute truths. Gracia [28] argues that the bioethicist acts as a Socratic interlocutor who challenges the assumptions derived from established discourses and fosters dialogue and cooperation among participants, without claiming definitive certainty. In this context, interpretation involves becoming aware of one's own biases; identifying these biases allows for a deeper understanding and helps guide context-specific actions. Gracia [28] emphasizes that the bioethicist acts as a facilitator of deliberation through hermeneutics, moving away from the role of the expert who defines a single, morally correct path.

Thus, they must serve as coordinators and facilitators of processes, establishing themselves as points of reference for perspectives that are not entirely clear, and adopting a perspective that shifts the focus to help identify the blind spots in our own prejudices. Therefore, hermeneutics has the potential to identify this very essential characteristic of understanding by making us aware that we are part of political, historical, and cultural frameworks that shape our interpretations of the world. About this, the author draws on Gadamer [31], emphasizing that the hermeneutic method is based on the principle of dialogical openness, in which we reach out to others to learn and transcend our own perspective, as a form of rationality that is achieved only through dialogue and deliberation. It involves understanding human reason as problematic and deliberative.

Gracia [28] goes on to argue that deliberation is the ability to question our own perspectives on known phenomena, based on the viewpoints of others and through a rational process, which enriches and, perhaps, modifies our own perspectives. The author states that this is a way of constructing knowledge that goes beyond being understood as a mere method, as it involves evaluating possible shifts in perspective that, ideally, transform initial points of view. The deliberative process can be considered an art form, one that, grounded in respect and humility, acknowledges that listening to other perspectives enriches one's own understanding of the phenomena or events under analysis. Deliberation requires more skills than knowledge. It involves being neither restrictive nor prejudiced, remaining open to any possibility as a learned exercise, and challenging the assumption that we are the holders of reason; it is a process of self-education and self-analysis. Gracia [28] cites Sócrates Vlastos [32] as a foundational reference point for his philosophical approach, emphasizing the possibility that, through processes of liberation, each individual can construct their own answers and horizons of meaning. Within this framework, ethics is conceived as a practical form of deliberative reasoning that can be applied in both collective and individual contexts.

Thus, García [33] argues, referring to Nussbaum [34], that the narrative approach contributes to the bioethical method because it values concrete experiences, contingency, uncertainties, the effects of actions, and the relationships that exist between people within their contexts. In this regard, the author highlights the importance of narratives as

examples that help us reflect and that can bring us closer to the decision-making processes involved in everyday life. Hence, the narrative transcends the method of bioethics, for it is not only a matter of understanding life; rather, narrative is the very way in which human life expresses itself. Narrative bioethics is grounded in these life narratives, in which every manifestation of life takes shape and expresses itself as ethical life, with values and responsibilities that guide it toward the best possible course [33].

Santos [35], based on the arguments of Martins and collaborators [36], asserts that the social sciences maintain their independence from the positivist quantitative method, which seeks to determine, predict, and explain concrete, physical, and biological reality, since this method is insufficient for understanding human experience, the meanings of life, and its uniqueness. In this regard, phenomenology emerges as the ideal research method for describing, reducing, and comprehending human experiences.

This phenomenological description, which the author refers to as a methodological approach, arises from the subject-researcher relationship, in which intersubjectivity is constructed through the narratives and experiences of the research subjects, who contribute to the interpretation of the structures they have experienced and endured in the events described. Likewise, during the phenomenological reduction, a more detailed hermeneutic exercise is carried out with the aim of understanding the language of the research subjects by familiarizing ourselves with the contexts, while putting ourselves in others' shoes and attempting to grasp the totality of the experience being related, thereby transcending the role of a mere spectator by understanding and being challenged by the identified meanings [35].

Analyzing the descriptions, Santos [35] asserts, allows us to uncover the essence of what is being investigated; and when repetitions are found in the discourses, we can determine whether the narratives described are sufficient to understand the phenomenon. Narrative bioethics and phenomenology as a methodology are closely related, because they seek to identify the essence of lived experience, of the experiential phenomenon, as well as its meaning; moving from the particular to the universal, they enable an understanding of phenomena through narrative by establishing connections between theory and practice.

The convergence between the phenomenological method and hermeneutics leads us to methodologically examine what Ricoeur [37] called hermeneutic phenomenology, which seeks to understand phenomena as constructs of the subjectivity and intersubjectivity of the individuals who perceive and identify them. This approach conceives the world as a field of evolving possibilities, rather than a concrete and immutable reality. Consequently, the phenomenon we seek to understand is shaped by the subjects' perceptions, mediated by their intentions and spatiotemporal perspectives.

Thus, following Fuster Guillen [38], this hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on the descriptions and interpretations that constitute the foundations of life experiences, their symbolic value, and the meaning that is constructed around them. This approach allows for an analytical examination of various ethical perspectives, drawing on everyday practices that can only be understood through experience. According to Moratalla [39], referring to Ricoeur's [37] arguments, phenomenology possesses hermeneutic qualities just as hermeneutics incorporates phenomenological preconceptions. This phenomenological perspective approaches the interpretation of the phenomenon from the experiential dimension of meaning that is constructed around the knowledge attained [40].

In short, the theoretical and methodological aim of this research is to explore possibilities for dialogue between narrative bioethics, the deliberative method, phenomenology, and hermeneutics, in order to gain a better understanding of the life journeys of the main characters in situations that exemplify bioethical problems and dilemmas depicted in anime. Despite the fictional nature of the characters and the narrative, it is hoped that, through their portrayal, we will be able to understand the situations illustrated, regardless of whether they are real or hypothetical, in order to gain insight into the essence and meaning of the experiences lived by the characters.

In this regard, hermeneutics allows us to unravel the symbolic richness of their plots, deliberation

sheds light on the conflicts of values present in the protagonists' decisions, and phenomenology opens up the possibility of grasping the subjective experience that viewers recognize and reinterpret in their own lives. Thus, the interpretation that emerges from these narrated experiences and the potentially real situations represented contributes to justifying, through deliberation, possibilities for choice in concrete contexts, thereby establishing anime as fertile ground for contemporary bioethical reflection.

Final considerations

Narrative bioethics allows us to understand anime as a narrative laboratory, a space in which dilemmas and conflicts are played out that, although fictional, directly speak to our daily lives. In its plots, fiction becomes a terrain of exploration where moral imagination—understood as the capacity to project prudential judgments within a shared symbolic field, one that is always open to interpretation, debate, and the tension between values—takes shape. In this context, anime serves as a cultural medium that brings together aesthetics, technology, and human experience, creating spaces for bioethical deliberation in diverse contexts.

From a theoretical-conceptual perspective grounded in hermeneutics, phenomenology, and the deliberative method, this work seeks to understand anime as a field of ethical inquiry that transcends its aesthetic and cultural dimensions, positioning it as a relevant setting for reflection on life, dignity, and justice from a contemporary perspective. This contributes to the consolidation of narrative bioethics as a perspective capable of integrating interpretation, experience, and deliberation in the analysis of complex dilemmas.

That said, we must not ignore the fact that the interpretation of these narratives is subject to inevitable limitations: the selection of works, the diversity of audiences, the plurality of cultural contexts, and even the gap that always exists between fiction and concrete social practice. Far from undermining reflection, these margins allow us to recognize the situated nature of interpretations and the need to maintain a critical vigilance toward processes of meaning-making.

In this vein, there is an opportunity to develop new studies that take a comparative approach to other cultural expressions such as manga, video games, and fantasy literature, as well as to explore the ways in which different youth and transnational audiences appropriate and reinterpret these narratives. Thus, anime can establish itself as an ideal medium for exploring contemporary bioethical dilemmas in diverse and globalized contexts, in which fiction and real life engage in a dialogue as part of the same process of constructing meanings.

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