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MEDITATIVE INTERACTIVITY:  
THE POWER TO CREATE THE SELF THROUGH THE VIRTUAL

Jessica Doyle

Submitted to the faculty of  
The Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

October, 2015

Accepted by the faculty of the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts in partial fulfillment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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October 31, 2015

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Jessica Doyle

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Beloved imagination, what I most like in you is your unsparing quality. The mere word “freedom” is the only one that still excites me.

André Breton, *First Manifesto of Surrealism*

One unbounded ocean of consciousness became light, water, and matter. And the three became many. In this way the whole universe was created as an unbounded ocean of consciousness ever unfolding within itself.

*The Upanishads*

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## ABSTRACT

Jessica Doyle

### MEDITATIVE INTERACTIVITY: THE POWER TO CREATE THE SELF THROUGH THE VIRTUAL

This dissertation examines philosophical modes of understanding subject formation within the realm of the virtual. I primarily base the evaluations within the concepts of misrecognition, alienation, and purposelessness found within the virtual world. I discuss the strength of the mirroring image while at play in the virtual game, which leads players to greater heights of understanding as to who they are and who they might become. Interactivity within the virtual, coupled with play and forms of meditative reflection, offer the player unique paths to finding freedom. Drawing primarily on the work of Jacques Lacan, G. W. F. Hegel, Martin Heidegger, and Friedrich Nietzsche, I demonstrate how creation within the virtual realm holds promise for an improved nature of becoming autonomous creators of one's life content and surrounding communities. My analysis takes Lacan's theory of the mirror stage by showing how the virtual uniquely provides choice beyond the self. Hegel's concepts of self-consciousness, spirit, and mind are linked in the broader sense to the virtual space. Nietzsche's views on self-creation and will to power are expounded upon within the ability to design one's life. Heidegger's views on technology and authenticity are considered in relation to the authentic inner self found when playing.

I argue that the emerging genre of virtual play is not as much about a personal escape, but that of a spiritual journey. The power of becoming self-aware is understood in terms of its ability to enhance what one brings back to physical reality. The virtual experience does not deplete life's tangibility. Rather, it has the ability to give one's life new meaning, and imbue a stronger sense of self—a new impression of reality. It is my contention that virtual interactivity covertly activates the cognitive mode to return the player to a state of authenticity that was previously veiled.



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## Chapter One

### **The Medium of Virtual Play**

*To The Moon* constantly had me questioning my own choices in life and whether I'd be happier if my life had taken a different course.<sup>1</sup>

There is significant promise as to how an individual can identify her authentic inner self through the virtual experience. With an autonomous approach, creating experiences in virtual worlds can formatively alter the concept of one's identity. New possibilities of consciously becoming have the ability to reshape the lives of individuals in a profound way. Perspectives shift as the opportunity to make decisions in an aesthetic virtual environment provides users the chance to explore unique ways of interacting socially. Within the experience of virtual play, individuals can solve psychologically complex issues while in the comforts of a non-threatening environment.

In the following dissertation, I argue that engagement with interactive technologies can be viewed as a productive mode in forming an ideal self. By immersing in virtual Metaverses, the super-ego is displaced—which becomes key to authentic subject formation. A Metaverse, comprised of *meta* meaning “beyond” and *verse* standing for “universe,” relates to fictional, yet virtual worlds and communities. Within the Metaverse, room for free play abounds. In the virtual experience, people can now explore unique ways of interacting socially and individually. Within this space, a loss of self-conscious angst is found in a world that does not set people up for certain

freedom. While many people may believe they are free, in truth, the states of surveillance and conformity alone close in on most possibilities of an individual creating an authentic sense of self. Thus, I argue, the virtual world is constitutive in making sense of and amends with one's identity in the real. Through the act of meditative interactivity via these experiences in the virtual, one's sense of self can be created more clearly. It will be seen that, within the virtual, the automated concept of self is diluted by experiencing other realities where social codes, cultural norms, and ideologies are removed. The new self that is discovered through this interactive experience is not to be seen as a fantastical outlaw. The virtual experience, rather, becomes that of a unique tool for personal and social development in which the fullness of one's intellectual and creative potential becomes found and can be used within physical experiences.

Digital technology is advancing so quickly that the word "video game" has become an ambiguous and outdated term, though it is certainly becoming more accepted and discussed with serious connotations. Well-esteemed schools such as Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), University of Southern California, and New York University offer undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate degree programs in game studies, gamification, game research, game theory, and game design, along with courses and specialties in ethics regarding gaming.<sup>2</sup> These examples indicate that the field of virtual play is growing and gaining respect in academia. Experiencing the virtual is now discussed in broad areas such as media studies, humanities, psychology, sociology, fine arts, and philosophy programs. Interestingly, a clear definition has not

been established as to what the actions of play in virtual worlds should be called, as there is not necessarily a game component in all virtual communities. As such, these terms in no way fit the current direction toward which the medium is headed. Thus, for the purposes of my project, I will refer to the acts of virtual play as “playing in the virtual,” “virtual games,” “gameplay,” and “the virtual.” One who plays virtual games will primarily be referred to as a player or gamer. When discussing play in the virtual, the concept will encompass interactivity between the player and another source—computer-generated or live—on the other side of the game. This interaction through virtual play will be discussed as an actual—while virtual—encounter with an Other on the opposite side of the screen.

To discuss the history of the video game itself, it is relatively new in terms of digital technology. Video games began in the 1960s and 1970s though the history of games encompass the fundamental component of play from early civilizations.<sup>3</sup> The video game industry today is broad and multi-faceted with a multitude of sub-genres lying underneath the largely outdated umbrella term “video game.” Virtual games can run the gamut from arcade games, game consoles, and handheld video game consoles—to games on smartphones, computer games inserted into the computer drive from a disc or portable device, and online games that are found on the internet without any downloading necessary. Currently, there are new instances of virtual reality game systems being released. The virtual reality head-mounted screen, Oculus Rift, encapsulates the player’s entire view and is currently in the process of beta-testing.<sup>4</sup> In addition, there are various types of gameplay, that encompass action games, open

worlds, adventure games, interactive fiction, role-playing games (RPG), massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG), simulation games that allow the player to build virtual worlds, businesses, and social situations, strategy games, and many more genres.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, in the following chapters, I will reference various modes of virtual gameplay, including interactive three-dimensional virtual worlds, which do and do not consist of competitive aspects, indie games, and interactive narrative fiction. I link these digitally interactive experiences to the ability to hold power of creative autonomy which has the dynamic power to create an authentic self. Furthermore, I will use the pronoun “she” and “her” throughout the dissertation in order to ease the flow of reading. I will argue that the virtual game correlates to three central concepts: (1) misrecognition, (2) alienation, and (3) purposelessness. These modes will be fundamental to my claim that the virtual has the ability to create a desired self. It is my contention that virtual interactivity covertly activates the cognitive mode to return the player to a state of authenticity that was previously veiled. By playing games without specific objectives and interacting in an aesthetically pleasing wonderland, the player experiences higher states of self-awareness.

The virtual game, then, can be seen as a new form of creativity with power to shift perspective. The passive viewer who previously participated in watching is now interacting and making decisions. Within the interactive virtual experience, the player believes, in a sense, that she is in the world, as the virtual becomes another version of

the real. Games hold deep and meaningful stories, which include philosophical concepts such as free play, tragedy, inspiration, challenge, and beauty. The experience of entering a landscape of play can indeed be seen as a form of departure from the everyday, however, I view this type of liberation as something that causes one to delight in the freedom of play and non-consequential decision-making as opposed to an escape.

The act of gameplay can be understood in terms similar to G. W. F. Hegel's master-slave dialectic, where the slave and master fight for the recognition of the Other. Only when the slave mentally overcomes the master and is comfortable with the work she has to do does she attain the highest level of self-consciousness. The master and slave—or lord and bondsman—dynamic can be understood in a literal sense or attributed within various levels of consciousness that one can attain in life. If the slave is working, then she slowly realizes that she indeed does have a portion of control, for if she ceases to work, there will be no more master. Due to the slave understanding her power, she becomes master over objects and then becomes conscious. The sense of freedom from slavery occurs due to the slave not holding back and risking a sense of mediocre comfort. The sense of freedom attained can also be seen as absolute mind or *Geist*.<sup>6</sup> To understand the metaphor within the virtual realm, the player also removes herself from her immediate surroundings mentally and does not look for recognition from the Other in her physical space. She rather becomes at one within the virtual where she interacts and reaches higher levels of self-consciousness in the Metaverse. With this, it may be understood that the desire for the slave to over-



turn the power of the master is necessary in order to achieve ultimate personhood.<sup>7</sup> Hegel asserts that the slave is gradually being “transformed into a truly independent consciousness.”<sup>8</sup>

Once the act of play combined with a higher level of self-consciousness is understood, the aesthetics of the game is noticed. While considering that aesthetics do not begin and end within the visual sense alone, the visual attributes are what initially propel the virtual experience into the category of art. When combined with interactive possibilities, the virtual can be seen as the end of art as it has been known because the viewer is now a participant who has stepped inside of the aesthetic experience. The viewer is now part of the work. The process heavily contrasts with all prior encounters with works of visual art, where the viewer remained at a physical distance when viewing work. Further, previous works of art did not entail the viewer making unlimited conscious choices while interacting with the art piece. The virtual allows the viewer to be involved with the creation of a unique work of art each time it is experienced, thereby making overt the understanding of the player’s power as the artist or creator of her own destiny. The power that the player encompasses is otherwise veiled in external reality due to the ego’s drive toward conformity and security.

Visual art allows one to behold a new state of awareness, that may or may not encompass an aesthetic nature, yet offers one to see a glimpse into an otherworld. While aesthetics, as it has been considered, is something that may be significant to the player, I argue that the greater desire now is to find a place of releasing—which does

not only rely on the power of representation or beauty per se. Therefore, contemporary aesthetics can be redefined to include the awareness of the player and the alliance with one's inner beauty. In games that are drawn quite crudely that resort to typing commands or words to create certain scenarios between user and character, a new sense of understanding through language is found. As an example, in the PC video game *Façade*, the player types text to create changes in an intimate social space.<sup>9</sup> The characters react to the typing of the player and the whole scenario changes based on simple changes in sentences. The player assumes the role of a friend of a couple who had invited the player to their home for cocktails. There is a clear disruption between the couple once the player enters the house. *Façade* then allows the player to type sentences to communicate with the couple, which could lead to a myriad of scenarios for the player and the host and hostess. These are virtual experiences, yet they offer lessons and tales that may benefit one's life—similar to literature and film—yet this time the player is involved and integral to the story's path, consequences, and ending.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, while the aesthetic nature is significant, the experience is something that is interactive. The imagery can appear to be aesthetically pleasing though not always relevant. What matters now is the active play between viewer and game, which can result in delight, pleasure, satisfaction, and motivation. The quote at the beginning of this chapter brings to light the power and impact which play in the virtual has upon society. It can be seen that the virtual transports minds, pre-conceived notions, and previously held ideological concepts.

To look at a contrasting point of view with reference to interactivity in current works of art aside from virtual play, the art movement called relational aesthetics can be seen as an example. Relational aesthetics is a term coined by French art critic, Nicolas Bourriaud, in his text, *Relational Aesthetics*.<sup>11</sup> Bourriaud discusses contemporary artist, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and his work, which consists of inviting participants to engage in activities that would normally be seen as an artist's reception. Food is served, and the atmosphere is hospitable. This pre-planned occurrence will happen in a physical space and offer interactivity between the viewers and spectators. In contrast, the virtual aspect of the gaming genre keeps the identity of the player anonymous. The spectator is now able to take more risks, due to the anonymous nature that does not hold the player to the same standards of being compared to the physical responses in an actual space. Relational aesthetics may seem to fulfill the same purpose as play in the virtual, though my argument focuses with the will of the player to "enter into" a game and temporarily disengage her everyday role in life in order to inhabit a more authentic version of her self. Virtual games, which may seem or be purposeless, have the potential to create purpose in one's life. It proves difficult to claim this same philosophical outlet with reference to the identity of a person in relational art, such as Rirkrit Tiravanija's works attempt to do. I argue that works such as Tiravanija's, which are designed to bring people together in a physical and communal sense, deeply contrast virtual interactivity. Works such as Tiravanija's hold importance in the physical closeness and proximity to fellow humans. Indeed, the purpose of the physical atmosphere is created to break away from the worries of isolated activities.

It is true that Tiravanija creates a space in which people can physically commune with one another and enjoy each other's company, bringing back the physical aspect of communication and camaraderie. However, the act of gaming is primarily an individual way of approaching art, very much like the traditional artist who works in solitude in her studio only to be able to tap into the understanding that occurs when putting brush to canvas. In the dissertation, I am not discussing the act of creating or designing games, but likening the act of playing in the virtual space to creating a work of art. This introspective involvement is akin to the artist that focuses on the work being created and shuts out the rest of the world, if only for the momentary time that she experiences the act of creating. The act of gameplay in this realm parallels that of meditative processes.

While it may be impossible to fully comprehend one's ultimate reality, the act of playing in the virtual brings the individual out of the spectacle of life and into the actuality of one's inner space—one's authentic self. The act of virtual play can be seen as that which leads one to a state of understanding of knowing akin to Martin Heidegger's notion of the hermeneutic way of searching and understanding. Heidegger states:

What is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it the right way... In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing. To be sure, we genuinely take hold of this possibility only when, in our interpretation, we have understood that our first, last and constant task is never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular concep-

tions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves.<sup>12</sup>

Looking at the virtual in this manner of interpreting brings up issues of responsible searching and continuing to discover, even if it seems to be a circular endeavor. Heidegger interestingly remarks the following, “What looks like disunity and an unsure, “haphazard” [*zufall*] way of “trying things out,” is an elemental restlessness, the one goal of which is to understand “life” philosophically and to secure a hermeneutic foundation in terms of “life itself.””<sup>13</sup> The searching and “trying things out” form new processes that allow the player to come to new impressions.

In addition to discovering new forms of knowing, the activity of play is central to the becoming process. In the virtual play space, the player may be utilizing the game from a physical stance, yet the workings of the mind begin to turn to play, which raises the levels of self-reflection in the player. Finding and better understanding the self, in effect, relates to the purpose of art. Here, we turn to an interpretation on the purpose of art. Stephen Houlgate discusses Hegel’s *Lectures on Aesthetics* as follows:

The principal aim of art is not, therefore, to imitate nature, to decorate our surroundings, to prompt us to engage in moral or political action, or to shock us out of our complacency. It is to allow us to contemplate and enjoy created images of our own spiritual freedom—images that are beautiful precisely *because* they give expression to our freedom. Art’s purpose, in other words, is to enable us to bring to mind the truth about

ourselves, and so to become aware of whom we truly are. Art is there not just for art's sake, but also for beauty's sake, that is, for the sake of a distinctively sensuous form of human self-expression and self-understanding.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, understanding the self better can be seen as equal to the purpose of art, as it can equate to a higher awareness of self. In addition to the purpose of art, the concept of free play is critical to understand the benefits of the experience within the virtual. Immanuel Kant sees free play as something that causes aesthetic pleasure in humankind.<sup>15</sup> Free play for Kant has no particular reason or ending point. Kant sees free play of the cognitive faculties as what sits between the imagination and understanding.<sup>16</sup> When combined with aesthetic appeal of visual form—albeit virtual—the understanding of being becomes significantly more complex.

With reference to playing in the virtual, the activity can also be seen as a form of learning. The Greek word “illusion” translates to “to play.” Plato sees the means of play to be good for the society as it amuses people and puts forth a sense of freedom.

Plato maintains:

The free man always has time (*schole*) at his disposal to discourse in peace at his leisure. He will pass, as we are doing now, from one argument to another... The orator is always talking against, hurried by the clock, there is no space (*ascholia*) to enlarge on any subject he chooses...<sup>17</sup>

Plato sees the notion of play to be good—to a point. However, for Plato, if play is

taken too seriously it could be detrimental to one's mind, as it could lead to one believing in illusions. It is clear to see that the industry of gaming is commonly blamed for many crimes and blight, as it is thought that players take the game too far, that is, that they mistake the virtual for the real. This topic constitutes larger societal issues, such as addiction, that will be covered later in the dissertation.

Today, societal life has become a game of sorts where individuals work, often to such a degree, that it could cause one to break down without a release.<sup>18</sup> Thus, pathways to imagination can be viewed as a positive experience in obtaining a clear sense of self-awareness. The use of imagination—or even the ability to pretend in the virtual—offers a release that gives one a sense of fulfillment, as, even if for a short time, the individual removes herself from the world of objects. When contemplating the experience of physical work with little liberation, it becomes clear to see playing as beneficial. Thus, throughout the dissertation, it will be questioned, what does playing in the virtual have to do with individual identity?

### **The Virtual as a Creative Medium**

In 1969, an exhibition opened in New York at the Howard Wise Gallery entitled, *TV as a Creative Medium*. This exhibition prompted many visual artists to take the art of video to a new level of creativity. However, to contrast the difference between television and virtual games, it is important to realize that playing a game involves interaction and decision-making that dictates what occurs next in the scenario. In reference to television and video, the moving images seen only take the viewer so

far—viewers are left to decipher what they saw or possibly be able to critique what they were shown. In the virtual game, there are reactions and decisions that involve the opposite side of the screen as each move that the player makes changes the experience. Whether the opposite side of the screen is computer controlled or a live human being, a reactive response occurs for the player. In the television viewing experience, live response nor decision occurs.

While the 1969 exhibit sparked the video art movement, it is not yet clear when the virtual game as creative medium will be commonplace in contemporary art exhibitions—as video has become. Typically, when one thinks of the term video game, contemporary art, academia, or philosophy are not commonly brought to mind. There has been hesitant, yet incremental, moves that bring the game within the realm of art and philosophy.<sup>19</sup> The Museum of Modern Art declared video games to be regarded as a form of art. MoMA purchased fourteen video games in November 2012 and displayed the games in 2013 in an exhibit entitled *Applied Design*.<sup>20</sup> Most of the games are playable, with the screen placed behind a barren wall and a joystick or controller ready for the user to pick up and play. The exhibition was one of the first to include video games as works of art, which, in addition to the increasing number of academic degrees in emergent media noted earlier, offers a great deal about the future of the medium. Furthermore, since those early instances, more museums have purchased video games for both exhibition and relic-saving purposes. It is clear that virtual games are becoming more accepted and the acknowledgement by the art world signals promise for the medium. Marshall McLuhan comments:



The medium, or process, of our time—electric technology is reshaping and restructuring patterns of social interdependence and every aspect of our personal life. It is forcing us to reconsider and re-evaluate practically every thought, every action, and every institution formerly taken for granted. Everything is changing: you, your family, your education, your neighborhood, your job, your government, your relation to “the others.” And they're changing dramatically.<sup>21</sup>

McLuhan goes on to say, “Until writing was invented, man lived in acoustic space: boundless, directionless, horizonless, in the dark of the mind, in the world of emotion...”<sup>22</sup> Thus, in this new virtual space, people have the capabilities to use the potentialities of the virtual medium in a new direction, and to reclaim newly envisioned aspects of the vastness of that prior acoustic space. People now see horizons in the virtual that are not yet there in the physical. The ability to view potentials offers a new form of vision to the player.

Contemplating the aesthetic nature of art, it is seen that there are certain qualities that art may hold aside from the notions of beauty and truth. In the same manner that Clive Bell envisions art as being that which encapsulates aesthetic emotion, gameplay can be understood similarly in various means within virtual scenarios. Bell observes that much of aesthetic work is not perceived in mainstream society. Thus, it can be seen that time in the virtual offers new interpretations of aesthetic forms of beauty and truth to more people that would not have had access to works that promote aesthetic emotion as easily.

Essential to this argument lies the potential for virtual games to engage, inform, and make one think about crucial issues in one's life and physical reality. This new perceptibility within the virtual has the ability to promote aesthetic emotion that does not necessarily need to have a purpose, as it leads one to access her thoughts. There is a metaphysical sensibility that hovers within the activity of gameplay vis-à-vis the virtual. This spiritual insight clearly has the power to transcend the physical. Perhaps playing in the virtual can act as a passage into the noumenal world—as the experience encapsulates the ability to create the authentic self without all senses being used.<sup>23</sup> It is interesting to consider that the concept of the virtual may have even been predicted centuries before the digital era. Kant relays that people could not see in a noumenal sense, yet perhaps the new experience within the virtual can be understood as a portal into understanding another way of being.<sup>24</sup> The noumena can be seen as intuitive, and the more virtual play is experienced with greater frequency—the more intuitive a person might become. Intriguing to the world of virtual play, Kant states in a letter to his friend in the eighteenth century:

The mind, though not constantly on the stretch, must still, alike in its idle and in its favourable moments, lie uninterruptedly open to any chance suggestion which may present itself. Relaxations and diversions must maintain its powers in freedom and mobility, so that it may be enabled to view the object afresh from every side, and so to enlarge its point of view from a microscopic to a universal outlook that it adopts in turn every conceivable standpoint, verifying the observations of each by means of all the others.<sup>25</sup>

Gameplay, thus, can be observed as an entertaining pastime only, though I argue that these entries into the virtual are a new component to the discovery of an unrestricted sense of self. The virtual can be seen as a new way to come to higher awarenesses.

### **Misrecognition**

A renewed formation of self can occur through various measures within the virtual game—and it begins with misrecognition. Misrecognition occurs when the player retreats from her conscious and conditioned state of being and enters into an entirely new way of being. In order to understand misrecognition as that which benefits the creation of one's identity, Jacques Lacan's theory of the mirror phase is considered and fits nicely within the virtual space.<sup>26</sup> Looking in the mirror, the individual sees herself as an ideal "I," an image of a constant unattainable perfection. Lacan states that we are always searching for this self that we can never reach, as it is, in a sense, only a replication of who we are. Lacan sees that this ongoing search causes a fragmented identity, which occurs before language and creates the ego.

Initially, what lures the player to enter the game experience is a yearning for recognition from the Other on the opposite side of the screen—the technological counterpart. Once involved in the virtual, the player, then utilizes new ways of thinking and being, which work to an advantage authentically—and the yearning for recognition becomes more fulfilled. The self-formation process is one of becoming, rather than being—and the experience in the new digital reflection offers an opportu-

nity to become more. The actualization of who one wants to be is now attainable through the virtual.

### **Alienation**

Through the exploration of the virtual, many avenues are found where a person can utilize the technology to any degree that she wants. Interestingly, there is still a space of societal disdain towards the technology of the game in the virtual. Thus, in order to see the beneficial aspects within the virtual, we come to the second aspect that helps to achieve a more authentic sense of identity—alienation. While alienation may not be commonly seen as beneficial to the individual, I claim that the experience of alienation—coupled with the sense of anonymity—can help the player to step back from outside reality for a time in order to step inward to the real self. When the player is anonymous, she is, in a sense, free. When playing the virtual game, the mode of anonymity allows the player to be whoever she wants to be. The player continues to hold a desire for recognition, which continues to circulate the need as a life drive or pleasure principle. These modes of alienation and anonymity are always available within the virtual game.

Karl Marx speaks of the alienation that is found commonly in a worker who does not live for herself, but rather for the commoditized object she creates in her work:

[H]e does not fulfill himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, does not develop freely his mental and physical energies but

is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker, therefore, feels himself at home only during his leisure time, whereas at work he feels homeless. His work is not voluntary but imposed, forced labour. It is not the satisfaction of a need, but only a means for satisfying other needs.<sup>27</sup>

The concept of alienation can be changed into a positive response, where the player feels at home in a temporary alternate space in order to discover her real self. The experience within the virtual game not only provides an individual the entry-point into a space of fantasy, but it enables a person to see her freedom more clearly. To find the sense of freedom, the person may need to step back and momentarily distance herself in a state of alienation to better connect with her autonomous self. Alienation can also be referred to as separation or indifference, which allows for the self to observe more succinctly. In a juxtaposing manner, then, the alienating space can be turned around into a meditative experience.

While many thinkers and philosophers have stated so, Jacques Rancière claims that all humans are equal and should be treated as such. Rancière indicates the need for a dissensual rising against the state of conformity and fear. Rancière states, “The management of insecurity is the most appropriate mode of functioning of our consensual states/societies.”<sup>28</sup> Any person who desires to, can indeed become a conscious creator of her life. With the power of a dissensual population, life can become a creative journey. Dissensual is seen as the opposite to consensual. A consensual population will not create change or evolve into greater potential. A consensual peo-

ple will create a balance of the same. According to Rancière, to live past the authority or group consensus of democracy, the people can rise above and take over the “automatic consensus, which is to say the harmonizing of the daily negotiation of pleasures with the collective brokerage of power and its re-distribution.”<sup>29</sup> In a similar vein, I propose a paradigmatic shift whose aim is to correct a perceptual imbalance which regards most virtual games as mindless and pointless. For the elimination of the virtual or the game in the virtual would not significantly change the course of life in any positive sense, as that would be a non-evolving state of being. Rancière further states: “An art is emancipated and emancipating when it renounces the authority of the imposed message, the target audience, and the univocal mode of explicating the world, when, in other words, it stops wanting to emancipate us.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, while the world of the virtual is open to anyone, it does not shout that it is built for freedom, but rather, it is if used for that purpose.

### **Purposelessness**

The third and last primary component I claim that aids the player in the virtual is the concept of purposelessness. Purposelessness within the virtual gives one a sense of the timeless, which is, after all, an attribute that one often looks for in art. In Chapter Five of the dissertation, I will differentiate between Eastern and Western purposelessness in reference to the concept of meditative interactivity. However, to introduce purposelessness in reference to the virtual here, we begin with concepts of Eastern

thought. With this, purposelessness can further be linked to play, and it is held with deep thought and care.

*Leela*, the term used in Hinduism, means playfulness, and that is what is said to be important to the wise—the sense that life is a celebration and should be treated as such. While virtual play may not initially seem to be a path towards becoming above or beyond enlightened, the concept of play can certainly bring one to higher insight—which is a crucial point to the world of the virtual. Thus, the potential that the virtual game holds—offering new ways of looking, observing, and becoming—is not yet understood in this way, as the name “game” brings up various Western references that are not commonly linked with the development of the self.

### **Examples of Purposelessness in Virtual Games**

In examining purposelessness, it is important to consider Kant’s notion of purposefulness without purpose. Kant speaks of art that is created consciously, though it is to look as if it was created with no effort. This indifferent state to creating on purpose is compelling to consider in relation to the virtual, as the technology has indeed been created by the designers, though the mechanisms, controls, and ease of use is created to be user-friendly and intuitive. Kant states, “It must have the look of nature even though we are conscious of it as art.”<sup>31</sup> The concept of purposelessness relates to Kant’s “purposefulness without purpose” concept from the Third Critique as

the human experience that gives the individual the ability to expand her conscious mind. The involvement of creating freely without specific objectives leads to an opening of awarenesses, through an experience of free play. Thus, there becomes an opening of perceptive and imaginative qualities, though the clarity does not begin with a specified purpose.<sup>32</sup>

The following three examples reveal purposelessness experienced in the virtual realm. In these examples, it can be seen that the pleasure in discovering more about the self and the Other becomes more important than any object-directed incentives. The user-generated, community-driven virtual platform developed in 2003, *Second Life*, allows the player to become immersed in a new “world” that is outside and free from circumstances or limits in the physical world.<sup>33</sup> While the game is not as popular as it was when it was first developed, a count of active users per month was recently reported to be one million.<sup>34</sup> Virtual communities without objectives such as *Second Life* display that there is promise for individuals to experience new ways of creating identity. A pertinent question could be, what is this desire to create a second life?

The player’s avatar can be chosen from scratch, and she can become whomever she wants. The player’s identity is not consciously perceived—she is anonymous. Clearly, when one is anonymous, one has no externally known identity. Here, in the virtual space, the non-identity is what gives the player a neutral tool to use to her advantage. Further, when one is anonymous, she needs no measure for being authentic,



true, or ethical. This opportunity will put forth a sense of relief, without concern for judgment.<sup>35</sup> If an individual is non-identifiable in the virtual, she can create the aesthetic semblance of who she thoughtfully wants to be. Not only does the purposelessness of the experience lead to a greater sense of the real when away from the platform, but the game of role-playing also becomes a framework to test boundaries safely without actual societal risk. Thus, there is a more pungent sense of the real because the individual is not tied to the conditioned “self.” This virtual play represents a new philosophical outlet for the conscious creation of identity.

In addition, while the game *Braid* is a puzzle-platform game that can be seen as holding a purpose, it may be more accurately seen as that which finds personal purpose through non-objectified purposelessness.<sup>36</sup> *Braid*'s website describes the game as:

A platform game in a painterly style where you manipulate the flow of time to solve puzzles. *Braid* treats your time and attention as precious. *Braid* does everything it can to give you a mind-expanding experience. Journey into worlds where time behaves strangely; observe, learn from, and then master these worlds.<sup>37</sup>

*Braid* takes one on an unending path, offering a new way of feeling and viewing socially structured thoughts of ending, retiring, leaving, and exiting. In the virtual, there are no boundaries of language or stereotypes—and this leads to non-anxious states. Thus, while one may begin the game with a sense of anxiety, the state is withdrawn while playing. For Heidegger, anxiety is necessary in order to achieve a renewed state

of the self, as it passes through the acknowledgement of nothing.<sup>38</sup> The virtual game, then, first approaches the state of angst, and then enters into a non-optimized state, or as Heidegger says, indifferent state. Hubert Dreyfus discusses Heidegger's warning of practices that are built upon too much efficiency and optimization. Here, he states that Heidegger calls for a more relaxed or insignificant mode of reality, which it seems would be built more upon a relaxed authenticity:

...we must learn to appreciate marginal practices—what Heidegger calls the saving power of insignificant things—practices such as friendship, back-packing into the wilderness, and drinking the local wine with friends. All these practices are marginal precisely because they are not efficient. (They can, of course, be engaged in for the sake of health and greater efficiency). This expanding of technological efficiency is the greatest danger. But these saving practices could come together in a new cultural paradigm that held up to us a new way of doing things, thereby focusing a world in which formerly marginal practices were central and efficiency marginal. Such a new object or event that grounded a new understanding of reality Heidegger would call a new god. This is why he holds that “only another god can save us.”<sup>39</sup>

Thus, it is applicable to consider the notion that better optimization is not necessarily what we should be striving for in life—but rather an almost non-efficient experience would cause one to appreciate her life more. When considering play with purposelessness, then, it becomes clear that the virtual can serve as an authentic space for “naturally forming” experiences and communities. For, if we are headed towards a fervent state of progress without any promise for humanity, one might question, why work towards states of optimization? The 2011 film, *Surviving Progress*, touches

upon similar ideas, as it states that the drive for more progress will ultimately cause a choke hold on humanity.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the need is present to understand technology and use it for greater connection to the self and the Other, rather than a certain “optimization”—as technology can assist the next step into a state of destruction or evolution.

With further consideration of a sense of purposelessness or journey towards no destination in particular, we access the state of meditative interactivity. A meandering journey to nowhere in a Metaverse, which is not fast-paced nor multi-tasked, and brings the player into a state of calm. This form of being can then translate into physical reality when not playing. In the virtual, it is clear that there is no destination. The progress that is created is indeed real, though it is held in a virtual setting—it becomes about the now and it remains limitless. The experience of the virtual clearly sits within the boundaries of one’s own consciousness. The state of purposelessness, then, becomes an entry-point into slowing down from a fast-paced society. That is, there is value, but the value is not in the end—the value is intrinsic. When one does not need a purpose, one may simply celebrate her being and path on the way to becoming. By way of Eastern thought, Osho (Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh), twentieth-century Eastern philosopher, explains the beauty of purposelessness:

It is very difficult, particularly for the Western mind, to understand that life is purposeless. And it is beautiful that it is purposeless. If it is purposeful then the whole thing becomes absurd—then who will decide the purpose? Then some God has to be conceived who decides the purpose, and then human beings become just pup-

pets; then no freedom is possible. And if there is some purpose then life becomes businesslike, it cannot be ecstatic. The West has been thinking in terms of purpose, but the East has been thinking in terms of purposelessness. The East says life is not a business, it is a play. And a play has no purpose really, it is nonpurposeful. Or you can say play is its own purpose, to play is enough. Life is not reaching towards some goal, life itself is the goal. It is not evolving towards some ultimate; this very moment, here and now, life is ultimate.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, it can be seen that the re-thinking of purpose—and questioning the role of optimum efficiency in society—can function as important parts to the equation of discovering the inner self more authentically. There are many virtual games that offer this purposeless and ongoing experience where the player does have the chance to obtain greater emotion, and thus raise her self-consciousness to a purer level. As an example, the interactive fictional narrative video game, *To the Moon*, incorporates elements of the virtual and dramatic fiction. The player is taken on a journey with characters, shapes, stories, and a narrative, which leads to a tragic, yet cathartic ending. Players have been so affected by the game that, after playing, they could not listen to the game soundtrack without feeling deeply emotional. This interrelationship offers evidence of the empathetic associations the virtual offers to the player's experience. Further, as in the opening quote to this chapter, the understanding is that the virtual game indeed offers new forms of self-reflection for the player.

Further, the virtual game can be seen from a philosophical standpoint as a moving image that the player can control. The game and its usability give power and

recognition to the player. A person can be who or what she wants to be now—even if it is in the mind via the virtual space. Making interactions with virtual characters causes one to forget her given and conditioned social roles. Certain games take the viewer on a journey where she is the character working with others to make assertive choices, which leads her to have emotional reactions towards the place and time of the game itself. This virtual experience does not deplete life's tangibility. Rather, it can give one's life new meaning, and imbue a stronger sense of self—a new impression of reality. It can even be observed that the clear channel to higher enlightenment via the virtual has been hoped for and predicted by philosophers throughout the history of written philosophy. The virtual has become a passage that one can enter through the mind, and the ability to control one's self becomes evident. The sensibility discovered could be the reality that Friedrich Nietzsche hoped for humankind.

Nietzsche sees the world as complacent and conforming, where citizens rarely live to their fullest potential. He sees that humanity as a whole conduct their lives in a centuries-old predetermined fear-based mentality, which keeps them from becoming designers of their lives. Here, within the virtual game, a window has opened where the potential for authentic freedom of self can perpetuate. Further, the virtual game being situated within an aesthetic world indeed encompasses forms of art that cannot be denied. Aesthetic modes of representation offer the player new sensibilities when playing. These sensibilities are indeed visually, audibly, and mentally aesthetic, as the virtual is not purely words, numbers, and symbols. In addition, visual beauty can be

found in the virtual—even in the images of horror or terror. Awe-inspiring visual portrayals have the ability to affect the player in a wondrous way. Kant states that feelings such as delight and pleasure can only come from the aesthetic experience, and it creates goodness in the world that continues to allow people to open their minds to new ideas.<sup>42</sup> Kant discusses the aesthetic worth of poetry, and we can look at his words as a harmonious metaphor to virtual play:

Poetry (which owes its origins almost entirely to genius and is least willing to be led by precepts of example) holds the first rank among all the arts. It expands the mind by giving freedom to the imagination and by offering, from among the boundless multiplicity of possible forms accordant with a given concept, to whose bounds it is restricted, that one which couples with the presentation of the concept a wealth of thought to which no verbal expression is completely adequate, and by thus rising aesthetically to ideas.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, in the following chapters, these concepts will be exemplified and expounded upon, leaving room open to understand the evolution of the creation of the self.

## Chapter Two

### **Foundational Dynamics of the Virtual**

The goal to be reached is the mind's insight into what knowing is. Impatience asks for the impossible, wants to reach the goal without the means of getting there. The length of the journey has to be borne with, for every moment is necessary; and again we must halt at every stage, for each is itself a complete individual form, and is fully and finally considered only so far as its determinate character is taken and dealt with as a rounded and concrete whole, or only so far as the whole is looked at in the light of the special and peculiar character which this determination gives it.

—G. W. F. Hegel  
*The Phenomenology of Mind*

### **Lacan's Mirror As Virtual Screen**

In the following chapter, I will examine the components that comprise the virtual game as a form that allows for subject formation. To begin, I examine the concept of misrecognition as one of three essential components towards finding authenticity through the virtual. In considering misrecognition, Jacques Lacan explains that the mirror stage is a developmental period when the infant recognizes herself in the mirror as a whole being rather than the previous loose experiential sense of boundaries between baby and mother. Prior to viewing the self in the mirror, the child did not know or understand the difference between self and other. Once the child sees herself in the mirror, she observes the "I." In the current digital age, we can view the screen similarly to the mirror.

The vision in the mirror, or more contemporarily—the screen—gives one the image and idea of the reflected “I” or the ideal self. The mirror stage, Lacan says, is a formative period of identification for the individual, and the unending process of connecting with the outer self—compared to the inner or spiritual self.<sup>44</sup> Lacan, being highly devoted to Freud, states the revelation in the mirror creates an identity that is alienating—or it gives the individual the idea that her self is more unique than other people. Here, Lacan says the individual now becomes in search of an objectified “thing,” rather than “who” she is being. In the mirror, the individual sees her self as a form and does not recognize her inner self when she looks at her reflection. When she sees that she is not living up to her quality as an object, she then becomes anxious. With these concepts, we begin to understand individual subjectivity. Lacan states:

But the important point is that this form situates the instance of the *ego*, before its social determination, in a fictional direction, which will always remain irreducible for the individual alone, or rather, which will only rejoin the development of the subject asymptotically, whatever the success of the dialectical syntheses by which he must resolve as *I* his discordance with his own reality.<sup>45</sup>

The forming of the outer self, then, is the birth and the development of the ego. However, Lacan states that the mirror stage does diminish and the self needs to interact with others. He says that this transition can become difficult for some who grow close to searching for their ideal “I” in the reflection. These concepts also bring up the topic of narcissism, which will be further addressed in Chapter Seven. Lacan asserts that



the process of understanding the difference between the ideal and the real creates a misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) of the “I.”<sup>46</sup> The misrecognition experienced in the mirror stage causes the individual to become an Other to herself at the very moment of the emergence of the reflected being in the mirror. Lacan maintains that for the rest of the individual's life, every form of identity that she tries or person she meets will be a misrecognition of this initial, inadequate experience.<sup>47</sup> Lacan says further:

Just as the infant is now dependent on the mirror—the current *other*—to identify himself in the image, he will later be dependent on language as the *other* to identify himself in “the dialectic that will henceforth link the *I* to socially elaborated situations.”<sup>48</sup>

The screen now offers the individual innumerable worlds to enter. The person may or may not see her reflection each time she looks into the screen, though, now, she is being shown that more is reachable when looking in. Thus, Lacan's theory of the mirror stage as the starting point of falsely believing the self is an enigmatic “thing” to behold and search for is in favor of the open-ended notion of the virtual. For Lacan, the virtual could indeed function as an opening-up to the understanding that the self is more than the “object” the individual first notices as its reflection. While the mirror image is a starting point for reflecting, I claim that the new reflection in the screen becomes an origin for understanding.

### **Truth in the Digital Mirror**

When looking into the screen, the image reflected magnifies what the player could conceivably imagine. The reflection in the screen is not always a mirror image, but can be any fantastical image or scene the player desires. The reflection can be filled in a unique way due to the virtual gameplay experience. Looking into the mirror (screen) can be noted as a positive stage that offers a free space of independence. Today, when an individual looks into the screen, she not only sees herself reflected, but she can view a brand new world of fantasy figures, characters, dreams, visions, and possibilities.

The concept of the mirror is quite paramount when considering the formation of identity. Japanese mythology refer to *The Three Imperial Regalia* (sanshu no jingi) otherwise known as *The Three Sacred Treasures of Japan*. In these stories of legend, the three main life powers are discussed. Reverence was given to the power of the sword, jewel, and mirror.<sup>49</sup> The origin of the myths is not accurately known, though it is clear that the stories were told in the Middle Yayoi period circa 250 B.C.<sup>50</sup> The three of these powers can be seen closely relating to many forms in gaming, though the screen can be revealed closely with this notion of the mirror. The mirror was thought to be the most important power of the three. Thus, it can be seen that the mirror is not a type of shield or barricade from truth. It can be, instead, a passage into new worlds and frames of mind. The power of the mirror has the ability to focus and refocus to an infinite degree. In the stories, the Japanese saw the mirror as that which offers true self-knowledge. Fourteenth Century Japanese writer, Kitabatake Chikafusa

states, “The mirror reflects from its bright surface every object as it really is, irrespective of goodness or badness, beauty or the reverse. This is the very nature of the Mirror which faithfully symbolizes truthfulness.”<sup>51</sup>

Perhaps the most critical part to consider in reference to the mirror and misrecognition is the power to view the self from a different vantage point. While attempting to discover the ideal self in the screen, the viewer can obtain a new sense of recognition. While, at times, a player can see her self in the screen due to a camera loaded on the game device or console—the screen does, in fact, function as a mirror. This type of digital mirror, then, can be seen as the most potent power, as it there that she discovers truth and wisdom. In his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel discusses self-consciousness reflected in the chapter entitled, *The Truth of Self-Certainty*:

With self-consciousness, then, we have therefore entered the native realm of truth. We have now to see how the shape of self-consciousness first makes its appearance. If we consider this new shape of knowing, the knowing of itself, in relation to that which preceded, viz. the knowing of an other, then we see that though this other has indeed vanished, its moments have at the same time no less been preserved, and the loss consists in this, that here they are present as they are in themselves. The [mere] being of what is merely ‘meant,’ the singleness and the universality opposed to it of perception, as also the empty inner being of the Understanding, these are no longer essences, but are moments of self-consciousness, i.e. abstractions or distinctions which at the same time have no reality for consciousness itself, and are purely vanishing essences. Thus it seems that only the principal moment itself has been lost, viz. the simple self-subsistent existence for consciousness. But in point of fact self-consciousness is the

reflection out of the being of the world of sense and perception, and is essentially the return from otherness.<sup>52</sup>

A person may live in unconscious fear if she does not reflect into the mirror often enough and connect with her inner wisdom. Here, we might understand that virtual play is a dynamic source of power for the individual, and the act is a revolutionary view into Lacan's mirror theory. Here, the mirror is a form of power that offers one the chance to become. For, the greatest fear most people have is the loss of recognition from the Other. Loss of recognition causes one to stop looking in the mirror at who she is, who she is becoming, and internalizing her inner self. This meditative process of looking in the mirror is very similar to automatic writing. When one writes or draws automatically, new creative thoughts may open up in the mind, and the process of identification of the ultimate ideal self takes place.

Thus, creativity emerges by looking in the mirror, writing, journaling, creating, playing, interacting—as the window of the soul is opened and the authentic is found. It is when a person does not stop to truly look deeply into the mirror or self that conformity takes place. Thus, updating the mirror to the screen opens up new worlds of self-knowledge, and it is due to taking time to play meditatively and ruminate. The entry point to higher states of awareness, however, begins first with the misrecognition of the ideal self.

### **Illusion and Misrecognition**

Delving further, we look into early tracings of the term, misrecognition, with reference to Hegel. In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History (Philosophie der Geschichte)*, Hegel first discusses the concept of private property—and its many contradictions.<sup>53</sup> He states that possessions are universal and certain individuals turn objects into their own possessions. If a person, then, possesses an object, this means that the other cannot possess it, and vice versa. For Hegel, if all people are possessing objects, then, no one is really possesses anything. Hegel says that in order for all to have secure property, that all possessions should be universal.<sup>54</sup> He says that the primal concept of property is not understood by the societal masses—however, private possession is largely understood by all. Thus, all people who own property own it in their minds—as the concept is not a natural way of living. This way of believing in private possessions is the first part of the equation in alienating oneself from properties that are universal.<sup>55</sup>

The distorted belief in private possession, then, is a first step toward an indication of misrecognition. With this, each individual lives in their own realm of privateness and excludes the whole of the community to a certain extent. What is interesting is that people believe they are the universal and, without knowing it, live in a form of alienation—in a self-imposed construction of personal influence. Hegel—and later Marx—states that this circling of thought keeps the bourgeoisie in a sensibility where they believe they are in complete power and have full ownership of their possessions. Interesting to the studies at hand, Hegel sees this mentality similarly to one possess-

ing a limited identity.<sup>56</sup> Hegel attempts to use the drawbacks of society and then discloses the perceptions of isolation as a strength. As it has been said, Hegel believes that absolute knowledge requires two subjects of self-consciousness to recognize the other. An influence for Hegel was German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte and his theories of self-consciousness that allow freedom for the individual. Akin to the virtual game, Fichte posits that people become more self-aware while they are challenged by another person. If one realizes that the other's actions were intended, she can then grasp her own actions as also being intentional.<sup>57</sup> Hegel discusses this similar theme in *Phenomenology of Spirit* where he mentions this encounter of awareness that ends in a struggle of life and death.<sup>58</sup> Here, he lays out the metaphor within the chapter heading, “Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage” as follows, “Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged.”<sup>59</sup>

The master and slave metaphor discusses how people gain self-consciousness as autonomous subjects through the interaction with other autonomous subjects. The struggle against the Other, though, cannot reach a real form of recognition, as the truth of one's self as a self-conscious being is only said to occur if both the master and the slave remain alive. Each person holds a recognition of the other and gives a reason for the other to live. Hegel states:

In this experience, self-consciousness learns that life is as essential to it as pure self-consciousness. In immediate self-consciousness the simple ‘I’ is absolute mediation, and has as its essential moment lasting indepen-

dence. The dissolution of that simple unity is the result of the first experience; through this there is posited a pure self-consciousness, and a consciousness which is not purely for itself but for another, i.e. is a merely *immediate* consciousness, or consciousness in the form of *thinghood*. Both moments are essential. Since to begin with they are unequal and opposed, and their reflection into a unity has not yet been achieved, they exist as two opposed shapes of consciousness; one is the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself, the other is the dependent consciousness whose essential nature is simply to live or to be for another. The former is lord, the other is bondsman.<sup>60</sup>

Hence, recognition that is a mutual connection between two people can only be achieved through a true collective recognition. Recognition, then, depends upon observation from others. The sense of alienation felt when one is not given adequate feedback can be more difficult for one to understand her self and her own identity. Thus, recognition can be seen as a basic life need. Misrecognition might disrupt identity and self-understanding initially—due to the struggle for recognition—though it is a necessary experience for one to move towards a deeper understanding of her core being. Misrecognition should appear and last briefly—not long—as the process allows one to step outside of the complacent idea of the self. For, a permanent dwelling in false belief hinders any positive form of self-consciousness or growth. I argue that the virtual opens up and silently utilizes this misrecognition to propel the individual to move forward to become further recognized—to proceed even above the recognition. As the slave produces works for the master, she becomes creator. While the slave creates more and the work becomes better and better due to her ingenious and authen-

tic creativity, she starts to see herself reflected in what she creates—and she then realizes her worth. Due to this awareness, the slave has the ability to see that she was indeed creating her life all along. The awakening that she experiences can give her a very raw sensibility as the slave becomes quite cognizant of her reality at that moment. Born from this realization, the slave is no longer alienated from the work she was performing, and she now grows onward to a higher plane of self-understanding. The self-revealing process would not be possible without first dealing with misrecognition. Thus, this way of behaving is a negation of a negation. While it is true that the master then becomes reliant on the slave, it can be said that the master must move to the slave level in order to become the ultimate creator, or the master will cease to exist as master. This interaction can be seen as a function of genuine self-reflection where the subject considers the notion that she has been held captive prior to her new understanding. Interestingly, Ralph Waldo Emerson, in turn, echoes these principles and states, “Our chief want in life is somebody who will make us do what we can.”<sup>61</sup> To tie together Hegel’s concept of the lord and bondsman dialectic with the virtual space, it can be seen that the player needs an Other to offer recognition to her. In essence, these forms of virtual cognition can be used as a tool for self-awareness.

### **Infinite Beauty Found in the Virtual**

Hegel further argues that the end of art as it has been known is unavoidable—and states that where beauty begins is not cognitively known. This idea is very interesting as humanity may never understand that pure beauty exists if not exposed to the



concept or potential visualization of infinite beauty. Viewing aesthetically ideal imagery in the virtual offers unique visual experiences for the player. The game becomes a psychical place of the player's own, with virtual characters around her—"real" on the other side or not. Becoming aware and expanding engagement with one's surroundings is the first step in learning to recognize that the world is full of natural beauty. Through the understanding of natural beauty at a higher level of comprehension, a more extreme level of aesthetic awareness can be mentally processed. Hegel states that the artistic side of aesthetics has a true manner of speaking to the spirit.<sup>62</sup> Hegel says:

The beauty of art is beauty born of the spirit and born again, and the higher the spirit and its productions stand above nature and its phenomena, the higher too is the beauty of art above that of nature.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, Hegel says that the object of art becomes even more beautiful than nature itself when the work is created out of spirit. We can then see play in the virtual as a form of post-art that leads one to a higher awareness of beauty. Hegel further claims that nature will show the way to a blind person as the individual becomes ready to accept what nature has to offer.<sup>64</sup> Through contemplating the beauty of nature through forms of art—virtual or physical—humanity can then intuitively comprehend structure behind the creation. Coupled with imagination, the experience within the virtual game can offer an acumen that gives greater meaning to the player.

Hegel states that the human soul has the freedom to wonder and make decisions for itself—it is naturally free.<sup>65</sup> Since the human understanding of the soul requires deep thought, the personification of the soul occurs as a freedom of thought that provides a profound communion with spirit. When the public do not have the freedom to decide and contemplate the beautiful due to societal conditioning, they then become oblivious to all of the possibilities and thus a loss of the truth of beauty does occur. Thus, if the ability to understand beauty is eradicated, the aesthetic truth is lost. However, when confronted with forms of beauty, specifically in the experience of virtual play, the soul will be able to become one with the human and growth will resume.<sup>66</sup>

Play in the virtual can be seen as a release from reality into a fantasy, which, in turn, offers the ability to stand in front of physical reality more clearly. When the virtual game is brought up in conversation, the concepts of illusion and fantasy are often discussed. The tenet of fantasy, however, can be deduced into and seen as a mindful world of becoming. Kant asserts that there is only one world, even though many believe in illusory notions.<sup>67</sup> The one world can be seen within the digital realm while sitting in the space as a new form of art and philosophy. In his book, *Kant*, Karl Jaspers asserts in Kantian terms, “The world of space and time is not reality as such, but neither is it illusion; space and time are the conditions of the objective reality of all our sense experience, given in intuition.”<sup>68</sup> A conundrum can be used that Kant discerns in reference to the enigmatic vessel that gaming has become:

The thing that I know is not myself; what is it then? I am not unless I have objects, sensory data, before me; what indeed am I without them? I have no outside vantage point from which to compare the subject and object of thought. All I can compare is objects and a subjectivity turned object.<sup>69</sup>

Virtual play, then, gives the individual a new vantage point to reflect and compare. The virtual offers a quest into new sensations of time within the experience. Kant's pondering on subject and object, then, can be viewed more clearly through the virtual.<sup>70</sup> Kant states, "Before true philosophy can arise, it is necessary that the old philosophy destroy itself."<sup>71</sup> In order to create, the past must be released. In order to form new philosophies through the virtual, it is important to deconstruct past philosophies to begin anew. By using the lens of the virtual, new perspectives are available. The virtual world is, thus, an advanced experience for higher understanding.

If an individual comes to believe the idea that humans are not, in fact, their bodies, names, persona, identity, ego—then the potential of the virtual grows larger. If a human understands herself to be connected as a spiritual being (*Geist*), the full enormity of the virtual will appear to be seen as an advanced experience that has been disclosed to people for some time. Play in the virtual sparks childlike curiosity and offers a human another chance. Another life. "How many lives do you have left?" A common gaming question. Virtual play such as the video game opens up these possibilities in the mind—which is how higher awareness manifests. The virtual, thus, becomes a trap-door to an improved awareness which leads to a new becoming.

## Taoism

Concepts such as the Hegelian and Marxian notions of the negation of the negation can be found and examined in Taoism, the Chinese life philosophy.<sup>72</sup> The tao—meaning, the way—is a form of living that is based upon creating and sustaining all that is in the universe. Within the Taoist philosophy, there are no rules—there are simply paths to becoming. The two main texts of Taoism—the *Chuang Tzu* and the *Tao Te Ching*—examine and explain universal concepts. One Taoist concept is based on a way of doing by not doing, which can be translated as the term, *wu-wei*.<sup>73</sup> The concept can be seen as a negation of a negation. The doing by not doing or action through non-action is made clear within virtual play in various ways. Within non-action, the player is putting herself aside. She is quieting the mind and playing. Non-action leaves no physical trace behind. Within the game, the player has the ability to distance her emotions and silence her ego. The principles of Taoism encompass concepts of surrender, harmony, simplicity, grounding, integrity, sagehood, transformation, immortality, and spontaneity. These life approaches co-align with ideas behind the content and experience of virtual play. The philosophy of Taoism is intended to be sacred and not expressed in words, which runs concurrently with much of virtual games that do not necessitate language. While there were periods in history that Taoism was believed to go too far—seen as a mystical religion—the essence of the origins of the philosophy of life via Taoism is quite vital to understand in relation to the ephemeral transcendent quality the Taoist philosophy can convey.<sup>74</sup> When one is not

connected to her physicality that represents her personality, body, or name—she can move forward to understand her authentic self. It is stated in *Tao Te Ching*, “To recognize your insignificance is enlightenment.”<sup>75</sup> Viewing Taoism in reference to the creation of the self, twentieth century Taoist, Wei Wu Wei, states, “Why are you unhappy? Because 99.9 percent of what you think, and everything you do, is for your self, and there isn’t one.”<sup>76</sup> Considering identity through the lens of Taoism, it is disclosed that there is not even a “self” as it is commonly known—thus, it becomes clear that one can create the self how she desires, as it is not fixed.

### **Discovering Autonomy Through Self-Creation**

Overturning the ego can be considered similarly through Friedrich Nietzsche. He stresses that every human is a creator and it is a moral right to design one’s life and surpass limiting ideas passed down from past generations. While Nietzsche believes that generational values—which include morality and the concept of God—should be rescinded, it can also be seen as simply that the common concept of identity needs to be re-examined. Nietzsche believes that the biggest error of humankind is the belief in two worlds.<sup>77</sup> He contemplates the realization that if an individual lives in only one world, all questioning would shift and the basic ideas of life itself would need to be reconstructed. Thus, Nietzsche believes that the basic concept of “man” needs a completely new definition. He claims the contemporary human can become the Superhuman (overhuman or *Übermensch*), and it would be imperative to discuss

the new being in the one world, not of a heavenly world after this earthly experience.<sup>78</sup> With reference to the concept of the “superhuman” Nietzsche states:

There it was too that I picked up the word ‘Superman’ and that man is something that must be overcome, that man is a bridge and not a goal; counting himself happy for his noontides and evenings, as a way to new dawns. ... Truly, I showed them new stars, together with new nights—and over cloud and day and night I spread out laughter like a coloured canopy. I taught them all my art and aims: to compose into one and bring together what is fragment and riddle and dreadful chance in man—as poet, reader of riddles, and redeemer of chance, I taught them to create the future, and to redeem by creating—all that was past.<sup>79</sup>

The search for the actual human who relishes in the here and now has inspired the works of philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre who claim that each person should understand their own meaning for their life on earth. These concepts apply to virtual play quite clearly, as the experience sends the player into the mode for the search of self-knowledge. While the player may not be consciously aware that the discovery of identity is occurring, the experience of the game offers many times over the chance to nurture and release the free spirit that Nietzsche believed was possible. By learning how to hold on to an understanding as to one’s reason for existence, the process becomes an experience in learning to love oneself. Re-learning and action freely transform the individual, according to Nietzsche.<sup>80</sup> These variables are found throughout the journey via the virtual.

The process of virtual play offers a person the opportunity to transform her life experience if she is aware and receptive. The various sections, spaces, lives, and challenges one might discover through the virtual offer valid, yet not always transparent, paths to arrive at spiritual development. These modes in the virtual assist the player by un-peeling layers of the mind, similar to a cleansing, as there is an essential need to create life due to each person being inherently creative. However, in order to grow and become, one has to first lose the concept of the self. The way to be reborn is to first die, in a figurative sense. Nietzsche says that humans are deaf even to the sounds they hear around them, which would include the sounds and echoes of their own being.<sup>81</sup> Nietzsche calls for a radical change where the everyday person becomes the genius they are supposed to have been in the beginning. Nietzsche sees open-ended ideas for human possibility. Perhaps the virtual will allow one to tap into the place where she can actually hear her own being—pause—and create her self in an image that transcends all former possibilities. Here, Nietzsche discusses the need for the superman to transcend the societal mundaneness:

For brief moments we are truly the primordial being itself and we feel its unbounded greed and lust for being; the struggle, the agony, the destruction of appearances, all this now seems to us necessary, given the uncountable excess of forms of existence thrusting and pushing themselves into life, given the exuberant fertility of the world—Will; we are pierced by the furious sting of these torments at the very moment when, as it were, we become one with the immeasurable, primordial delight in existence, and receive an intimation, in Dionysiac ecstasy, that this delight is indestructible and eternal. Despite fear and pity we are happily alive, not

as individuals, but as the *one* living being, with whose procreative lust we have become one.<sup>82</sup>

The responsibility of self-creation that Nietzsche believes so deeply in can be found within new virtual discourse and experience. In his *Human, All too Human*, Nietzsche searches for a place where spirits can be or become free. The sense of freedom that could overcome idealism, he says, is to display a spirit that thinks differently from what would be expected and liberates itself from tradition.<sup>83</sup> There may be no better place where this spiritual freedom can be found than the world of the virtual today.

### **Consciously Creating The Self Through Self-Knowledge**

While it is clear that the virtual is but one outlet in society, it can be seen as a portal that opens up worlds of previously closed possibilities for many. People have pushed naturally, while in the virtual, towards evolving forms of becoming, or even just experiencing anew. The virtual world is an open window available for those who choose to expand their perceptions. Thus, as what might be learned from Kant, it can be said that people need to retreat from former reality to create a new reality. It is, thus, necessary for one to consciously create the self if the desire is to live to one's full possibilities. While Nietzsche claims that the artist can save the disappearance of the human, it can be seen that the virtual offers the same insight, as play keeps one light.<sup>84</sup> In this manner, the self-reflective player can be seen as a new creator of her life.



Through play in the virtual, a person can learn how to love herself through self-knowledge. As Nietzsche claims that the concept of “man” is something to be surpassed, he seeks to affirm life and sees it as a philosophy of cheerfulness, otherwise known as a gay science. When stating that God is dead, Nietzsche seeks to claim that it is not just the death of the deity known as God, but the death of the so-called high values that have been passed down from generations. He seeks a revaluation of all values, which is an attempt to question the way people are accustomed to thinking about purpose in life. Thus, through transforming one’s thought, there is an inadvertent effect of this wisdom—that is, self-awareness.<sup>85</sup> Virtual play, then, can be directed as a spiritual replication as the player uses the character in the virtual game as a vessel in which she can make it do anything she intends. The experience of the spirit within the character can be seen as a metaphor to the spiritual within the physical human body. Thus, the character in the game is the body and the player is similar to the spirit or *Geist*.

Nietzsche wonders if people will be able to remedy the most basic problems of contemporary society—and further, he questions if life is even worth living at this point.<sup>86</sup> While his own answer to both of his questions is no—life is not worth living—he simultaneously says that individuals need to create the ultimate life for themselves since life is not as serious as one might have thought. This Nietzschean form of negative reasoning can be viewed as moving beyond optimism and pessimism. For, Nietzsche claims that tragedy pushes us to continue on living.<sup>87</sup> Comparing the Dionysian

drive with the virtual, the origin of tragedy can be noted in ancient Greece as a struggle between two drives. Nietzsche names these drives after Greek deities—Apollo and Dionysos. Apollo respects boundaries and offers an ethic of self-control. On the contrary, Dionysos represents a parting of boundaries and lives in excess. It can be said that the two energies exist in all human souls. Together, their friction becomes a creative dynamism. The two forces are needed to work productively in relation to each other. The creative evolution that then occurs is formed by the Apolline and Dionysiac. Together, they continue to provoke one another, and come together to give birth to art. In order for productive creativity to occur, the two parts work together—to benefit in a synthesis. These opposite forms of life promote progression. Nietzsche’s Dionysian approach to looking life in the face with delight and merriment is akin to states achieved in the virtual. As Nietzsche claims that each person is an inherent creator, playing in the virtual can be seen as a gateway vessel that brings present society back into an imaginative state.<sup>88</sup> Nietzsche speaks of the “genius” as one who has been able to hold on to her child-like sense of awe and imagination. Further, since imaginative properties are innate, they can always be re-learned if lost.<sup>89</sup> Thus, it can be said that the creative force is central to a life worth living. The virtual puts forth the opportunity for one to process from being into becoming. The virtual provides this unceasing outlet towards constant creative renewal—if desired.

### ***Différance and Time***

With reference to renewal, Jacques Derrida presents an attack on absolute presence, absence, and origins. These notions are important to discuss in reference to the virtual. As Derrida deconstructs modes of communication, he states that there is no truth and the subject becomes de-centered through social discourse. His claim is important in reference to the virtual as it takes the player into new states of interpretation where there is no supreme subject anymore. Through discourse within the virtual, the player is de-centered and it is for the better in order to come to a new space of understanding. Both Heidegger and Derrida discuss the circle, which is a common characteristic in virtual games. Heidegger says that people are moving in a circle, and they follow a circle. Derrida states that people are always starting over—and never complete—which is, interestingly, what he calls *méconnaissance*. The activity of perpetual awakening can further be seen as the continual revealing of Heidegger's *aletheia*. There is always a rhythmic uncovering and then veiling. These notions are relative to the description of playing in the virtual. As Derrida also discusses *différance*—the endless deferral of meaning—it can be seen that through the virtual experience, the player finds new impressions of meaning. Derrida asserts that meaning is not fixed, and contexts are always in flux.

We define words in terms of other words, so meaning is always deferred. Through these concepts, the player continually experiences the now in an intricate way. Derrida creates a new language, just as the artist does. The new philosophical language that Derrida offers can be seen as a starting point for the virtual. In this way,

it can be seen that Derrida is anticipating a new point in time such as the virtual and digital era. Furthermore, playing in the virtual is enveloped in the perception of time. The virtual does not reside in Newtonian time—it sits in Einstein’s theory of time. While Newton claims that time is absolute, Einstein sees time as connected to space, not separate from the other. Newtonian time is an outmoded notion that resides in a state of absence. Einstein’s time and space demonstrates the new awareness that it is us, the individual, who creates time, as all time is relative.<sup>90</sup> Playing in the virtual, thus, has the ability to sit in the middle of time.

### ***Geist* as Absolute Spirit**

Questions in reference to time are beneficial for individuals in relation to the concept of spirit. Hegel discusses the notion of spirit, which he calls, *Geist*. Hegel sees *Geist* as that which holds absolute knowledge—as the person who dedicates herself to self-conscious reflectivity obtains this spiritual awareness. Hegel believes the concept of the ultimate self can be found, though it should not be a struggle.<sup>91</sup> The search for self, he believes, should come forth purely and without forced demand.<sup>92</sup> Creating or discovering the self should be considered as a natural experience. Hegel asserts that aesthetic understanding aids in the acknowledgement of the Absolute Mind via the self. The process of understanding one’s being is an ongoing and recursive meditation. The understanding of beauty, truth, freedom, and self is continuously intertwined within the process of self-creation.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, while it can be said that there is an interconnectedness between all people through a world soul, there is

also the understanding that each person is an individual and has the right to step away from the herd and follow her inner yearnings. Thus, the group consciousness is teamed with individual instances of free identity. Hegel describes *Geist* in many forms, though he sees it as the main approach to freedom, and the converging of “we” and “I” in the most pure form.<sup>94</sup>

Hegel sees human history as the development of Spirit. In essence, he sees changing times and events as the historical development of consciousness. Furthermore, Hegel views concepts of finite and infinite differently than Kant. Hegel believes in spirit and infiniteness versus Kant’s notion of the unknowable finite form. For Hegel, the physical and mental are not separate entities from one another. To quote Hegel:

The bud disappears when the blossom breaks through, and we might say that the former is refuted by the latter; in the same way when the fruit comes, the blossom may be explained to be a false form of the plant's existence, for the fruit appears as its true nature in place of the blossom. The ceaseless activity of their own inherent nature makes these stages moments of an organic unity, where they not merely do not contradict one another, but where one is as necessary as the other; and constitutes thereby the life of the whole.<sup>95</sup>

Hegel sees the reflection that is actually an illusion to be that of a self-affirming consciousness through the concept of the Other. For Hegel, nature is always “being” in the process of “becoming” and art brings a person closer and closer to not needing to

feel security with the idea of human physical embodiment. While Hegel sees the ultimate art that envelops *Geist* as a renewing discovery of human spirit, the virtual can be seen as an evolution of a spiritual form of art. The virtual, thus, encompasses a new form of metaphysical realism.<sup>96</sup> For Hegel, both thought and being are intertwined. He states that within the powers of the dialectic and the negation of the negation—without one, there is not an other. Hegel states:

I have my self-consciousness not in myself but in the other. I am satisfied and have peace with myself only in this other and—and I *am* only because I have peace with myself; if I did not have it, then I would be a contradiction that falls to pieces. This other, because it likewise exists outside itself, has its self-consciousness only in me, and both the other and I are only this consciousness of being-outside-ourselves and of our identity; we are only this intuition, feeling, and knowledge of our unity. This is love, and without knowing that love is both a distinguishing and the sublation of this distinction, one speaks emptily of it. This is the simple, eternal idea.<sup>97</sup>

Twentieth century philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer further says that everything is continually disappearing: “For, to give an indication of where we are headed, it will emerge there that what remains is precisely what is real where everything is continually disappearing. The real world exists precisely as continual change, constant change.”<sup>98</sup> Hegel sees this in a positive sense with reference to truth, “Appearance is the coming into being and passing away which itself does not come into being and pass away, but is rather in itself and constitutes the reality and movement of the life of

truth.”<sup>99</sup> Thus, it can be seen that through the Other inside of historical consciousness, the self can evolve.

### **Nature, Understanding, and the Infinite**

The attainment of ultimate understanding of the Absolute spirit is a process that modulates in and out of itself, states Hegel.<sup>100</sup> Hegel asserts:

Absolute Spirit enters existence merely at the culminating point at which its pure knowledge about itself is the opposition and interchange with itself. Knowing that its pure knowledge is the abstract essential reality, Absolute Spirit is this knowing duty in absolute opposition to the knowledge which knows itself, qua absolute singleness of self, to be the essentially real.<sup>101</sup>

The process of attaining this consciousness twists, breaks, re-forms, and grows. Consciousness cannot grow unless areas break and then, essentially, disintegrate. This process of change can be found similarly throughout all of nature—the destructive steps in order to renew. What is once present recedes, and this cycle is continuous. Each stage of becoming destroys and negates the previous stage—only to finally come into the true essence of being. In the virtual, visual form and places continuously change and move into different forms in space. Here, within these moments, new instances of spirit are found. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel speaks further:

Just because the form is as essential to the essence as the essence is to itself, the divine essence is not to be conceived and expressed merely as essence, i. e. as immediate substance or pure self-contemplation of the di-

vine, but likewise as *form*, and in the whole wealth of the developed form. Only then is it conceived and expressed as an actuality. The True is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development. Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a result, that only in the end is it what it truly is; and that precisely in this consists its nature, viz. to be actual, subject, the spontaneous becoming of itself.”<sup>102</sup>

Hegel suggests all forms and associations can be seen as vehicles for Spirit to grow. He does not look down upon the past, but he rather incorporates it in the growth and becoming of the Absolute.

In 1947, visual artist Adolph Gottlieb expressed similar thoughts in reference to growth and evolution of creation as a necessity to continue into spirit. While Gottlieb was referring to the new form of abstraction in art of the New York School at the time, immense similarities can be found within current thoughts and Hegelian concepts. Gottlieb sees the historical evolution of change as a form of progress—not a detriment to society:

Certain people always say we should go back to nature. I notice they never say we should go forward with nature. It seems to me they are more concerned that we should go back, than about nature. If the models we use are the apparitions seen in a dream, or the recollection of our pre-historic past, is this less past of nature or realism, than a cow in a field? I think not. The role of the artist, of course, has always been that of image-maker. Different times require different images. Today when our aspirations have been reduced to a desperate attempt to escape from evil, and times are out of joint, our obsessive, subterranean and pictographic images



are the expression of the neurosis which is our reality. To my mind certain so-called abstraction is not abstraction at all. On the contrary, it is the realism of our time.<sup>103</sup>

The virtual can be likened to the realism of today—allowing people to move forward with nature. The virtual as a medium to learn through has allowed humanity to understand their inner selves more clearly. Looking towards the world of digital interactivity, the virtual moves the creative evolutionary plane forward. While virtual play may not seem to fit into the operation of life as a whole, when looked at from these aspects it is clear that the responsive mode of gaming fits quite nicely with the attainment of ultimate self-awareness. For, the structured inequalities within society make it challenging for a person to develop an authentic individual self. The conception of “self” is so heavily formed once born that the individual practically loses touch with her own true original characteristics right away. Social circumstances of mass conditioning in Western society put the human being into two predicaments—either within the position of the rebel-artist or within the conforming mob-mind presence. If she lives in a pure sense—she strengthens her personal autonomy. Twentieth century painter Mark Rothko reflects this sentiment, as he discusses the journey of the artist. Here many similarities are found between the artist and the virtual player:

The unfriendliness of society to his activity is difficult for the artist to accept. Yet this very hostility can act as a lever for true liberation. Freed from a false sense of security and community, the artist can abandon his plastic bank-book, just as he has abandoned other forms of security. Both the sense of community and of security

depend on the familiar. Free of them, transcendental experiences become possible.<sup>104</sup>

Within forms of group consciousness, individuals can get in touch with their true individuality on the spirit level in the virtual. Senses of autonomy such as the aforementioned can be found through forms of creativity and expression. It is thus clear that play in the virtual offers individuals a journey to higher self-awareness.

## Chapter Three

### **Discourse in the Virtual**

Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction.

—Mikhail Bakhtin  
*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*

### **Dialogical Path to Self-Awareness**

To further contemplate higher forms of self-consciousness, we can look toward the methodology of dialogical theory through twentieth century Russian philosopher, Mikhail Bakhtin. To set up these concepts, we turn to the foundation of personal identity. Identity is related to who one believes she is. To reveal the identity of the self here, we explore what might be authentic discourse in the virtual. Authentic communication that is mutual between the self and others can be seen as a natural release that finds freedom within the concept of self. The dialogical path of communication encompasses more than one authoritative voice. The dialogical form provides discourse on the world in and of itself compared to a monologic tale of one soul. The dialogical makes the discourse about “us” contrasted to the experience being about “me.” The experience of mutual discourse with others creates an infinite journey on the path to higher self-consciousness. The opportunity to engage in authentic discourse presents itself well through the virtual.

A component connected to the importance of finding the self in the virtual is the search and discovery of the hero of the self. Bakhtin interprets Fyodor Dostoevsky and the interest of the hero. It can be clearly seen in virtual play that the hero is what the player is commonly working towards. A parallel reason can be found as to why people read fiction. Interestingly, Bakhtin describes the hero for Dostoevsky as a “particular point of view on the world and on oneself, as the position enabling a person to interpret and evaluate his own self and surrounding reality.”<sup>105</sup> Bakhtin goes into great detail in Chapter Two of his text, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. In this chapter entitled “The Hero, and the Position of the Author with Regard to the Hero, in Dostoevsky's Art,” the similarities to Bakhtin's mentioning of Dostoevsky's hero are uncanny for their similarities to the hero in the virtual game. Bakhtin discusses the entry point of the hero in Dostoevsky's work. He asserts that the hero transforms in the novel due to how the world appears to him, rather than how the hero appears to the world. Also important is how he appears to himself—thus his forming self-awareness.

As a specific example in a video game, a heroic character found in the game *Starcraft 2* begins with Jim Raynor as an ordinary man on a mission and through the game, he develops into an ultimate hero. Through the game, Jim Raynor turns into a cyborg laden character who metamorphoses into a visible hero. Throughout the game, the character grows into the hero that he is later to become. The player is able to live

through the changing of the average man and become the hero who decides to take a revolutionary stand against a wayward military group in the game.

Bakhtin discusses the self-consciousness that develops in the every-man. Bakhtin remarks that, in his novels, Dostoevsky depicts the hero as a character only, and does not mention him as a hero. The reader follows the protagonist and his story and witnesses the transformation of the hero's self-consciousness. This metamorphosis occurs through the change of thought processes, actions, and reflections in the mirror. Both in Dostoevsky's novel and in games such as *Starcraft*, the hero emerges over a period of time without the reader or player noticing until the vision of the physical hero comes into being. Bakhtin speaks of Dostoevsky's hero metamorphosis, which echoes *Starcraft's* hero:

He transferred the author and the narrator, with all their accumulated points of view and with the descriptions, characterizations, and definitions of the hero provided by them, into the field of vision of the hero himself, thus transforming the finalized and integral reality of the hero into the material of the hero's own self-consciousness.<sup>106</sup>

The aforementioned dialogical design, an objective scenario, contrasts with the monologic form of writing. In the monologic form of writing, the hero is bounded by stringent rules as to how the hero begins and how he is constructed. The form of self-consciousness is not organically formed and is inserted into the character more rigidly without room for thought or progressive awareness. To contrast the monologic

and understand the dialogic point of view in both virtual play and Dostoevsky's novel

*The Underground*, an explanation from Bakhtin can be looked upon:

The hero from the underground eavesdrops on every word someone else says about him, he looks at himself, as it were, in all the mirrors of other people's consciousnesses, he knows all the possible refractions of his image in those mirrors. And he also knows his own objective definition, neutral both to the other's consciousness and to his own self-consciousness, and he takes into account the point of view of a 'third person.'<sup>107</sup>

The third person can be seen as the player who plays the game. Similar to the novel, the player plays (reads) the game (story) of the transformation of the average person to hero as a third person. The player also becomes the hero now, as she is moving the hero in such a way that she is feeling her way through the game. She is matching the changing of awareness and opening to new sensations of self-consciousness. The dialogic design of the game mirrors the Dostoevsky novel while going a step further and allowing the player to essentially engage in the becoming of the *hero*. Interestingly, Dostoevsky himself discusses the role of the hero in his novels in the foreword to his work, *A Meek One*:

The telling of the story, of course, takes a few hours in breaks and snatches; it is disconnected in form, for he either argues with himself or addresses some unseen listener, a judge as it were. However, it is always like that in real life.<sup>108</sup>

Bakhtin states that the issue at hand is that there is an unfolding of a new view of the whole of the heroic person. This way of thinking highly contrasts prior ideas of a human who is shown to be a hero. The unfolding process, Bakhtin states, depicts a new form of seeing the human in art.<sup>109</sup> Understanding this as the framework of the dialogic story that depicts the transformation of the hero largely changes the experience of the reader with the novel. To compare the notion to virtual play, the involvement allows one to view and discover the human throughout more distinctly.

The natural development of the protagonist into the hero shows the organic nature of one who becomes aware and understands her own levels of consciousness. To realize these shifts are depicting the process of becoming is important to understanding the formation of identity and awareness in the player. Thus, the player is experiencing the intrinsic process together with the character. Through the writing of Dostoevsky and through the polyphonic experience of the player in the virtual world, the player or reader is permitted to know what she knows. There is a sense of equality in the polyphonic or dialogic novel in that there is a participatory aspect of the story. In the contrasting ordinary novel, the reader is given a set of evaluations, juxtapositions, and finalizations of the hero and the story. There is no actual autonomy occurring in the monologic story.

The monologic story keeps the reader out—the experience is treated as if the reader is spying on the character turned hero. To contrast, the dialogic story brings the

reader alongside the hero and allows the reader to enter the mind of the character.

Bakhtin concurs:

All others' perception of the world intersects with his perception. Everything that he sees and observes—both Petersburg slums and monumental Petersburg, all his chance encounters and trivial happenings—everything is drawn into dialogue, responds to his questions and puts new questions to him, provokes him, argues with him, or reinforces his own thoughts.<sup>110</sup>

The purported isolated experience of the virtual game, then, pushes the player into a dialogical experience. While the gameplay experience is clearly virtual, the dialogical qualities are still held and are available to amend one to reconsider previously held beliefs. The dialogical experience certainly echoes the experience of reading the novel. Only virtual play is even more transformative and intense for the player contrary to the reader as the player experiences these modes of becoming with many of her senses. Thus, the monologic position does not offer a great conversation akin to the dialogical mode. Bakhtin contrasts the dialogical experience of Dostoevsky to the monologic experience of Leo Tolstoy. Bakhtin says that the experience of the character in the monologic story is very confined. The character does not experience any kind of self-awareness and is not able to make a response to the point of view of the writer. In the monologic story, the hero may not have the last word—thus, there is no autonomy or sense of becoming. Discussing the monologic style, Bakhtin states:

The words and consciousness of the author, Leo Tolstoy, are nowhere addressed to the hero, do not question



him, and expect no response from him. The author neither argues with his hero nor agrees with him. He speaks not with him, but about him. The final word belongs to the author, and that word—based on something the hero does not see and does not understand, on something located outside the hero's consciousness—can never encounter the hero's words on a single dialogic plane.<sup>111</sup>

In the monologic story, then, the author holds the final word without room for an authentic response from the main character or hero. Everything is viewed from the authoritative position of the writer and there is no opportunity to engage in a true exchange of ideas and viewpoints. The monologic way of creating enhances the idea of a bourgeois patriarchal experience in which only one remains in power. The dialogical experience, by contrast, engages all who read or play and offers many forms of understanding and paths to self-awareness. Where one form of creation is very open, the other form closes. It is clear to see the majority of play in the virtual operates from the dialogical standpoint—rather than authoritative.

### **The Hero and Heroine as Non-Hero**

It is also quite clear that there is a difference between the hero and the heroine defined in the virtual story. According to recent statistics, 48% of people who play video games are women.<sup>112</sup> This interesting data displays the fact that gameplay is not a stereotypical male-heavy pastime. With this knowledge, an issue that remains is the representative visual inequality of the aesthetic treatment of female roles within the game. Imagery that disempowers women can be seen in video games within the virtu-

al, just as in much cultural media throughout American society.<sup>113</sup> In order to understand these inequalities further, it is important to note that only 11% of women comprise the current number of video game developers and designers.<sup>114</sup> The gender inequality of creators of the video game, then, assist in understanding the disproportional visual representation of gender in the game. Interestingly, within virtual games that are platform-based, the most important female characters or heroines in the games are commonly seen as exactly who they will appear to be in the game immediately. Thus, there is not a transformation to be seen between the everyday woman and the self-aware heroine, as it might be shown within the masculine counterpart of the virtual game. The difference brings us to questions on social conditioning that carries on into the game. The social roles of women in current society can certainly echo the same balance within the game. The virtual game is a medium that offers the potential to break down previously held stereotypes, even more when it comes to gender and the objectification of the female character. If the hero is going to show the metamorphic transformation from everyman to superman, it is imperative for the player to see, too, that the character can now also visibly transform from everywoman to superwoman.

While it is quite clear that the majority of the female characters in the virtual game are seen as either a character with primary sex appeal or a princess waiting to be saved, there are other instances that allow the female character to be seen through a different lens. Fortunately, there are virtual games that realize the importance of the

revolutionary tool of equality that the virtual game holds. In the *Second Life* community, players can change their gender at any time or practice gender bending at will.<sup>11</sup> Further, players can choose characters that are not human, yet have human capabilities. Additionally, according to research from Nottingham Trent University, up to 70% of women and 54% of men play as the opposite gender.<sup>116</sup> The safe mode of reveling in various ways of being with nuances in identification push the player into these new experiences, albeit virtual. These involvements amend one to reconsider previously held thoughts due to new interactions in these dialogical relationships.

As an example of the absence of empowered gender roles in the virtual game, one can look to a sexually objectified female character. Lara Croft is a noteworthy illustration of a feminine icon in the traditional video game. While the character demonstrates physical abilities, she is highly sexualized visually. In the game, she functions primarily as an object of visual gaze. Here, the scopophilic tendencies are seen to be well at work in the game. The passive female as object is the counterpart to the dominant male viewer and creator of the game. The erotic form of representation turns the female character into an automatic object. A transformation from average woman to heroine is not made transparent to the player. With a character such as this, there are only two notions of gender—the dominating male and the female who is assumed to be gazed upon.

These remarks on the patriarchal gaze open the opportunity to connect together dialogue with reference to Judith Butler's theories on the roles of gender and per-

formativity in contemporary culture. Butler seeks to look beyond two genders and become more fluid with how people might define themselves. She firmly states that there are more than two genders and this societal “gender trouble” can be thwarted once it is known by many that gender can move and change.<sup>117</sup> While females in *Second Life* and other real-time virtual games are still treated subordinately, there is great room for the notion of gender to be re-thought in the realm of the virtual. Many instances can be seen where the playing field of male and female characters are neutral amongst the game, though there is still a large imbalance.

As an example that does depict a metamorphosis from sexualized to heroic female character, Samus Aran, a character in the science-fiction video game, *Metroid*, provides an apt example. While appearing to struggle for her quest to become authentic, she is shown in the game as a more powerful character within the transformative process. She almost appears to be super-human in her transformation. Samus is portrayed as a fully capable being who is forgoing the male-constituted traditional forms of female-as-object in prior video games. Fully independent and autonomous as a human, her character is a bounty hunter who does not take orders and is one of the most powerful warriors in the galaxy she inhabits. Samus Aran is a strong contrast to Lara Croft in her non-objectified status.

### **Construction and Deconstruction: Gender Roles**

Coming from a post-feminist perspective—and to reflect within a feminist context—it is evident that there is an inadequate distribution of fair representation of

female characters when male developers create them for virtual games. When males are creating the character, a problem remains that they do not come from a place of a female or function as their voice. By reestablishing more substantial role models in all characters equally, it would serve to empower more people. Further, if gender is a social construct, it can be seen as a literal manifestation in the virtual game. The body, then, becomes a situation, as twentieth century French writer, Simone de Beauvoir suggests.<sup>118</sup> The ego is derived from the illusion of a true identity, and this misconception goes back to one-sided beliefs held within language. By constituting one's sexuality within the virtual, however, terms and forms of identification begin to become fluid. There is no longer a fixed subject or determined gender in the game. Now freedom of choices are found. Despite ideological and patriarchal structuring in society, it might soon be perceived that people have potential to live in unlimited ways. Words and terms are now used as tools in a much greater toolbox within the virtual world. Language is becoming unlocked—and it has more and more ability to be of use through the virtual.

What might be needed is a feminist unthinking in the virtual game. It is quite obvious that video game or virtual content cannot remain stuck in one gender. Thus, the concept of gender and the game brings one to the understanding that it is a matter of the embodiment of freedom. Through language—and then through gender understanding—the main premise is that we rely on what we know, even if it is not correct. If we go back to the origin of gender, and even speech, this assumed knowing can be-

come deconstructed. Julia Kristeva discusses both gender and language, and her theories can be linked to the discourse of virtual gameplay. While she comments that words are endlessly deferred, she states that speech gathers and restrains. Furthermore, she observes that art provides sinners the opportunity to live.<sup>119</sup> Kristeva states:

The world of illusions—the world of religions—brings to light or embodies the prohibition that has us speak. Thus, it gives legitimacy to hatred if it does not invert it into love. Embodying, legitimizing—today we are too aware of their techniques to yield to them. The worlds of illusions, now dead and buried, have given way to our dreams and deliriums if not to politics or science—the religions of modern times. Lacking illusions, lacking shelter, today's universe is divided between *boredom...or...abjection* and *piercing laughter*.<sup>120</sup>

Kristeva asserts that art indeed has the power to transform society. Art and play in the virtual, then, have the ability to work through the concepts of masculine and feminine. As art and the virtual are small steps away from physical reality, virtual gameplay replicates reality in very usable terms. Virtual spaces are created to be intuitive, inviting, challenging, and dramatic. These fictional spaces offer new depths to the real.

Furthermore, Kristeva seeks to move beyond former positions of feminism and explore—through aesthetics—what individuality each person holds. In reference to identity, she sees that due to these transforming processes, one becomes detached and free—which, in turn, gives the individual an opportunity to create her self.<sup>121</sup> Kristeva sees that there should be a liveliness in the self-seeking process as well,

“When practice is not laughter, there is nothing new; where there is nothing new, practice cannot be provoking: it is at best a repeated, empty act.”<sup>122</sup> With this, the joy and novelty in the virtual can be seen as a positive to entrance the new.

### **Gender and Language**

As it may be known, the exemplification of identity and visions of gender that are now seen within the virtual open new doors that were not available previously. Here, we look to Donna Haraway and her thoughts on gender, identity, and the cyborg. Haraway views the cyborg as a feminist tool due to the changes of categories within nature and culture. Haraway, too, suggests that new technologies offer masculinist tendencies due to being developed by men. Haraway quite astutely asserts that if the new technologies are engaged critically, we can certainly provide tools for great change in gender interpretation.<sup>123</sup> Both Haraway and Butler claim that there is no natural to begin with. Both writers state that humankind—thus, gender roles of male and female—are indeed self-created. Judith Butler says that the subject of feminism and gender itself is a discursive formation, with constraint clearly built into language. The term “female” and the term “male” begin in the words themselves. If the player could see this truth while choosing her gender in the game, perhaps she would see that the very idea of the feminine is a patriarchal construct based on a fictional foundation. Haraway proclaims:

I do not know of any other time in history when there was greater need for political unity to confront effectively the dominations of ‘race,’ ‘gender,’ ‘sexuality,’

and 'class.' I also do not know of any other time when the kind of unity we might help build could have been possible. None of 'us' have any longer the symbolic or material capability of dictating the shape of reality to any of 'them.' Or at least 'we' cannot claim innocence from practicing such dominations. White women, including socialist feminists, discovered (that is, were forced kicking and screaming to notice) the non-innocence of the category 'woman.' That consciousness changes the geography of all previous categories; it denatures them as heat denatures a fragile protein. Cyborg feminists have to argue that 'we' do not want any more natural matrix of unity and that no construction is whole. Innocence, and the corollary insistence on victimhood as the only ground for insight, has done enough damage. But the constructed revolutionary subject must give late-twentieth-century people pause as well. In the fraying of identities and in the reflexive strategies for constructing them, the possibility opens up for weaving something other than a shroud for the day after the apocalypse that so prophetically ends salvation history.<sup>124</sup>

Likewise, Simone de Beauvoir claims in her text, *The Second Sex*, that the main concept of woman is a male concept. She expresses claims of man as the subject and woman as the object.<sup>125</sup> The stark concept, however, can change when it becomes that the player can freely choose any gender she wishes to portray without societal judgment. Further, according to Butler, currently there is only one gender—and that is the feminine. She claims that the masculine is not a gender, but rather, the general person. Butler claims that the masculine is all. The omnipresent masculine phallogocentric language, then, continues to keep the feminine construct established.<sup>126</sup> Of course, the concept of a third gender or the use of gender-neutral discourse within the virtual may



allow for a wider acceptance of nuanced forms of identities to be understood. By disrupting common thought on areas that are not questioned, the virtual world now has the ability to give the individual critical tools for inquiry into the formation of an identity. Butler states that people need to be able to think and behave critically—and not necessarily come to the topic of discourse on gender through a spectacle-based angle, but rather from an intelligent stance:

One critical function is to scrutinize the action of delimitation itself. By recommending that we become critical, that we risk criticality, in thinking about how the sexual field is constituted, I do not mean to suggest that we could or should occupy an atypical elsewhere, unlimited, radically free. The questioning of taken-for-granted conditions becomes possible on occasion; but one cannot get there through a thought experiment, an *epoché*, an act of will. One gets there, as it were, through suffering the dehiscence, the breakup, of the ground itself.<sup>127</sup>

Given these philosophies of gender within the virtual, we see that the underlying reason below structural inequalities is wrapped together in the concept of language. Language, then, can be seen as an impediment on advancement, and add to deeper conditioning of gender stereotypes. Of course, language offers pathways to states of evolution, though it also keeps people paralyzed in their tracks. Both Nietzsche and Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure probe questions such as these in reference to language. Saussure and Nietzsche hold similar claims that language is not ingrained. If language is one part that might hinder human development, what chaos would ensue if origins

were called into question? If complacency indeed breeds the herd mentality, the question remains, will virtual space open up new ways of understanding, being, and becoming? An answer could be that, yes, the virtual does move beyond the limits of language. Perhaps if absence is uncovered as presence, the choices within humanity may be revealed. Humans have such immeasurable physical and mental capabilities that the limit of what one can do is still unknown.

Furthermore, language is not as purpose-driven in the virtual realm as it is in the physical realm. Rather, the processes of play in the virtual game focus on action, movement, interaction, decision-making over the use of language being overbearing. This offers much room for advancement in creation beyond the limits of verbal language. For example, in the life simulation video game, *The Sims*, the player manages simulated characters during their daily life and routines. They often speak to the player by looking up in the purported sky and speaking with the operating player. Intriguingly, this echoes a certain relationship between the individual and a God-like presence. However, when the characters in *The Sims* look up and speak with the player, their language is gibberish. If verbal language is not necessarily the most important form of communication, what other forms of communication can be used in order to achieve higher than desired results?

Conceivably, the virtual gives a new opportunity to allow all individuals to respect, honor, and revel in the opposites and enjoy their differences. It may be that the only way for the individual to understand these basic states of equality is to use

the imagination together with interaction in the game. Overall, the topic regarding the portrayal of females in video games covers a large and broad scope. This issue will not be examined as wide as it presents itself here, though it is clearly important to mention this extensive area of contention.

### **Judgment and Difference**

Through the virtual, interactivity becomes a conscious experience, and as such it can be explored as a new form of philosophy. Virtual experience is liberating, as it removes unwanted issues from a creative standpoint. Within this evolutionary growth, absence is deterred and more than enough is inevitable. If one's ability to think is unlimited, and the things one can imagine into existence are boundless, then the virtual realm offers these forms of energy to the player whenever she wants to play in the virtual and grow. When a player begins to understand these concepts, she starts to think from a mind aware of its own infinite nature. Playing offers new perspectives. These are new viewpoints that address themselves above common societal judgments as the normal social rules are not necessary in the virtual. In the virtual, life becomes more playable and the options to explore present themselves as more probable. Actual possessive property and class systems are not on the mind of the player while in the virtual. Physical possessions become obsolete within the virtual.

When playing the game, the player is afforded many opportunities to discover the higher self and quiet the ego. When finding this inner power, prudence is re-

moved. Conservatism is banished from one's being, thus the player becomes more understanding and contemplative of others' experiences.

When contemplating judgment, the concepts of race and difference can be considered as well. While race and difference are also bound by language, judgment can be seen to be born out of reflection. The more disinterested form of aesthetic judgment in the game offers a release from judgment when playing and puts forth an intuiting sense of empathy for the characters being played. This non-serious form of judging adds a light approach to the concept of difference when playing. When all forms of appearance, gender, physicality, and status can be moved, removed, and switched at will, the player learns that she is in control of her beliefs about who she is. The imagination and perception take hold of the disengaged form of judgment and allow for a space that can easily be changed for more empowering forms of use.

Beheld within the virtual, races of new creatures and beings are found to be plentiful. Unfamiliar universes are opened up, and there is no room for stereotypes. New races, new genders, new forms of beings are constantly being created and played. Characters easily change from one mode to the next. When a player creates her avatar in the game, she has the power to create any identity that can be perceived. The game moves effortlessly through, in, and around time and space. For, in the game, one can override societally structured inequalities and transcend the limitations through the virtual. One can be a creator of a being and understand the place of the character freely compared to the three-dimensional reality one participates in when

confronting others. Virtual play transcends the trappings of race and puts the player into an epistemological mode. Here, the gamer can investigate and freely consider origins, nature, methods, and, if any, limits of all beings.

As an example, in the video game, *Assassin's Creed: Liberation*, there is a female character named Aveline de Grandpré, who is Creole and the daughter of a Frenchman and an African woman. In the game, she has the ability take on a multitude of personas. She is an assassin who can disguise herself in various forms, including that of a slave. Her stepmother is caucasian and works with her to free slaves in the game, while on the hunt as an assassin.<sup>128</sup> Here, the player does not fall into any type of marginal trappings and sees that one can change her status, personality, and sense of purpose easily in the game. The potential realization is that the player will transfer this understanding into their daily physical and spiritual lives to realize that this is capable in their reality as well. The character, Aveline, wears a regal uniform, showing a sense of passion and ambition in her desire to move past any judgment or notions of her femininity or race.

The dominant sensibility surrounding judgment and difference in the game is that the negative connotations of judgment can be lessened or eradicated by the isolated and meditative experience the player finds herself in when playing. She is one with all characters and can be all characters. Here, she can act as the God force within each character if she chooses. The player becomes an equitable being and projects a

sense of understanding and respect due to the non-discriminatory stance she finds herself in by inserting her being into the vessel of the character.

Through distancing past programming and emotions, the player learns from her inner knowing not to discriminate against other beings—perhaps she comes to a universal understanding that can indeed be understood as a collective group that can also be accessed in the material world. By quieting her ego through play, she reaches her higher inner self, along with the infiniteness of all others. Here she can contemplate the experiences of others and feel for them and help them to conquer any issues that they may face in the game. She gains compassion and becomes a fair person, both in and out of the game. If discrimination is born from fear and the larger ego, perhaps the virtual may promote compassion. Thus, as focusing on areas of inequality might perpetuate the ineffectiveness of the demoralization it intends to discard, the game quietly pushes these unwanted issues out of the equation. Here, the player transcends the idea of inequality. Inadequacy is not in the world if one opens her mind to the concept that it is not—and virtual play offers this issue of importance. The way to empowerment in all forms is believing in the value of the inner self. If the virtual world achieves self-realization, it could open up many possibilities to the player and she may begin to understand her own power, which may inevitably lead to new forms of growth, and even, change in physical reality.

For, if a person desires to change her life, she has to change the story that she tells herself. She needs to become something more. She cannot hope her life will

change—she has to become something bigger. She needs to overcome her ego and this means growing much bigger than the ego. Most forms of prejudice are based around the ego—thus fear. If a person wants to grow, she needs to live above the ego, and this takes action in order to occur. Virtual gameplay can thus be seen as a portal to other worlds in the mind and offers freedom from judgment and weakness. Virtual play clearly shows the player that she can indeed create her own life.

### **Aloneness to Find Meaning**

The ego is built upon the illusion of a created identity that has been formed within the episteme of language. The perception one holds of her identity can be said to be formed within the imagination. Further, the concept of the Taoist term, *wu-wei*, takes place within the game as action in the non-action is similar to working in the virtual while not working in the material. This notion can be further broken down to working with the spirit while not working with the ego. It is the being in the nothing. Just as Jean-Paul Sartre says in his *Being and Nothingness*, “Thus freedom is not a being; it is the being of man—i.e., his nothingness of being.”<sup>129</sup> It is a form of power without exerting power. It is an inner confidence. These concepts are offered, while non-transparently, to the player if she chooses to accept it.

If it is held that society has not been entirely designed for the comfort of people, the individual who becomes aware of this inequity can retreat from the mind of society and form her own vision of life. The player, just as in Plato's cave, might see the light and return back to society with renewed power to make anyone aware who

chooses to know as well. Thus, this experience of withdrawing from the imprisonment of control and coming back to share is a process of becoming a powerful creative being. In his text, *Zarathustra: A God That Can Dance*, Osho states the following on the power of temporary aloneness:

From twenty-eight to the age thirty-five, all these people—Gautam Buddha, Zarathustra, Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, Jesus—all have moved in higher planes of being. And just not to be bothered, not to be hindered by people, not to be distracted, they moved into the mountains—into aloneness. According to me, it was not against life—they were simply searching a silent space where there were no distractions and they could find the greatest orgasmic experience... what William James has called "the oceanic orgasm," in which you completely disappear into the ocean of existence—just like a dew-drop slipping from a lotus leaf into the ocean. So the age thirty is not just incidental. All great seekers have left in the search between twenty-eight and thirty-five. That is the period of seeking, searching—searching something that is not of the body, but of the spirit.<sup>130</sup>

### **Creating Identity Through Curiosity**

The act of gratitude can be demonstrated in the virtual, infinity is shown in the game, spirituality is available in virtual space, and a myriad of other dimensions are experienced within the game. The player is continuously given more chances by receiving other lives in the game. She is given opportunity after opportunity to play other characters in the game. In the game, the individual is not limited. The player



learns how to reach higher potentials. The player learns of her innate and infinite power in the game, and thus in life.

The virtual world offers the player a chance to claim a new understanding of life. Not only does the player achieve transformation by widening her understanding and curiosity, but she now sees things in a progressive way. Thus, the game can certainly overcome negative connotations in reference to class and status, as perception of the self becomes converted. The notion of one becoming godlike in her endeavor to reach her highest self connects with many virtual games that simulate the experience of being as God looking down on the people. There are many games that are life-simulated and focus more on creation rather than destruction or competition. *SimEarth* is a video game that is a planet simulator. In this game, the player has full control of a planet that encompasses all aspects of earth over its ten billion year span of life.<sup>131</sup> It includes humans and species of all kinds. The player, in effect, acts as God and has the ability to do what she wants with the planet. Further, when playing in the mode of God, the player can look down and inwards to see what is possible. She can see where difficulty and opportunity lay and arise. She can see where there is inequality, injustice, and prejudice from a distanced vantage point. The player sees, from the God-mode, everything stripped down to the primal, or even spiritual level. The virtual, then, offers a quantum leap into possibilities of the human.

The game, *SimEarth*, created by designer Will Wright, models the game-plan after the Gaia hypothesis, which claims that the planet earth is an organism that is in-

deed alive.<sup>132</sup> *SimEarth*, which was created in 1990 has branched out into the popular video game, *The Sims*, which is also a life simulation game.<sup>133</sup> Wright credits his Montessori schooling with the initial sparks of designing the enlightening game:

Montessori taught me the joy of discovery. It showed you can become interested in pretty complex theories, like Pythagorean theory, say, by playing with blocks. It's all about learning on your terms, rather than a teacher explaining stuff to you. *SimCity* comes right out of Montessori—if you give people this model for building cities, they will abstract from it principles of urban design.<sup>134</sup>

Thus, Wright conveys there is a happiness in discovering—and it is clear that the joy does not have to go away. Big concepts are learned through play. These freeing principles are felt, too, in the virtual. While *SimEarth* or *The Sims* may not replicate a common life in our society, the repetitiveness of the day-to-day living does reflect play as children. In essence, children play to learn. They model and mimic to understand the circumstances in which they are living and how they might live. There may be repetition in the game, though each time, something different will occur. The technology of *The Sims* offers the players room to grow, learn, design, and develop their self-expression through the game. Growing will happen with these baby steps into the game experience. In fact, most advice on success encourages a child-like curiosity. Today, outside of success literature, child-like curiosity is rarely encouraged in mainstream society aside from the video game.

## Universality

The concept of universality can be examined in reference to virtual game content. Marxist political theorist and critic Frederic Jameson discusses the relationship between the individual and objects, and relates that this conjoining has to do with a historical reality. With these specific concepts, Jameson discusses the new ages of Realism, Modernism, and Postmodernism.<sup>135</sup> He relays that the age of Realism constitutes the period of the bourgeois consciousness. The age of Modernism put forth dissonance and unhappiness regarding the way the world is evolving. Postmodernism, then, for Jameson, is an opening that people are both aware of and looking at from an ironic standpoint, as society has been bombarded with too much information.<sup>136</sup> I contend that this period after Postmodernism is situated around and within the world of the virtual, as it is related to open concepts such as universality. Jameson claims:

Yet something else does tend to emerge in the most energetic postmodernist texts, and this is the sense that beyond all thematics or content the work seems somehow to tap the networks of the reproductive process and thereby to afford us some glimpse into a postmodern or technological sublime, whose power or authenticity is documented by the success of such works in evoking a whole new postmodern space in emergence around us.<sup>137</sup>

Jameson is pleased with the authenticity of the human expressing her uneasiness with the modes of solitude and alienation—with no roots or stability. Rebirth and new growth can be found to occur within the removal of roots and what we could call dis-

ease. The societal expressions of dissatisfaction show the human will to remove their authentic selves from a life of an alienating life. People are looking toward a utopian vision in these notions—though they have been sidetracked by idle diversions. Jameson sees the Postmodernism as a time where all has become fragmented and people are each living in isolated realities.<sup>138</sup> For Jameson, this life is artificial and knowingly banal. He also sees current life as a compilation, where life is collaged together with one impersonation following another in a spliced manner.<sup>139</sup>

What to do about these cultural circumstances? Jameson believes that what is needed now is cognitive mapping in an aesthetic manner. He calls this process “cognitive mapping.”<sup>140</sup> Cognitive mapping is interesting in that it is a psychic form of mapping that allows an individual to better understand the world around her. Jameson aptly states: “Ontologies of the present demand archaeologies of the future, not forecasts of the past.”<sup>141</sup> He believes people have and will continue to lose sight of what is real and true if they continue to cling to the past. He compellingly sees the disappearance of past methods to allow one to move forward an authentic reality. These concepts and thoughts ring within the new frontier of the virtual. Through the use of mind power over physical power, the actual map back to finding one’s inner self can be re-tracked and put on path.

The virtual is seen sitting uncomfortably in the more contemporary makeshift term, Metamodernism.<sup>142</sup> While Postmodernism is concerned with making the object or concept again—without one way of doing anything—Metamodernism is set to

stitch together both Modernism and Postmodernism in a certain way that begins to make anew of the past situations. In the most updated and succinct synthesis of the term, it is summarized as follows:

The metamodern structure of feeling evokes an oscillation between a modern desire for sense and a postmodern doubt about the sense of it all, between a modern sincerity and a postmodern irony, between hope and melancholy and empathy and apathy and unity and plurality and purity and corruption and naïveté and know- ingness; between control and commons and craftsmanship and conceptualism and pragmatism and utopi- anism. Indeed, metamodernism is an oscillation. It is the dynamic by which it expresses itself. One should be careful not to think of this oscillation as a balance how- ever; rather it is a pendulum swinging between numer- ous, innumerable poles. Each time the metamodern en- thusiasm swings towards fanaticism, gravity pulls it back towards irony; the moment its irony sways to- wards apathy, gravity pulls it back towards enthusiasm.<sup>143</sup>

Before these new forms of thought burgeoning within Modernism, Post-mod- ernism, and Metamodernism, new forms of spiritual thought were occurring, which resulted in the New Thought movement. The New Thought Movement began in the early nineteenth century, while Modernism began in the late nineteenth century. The New Thought Movement has been inter-woven throughout these centuries—in be- tween Modernism and Postmodernism. The New Thought Movement can be found of interest to these studies as it encapsulates some inklings of use for people to move forward in their spaces of equality. We can see this movement of personal develop- ment akin to the virtual path, as it is a way toward higher self-awareness that is pro-

moted to greater groups of the population. Interestingly, the New Thought Movement promotes the power of the individual, and it is available to all people. While the Metamodernist movement makes sense as a place to stay until empowerment is known, it seems to be that the movement needs to be amplified into a more substantial and energetic definition. Just as the term video game needs to be re-named and re-defined as a tool that has limitless capabilities to quantum leap into more, so too does the era that we are living in. Metamodernism is helpful in placing us in a new position, though the current time period may need to be re-evaluated just as Heidegger and Nietzsche have taught—as society is still based upon generations-old systems of thinking that do not offer empowerment to self-awareness.

### **To Lose the Ego**

The virtual has the potential to leap over the trappings of Modernism, Postmodernism—and even Metamodernism. The virtual realm offers a new and unprecedented experience that cannot be reformulated as such within those prior isms. Through creativity, movement, reacting, and controlling, the virtual world is responsive. When playing, there is an authentic inner experience that occurs that allows the ego to recede. After all, losing the ego is what has been sought after for thousands of years. Virtual play as a new bridge of art and philosophy offers a completely different mechanism than any previous form of thought or art. While Modernism sought to make things new, and Postmodernism found the irony, it seems that the newest ism,

path, or world has the ability to offer a form of departure to move on from the previous outlets.

In his text, *The Metropolis and Mental Life*, German philosopher Georg Simmel writes very similar ideas about authenticity that can be found within contemporary life.<sup>144</sup> While Simmel writes the following quote in the late nineteenth century, the concepts of his lamentation relate to the fury one may have when seeing the change that could easily occur, though has not up to this point. Simmel's negative connotations are quite comprehensible given he had no knowledge of what was to come in the digital age. Much of what he says rings true with the empowering concepts found through the virtual:

The deepest problems of modern life derive from the claim of the individual to preserve the autonomy and individuality of his existence in the face of overwhelming social forces, of historical heritage, of external culture, and of the technique of life. The fight with nature which primitive man has to wage for his bodily existence attains in this modern form its latest transformation. The eighteenth century called upon man to free himself of all the historical bonds in the state and in religion, in morals and in economics. Man's nature, originally good and common to all, should develop unhampered. In addition to more liberty, the nineteenth century demanded the functional specialization of man and his work; this specialization makes one individual incomparable to another, and each of them indispensable to the highest possible extent. However, this specialization makes each man the more directly dependent upon the supplementary activities of all others.<sup>145</sup>

Simmel is clearly discontent with the absence of human character and mundane tasks being subjected onto the everyday human. He sees this banality as a threat to individual subjectivity. Simmel sees that personality has been removed from the individual—and bourgeois mentality carries on with a blasé attitude. It is important to understand, however, that these comments were written in 1903 and Simmel was one of the first theorists to comprehend and call attention to the incredible impact between urbanization and people in human society. His mentioning of an apathetic attitude, sphere of indifference, and reversal of spirituality in the human show that these forms of loss of the individual are just as real today as they were over a century ago. What is evident is that a new form or juxtaposition of Modernism and Postmodernism will not offer higher levels of consciousness to the individual. Clearly, a new form of living with and through the virtual dimension is desirable to handle our capability for quantum jumps in higher consciousness and expression. Simmel says:

The individual has become a mere cog in an enormous organization of things and powers which tear from his hands all progress, spirituality, and value in order to transform them from their subjective form into the form of a purely objective life.<sup>146</sup>

It seems that life is incredibly simpler for the person who is independently secure. Virtual play, then, is a self-initiated and self-enclosed experience in which one responds and receives instant feedback. While it can be seen as a truth that some people will never move toward understanding, there is a new way through the virtual.



Philosophers such as Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Rancière cry out for the individual to claim and preserve her unique inner self. With this lamenting, we can better recognize the degeneration of humankind through a conformed mentality. It is promising that the virtual has been attained so quickly, as it clearly offers a portal to other worlds that could never before be imagined. Rather than constantly looking to the past and fearing the loss of it, perhaps we can move onwards into a digitally enlightened realm.

### **Virtual Aesthetics**

It has been said that art is the chief organ of the imaginative life.<sup>147</sup> Art inherently demands the use of interaction, imagination, and perception. These modes of cognition offer fundamental pathways that lead to new forms of curiosity and discernment. These cognitive mechanisms are amplified within virtual play. Due in part to intense aesthetic realism in virtual gaming, there is a thin haze that causes one to believe that multiple spaces of thinking and being are available while engaged in play. There is a pure sense of delight in this experience. These imaginative capacities assist in finding pathways to new realities, which allow one to come upon distinctively novel ways of being in the world. Connecting imagination with expression, painter Piet Mondrian states, “The universal is what all art seeks to express.”<sup>148</sup> Mondrian seeks expression of the beautiful and spirit through aesthetics, and states that the universal in each person is and remains constant, as the individual is always being repeated and renewed. Further, he discusses that happiness is found through “perpetual rebirth of

the changeable.”<sup>149</sup> Viewing nature in this way of human-ness runs concurrently to the virtual. Mondrian goes further to express the purification of spirit that is found through plastic arts:

...Through the new spirit, man himself creates a new beauty, whereas in the past he only painted and described the beauty of nature. This new beauty has become indispensable to the new man, for in it he expresses his own image in equivalent opposition with nature. THE NEW ART IS BORN.<sup>150</sup>

While this was written by Mondrian in 1920, his enthusiasm can be felt today and echoes the freedom with which individuals may find themselves in the virtual. By extending past limitations of the ego and popular emotion, and finding a new path to the ultimate inner spirit, the individual can create what she was always meant to become. Thus, through the experience through art via the virtual, the human can be reborn. Mondrian speaks at length about the new possibilities to expand the definition of art, and thus, expand the definition of the human:

The new spirit must be manifested in all the arts without exception. That there are differences between the arts is no reason that one should be valued less than the other; that can lead to another appearance but not to an opposed appearance. As soon as one art becomes plastic expression of the abstract, the others can no longer remain plastic expressions of the natural. The two do not go together: from this comes their mutual hostility down to the present. The New Plastic abolishes this antagonism: *it creates the unity of all the arts*. [. . .] Sculpture and architecture, until the present, destroy space *as space* by dividing it. The new sculpture and architecture must destroy *the work of art as an object or thing*.<sup>151</sup>

To view play in the virtual as a form of art and look at it akin to Mondrian's call to abandon the object-ness of art, virtual play falls neatly into place in terms of the historical process of creative evolution. While plastic art, sculpture, performance, photography, video, and new media have moved toward new concepts of what space is or can be, it is clear that the form of the virtual is an apparent next step in the acquiring of higher consciousness through aesthetic means. If it is acknowledged that negative concepts such as poverty, scarcity, non-productive busy-ness, and stereotypes are promoted and perpetuated through propaganda and mainstream media, the unlimited potential of the human might be understood. Empowering concepts of potentiality are contemplated more deeply when an individual briefly steps backward from the universal mind and retreats into her inner authenticity. Thus, it can be seen as helpful that players will disengage from the buzz of mainstream when resigning into play through the virtual. Within this conscious societal detachment, the individual finds her "self." She discovers that fictitious constructs consisting of time and space that she once believed to be true are actually non-existent. She learns that she creates time through the game. It can be claimed that this conscious state of meditative interactivity in the virtual is next in the evolution of creativity.

### **Appearances of the Real**

Forms of freedom and power become revealed when diving deep into the nature of the virtual. When young, many children are given a privileged access to the

concept of purity through innocence. All who will begin their journey in life are born free and full of what might be called “truth.” In the newborn human, what is found is an essential freedom, which is revealed through self-awareness. If a truth can be told, this is it. All are inherently free. One can discover this through the meditative tendencies in the virtual. In the game, freedom is the only option. Sartre aptly states, “Man cannot be sometimes slave and sometimes free; he is wholly and forever free or he is not free at all.”<sup>152</sup> German idealist and Hegel contemporary, Friedrich Schelling sees the essential human contribution to the world begins with the principles of human creativity.<sup>153</sup> He believes that there is something which unites everyone at a primal core, which is called pantheism. This term is defined as a world soul—a single presence within the whole of nature.<sup>154</sup> Thus, his hypothesis states there is a universal soul in each human. When a human is born, she begins her life absolutely free. Through the processes of modeling, the phenomenal touch between truth and humanity might become concealed. During one's life, then, the human strives to re-connect with her universal soul, or truth. Today, the game of misrecognition affords the individual the opportunity to re-connect with her universal purpose. Through creativity, the human is struck with aesthetic emotion which informs at a non-verbal level. Playing in the virtual helps to achieve this universal re-connection.

Schelling further offers a utopian concept within the universe found through forms of art. If nature cannot explain its beauty through words, the output of human knowledge and response can offer the inner essence of life. We can better understand

nature through art just as we can contemplate the subjective through the objective. Schelling calls for a new a mythological renewal of divine beauty within nature.<sup>15</sup> The virtual, then, could provide new forms full of aesthetic experiences that are able to produce new thoughts of spiritual understanding. Schelling does not see these mythologies as a new system, but as a new form of life:

Certainly one who could write completely the history of their own life would also have, in a small epitome, concurrently grasped the history of the cosmos. Most people turn away from what is concealed within themselves just as they turn away from the depths of the great life and shy away from the glance into the abysses of that past which are still in one just as much as the present.<sup>156</sup>

Similar notions of truth are revealed through new measure within Platonic notions.

Socrates speaks through Plato in *Phaedrus*:

For a human being must understand a general idea formed by collecting into a unity by means of reason the many perceptions of the senses; and this is a recollection of those real things which our soul once beheld, when it journeyed with a god and, lifting its vision above the things which we now say exist, rose up to real being.<sup>157</sup>

While Plato has a general uneasiness for these nuanced sensitivities, as he saw art as inherently deceptive due to never reaching the truth, it can be seen that 2500 years later, this uncovering of the truth may be unwrapped once again through the virtual as a vessel to interpretations of enlightened truth. Contemporary Slovenian philosopher,

Slavoj Žižek discusses the concept of truth, phenomena of the real, and appearance. He sees that truth is not so much a real concept, but it can be seen as the view of an object without a distorting sense of subject. Žižek states that there is a detachment that separates perspectives from each other.<sup>158</sup> Within this gap is a truth:

The Real is the appearance as appearance; it not only appears within appearances, it also is *nothing but* its own appearance—it is simply a certain *grimace* of reality, a certain imperceptible, unfathomable, ultimately illusory feature that accounts for the absolute difference within identity. This Real is not the inaccessible beyond of phenomena, simply their doubling, the gap between two inconsistent phenomena, a perspective shift.<sup>159</sup>

Kant discusses concepts such as the above mentioned similarly, though he leaves much of what he claims as incomplete:

What we have meant to say is that all our intuition is nothing but the representation of appearance; that the things which we intuit are not in themselves what we intuit them as being, nor their relations so constituted in themselves as they appear to us.<sup>160</sup>

Žižek states that Hegel also finds Kant's answers unfulfilling. Hegel believes that while Kant finds the unknowableness regarding the thing-in-itself to be a positive—he stops himself too soon, as he does not give a whole vision of this revolution of the metaphysical world. Thus, Hegel makes the effort to take Kant's basic premises further:

The Thing-in-itself expresses the object when we leave out of sight all that consciousness makes of it, all its determinate feelings and thoughts. It is easy to see what is left—utter abstraction, total emptiness, only described still as a beyond—the negative of every representation, feeling, and determination. Nor does it require much reflection to see that this *caput mortuum* is still only a product of thought... that it is the work of the empty I, which makes an object out of this empty self-identity of its own... Hence one can only read with wonder the perpetual remark that we do not know the Thing-in-itself. On the contrary there is nothing we can know so easily.<sup>161</sup>

Thus, Plato starts the initial musings on the metaphysical concepts of truth, the real, and freedom. Kant begins to unwrap these notions, and Hegel finds through both Plato and Kant that there is this unknowable-ness, though it can be found quite easily, as it is inside of each person. If there is any kind of being-ness or universal-ness, then, it is inside of each human. If this were not the case, there would be no “truth.” There is either a whole or a nothing. Both concepts can be intertwined and they are one and the same. Within contemporary thought, Žižek concurs with Hegel, “the infinite Truth is ‘eternal’ and *meta-* with regard to the temporal process of Being; it is a flash of another dimension transcending the positivity of Being.”<sup>162</sup>

Žižek sees through the many debates regarding metaphysics, phenomenology, and truth—and wisely states that what is to be found when getting to the essence of everything is, “only what we put there.”<sup>163</sup> The truth and our interpretation of it is what we decide it will be. The virtual realm gives one an opportunity to explore a non-stifling way of being. With a fictional shift, Žižek quotes author C.S. Lewis and

his thoughts regarding his epiphany on his revelation that he, indeed, was a powerful human endowed with free will:

The odd thing was that before God closed in on me, I was in fact offered what now appears a moment of wholly free choice. In a sense I was going up Headington Hill on the top of a bus. Without words and (I think) almost without images, a fact about myself was somehow presented to me. I became aware that I was holding something at bay, or shutting something out. Or, if you like, that I was wearing some stiff clothing, like corsets, or even a suit of armour, as if I were a lobster. I felt myself being, there and then, given a free choice. I could open the door or keep it shut; I could unbuckle the armour or keep it on. Neither choice was presented as a duty; no threat or promise was attached to either, though I knew that to open the door or to take off the corset meant the incalculable. The choice appeared to be momentous but it was also strangely unemotional. I was moved by no desires or fears. In a sense I was not moved by anything. I chose to open, to unbuckle, to loosen the rein. I say, "I chose," yet it did not really seem possible to do the opposite. On the other hand, I was aware of no motives. You could argue that I was not a free agent, but I am more inclined to think this came nearer to being a perfectly free act than most that I have ever done. Necessity may not be the opposite of freedom, and perhaps a man is most free when, instead of producing motives, he could only say, 'I am what I do.' Then came the repercussion on the imaginative level. I felt as if I were a man of snow at long last beginning to melt. The melting was starting in my back—drip-drip and presently trickle-trickle. I rather disliked the feeling.<sup>164</sup>

This glimpse into a moment of authentic self-awareness is an astounding tale of a moment of emancipation. In Žižek's text, *The Act and its Vicissitudes*, he discusses



this passage and explains that Lewis was clearly set free, yet still felt uncomfortable at the end of his description as he disliked the feeling of being aware. Discomfort signifies growth, so clearly Lewis was experiencing a quantum jump in awareness. Similar awakenings can most certainly be found when musing in the virtual.

## Chapter Four

### **Virtual Play: License to Create the Self**

Evaluation is creation: hear it, you creative men! Valuating is itself the value and jewel of all valued things. Only through evaluation is there value: and without evaluation the nut of existence would be hollow. Hear it, you creative men! A change in values—that means a change in the creators of values. He who has to be a creator also has to destroy. People were the creators at first; only later were individuals creators. Indeed, the individual himself is still the latest creation.

—Friedrich Nietzsche  
*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

### **Anonymity**

Within the previous chapter, new possibilities within the virtual via attaining higher sense of spirit and awareness have been established. Throughout this chapter, the capacity to willingly create the self as desired will be examined. The activity of play in the virtual provides beneficial mental applications including misrecognizing the ideal self, working in the form of anonymity, and embracing masked identity which supports the redefinition of conscious identity.

The sense of anonymity attained in the virtual world is an integral factor in the growth of higher self-consciousness. Idealism becomes a misrecognition at the point that Jacques Lacan states humans become detached from a perfect scenario and move into a perpetual state of always searching for the ideal. The birth of the virtual world has provided a loophole where one can go back to that self-reflexive moment and dis-

cover the ideal self again and again. For, the authentic nature of the self is found when in the activity of play. Due to the accessibility of anonymity found in the virtual, life itself becomes altered because one can now be who she wants to be. The question is not about obtaining a true or false sense of reality as it is in finding the authentic one.

A sense of anonymity becomes a virtual identity within the virtual world. An ideal sense of self can be attained quite genuinely in the virtual. The anonymous and virtual identity, then, can construct a much more perfect self, aligned with a heightened sense of awareness due to renewed sensibility and perception. No other forms of material commodities are needed to ignite consciousness. This positive way of thinking about technology is, again, a negation of a negation, as these worlds will bring the individual out of the spectacle of life and into the actuality of living, which is coming into a communion with the authentic self.

Through the virtual, a possibility has been created for a new renaissance in creative ways of being. New memories are created that replace previously held beliefs. Through this meditative state, one finds that she can become anyone, even if it is not in a physical state. The virtual causes a person to acknowledge her literal and mental surroundings. Rather than idly sitting in front of a television, the player consciously and actively engages in situations that can certainly benefit her character, her outlook, and her perceptibility.

Through anonymity, there is a pure state of detachment which allows consciousness to interact in a space that is free of societal risks. Conditioned roles are put aside and the player can perform however she chooses. If she is a quiet person in physical day-to-day reality, she can become an outgoing dancer with large wings in the virtual. In the virtual, characters are accepted however they choose to present themselves. Further, if a person is more extroverted in physical reality, she can still behave as an extroverted character, although at this point it is on her own terms and she is aware of how she is presenting her self.

Becoming anonymous on a conscious level has become a useful next step on the road to higher self-awareness. Relishing in finding the inner self through the virtual can be seen, then, as a necessary point in individual consciousness. Playing in the virtual world creates new ways to access other states of thought that may have been previously veiled. With more people learning about the freedom that is found in the virtual, the order of society becomes challenged. When one begins to play any game, she jumps into another universe and forgets about her daily routine in everyday physical life. Within the virtual world of the game, the player can become who she wants, she can go to other locations, and can live another life. There are no consequences as to her actions—just the same as the imagination. The player is centered in the mode of free play without restrictions. When the game is turned off and the player enters back into her current now, she may be able to see events more clearly with a new approach to problem-solving.

Anonymity offers a renewed sense of power to the player. The self is first seen in the mind, and then the sense of novel perception can transfer into physical life. The experience allows one to see her own authentic self outside of the virtual reality. In the virtual, there is room for invention and the art of living is discovered. When playing in the virtual, the activity is done in real time, and the experience envelops and responds to the player. This is a sharp contrast to simply reading travel magazines, watching a film, or talking with a person in a physical situation.

### **Polyphonics in the Virtual**

Due to the game experience being one of interaction with a form of dialogue, it is also a form of polyphonic discourse. Playing in the virtual as a polyphonic voice leads to interchangeable positions. Just as the writing of Dostoevsky probes thoughts and questions, and does not give answers, the polyphonic nature of the virtual twists in parallel branches. These parallels lead to the importance of the virtual's contribution in society as a language that rethinks issues of structure, evolution, and individuality, all illusions for the sake of forms of power. The virtual, becomes, then, a new possibility to re-imagine the world, with all of its unconscious processes of control. Looking inwards with the virtual and moving past a controlling system, the experience becomes a form of awareness, and the role of playing in the virtual becomes self-consciousness. New technologies create conditions for a new kind of polyphonics: the technological or digital polyphonics. Here we see the world of virtual play function similarly to the novel as a creative form of giving and taking, only now more

heightened. Mikhail Bakhtin speaks of the birth of the novel, “From the very beginning, the novel was structured not in the distanced image of the absolute past but in the zone of direct contact with inconclusive present-day reality.”<sup>165</sup>

Bakhtin shares notions of the mirror image with Lacan. In addition, they see eye-to-eye regarding the Other in the mind.<sup>166</sup> Bakhtin views the act of looking at oneself in the mirror as working in the dialogic imagination. Bakhtin believes that when one looks in the mirror, the individual sees the entire vista of what others see and believes about this individual and legacy.<sup>167</sup> The mirror, then, can be used as a tool in order to view the self from the minds of others. Here, the mirror translates to the screen, and the virtual character(s) translate to many minds and a plane of possibilities. For Bakhtin, this could be seen as a benefit as this mode of interacting offers the ability to create a life and weave one’s way amidst many others and work from a dialogical standpoint in order to achieve greater realization of the “whole” of life, rather than a hole in life.

### **The Carnavalesque**

In fact, carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators.... Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom. It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal, in which all take part. Such is the

essence of carnival, vividly felt by all its participants.... The tradition of the Saturnalias remained unbroken and alive in the medieval carnival, which expressed this universal renewal and was vividly felt as an escape from the usual official way of life.<sup>168</sup>

Likewise to the concepts of the reflected appearance and polyphonic interchange, we turn to the concept of the carnivalesque aspects within the virtual. The bliss of play—and enjoying oneself for the sake of experiencing pleasure—clearly demonstrates the adjoining relationship between virtual play and the carnivale.<sup>169</sup> Gaming can be seen as carnivalesque in that it turns the reality of life on its head and throws aside hierarchical conventions and authority. The carnivale is seen by Bakhtin as a “world inside out.”<sup>170</sup> It is fragmented from common reality and offers a freedom that goes further than the typical notion of what a life could be. The carnivale does act according to certain rules, yet it subverts them into something flexible that can angle along with imaginative properties. With both the virtual and the carnivale, anything is possible when bending rules. Bakhtin sees the carnivale as that which puts forth, “the chance to have a new outlook on the world, to realize the relative nature of all that exists, and to enter a completely new order of things.”<sup>171</sup> This concept is clearly relative to playing in the virtual, as the perspective becomes something completely irreverent, yet playful and permissible. The transformative process of the player engaging in the game shows clearly the developmental and broadening scope of the carnivalesque aspect.

Critical to the metamorphic aspects in the virtual play process is the universality of the experience blended with the force of action in the player. The Dionysian renewal that purges and reclaims its spiritual self is consistently at work in the game. For, the Dionysian figure is that which is becoming—it is the truest version of the self. What is found when actively playing in the virtual is an archaic and delighted nature. There, an innocence is found. Within the game, the player *unwittingly* hushes the ego. The Bacchanalian rebirth that occurs removes the original sense of the ordinary. Today, in the world of the virtual, these Ancient Greek notions are now tethered in technological and digital settings. These other dimensions offer various perspectives into the carnivalesque attributes to life. In the carnivale, all are one and face the same fate. Within the carnivale, people laugh in the face of fate—*amor fati*—and enjoy the life one is given.<sup>172</sup> This acceptance of one's life and the acknowledgement of what comes of it offers an agreement. Interestingly, Nietzsche discusses the concept of the eternal return, in which one should live their life as if they would eternally live it over again. So, too, in the world of the game, death does not last long, and the ability to try again is unending.

An important question—is the virtual merely a spectacle much like the carnivale, or is it a powerfully creative experience? Bakhtin claims the medieval *Feast of Fools* was authentically carnivalesque, and that the more contemporary Mardi Gras has become a spectacle.<sup>173</sup> I argue that games in the virtual offers a new wave of overtones that echo the seriousness with which the *Feast of Fools* began. Only now, how-



ever, the game experience is accompanied together with technological advances and philosophical concepts, which are grounded in creative change. Mardi Gras may have been simply a show, though gaming is now taking on a virtual and constant festival that offers all forms of delight, celebration, thought, action, and revelry. The carnivalesque nature of virtual gaming undoubtedly echoes the notion of Dionysian renewal and ecstasy.

While Bacchanalian festivals are well known to hold high the reverie of immorality and hedonism, the same concept is found in similarly to the likeness of gaming to the celebration of life and renewal. When looking at the game regarding Dionysus and the carnivale, Bakhtin sees the inwardness coupled with togetherness to be a positive. Furthermore, he sees togetherness and positivity come together as a language that is dialogical. The chaos of a non-streamlined activity offers the chance at self-creation in that it connects one to many. Because the inwardness is coupled with technological dialogic and polyphonic interaction, the ultimate self may be born.

To continue the comparison between gaming and the carnivale, these experiences promote change and abruption, movement and manifesting. Bakhtin sees the carnivale as that which gives solace to those who do indeed live a double life. Their prior dogmatic existence disappears at the festival where all is perfectly acceptable, and there is equality amongst the players and spectators. The desire to be released is not new—it is beheld as the attaining of a sense of freedom. The freeing power is a form of deliverance and breaks a person free from monotony. Further, Bakhtin looks

at both the classical body and the grotesque body. He sees the classical body as something that is complete and individual. He sees the grotesque body, which we can see akin to the carnivalesque notions in many virtual games as something that is freeing and unlimited. Bakhtin states that the grotesque body is “never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created and builds and creates another body.”<sup>174</sup>

Within virtual gameplay, if one desires to engage in any activity—be it non-purposeful, simply aesthetic, or even violent—they are free to do so in a non-consequential atmosphere. It is in amusement and recreation—and here, it is permitted. In the video game, just as the carnivalesque experience, connections abound including spiritual awakenings, self-transformations, and evolving awarenesses. Transformation through acts of the carnivalesque highlight the possibility as to what Bakhtin sees as a promise for a utopian freedom which will occur due to the free rein on thought and becoming. The regenerative capacity of the carnivale offers a window to process and understand one’s life creatively, and to unearth the creative spirit. Here, the carnivalesque becomes a merging of activities in which utopian pleasure ensues. Day-to-day life intricacies are abandoned for a time of festivity and retreat, even if in the virtual through the game or the festival.

Hierarchies are abolished in the virtual, and what can be found is a world free from societal stagnation. The space of open access in the virtual gives one the chance to play and enjoy life a second time—in a new way. Here in the virtual—just as in the

carnivale—the clown is king now, as there is little difference between he who thinks he's a king and he who is a king.

Furthermore, with reference to the carnivale, we can look to the four categories that Bakhtin tells us comprise the carnivalesque attributes and note that these characteristics closely resemble the components of virtual play:

1. Familiar and free interaction between people.
2. Eccentric behavior when one's natural behavior is accepted and appreciated without consequence.
3. Carnivalistic misalliances in which it is acceptable that all which is commonly separated to reunite.
4. Sacrilegious in which events could take place that would not end in punishment or discipline.<sup>175</sup>

To discuss the first component, “Familiar and free interaction between people,” each player knows what level one is on and acknowledges the space in which they both currently exist in both the game and the carnivale. In the carnivalesque space, there is no resentment or doubts. All are, essentially, on the same page in the virtual world. All are swimming in the same pool of virtuality and realize this is something new—which offers limitless potential of a productive and authentic experience. The interaction is a continual dialogue. In Bakhtinian terms, dialogism is an

open-ended process that does not end—it is an existential process of humanity. Bakhtin claims this polyphonic dialogism is a condition that binds doubly between the self and the Other. Bakhtin’s dialogism states that discourse is ongoing, and so it is in the virtual game.<sup>176</sup> It is always already and continuously circling the present.

Regarding the second attribute, “Eccentric behavior when one’s natural behavior is accepted and appreciated without consequence,” the level of eccentricity in the virtual indeed remains at certain points according to the nature of the game. In gaming, however, there are no set rules for behavior as there is in physical civilization. Thus, eccentric behavior is permitted and not questioned in games that call for such freedom. The openness for one to behave how they wish without consequence is key to the power of finding a true self as there is infinite room to expand and revel within a space of pleasure.

The third component, “Carnivalistic misalliances in which it is acceptable that all which is commonly separated to reunite,” is important to virtual gameplay. In the virtual reality of the video game, it is unlimited yet confined to the specific Metaverse in which one is playing. In physical reality, there is one earth with many places. In the Metaverse, it is known that all are in on the one concept, whether they are moving about freely or together. There is an understanding that all are one yet can be separate. There is little confusion in the virtual Metaverse. The rules are embedded in an intuitive sense, not rigid or laden with guilt or a sense of specified duty.

The last category, “Sacriligious in which events could take place that would not end in punishment or discipline,” correlates to the video game in that there are no consequences that will end in harm in the physical world. The world of virtual game-play, just as the world of the carnivale, is understood to be a non-judgmental space and the player is free to engage however she wants. If she wants to play a competitive game that includes violence, it is fine to pursue in the virtual. There is a release in which she can let go. The action in violent situations in a game will not pressure the player into seeking further violence when finished playing. The player engages in the adventure and is satisfied when done. Just as a person enjoys the thrill of a horror film without getting hurt, the gamer enjoys a larger thrill by taking part as closely as one can without actual damage being created when complete. The game responds to the player, which is something that has never occurred before.

### **Becoming All**

Furthermore, when a gamer plays in the game, she becomes all due to the scope of the virtual atmosphere with which she is immersed. The imagination is immediately activated, along with perceptions. Playing and becoming all can be seen as a new form of training in perception. The imaginary deals with the capacity to conceptualize images and how these images reflect on to the self. While it may be uttered endlessly that more can be done by way of teaching art and culture, it is imperative to integrate the teachings of awareness coupled with perception and imagination in order to progress further into the twenty-first century. Virtual play is an answer to this long

heard call. Virtual play puts forth ways in which the mind and body connect with new potential. The experiences within the game offer future ways of learning and becoming more than might currently be realized. While the video game is largely seen as a commoditized object, the transformative power offered is yet unrealized potential. The experiential nature of playing in the game gives the player a new sense of fulfillment and optimal hope for what is possible. When the player begins to play, she dives into the newness of the game and experience. She becomes a being that is immersed with others. She can become multiple characters. She indeed becomes all. Once the player becomes all, the becoming aspect is that of the universal. In the virtual space, there are no prescribed social spheres, presumed ways of being, or judgment that will affect one's character.

By choosing identities and trying out different points of view, the player may experience empathy. The player can now see the world from a different point that may have otherwise never been known. While Nietzsche rejects notions of empathy, he says that he does understand how and why others act as they do.<sup>177</sup> Nietzsche can relate to the way others feel even if he does not agree with them.<sup>178</sup> I argue that empathy is indeed a step closer to a higher state of self-consciousness. Being able to relate without the experience or knowledge lets the ego diminish away from the personal sensibility, as this is a state of detachment or Kantian disinterestedness. For, key to enlightened forms of thinking, particularly according to Zen Buddhism, is losing the self. Empathy, therefore, assists in the loss of self. The concept of the loss of self on

the journey to self-awareness regarding Zen Buddhism can be seen in the Zen Buddhist wood print entitled “Ten Bulls of Zen” by Kakuan.<sup>179</sup> The print depicts the process of self-realization and awakening. The depiction shows an ox herder who is to be identified with the self and the ox that is to be identified as the authentic self. This ten-step process towards self-awareness can be likened to the experience of the virtual experience. The steps are as follows:

1. The Search for the Bull
2. Discovering the Footprints
3. First Sight of the Bull
4. Catching the Bull
5. Taming the Bull
6. Riding the Bull Home
7. The Bull Transcended (Bull Forgotten, Self Alone)
8. Both Bull and Self Transcended (or Forgotten)
9. Reaching the Source
10. In the World

In the etchings and descriptions, the process of awakening is when the self and ego regard one another and then lose one another in order to discover that life is not as much about the self, but about appreciating and experiencing the current reality, however mundane or spectacular it may be at the moment. The last image depicts the now authentic individual who has explored all moments of understanding, empathy, and

awareness. While he does not appear any different, he has a new found inner understanding of reality and goes about the marketplace as he did before. However, he now has much to offer to others by way of his enlightened consciousness.<sup>180</sup> These modes can be attained through the virtual game.

The player first approaches the experience as the known self. The player meets the Other self, which is her authentic self, while playing the game. The Other can be seen in various ways—as the character being played or the other characters. While playing, she discovers what it means to be a living being with a physical reality, specifically due to the transparent nature of the other-world of gaming. She thus sees the Other and feels a connection but does not yet understand how or why she feels a certain way to that Other. She, the player, feels a certain discontentment though cannot quite discover what it is that she is missing. She recognizes these emotions and looks to unearth her feelings (which may be buried under the role of the self). She is in search of a path and begins to understand how to acquire a sense of well-being. She sees certain notions of how to attain a sense of peace, but does not know how to find this peace as of yet. She then realizes that her life is in her own hands. She does indeed have the power to decide and control how she wants to live. She, just as in Plato's Cave, is seeing the illusion of reality that she has always believed, and is coming out of the dark shadows. After realizing that she is free, the oxherder (or player) truly enjoys the reality that she can now actually see, ruminate, and play. She can release her prior pent-up energies and achieve untainted awareness.



It is seen that this awareness can only be attained when the self is able to see the Other self for what it is. While this may have been done in the mind alone prior to the digital age, the digital era now offers emancipation in the game. The gamer or oxherder now sees that the Other was merely the experience of everyday life. Thus, the experience of the self and the perceived reality has been overcome. All is whole, united, and one once these concepts are erased. The player, then, sees and understands the true nature of reality. As she understands the miracle of life through the transcending of self, she is able to put forth these energies into society. Here, too, it can be likened to the virtual. She has understood what was once thought to be true and false are concepts of the mind. She then goes about her life with others and does not retreat to a life of exclusivity. She is prepared to put forth her exuberance for this understanding of life—if her thoughts are to be validated and received.

This transcending of social and ideological structures keeps the evolution of creativity moving upwards. With this other-world experience, a new culture is achieved that combines qualities of stability with elasticity and is afforded to the individual with no sacrifice to their physical being. By progressing above limits of what can be done in society while in the virtual, advances can be made in the world of the individual—thus the society in which she inhabits. Is it possible to view the world of virtual play as a new form of culture? If it is not located in a physical space, it can be viewed similarly within the confines of the mind. The culture in the virtual makes the development of human potential possible. For, if we deduce that there is no natural or

natural space per se, we might ask how the virtual might be seen. Society is a space in the minds of the societal members which is thought of as an ordered way to allow people to believe in the natural way of living and behaving according to social norms. If people reside in both their mind and in society, the only way to progress is to challenge assumptions and follow through into new ways of thought and becoming all.

### **The Mask That Causes Freedom**

Further along the lines of self-creation, the aspect of the mask can be sewn together through Bakhtin and the virtual. The mask itself keeps the player anonymous, yet it also renews. The mask conceals the player, and she is free to roam and play with abandon. Viewing the mask further, it connects revelry with dissimilarity, and it allows the energy of play to abound. The dissonant mode of disguise rejects the uniform nature of conformity.<sup>181</sup>

While the mask indeed conceals, it also opens other pathways into new forms of participation and communication, and ignites a new form of free social space that encourages life and art to mix while connecting to play and action. In these circumstances, differing voices are heard and connect, which break down previously held beliefs and stereotypical exchange. The opportunity for new points of view empowers genuine communication. Thus, the player is no longer an individual mind—a collective consciousness occurs, and the person becomes aware.<sup>182</sup> While in the act of play and wearing a mask, the player is continuously evolving and becoming, as the mask is transitory and metamorphosing. She is renewing herself, while staying together or

communal in the collective Metaverse. Just as there is a constant creative evolution of all people together, the one player is not a lone figure, but a part to the whole of the history of humanity.

Furthermore, anonymity is synonymous with namelessness. Onomastics, the study of names, is a significant area to consider with relation to the virtual and anonymity. Naming is rapidly changing in the virtual. Prior to the virtual, names were considered a permanent fixture on identity. Names were seen as a label for the individual. The player is offered many ways of describing who she is in the Metaverse. A name in the virtual is now called a username, screen name, handle, login name, and nickname. With these changes in names, we might see the user as essentially nameless if a name is so easily pliant. Losing one's name can be seen as a therapeutic equivalent to finding oneself, for to lose oneself is to find oneself. By losing one's self, a new self-knowledge is attained.

Matters of names and the nameless can be equated with anonymity as being the nameless. When wearing the mask of anonymity, then, power is acquired. The ego with baggage is lost as the name that is filled with the past is dropped when entering the game. The player, who acquires a new name in the virtual, does not rely on past experiences in physical space to decide upon how she is going to navigate in the virtual. The experience in the world of the virtual is a new terrain for her to explore without a name or past. Also important to consider is the urging of game systems to ask the player to make sure their name is not identifiable for security purposes. The

insistence of the changing of the name is a subtle notion showing the silent pushing of the user to open up to unanticipated possibilities.

### **The Cheerful Death**

In grotesque realism, therefore, the bodily element is deeply positive. It is presented not in a private, egoistic form, severed from the other spheres of life, but as something universal, representing all the people.<sup>183</sup>

We can next look to the concept of death in relation to the virtual gaming experience. It can be observed that when a person does not approach life with an irreverent enthusiasm, impassivity ensues. Fear and apathy dissipate when a celebration occurs due to the carnivalesque aspect of an immortal collective. In the virtual game, the player is continuously given more chances—more lives. If the player “dies” in the video game, she can begin again—she experiences a virtual rebirth. In a sense, here, the player learns how to die—she learns about death in an awakened state. Furthermore, the player can re-set the game if she is unhappy with her prior moves. With this renewing state in mind, Bakhtin discusses the clownish portrayal of death about which French Renaissance writer François Rabelais writes in the sixteenth century. Rabelais writes of death as a comic portion to life, as it is what occurs in life though is not the end of a grand picture. We can then view this concept clearly likened to gameplay. With the infinite number of lives or turns a character can take in the game, the idea of the sole individual dying and eternally ending is halted. Here, death is something that is productive. It is not a narrow biological fact of life, but rather an

event that embraces the whole of life. In his writing, Rabelais seeks to knock down the past concept of a sorrowful death and display the soul and eternity of humanity.

Bakhtin states:

Death is an ambivalent image for Rabelais and for the popular sources from which he drew his material; therefore, death can be gay. While depicting an individual body in the throes of death, this image also shows a glimpse of another youthful body being born; even if it is not shown or directly named, it is implicit in the image. Where death is, there also is birth, change, renewal. The image of birth is no less ambivalent; it represents the body that is born and at the same time shows a glimpse of the departing one. In the first case we have the negative pole but without a break with the positive pole; in the second case, we have the reverse, the positive continuous with the negative. The image of the underworld also bears this ambivalent character; it contains the past, the rejected and condemned, as unworthy to dwell in the present, as something useless and obsolete. But it also gives us a glimpse of the new life, of the future that is born, for it is this future that finally kills the past.<sup>184</sup>

Thus, Rabelais describes stories of death being a renewal of life and laughter. Bakhtin writes, “The “cheerful death” of Rabelais not only coincides with a high value placed on life and with a responsibility to fight to the end for this life—but it is in itself an expression of this high evaluation, an expression of the life force that eternally triumphs over any death.”<sup>185</sup> Here, then, the player experiences a renewed relationship with death.

### **The Renewal of Self**

True reality is merely this process of reinstating self—identity, of reflecting into its own self in and from its other, and is not an original and primal unity as such, not an immediate unity as such. It is the process of its own becoming, the circle which presupposes its end as its purpose, and has its end for its beginning; it becomes concrete and actual only by being carried out, and by the end it involves.<sup>186</sup>

To view notions of identity further, the 2011 film, *The Skin I Live In*, can offer further insight into the concept of one changing her outer appearance and, thus, the character discovers her inner core.<sup>187</sup> In director Pedro Almodovar's film, the main male character, Dr. Ledgard, alters the female character's identity, which provides a journey for her to find her true self. The film is quite dark and disturbing, though, interestingly enough, so are a multitude of video games. Perhaps the cathartic release in both the tense film and the suspenseful video game can provide subconscious undertones regarding one altering her external identity in order to find her internal oneness.

An additional example of the conscious and physical act of changing one's appearance and identity can be seen in reference to the performance artist, Orlan. Orlan is a contemporary artist who has changed her physical appearance over time. She used her body as the actual form of art and underwent great amounts of plastic surgery in order to confront common conventional stereotypes of what a female figure—or even any human figure—should look like. Her work, which is referred to as carnal art, is interesting to consider as she is confronting the cliched versions of body, identity, and power to create the self. Compared to concealed surgery where the pa-

tient receives plastic surgery, though does not disclose the fact, Orlan makes the entire surgery an enormous spectacle. The sensational experience where she is recorded and invites celebrities into the operating room exposes the truth that each person has the ability to consciously create their self. Orlan states, “I can observe my own body cut open, without suffering!... I see myself all the way down to my entrails; a new mirror stage.”<sup>188</sup>

Digital technologies and creative thinking—together through the virtual—have become a turning point in history. Because of the accelerated speed that the virtual has allowed humanity to access, people are growing more enlightened in mind and spirit at an increased pace more than previous eras. The virtual age can be seen similarly to a form of a renaissance. Communication, connection, and understanding have grown immensely with the advent of the virtual. The virtual indeed affects physical reality itself, along with the perceived notion of time and space. Nietzsche proclaims that the importance of our basic concept of reality is constructed in no part on our own, and the importance placed on reality is entirely overrated.<sup>189</sup> Philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas refers to the notion of interrupting history as a positive endeavor. In his text, *On Escape*, Lévinas discusses the necessity and positivity of a metaphorical escape from being. He speaks of the need to escape into something other than being. He shows that escapism—like panoptic paranoia and Heidegger’s anxiety—is a real necessity. Here, we can see escaping in a positive sense. Lévinas claims, “Escaping is the quest for the marvelous, which is liable to break up the somnolence of our

bourgeois existence.”<sup>190</sup> In the introductory essay by Jacques Rolland entitled, “Getting out of Being by a New Path,” he discusses the possibility of changing one’s being from certain oppressions, and thus escaping into a new and open world full of possibilities. The escape is not a nihilistic move, but can be seen as a form of revolution. Thus, virtual technology can be likened to an autonomous mode of creative imagining that overcomes the powers that constrain and oppress. For, even without the awareness that this is occurring, the player happily escapes or consciously withdraws. Lévinas states that these forms of escape are, in essence, a search for refuge. He sees escape as something more than getting out. He sees escape as way to go somewhere.<sup>191</sup> To quote Lévinas:

Temporal existence takes on the inexpressible flavor of the absolute. The elementary truth *that there is being*—a being that has value and weight—is revealed at a depth that measures its brutality and its seriousness. The pleasant game of life ceases to be just a game. It is not that the sufferings with which life threatens us render it displeasing; rather it is because the ground of suffering consists of the impossibility of interrupting it, and of an acute feeling of being held fast [*rive*]. The impossibility of getting out of the game and of giving back to things their toy-like uselessness heralds the precise instant at which infancy comes to an end, and defines the very notion of seriousness. What counts then, in all this experience of being, is the discovery not of a new characteristic of our existence, but of its very fact, of the permanent quality itself of our presence.<sup>192</sup>

We can look further within new ways of experiencing consciousness within the virtual. In his novel, *Nausea*, Jean-Paul Sartre writes about existence and con-



sciousness, and draws the character into a dilemma in which he discovers his own being, along with the objects around him. He does not see his own essence, nor does he see the essence of the objects. Life as he had previously known it was thrown into a new semblance. “And then all of a sudden, there it was, clear as day: existence had suddenly unveiled itself.”<sup>193</sup> Sartre likens this awakening to a state of nausea. Virtual play, then, can also be seen as an experience that offers the player the new view of her own existence. It can be said that to be thrown into existence is to be free, with no definition of the reality into which one is thrown.

Technology continues to develop rapidly and the virtual experience is growing further open-ended as to types of virtual games available at any moment to a player. While this nausea beckons the player to see and understand her common existence compared to that of an object, she now has an infinite number of experiences in which she can take part at any given moment. She can jump into any skin and become any character in order to redeem her authentic self. The nausea dissipates once the essence of life is found in the game. A common way of life is to live in a fictitious manner, however, utilizing these pathways toward freedom opens up new possibilities into unique ways to re-discover the pure self.

Play in the virtual would not be as powerful without the artistic visuals that project such a crisp and other-worldly vision of spaces never before conceived. With respect to the aesthetic nature of the game, emotions are heightened when playing. Twentieth century British art critic, Clive Bell, concludes that this type of emotion

must be something that is elicited by an ever-present quality that is set art apart from other objects. Bell sees that there is indeed a common set of traits that unify and define what is called art. With this, any object that instigates this emotion is called a work of art. The nature of such responses is necessarily varied. Bell is not saying that all works of art incite the same state, instead they all produce a different feeling. Bell states:

The starting-point for all systems of aesthetics must be the personal experience of a peculiar emotion. The objects that provoke this emotion we call works of art. All sensitive people agree that there is a peculiar emotion provoked by works of art. I do not mean, of course, that all works provoke the same emotion. On the contrary, every work produces a different emotion. But all these emotions are recognisably the same in kind; so far, at any rate, the best opinion is on my side. That there is a particular kind of emotion provoked by works of visual art, and that this emotion is provoked by every kind of visual art, by pictures, sculptures, buildings, pots, carvings, textiles, etc., etc., is not disputed, I think, by anyone capable of feeling it. This emotion is called the aesthetic emotion; and if we can discover some quality common and peculiar to all the objects that provoke it, we shall have solved what I take to be the central problem of aesthetics. We shall have discovered the essential quality in a work of art, the quality that distinguishes works of art from all other classes of objects.<sup>194</sup>

Bell proposes that although works of art are made up of many qualities, the concept of a significant form, which is made up of lines and colors, is something that exists in all works of art.<sup>195</sup> The semblance to the artistic visibility within the virtual game goes hand in hand with Bell's sense of aesthetic emotion. In fact, the personal experi-

ence of a particular emotion is the starting point for all of the systems of aesthetics. Thus, it may be seen that the virtual game, too, encompasses both aesthetic emotion and significant form.

It is through the individual that art is to be sensed. If the experience in the game is that of aesthetic emotion coupled with significant form, the individual grasps moments of euphoria and pleasure akin to—or far better than—the experience of viewing fine art. This, in essence, is the ultimate feeling of being in control of the self.

Nietzsche speaks of discovering the renewed self in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.<sup>196</sup> Nietzsche sees the human as one who is capable of continually changing, always questioning and creating her own life—if only she would acknowledge it is possible. Nietzsche, however, does not believe that we are to become this new being from scratch, nor are we to erase and forget about our past. That is not necessary. Instead, Nietzsche says we are to live and then come to an understanding and take decisive actions as to the fact that we want to live life fully, on our terms, not automatically or ordinarily. Nietzsche wants humanity to step up to life and take back control. However, we could never take back this control in the beginning if it were always available initially. It is necessary that it is lost before it is found by way of the negation of the negation—thus, a contradiction. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche weaves together an epic story of Zarathustra (Zoroaster) who takes the reader on a metamorphosis of an individual who eventually creates their own life.<sup>197</sup> In a parable

within the story, the individual starts out as a camel. It is important to note that this camel has already had a long life in which she obeyed all commands and did what she was told. The camel lived quite automatically, without questioning. In the process of transforming, the camel becomes the lion. After becoming the lion, she then becomes a child.<sup>198</sup> Nietzsche states:

But say, my brothers, what can the child do that even the lion could not do? Why must the preying lion still become a child? The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred “Yes.” For the game of creation, my brothers, a sacred “Yes” is needed: the spirit now wills his own will, and he who had been lost to the world now conquers his own world.<sup>199</sup>

Metaphorically, we grow beyond our prior selves and find a new beyond for our identities. With this, we can overcome any past issue regarding our habits or behaviors. The virtual, now, provides the opportunity to create and realize a new self. The prior self does not have to stay around if it is not, in any sense, productive. There is a means now that enables anyone to play and create their self and purpose.

The process of self-creation, then, entails an individual discovering her inner, authentic self. Further, this self-discovery can be seen as something that makes one question her motives, her purpose, the reason for doing what she does. In his text *Mind—Energy*, Henri Bergson states:

Our actual existence, then, whilst it is unrolled in time, duplicates itself along with a virtual existence, a mirror-

image. Every moment of our life presents the two aspects; it is actual and virtual, perception on the one side and recollection on the other... Whoever becomes conscious of the continual duplicating of his present into perception and recollection... will compare himself to an actor playing his part automatically, listening to himself and beholding himself playing.<sup>200</sup>

These dual paths to living were—prior to the digital age—a veiled experience that leads to the fundamental question of perception. People have become accustomed to assuming their perceptions are a natural part of life, or that their sense of the world cannot change. Both perception and imagination are key components to the necessary ingredients in changing the understanding of self. In addition to cultivating perception and imagination, awareness is needed for both to evolve. In the symposium transcript from, *Man and Civilization: Control of the Mind*, Aldous Huxley discusses the need to teach new ways in understanding perception. He says that the sense of perception has been largely ignored and barely cultivated or employed in educational practices. He states that perception needs to be taught from youth and creative evolution will go forth stronger. Huxley calls for a renaissance in understanding how to utilize and promote further depths in perception. He echoes the mentality that we are quick to say what a problem may be, but slow to offer a cure. He came upon a 2000 year old Sanskrit text in which a couple discusses 112 exercises in “knowing thyself.”<sup>201</sup> He wonders why we do not have a larger push to understand our selves or educate our youth and society in the mastery of perception.

Huxley discusses these issues of perception and says that the understanding of the mind-body connection help to release pent-up adrenaline and aggression. We can view these concepts in relation to virtual play. These notions were stated by Huxley in January 1961, and he was looking for an answer to these societal issues that he saw as hindrances to the evolution of creativity. Perhaps the virtual play experience is the answer Huxley was searching for. Huxley stated that imagination could be used as a means of actualizing our potentialities, which is completely accurate as imagination is key in play. The virtual offers the development of perception, imagination, and the process of becoming aware. Huxley, too, calls for games in imagination and exercises such as the 112 Sanskrit methods in gaining understanding of the process of life in order to continue to evolve. The virtual is the next step Huxley would have been delighted to see into fruition. Humans have such dynamic imaginations that finding ways to actualize the potential of this immense power can only be an improvement on the quality of one's life.

### **Community in the Virtual**

When taking into consideration the thoughts previously made, we can build upon the necessity for an understanding of community via Karl Marx. Marx believes that individuals have complete ability to express themselves. He believes that people need to express themselves in their life. He further calls the world spirit, self-consciousness. Marx sees the world as that which is searching for awareness in order to find the true essence of humanity. Marx states:

Only in community [has each] individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; only in the community, therefore, is personal freedom possible. In the previous substitutes for the community, in the State, etc. personal freedom has existed only for the individuals who developed within the relationships of the ruling class, and only insofar as they were individuals of this class.<sup>202</sup>

In the community that is built upon the essence of humanity, Marx believes freedom can occur. The ability to experience pure potential can only be found in the network of a communal essence. When people are free to make their own decisions and come to conclusions about their past assumptions, freedom may be achieved. Marx believes that humans are free when they are creative. He believes that the capacity for creativity is the essential species-being of humanity. However, humans are deceived when working in a way that is not independent from commodification. Marx believes that the ultimate species-being is removed when the worker is in the network of capitalist commodities.<sup>203</sup>

Marx proclaims that the work of art is the complete opposite of labor that is alienated. He sees the ruling class as who is to blame. The ruling class encompass those who have control over all production. Thus, they have control over mental production. Those who are not able to control any material or mental production are then subject to who has the power. Marx states, “Even the need for fresh air ceases to be a need for the worker.”<sup>204</sup> Marx sees that the worker becomes the product when producing it. The worker loses her true sense of reality in that she gives up what is essential

to creating by making mass-made commodity objects. The worker is thus objectified and estranged from herself. Marx comments, “For man reproduces himself not only intellectually, in his consciousness, but actively and actually, and he can therefore contemplate himself in a world he himself has created.”<sup>205</sup> Marx sees that people are taken away from their essence when faced with estrangement. He believes that the majority of society is duped into believing this kind of work is necessary to live a life, though it is, in actuality, a complete absence of truth and a large deception on the part of the patriarchal system. Proletariat labor leads people to believe they are beneficial in their toils, yet they are literally and unwittingly paying their life for the benefit of the commodity. Marx goes further with this thought:

The less you eat, drink, buy books, go to the theatre, go dancing, go drinking, think, love, theorize, sing, paint, fence, etc., the more you save and the greater will become that treasure which neither moths nor maggots can consume—your capital. The less you are, the less you give expression to your life, the more you have, the greater is your alienated life and the more you store up of your estranged life. Everything which the political economist takes from you in terms of life and humanity, he restores to you in the form of money and wealth, and everything which you are unable to do, your money can do for you: it can eat, drink, go dancing, go to the theatre, it can appropriate art, learning, historical curiosities, political power, it can travel, it is capable of doing all those things for you; it can buy everything it is genuine wealth, genuine ability. But for all that, it only likes to create itself, to buy itself, for after all everything else is its servant. And when I have the master I have the servant, and I have no need of his servant. So all passions and all activity are lost in greed. The worker is only permitted to have enough for him to live, and he is only permitted to live in order to have.<sup>206</sup>



Due to this overarching inequity, it can be seen that the virtual serves as a much-needed outlet to escape and find one's true essence that has been or is in danger of being lost. No matter that the virtual is a technologically structured space—gaming allows one to play. There is enough variety for one to find what they enjoy. Gaming is not governed under an authoritative state. The amount of games that are independently produced offers enough for one to utilize their free will and play anything they wish. There are no rules for the games. There are no limits to which genres one can peruse. There is no saying how many times one can play the same game. The world here is limitless. Just as Jacques Derrida uses the book to critique language, the player uses digital technology to engage in delightful bliss.<sup>207</sup> The players are essentially using the virtual platform in order to follow a blissful state that is hitherto stifled. There is no need to retreat to a way of the past in order to find an authenticity. Instead of looking for a natural state, the player of this technological age finds their freedom in the virtual now. Marx says, "As individuals express their life, so they are."<sup>208</sup> Furthermore, Marx sees the work of art as the "other" of commodity production. He sees it as a view into non-alienated labor. The virtual, then, can be seen as a necessary part of history and the general development of society. While much of society claims people need to disconnect from technology in order to know the self better, perhaps the virtual can instead be seen as an antennae that can be used to connect.

### **The Virtual Apparatus**

Through the discussion of the need for outlet via Marxian commodity theory, it can be seen that people also have a need for forms of apparatus to achieve greater freedom. Giorgio Agamben sees contraptions, devices, and gadgets in life as an apparatus. More specifically, he sees that which interrupts and divides as an apparatus. For him, then, the video game is most certainly an apparatus. He believes that the apparatus keeps people distant and separated from one another. Agamben sees those who utilize an apparatus as always already under a control. However, it can also be seen that the individual can overcome the power of the apparatus—the individual can use it for her benefit. With the rapid acceleration of constant available information, humans are capable of acquiring an unprecedented intuition into what it is to be autonomous. There is little room to be anything but autonomous when being bombarded with constancy. People are highly resourceful in the digital age. The virtual world offers new forms of wisdom—above and beyond to those who wish to partake. It is not impossible for the subject of an apparatus to use it in the right way. Here, we have a difference when it comes to gaming. Agamben comments on the couch potato who becomes a mere point in viewership ratings. However, regarding gaming, this may now be viewed as a creative outlet. Essentially, one can use the game however they wish. There are no set rules. Overall, the creator of the game does not know how many people are playing at a current time. Virtual play is not the same as watching live television. It is an interactive activity that largely involves aesthetic value. While Agamben claims that the apparatus keeps relationships abstract, it is important to note

that he says the apparatus also offers the Open. We can see the Open in the worlds of the virtual today—as constructions of new worlds.<sup>209</sup>

In his text, *What is an Apparatus?* Agamben also discusses friendship. He quotes Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and reveals that Aristotle says that a friend is an other self. Looking at the virtual and friendship, then, we can see the player on the other side of the screen as an other self. Agamben also talks about the convict who has become free. The ex-prisoner is now unbound and sees life much differently than before. The prisoner is, one may say, past the law once freed. The prisoner now sees something different in her surroundings and actions. Agamben says this person has left the world of guilt and is now above the law. “Like the freed convict in Kafka’s penal colony, who has survived the destruction of the machine that was to have executed him, these beings have left the world of guilt and justice behind them.”<sup>210</sup> Here, these ideas can be seen to echo the virtual as well. The player leaves the world of imprisonment and has become free. Mentally, the player has retreated, and due to her active presence in the virtual space, she has surpassed the oppressive nature of reality. Therefore, beings that leave the world of guilt and justice behind them are free from judgment.

### **Becoming**

With these notions in mind considering the communal possibilities and lover of life, we can look to the developing process of becoming. The manner of becoming is not the same as the aspects of being. When one is being, she is continuing on a

path. When one is becoming, she is moving toward higher ground—she is transforming. Becoming, then, is a metamorphosis. To become, however, one has to first observe her current point of origin. In order to integrate a path of becoming, the individual must be awaiting at a starting point. We can see these concepts tie together with Nietzsche's notion of the renewed self who has to start on the ground, no matter how she gets there.<sup>211</sup> The point is to show up to this point and discover the new direction in which Hegelian *Geist* may be found. The old ways of adhering to an omnipresent authoritative monotonous life are shed when one awakens to a new way of becoming and transforming into their authenticity. The authentic self is continually developing, though the first step in the ontology of becoming is what is important. Stepping into a new world, a utopian Metaverse of the virtual shapes new views and outlooks. The process of becoming gives power to the player, and offers the chance for her to become empowered and take charge of her new trail. The experience that the player beholds gives a fresh perspective each time the game begins. In gaming, the player is rewarded by being offered multiple chances to keep beginning, to keep renewing.

Becoming more in a game can be seen as a new experience where the player can explore and form a unique voice. Artists of the past who rebelled against tradition may not be a very far reflection of gamers, as they are similarly looking to challenge what is no longer useful and navigate in new directions. Socially, it may be a confusing point in time, thus the struggle to become and form identity may be more chal-

lenging, though finding a direction in the virtual fosters new techniques and forms new questions about what is the way one may evolve.

It is further critical to consider the time that we are in today along the conscious route of history. Digital technology is rapidly flourishing. Playing in the virtual can be seen as something that adds to a more enhanced life experience. In a sense, the virtual is similar to other outlets in history. It happens to be the channel of today's digital era. The rewarding aspects are that what may be embraced within this never seen before interactive experience. In *The Painters of Modern Life and other Essays*, Charles Baudelaire remarks about his current times and how they vary greatly from past eras. He believes that each age beholds a unique vision. Baudelaire states, "I have remarked that every age has its own gait, glance, and gesture."<sup>212</sup> Baudelaire further discusses the dandy in the city (who we might be likened to the player in the video game):

Thus the lover of universal life enters into the crowd though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy. Or we might liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life. He is an 'I' with an insatiable appetite for the 'non-I,' at every instant rendering and explaining it in pictures more living than life itself, which is always unstable and fugitive.<sup>213</sup>

The lover of universal life described can be seen comparatively as the player who enters the game—anonymous and behind a screen, yet happy to engage with a trove of others. Eager to view, learn, and experience new offerings and ways of living.

### **Evolving into a New Creation**

According to Donna Haraway, the nature that we have believed to be true has been developed and engineered through capitalism and patriarchal rule. In the world of the virtual, a non-optimal and non-dominant society functions smoothly. Haraway sees that it is not a rebirth that is required, but a form of regeneration.<sup>214</sup> While Haraway discusses the utopian dream occurring via the world of the cyborg, it can similarly be seen that the virtual is that which creates room for higher consciousness. Similar to Butler, Haraway states in many ways that there is not a natural human—that humans have been made. Humans have been developed unequally and there is an opportunity for humans to be created justly. Haraway states “we have allowed the theory of the body politic to be split in such a way that natural knowledge is reincorporated covertly into techniques of social control instead of being transformed into sciences of liberation.”<sup>215</sup> In Donna Haraway’s paradigm, nature indeed connects with technology and they become one. Acquiring and understanding knowledge differently allows a person to create their life and, thus, self differently.<sup>216</sup>

These ideas can be seen similarly regarding Michel Foucault and human nature vs. nature, cogito, and the language or discourse. Foucault deconstructs subjectivity and sees the human as “a new invention” while also finding the individual being

erased.<sup>217</sup> It remains interesting to think of Foucault's death of man, Nietzsche's death of God, and his concept of Superman, Hegel's end of art, and countless others speaking to this effect—"the end of" and how this may be something quite positive. For, technology and the virtual are forms of power—as well as necessity. Further, when connecting these ideas to the concept of writing and language, it is fruitful to think of video diaries or video blogs where writing has become something so far removed from the origin. To go another step further, technology has come so far that the user can swipe and use two fingers—there is an evolution—we re-use the thumb and tap. Nietzsche, even, acknowledges technology that becomes us in reference to his writing ball (typewriter), "It is a thing like me."<sup>218</sup>

For the virtual can be seen as essentially human and humans are those who find or create technology. Gaming technologies have become a system that moves and evolves within a creative evolution. There is a certain dualism that needs to be overcome to see creative evolution as always becoming a new creation. Panpsychism, the concept that the mind is a universal feature of all things in which everything derived, can further be viewed as a key to unlock this issue of dualities. Someone who is a panpsychist, or panexperientialist, sees her self as a mind in a world of minds.<sup>21</sup> Panexperientialism to virtual gaming is an important link, particularly when other players are playing together simultaneously. Many possibilities are left open in reference to people living in multiple worlds at any given moment. The individual not only lives in her own mind and in the mind of society, but she lives, too, in the myriad

of characters she can be and the characters that are activated while she is playing the game. This is part of a new evolution, for what was once believed to take place all in the mind—is now something that can be seen visibly.

A central question here—how might a person live her life—is one that so many philosophers have questioned at length.<sup>220</sup> These thinkers see the world as something that is living, that offers many openings where people can live their lives in ways previously unimaginable. Further, we can look at the notion of the body and question what it can actually do. It may be that virtual games show us other ideas. Remarkably, Deleuze mentions that Dutch philosopher, Spinoza, says, “We do not even know of what a body is capable of” and “We do not even know of what affections we are capable, nor the extent of our power.” Spinoza takes one step further and offers another tip: “Teach the body to do many things; this will help you to perfect the mind and to come to the intellectual level of thought.”<sup>221</sup> It is stunning to consider that Spinoza made these remarks in the seventeenth century. Thus, just as one may learn how to die in a game by way of a Rabelaisian cheerful death, one may also learn what the body can actually do while in the virtual space.

Machines may have been created to remain foolproof, but games are developing so rapidly that there is great room for spontaneity. It is when the player becomes too sure of herself that she makes mistakes. In physical reality, if one is in a rush, it invariably leads to mistakes. Here, in the virtual, time is endless and there is no need to hurry. If a mistake is made, one can begin again without any thought of the past err.



If an error is made in the virtual, the player may “die.” After the death, though, the player can learn from the mistake and re-set the game.

### **The Virtual as a Form of Art That Creates Change**

In his *The Future of the Image*, Jacques Rancière discusses the image and how images are all that we have.<sup>222</sup> His comment can be witnessed strongly in the virtual. Image-based reality is happening at a quickening pace, and can easily be seen in social media applications such as Instagram, Pinterest, and Tinder. Within these platforms, people primarily view the image only. Rancière furthers the notion of image-ness, in that it is a group of relations between elements and functions. Rancière sees positive change is possible within aesthetics and discusses the functions of the contemporary image. Rancière views the social aspects of art as an optimistic view of the future of the image, though it is up to artists to be able to change history.<sup>223</sup> Here, we can see the relationship that is needed is with one’s self.

Rancière believes every individual should certainly have a chance to decide how she wants to live her life. While he does not say how to go about this, he does discuss how one might respond to their environment. Further, while many philosophers commonly spell out the problems at hand and do not offer a prescription as to how to fix the issue, I claim that the virtual world of play is an answer to how one may decide as to how they create and understand their life. The space of the virtual has created a place for connection to others and to the inner self. Connections and interactions are continuously being made in the virtual with continuous updates also

occurring. As it has been found in psychological and scientific studies, in order to be a whole human being with all needs met, a person needs these areas to function properly in their physical life in order to live a fulfilling life.<sup>224</sup> Through interactive technology, one can overcome the inauthentic self and engage in productive activity.<sup>225</sup> Rancière states the following that is remarkably similar to the power of the critical use of the virtual as a form of art that creates change:

Critical art is an art that aims to produce a new perception of the world, and therefore to create a commitment to its transformation. This schema, very simple in its appearance, is actually the conjunction of three processes: first, the production of a sensory form of 'strangeness': second, the development of an awareness of the reason for that strangeness and third, a mobilization of individuals as a result of that awareness.<sup>226</sup>

Rancière sees the political state as that which breaks with the "natural order" that individuals should rule their public and private lives. While it seems that people are free, they have already been pinned and placed into a specific collection of objectified types. It seems that people cannot deter far from the presupposed order they are subtly being forced to abide by. The police state offers a perpetual state of insecurity in order to keep an oppressive state, Rancière claims. Virtual otherworld experiences bypass this paradoxical equality and offer a new freedom.<sup>227</sup> Further, if we dissect and translate the word mindless into selfless, an alternative viewpoint can be pointed in the direction of the virtual. With this, time in the virtual can be seen as a dissensual activity that activates awareness. Just as we are progressing nowhere as a democratic

society or striving towards an unrealistic optimal state that leads to no place in particular, Rancière believes the state of dissensus is where autonomous creativity sits. A state of consensus is stagnant. Imperfection is the power.<sup>228</sup> We can look to the virtual world as a hybrid form that allows a space for self-discovery.

### **Performativity as a New Path**

To move further into the topic of performativity, Judith Butler states, “Performativity has to do with repetition, very often with the repetition of oppressive and painful gender norms to force them to resignify. This is not freedom, but a question of how to work the trap that one is inevitably in.”<sup>229</sup> Her associations with performativity can be looked at as closely in reference to the virtual character. While Butler discusses performativity through the structure of gender roles, performativity can also be seen as something positive in the virtual space. Through performativity and aspects of the carnivale, the virtual can be seen as a productive place to oppose the subordination of society. Butler discusses these aspects in relation to gender, while performativity occurs every day. Butler says, “The parodic repetition of gender exposes as well the illusion of gender identity as an intractable depth and inner substance.”<sup>230</sup> Just as we might hope that parodies and performance may cause people to be aware of the roles to which they conform, Butler sees the performative act as a way to get out of the conventions we are used to being a part of—to awaken from the imposing practices and acts we are told to undertake—to be able to step back and see things as they are.

Butler, then, calls for a Nietzschean transvaluation.<sup>231</sup> Here, Butler sees parody and performance as being able to revitalize the “distinction between a privileged and naturalized gender configuration.”<sup>232</sup> Butler offers a theoretical background behind performativity and discusses the many ways that are needed to break free from patriarchal discourse. While we are constantly prescribed specific passages to take in society, there are limited options to being, and any other way of being is generally seen as wrong or not natural. Butler sees the same predicament in the world of two genders—as there are only options for masculine or feminine today.

In this light, Nietzsche claims, “We have to learn to think differently—in order at last, perhaps very late on, to attain even more: to feel differently.”<sup>233</sup> It may be asked, then, why one needs to feel differently. Nietzsche says it is vital to question the origins as to why one thinks and feels the way she does. Nietzsche sees that people commonly think in terms of morality—most want to be moral citizens. He sees this obeying stance as harmful and believes the pressures of one trying to be a good person is that which stunts the growth of consciousness. Nietzsche believes these are problems that originate within the feelings of compassion and pity, which he calls *mitleid*.<sup>234</sup> Nietzsche claims that people find value in compassion and pity, as it is believed to be that which aids in helping others who suffer. Nietzsche, however, sees *mitleid* as something that is largely misunderstood. It is one thing as to how one thinks they should feel when conjuring compassion, and it is another as to how one actually feels when contemplating compassion. Thus, Nietzsche says that humans

overall do not understand the basis or origin as to why people feel this way in reference to compassion or suffering. Nietzsche believes the state of *mitleid* is actually a concern for the self and that compassion is more about the individual than the Other.<sup>235</sup> *Mitleid*, then, can be seen as a manipulating factor to make the ego feel better about itself. Due to this state, many people may help others in order to receive praise, look better to the Other, and feel better about oneself compared to the unfortunate Other. With this in mind, gaming deflects *mitleid*, as there is not as much personal reason to look better to an Other, other than to look better to one's own Self.

### **Perceptions of the Real**

We do not either live in a world of reality nor do we live in a world of illusion. There is much more, and it becomes a human obligation to push the creative paradigm further and continue to search, discover, and evolve. Žižek discusses the world of the virtual and the problem with wrapping it up sweetly in a *Matrix*-like bow. Žižek sees the multifarious ways in which we can view the future of technology. He acknowledges that some view the concept of the film, *The Matrix*, as “our world [being] just a mirage generated by a global Mind embodied in the World Wide Web.”<sup>23</sup> He too connects the notion of *The Matrix* to Plato's cave, in that humans are viewing spectators in a cave watching the shadows on the wall, believing all to be a reality in the cinema of life. Žižek believes that what is needed is a bridge between both truth and illusion. We do not need to be slaves to the *Matrix* concept, nor do we need to run from it. People can learn to bend the rules of truth and illusion and become masters of

multiple modes of living. For, one need not devote their time to living robotically, nor only fleeing and playing:

—There is a correct insight in this complication of the simple and straight division between the “real reality” and the Matrix-generated universe: even if the struggle takes place in the “real reality,” the key fight is to be won in the Matrix, which is why one should (re)enter its virtual fictional universe. If the struggle were to take place solely in the “desert of the real,” it would have been another boring dystopia about the remnants of humanity fighting evil machines.<sup>237</sup>

To further Žižek’s claims, he states that it is not about taking the blue pill or the red pill. It is not about stripping us of the fiction, nor the reality. If we are stripped of either, we lose all sense of any reality. Fiction is, thus, a necessary life component. Life becomes more understandable and graspable through story. In fact, the virtual does not need to be seen as something separate from the real if it is a daily part of someone’s life in the real. By being a focal discussion piece, the virtual earns a space in the real. Žižek furthers these concepts and agrees that it is not so cut and dry. He does not agree to either taking the blue pill in which one continues to remain in Plato’s cave and believe whatever she is told. He also does not agree to taking the red pill, which opens up the worlds of possibilities encompassing a utopian Wonderland. Instead, Žižek says that he wants a third pill:

So what is the third pill? Definitely not some kind of transcendental pill which enables a fake fast food religious experience, but a pill which would enable me to perceive not the reality behind the illusion, but reality in

illusion itself.—Our fundamental delusion today is not believing in what is only a fiction, to take fictions too seriously—on the contrary, it is not taking fictions seriously enough.<sup>238</sup>

Žižek says that we are always-already dealing with others, in a phenomenological sense. However, any part that does not fit in with an ideal version of others is left out of the image of them. For, if we are not dealing with the real other, and we are always dealing with a virtual or abstract version of the other, the world of the virtual takes this actuality of life and makes it not only more accessible visually and technologically, but keeps it streamlined and visible to the players. We are always-already continuously acting in the imaginary virtual. By interacting with other people, the exchange is always behaving as if certain portions or visuals or characteristics are not there. Portions of others become erased in our dealings with others. Further, Žižek says that even our beliefs are virtual and presupposed. It is seen that humans want to believe in appearances. Interestingly, the virtual Other in our day-to-day reality is one who we do not want to disappoint. To contrast, the virtual Other in the game is an ally and one who chooses to play with the player in an insistence of enjoyment and non-resistance. There is a willingness and engagement with the virtual Other. The act of pretending and feigning an interaction disappears in the virtual because it is in a space where rules are broken down and a second life can ensue. Freedom may be found in the virtual space.

Just by talking, Žižek says that the existence of the Big Other, who holds the key to meaning, is assumed.<sup>239</sup> Žižek, however, states this authoritative Other is a complete illusion. This can be seen similarly to Rancière's discussion on the police state. Perhaps, it is better that gameplay is currently seen as more of a rogue act, as it creates a new freedom due to the fact that it rebels against the authoritative state. Play becomes something that is life-asserting and optimistic. Play has become a dissensual act in many ways. Kant asserts, "Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. ... The motto of enlightenment is therefore '*Sapere aude!*' [Dare to know!] Have the courage to use your own reason."<sup>240</sup>

The virtual world has the ability to create authenticity. The virtual space serves as a framework to safely test boundaries without worry for physical implications. At this point in history, the virtual is needed to make sense of the real.



## Chapter Five

### **Becoming through Play**

Can it be that what really scares them in the doctrine I shall try to present here is that it leaves to man a possibility of choice?

—Jean-Paul Sartre

*Existentialism and Human Emotions*

### **States of Purposelessness**

After considering the concepts referencing the self as conscious creator, we turn to states of becoming more through purposelessness within the virtual. Purposelessness begins without purpose and changes throughout a process to ultimately find purpose. Thus, in order to attain it one must cease striving for purpose temporarily. Rather, by ending the focus and engaging in pure play, purpose may be uncovered. Purposelessness offers no ultimate reason for engagement other than the pleasure gained from interacting in the experience. Purposelessness becomes a benefit when one is driven to move forward even without an initial known meaning. Primarily, a person cannot find purpose unless she is being her authentic self.<sup>241</sup> Thus, if one acts without purpose first—with an indifferent sense of abandon and play, she will learn to enjoy her states of being more. In the activity of purposelessness, one can discover feelings such as delight and humor. In this state of mind, the ego has been forgotten and strewn aside. Paradoxically, when purpose is quieted, the true purpose abounds. In the virtual, the subtlety of the ultimate purpose of the game is often not visible to

the eyes and mind of the player. The player holds the unconscious belief she is playing a game to retreat from life's duties, perhaps. However, if the player moves along far enough, the journey throughout the game leads to a new awareness—particularly if the player is receptive to the freedom that awaits her in the virtual reality.<sup>242</sup> Hence, the virtual is another means toward viewing reality.

Thus, as purpose promotes meaning, one must look away from it first in order for it to be found. In his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, twentieth century author, neurologist, and psychiatrist, Viktor Frankl, sees that those who ultimately attain a purpose are continually striving to move forward, and will keep going in their life despite any obstacles.<sup>243</sup> People need a purpose to grow into the future and develop their process of becoming. Life becomes more effortless if one has a reason to live. Twentieth century writer and philosopher, Albert Camus, is similarly close to Frankl in his theories. Camus states that a person will either give up life completely due to constant absurdities in the world, or she can create her own work of art that becomes her new life.<sup>244</sup> For many people today, gaming is a reason to live, and, interestingly, some say video games have saved their life.<sup>245</sup>

The act of purposelessness indeed gives players purpose in an eventual state. If it appears as artificial purpose to an outsider, then so be it. I push this tendency further and ask, what difference does the artificiality versus the real make if the person receives a sense of fulfillment? The mind does not know whether an imaginative thought is real or not. The mind decides what to keep and remember based on infor-

mation it is given through senses and thoughts. One may feel warmly about a person while being together with them physically, though they will still have that similar feeling upon looking at a photo or video of that person. The mind is satisfied with the copy of the individual for that time. The mind is fulfilled. People are able to program their minds however they choose by utilizing their imagination and coupling it with images and visualization. Positively shaping one's perceptions and imaginings offers the ability to change anything one cares to think about, even if the actual experience is not occurring in real time or space. By imagining new experiences and encounters, a shift can and will occur in the mind of a person. By using the imagination to enhance one's mind, the use of virtual play has the ability to push even further, as it provides ample opportunity to step into other worlds and experience visions that would never have been seen. Those who can alter these experiences and expand may grow and evolve internally.

### **Experiencing Other Worlds**

The cognitive difference between reality and the virtual is extensive in contemporary Western society. What is considered "real" appears to most people to hold more importance over the imagination. The significance of dreams is commonly dismissed and the joy of purposelessness is looked down upon. What the majority does not realize, however, is that while in these modes of imagination, growth in perception, and playing with no purpose—the player becomes larger in her becoming. She is sparking new awarenesses and realizing new freedoms and potentials that otherwise

would not have been seen previously. The mind can be worked with by using the imagination as a means to understand personal freedom. While one can use her imagination in a negative sense and believe she is in constant danger and employ a state of fear due to bombardments of unfavorable news, she can also put imaginative fears aside and conjure up self-confidence and fearlessness. Thus, the virtual play experience offers the chance to have one re-direct her previous limiting thinking and replace it with positive and visionary ideas for a bolder life. Further, the virtual space offers the player the ability to see other worlds and understand others on a more intrinsic level. In working with the imagination, one can shift and transform the mind. The imaginative state can show the player novel situations with previously unexplored perspectives.

The imagination can be folded down and deduced into an actual reality. While there is nothing that has a separate and fixed identity, according to Buddhist philosophy, all that exists depends upon the consciousness that imagines and perceives it. It can be seen that impermanence relates to the virtual as the experience playing puts the player in a state of non-purpose. The player could indeed have a motive or desire to see a certain visual whilst playing, however, the critical point is that the player has willfully chosen to engage in this alternate reality and is now beaming off new thoughts and meanings and solutions to imaginative prospects that never would have been seen otherwise. For the Buddha says:

All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is found on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts.

If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him.<sup>246</sup>

When the player encounters other places through the virtual, she is creating and engaged in the process of conjuring up and playing in a new reality. Again, the mind is not bothered to differentiate the difference between what is real from what is virtual during the experience.<sup>247</sup> The mind can easily separate the differences, even though it receives the same sensory stimulus from both real and virtual moments. These virtual sensations can be understood similarly to watching a horror film or riding on a roller coaster. The mind knows that the body is unaffected, yet it still feels the sense of fear or dread that is a sublime pleasure. With this, the body can easily be affected by the virtual experience and remain safe.

In his text mentioned earlier, Frankl discusses the notion of living life as if one has already lived once before and know the consequences and this same concept occurs while playing the game.<sup>248</sup> He states, “Live as if you were living already for the second time and as if you had acted the first time as wrongly as you are about to act now.”<sup>249</sup> Frankl developed and instituted the form of therapy called logotherapy. Logotherapy stems from the Greek word, *logos*, which is defined as “meaning.” Thus, the practice of logotherapy can be seen a desire for meaning. The term, then, is translated as a form of “meaning therapy.” We can see play in the virtual as a new form of logotherapy.<sup>250</sup> In the virtual atmosphere, the player is engaged in the education and understanding of meaning to her world. Rather than analysis of a subject, logotherapy

seeks to find the authentic qualities of the person's spirit in order to uplift their quality of life. Rather than digging for meaning in the past, logotherapy searches for meaning in present and upcoming ventures. It is quite literally a productive endeavor. Frankl sees three primary areas of importance in logotherapy as follows:

1. Every person has a healthy core.
2. The focus is to resourcefully enlighten the individual and provide tools to show them their inner spirit and capabilities.
3. Each person has the freedom to find meaning in their life.<sup>251</sup>

The act and experience of play, thus, can be used quite similarly to logotherapy. Many people may not think of playing games in the virtual world as therapy, though it demonstrates how to contemplate similar ideas Frankl mentions. The time spent playing in the game not only offers subconscious moments of reflection, but also allows one to meditate on their lives. It is when the person becomes too sure of herself that she makes mistakes. She, then, grows to be in a hurry and often will make mistakes. In the game, if the player becomes too sure, she may "die." The player then learns from the mistake and has the opportunity to begin again. In the game, time is infinite—and there is no need to rush. If she makes a mistake, she starts over.

### **Meditative Interactivity**

Here, we will address both the eastern and western concepts of purposeless purposefulness. To begin, twentieth century Indian mystic, guru and spiritual teacher, Osho, believes in many forms of meditation, including dynamic meditation. Osho's teachings unite various meditative practices in order to find the higher self. His teachings can be interwoven with the meditative aspects of virtual play that have the ability to bring one to a heightened sense of enlightened being.<sup>252</sup> Osho developed meditative rituals that focus on physicality, silence, and celebration. His pursuit in these concepts were created in order for one to experience reduction of repression, lowering of ego, becoming empty by losing the false (socially constructed) self, and, thus, attaining a higher sense of awareness. Osho was known for telling jokes that were offensive where he insulted many ethnic and religious groups in the world. Osho defends his humorous methods by saying his intent was to shock people in order to have them search inside of themselves and question their identification with and attachment to their ethnic and religious beliefs. His belief is held that divisions of religion, politics, gender and race are completely destructive. Osho discusses the life that reveals in love, awareness, humor, joy, creativity, meditation, interactivity with others, and courage:

If you really want to know who, in reality, you are, you will have to learn how to cease as a mind, how to stop thinking. That's what meditation is all about. Meditation means going out of the mind, dropping the mind and moving in the space called no-mind. And in no-mind you will know the ultimate truth, dhamma. And moving from mind to no-mind is the step, pada. And this is the whole secret of *The Dhammapada*.<sup>253</sup>

Thus, what is needed is a combination of being deeply aware of the mind, and consciously quieting it in order to find the true essence of the self. Osho continues, “[Life] is a cosmic play, a continuous beautiful game, a beautiful hide-and-seek—not leading anywhere. Nowhere is the goal.”<sup>254</sup> Here, Osho discusses how the rush to attain perfection negates the whole essence of the pleasure of being and becoming aware. His perspective offers the player the ability to live vibrantly without any hindrances or pressure. The way of becoming is connected to the concept of flow in which space and linear time seem to disappear when one is immersed in the present. The game is always concentrated in the present. One's actions when experiencing flow permits her to essentially play in life. This is an optimal state of consciousness in which one's process of creativity takes on its own reason for being. Osho thus states:

Don't be serious, because a play can never be serious. And if the play needs you to be serious, be playfully serious, don't be really serious... Then this very moment you can move into the ultimate. The ultimate is not in the future, it is the present, hidden here and now. So don't ask about purpose—there is none, and I say it is beautiful that there is none.<sup>255</sup>

Thus, through the activity of ultimate non-serious play with the desire to connect, the trance-like state puts forth the experience of meditative interactivity. While the metaphorical term “meditative interactivity” almost seems to be an oxymoron of sorts, it



can rather be seen as a form of heterotopian space in that it brings together a calming connection with the self and the Other.<sup>256</sup>

In reference to the Western sensibility of purposelessness, it is known to be wrapped in debates that encircle foolishness and endless contention in reference to logic. Albert Camus says to enjoy the present and bathe one's life in sensuousness, as there is no purpose or second world after this one. Eastern thought insists on purposelessness being the optimal purpose. Hence, Eastern sensibilities focus on exchange and rapport, while Western sensibilities focus more on competition, individualism, and the striving for success. Eastern sensibilities that revolve around universal relationships, rather than individual conquests—offer great fertile possibilities to the future of the virtual. It can be seen that aspects of both Eastern and Western sensibilities can work together for the greatest effect of the medium of the virtual.

### **The Road to Enlightenment**

In other respects towards purposelessness, Jean-Paul Sartre believes that states of imposed meaning transcend actual activities that occurred in the past.<sup>257</sup> With Sartre's finding that every activity can have a transcendent quality, and Frankl's discovery that the overarching power of love and desire for purpose exceeds any thought, it can be seen that these same notions exist in the virtual. If the player begins to lose her prior conditioning or labeling of herself in the physical world due to playing the virtual world, she can lose her former self that she did not create in an authentic way. She, thus, annihilates her former being. She becomes what Buddha says is the

highest attainment, *no-thing*.<sup>258</sup> Twentieth century essayist, Anaïs Nin, appropriately states:

Character is timeless. Ageless. We live back and forth in the past, or in the present, or in the future. With the young, one lives in the future. I prefer that. Changes occur constantly according to the vision, image, or myth which possesses one. We do not grow absolutely, chronologically. We grow sometimes in one dimension, and not in another, unevenly. We grow partially. We are relative. We are mature in one realm, childish in another. The past, present, and future mingle and pull us backward, forward, or fix us in the present. We are made up layers, cells, constellations. We never discard our childhood. We never escape it completely. We re-live fragments of it through others. We live buried layers through others. We live through others' projections of the un-lived selves.<sup>259</sup>

Furthermore, in his text, *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, Sartre asserts, "The only being which can be called free is the being which nihilates its being."<sup>260</sup> Here, we see a freedom occur as that which is gone is free. Sartre continues, "But since desire, as we have established, is identical with lack of being, freedom can arise only as being which makes itself a desire of being; that is, as the project-for-itself of being in-itself-for-itself."<sup>261</sup> Sartre also discusses the concept of holes. The notion of holes can be viewed in relation to the virtual with existential concepts such as searching for an escape from being. Sartre says that people seek holes to fill in their lives. In gaming situations, there are many holes that a character can slip or fall into, which takes the player into a new dimension or another world. Sartre says that it is a mode of being that is presented as a hole that needs to be filled with one's own body.<sup>262</sup> The concept

of losing the former self to come upon the new self is difficult for many to swallow. Many people have strong attachments to their past and their conditioned concept of who they are, no matter how false their perception may be. Playing the game in the virtual can easily put the player into a meditative state that opens awareness in the mind and causes one to encapsulate deeper understanding.

When the player has the ease to slip into this meditative state, she can connect to dhamma, which is an access to insight. The dhamma is known as the truth, and it can be seen when a person quiets her mind. Dhamma is a meditative quality where introspection takes place. Once a person is aware of her present surroundings and moment, she has stepped into dhamma. Dhamma embraces mindfulness and inner knowing. According to Buddhist principles, when the individual steps into the place of the dhamma, the more the person can decide if she is in the state of insight or not. Buddhist teachings say it is fine if we do not always reach dhamma, though it is important to be aware if we are in touch with it. Once we move closer to an insightful reality, Buddhist teachings claim one will become the Dhamma. When everything is seen as what it is, and all is uncovered or truth is revealed (*aletheia*), we have encountered dhamma. It is understood that when birth and death, hate and greed, and all matters of life are viewed, we have uncovered truth. When playing a video game, very often these modes of life are shown in great detail. Here, if the player is open and receptive, dhamma is on show for the player to take and use in her life. If the player is not paying attention, of course, dhamma evaporates.

By being observant, all that exists is shown, and the player can find that the truth is always surrounding. When one silences the ego-mind, the player might find that she is seeing things as they really are and not jumping from one dukkha to the next.<sup>263</sup> With the understanding of truth through becoming, one may find an internal sense of peace and fulfillment in the process of playing the game. This awakened state of awareness allows one to see a new dimension to their actual world, rather than seeing limits in their life and goals. Due to the enchantment of the mindful state, one may wish to move further and delve deeper into the probing of what is phenomenally possible.

### **Attaining Wisdom Through Mindfulness**

Referencing the process and practice of attaining higher self-awareness and meditative mindfulness, the Buddha teaches that this form of enlightenment or transcendence will occur over time. An enlightened sensibility is not an instantaneous moment where one reaches nirvana. Thus, regarding the activity of the game, the process of the evolution of becoming occurs increasingly over time. A player will not play for a short period of time and automatically become open-minded. Rather, it is an uncovering process that slowly unveils truth to those who are patient enough to wait and prepare the mind. To quote the Buddha in reference to this claim:

Just as the ocean has a gradual shelf, a gradual slope, a gradual inclination, with a sudden drop-off only after a long stretch, in the same way this Doctrine and Discipline (dhamma-vinaya) has a gradual training, a gradual

performance, a gradual progression, with a penetration to gnosis only after a long stretch.<sup>264</sup>

These meditative processes are a means of becoming self-actualized. It is clear that each era in history is changing and evolving into a new creation. The digital age is currently moving so speedily that societal evolution is an undeniable and approaching truth. Referring to the current time, in his text, *The Courage to Create*, Rollo May says, “We are living at a time when one age is dying and the new age is not yet born. We cannot doubt this as we look about us to see the radical changes.”<sup>265</sup> May speaks of those who are able to curb violent behaviors by choosing to find a new form of physical courage by the “valuing of the body as the means of empathy with others, as expression of the self as a thing of beauty and as a rich source of pleasure.”<sup>266</sup> The concept can be seen in virtual play, as the player interacts as a character in the game and explores with other characters. Here, the gamer learns sensitive qualities and explores her own creative process, which culminates in a higher self-consciousness. Within this state of awareness, manifestation of new realities can take place. The more aligned one is with this creative force, the easier innovative occurrence of a life arises, and the more genuine the individual becomes. The closer a person reaches self-actualization, the less she is concerned with what society may think of her, which then feeds the courage to create what is inside, which is who the person is ultimately. For, time is fluid and conforms to both action and inaction for its participants.

Play in the virtual can equally be likened to wisdom given from the Upanishads, the sacred and ancient Indian texts. The Upanishads texts are said to offer the ultimate spiritual vision. They are a collection of Vedic texts that hold the earliest concepts of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism known as the Vedanta, which is the final goal of wisdom. Here, *veda* is defined as wisdom and *anta* is defined as end. Great similarities can be pointed to play in the virtual and what was taught in the Vedic period, possibly ranging from 4000-5000 BC.<sup>267</sup> These concepts and definitions were meant to portray images of those who were seeking to approach a wise being in a secluded forest in order to learn about the cosmic universe and God. By intriguing similarity, large numbers of virtual games consist of settings within mythic-like forests, as these teachings were given in distant retreats that consisted of ritual and ceremony. According to translator, Swami Paramananda, the Sanskrit word, *Upanishad*, is a compound word that means to sit at the feet in the presence of a teacher, and concurrently means to shatter or destroy ignorance.<sup>268</sup> Interestingly, the concept of killing the *Self*—as the authentic, immortal Self cannot be destroyed—is mentioned throughout the texts. We can see this concept many times over in the game and the virtual. In both spaces, the self can be continually renewed and re-created. The metaphorical killing of one's self is a metaphor for the killing of the ego. In the game, the player has this ability by committing a character suicide in order to re-set the game, or the player can end the character chosen at any given moment in order to try a different character.

The aim of the Upanishads was to show the individual how—by the path of right action—she may prepare herself for higher attainment of the self. The writings claim that oneness of soul and God lies at the root of all life. In the writings, it claims that until the mind is withdrawn from various distractions of the world, one cannot enter into the dimension of a higher spirit. To quote a piece from the writing:

He who sees everything as nothing but the Self, and the Self in everything he sees, such a seer withdraws from nothing. For the enlightened, all that exists is nothing but the Self, so how could any suffering or delusion continue for those who know this Oneness?<sup>269</sup>

The text claims that she who perceives the self everywhere will not shrink from anything, for through her higher consciousness, she feels united with all of life.

Another pertinent point in the Upanishads that refers closely with virtual gameplay is that the face of truth is hidden by a golden disk.<sup>270</sup> The concept of the golden disk is quite enigmatic. As Sanskrit was written in a cryptic language where words have extra or changed letters based on word position, what is known about the importance of the golden disk closely relates to elements in the virtual game. The golden disk is discussed in Verse fifteen of the *Isha Upanishad*—it states that the door of truth is covered by a golden disk. The writer asks the source, or sun, to open the golden vessel in order for him or her to be bathed in the grace of truth. The golden disk, which is a false gold, can be seen as the buddhi within each person and it is only golden due to the light of the essential self glowing inside. This light, however, is not

bright for all people. The self only glows golden when impurities of the mind are eliminated through a spiritual understanding.

Thus, the glowing cannot be seen if the non-illuminated ignorance prevails. The golden disk, thus, can be found by a purification of the mind. Once the mind is purified, one can open the disk and engage in the actual light of the authentic inner self. The last portion of this process, then, is to understand the wrapping together of the individual self and cosmic self.<sup>271</sup> Opening the golden disk can also be seen as the moment that a person is about to lose her identification with the ego and become more enlightened. Interestingly, there are many scenarios in virtual games where the protagonist needs to remove or penetrate a golden shield with some type of force. Further, steel doors are common in action games. Perhaps these subconscious elements within the virtual game can play a part in a form of spiritual transcendence.

### **Play**

After considering the aspects of purposelessness and meditative qualities in the virtual, we come upon the concept of play. To define play, it is the opposite of work, and it lacks seriousness. Play is commonly seen as a connection with childhood, while the concept of work connects with adulthood. However, it is found that adults who are most associated with their authentic self have retained their inner child. Nietzsche also states that the artist has held on to her child-force, “He has remained a child or a youth all his life, stuck at the point at which he was first assailed



by his drive to artistic production.”<sup>272</sup> They allow themselves to play and enjoy. In the virtual space, the player engages with others, as well as herself. To understand the self as uniting with the Other in a definitive sense, the experience can be seen as an impressive form of awareness. When engaging in play, the human becomes filled with a copious sense of belonging in the universe. German poet and philosopher, Friedrich Schiller says that when a person is engaged in play, she is fully alive, as there is no gain or motive to be sought. Play is the reward. Schiller, states, “Only play makes the man whole and unfolds both sides of his nature at once. Man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only a human being when he plays.” Further, Schiller says, “It is through beauty that we arrive at freedom.”<sup>273</sup> In a harmonious coordination, Heidegger says, “Freedom is letting things be.”<sup>274</sup> While Heidegger calls art the becoming of truth by relating the matter of art to truth as *aletheia* or unconcealment, the virtual is fortified within play, beauty, and multiple interpretations of truth.<sup>275</sup>

To further address the physicality of play, it can be seen that brain waves change at certain periods of a person’s life and circumstances—and also at play throughout life. When children are ages 0-4, there is a heavy concentration of Delta waves. Delta waves are similar to heavy states of sleep in adults. Children ages 4-7, experience Theta waves, which focuses on constant changes in behavior. Children ages 7-14 experience Alpha waves in which healing and meditation take place rapidly, and new synapses occur more frequently. Ages 14 and above, adults frequently

experience Beta waves. While Beta waves are most common and do not provide as much growth and progression for the mind as do Delta and Theta, people can train their minds in various ways to go into these higher states of awareness and meditation. Delta and Theta brain waves offer rejuvenation and ideal health. The varying brain waves are available to be induced through meditation or brain entrainment methods, and they can likewise be stimulated through play.<sup>276</sup>

Play can also be seen as the opposite of caution. Players are willingly experiencing the virtual game in order to throw caution to the wind. Generally, there are no physical consequences in the virtual experience. Behavior that exhibits risk—if even in the virtual—leads to a positive frame of mind. The individual can play in the Metaverse and engage in incautious activities for the simple act of amusement. In *The Will to Believe*, William James speaks of two different approaches to beliefs and characteristics in life. He says one can take the negative approach in which the person lives a life based in fear, timidity, and self-doubt. There is no risk involved in this way of being. Alternatively, James says that the positive approach to life perspective is to embrace all truth and adventure that one can. This type of person will look to discover new things and enjoy new experiences.<sup>277</sup> James states, “Our errors are surely not such awfully solemn things. In a world where we are so certain to incur them in spite of all our caution, a certain lightness of heart seems healthier than this excessive nervousness on their behalf.”<sup>278</sup>

The similarities between caution and risk are clear within play. In the virtual, there are constant new places to explore and move one's mind forward and expand. If an individual enters into an experience with a positive approach and expects new opportunities will occur, more often than not, more positive experiences will be offered. James says this is a form of faith that one must believe in order to live a life worth living—as there is something worth aspiring to. If one remains cautious and does not explore, one may never know what could have been possible.<sup>279</sup> Playing allows the mind to remain free and active, rather than passive. While a person is playing, she still remains aware. This awareness offers a person the freedom to be open to unexpected angles and new viewpoints. Further, in a space of beauty which encompasses the aesthetic dimension, the individual will be more open to inspiration and have more eagerness to be inventive and productive.

Imagination is heightened when playing games. When in a state of play, the imagination is exercised like no other form. Aspects of the virtual can be broken down into many parts that include illusion, intuition, synthesis, and understanding. One can cause their mind to act freely, transcend circumstances, and develop in new directions. In *The Republic*, when Socrates and Glaucon speak of living a good life, Socrates says that openness of the mind is a virtue.<sup>280</sup>

### **Creative Opportunity Through Play**

Socrates sees differences between two worlds which are called *praxis* and *fictio*. *Praxis* means action, and refers to the real world, while *fictio* has to do with the

world of play and make-believe. Furthermore, the term *schole*, which means scholar today, meant leisure in the time of the Greeks. Plato sees that play is important, particularly for the young. He realizes the magnitude and importance that play holds on a mind. Plato sees play as what transcends being, as play and the use of imagination transcend above and beyond an actual known reality.<sup>281</sup> With play being so potent for Plato, there is quite clearly great influence behind the creative process of playing—thus, becoming.

The activity that is found within the virtual employs a search that has been going on since ancient times in which we seek excellence of the human. When approached from this perspective, play becomes creative and brings the individual to a new place within the search for virtue. The activity of “playing” in any situation brings about a new feeling that is quite wondrous and novel—which becomes a path toward creativity. Playing produces combinations of surprise and also the obvious. Carl Jung speaks of art that can produce connectedness and calls it visionary. Combinations of play and creativity connect unions of symbol, metaphor, and image that go beyond previously unsuspected preconceptions and explores connections between abstract ideas.<sup>282</sup> Jung states:

The dynamic principle of fantasy is play, a characteristic also of the child, and as such it appears inconsistent with the principle of serious work. But without this playing with fantasy no creative work has ever yet come to birth. The debt we owe to the play of the imagination is incalculable.<sup>283</sup>

Thus, the activity of play coupled with elements of surprise, recognition, and a touch of the visionary, offer new perspectives in one's mind. The process of virtual play takes one beyond the ordinary ways of experiencing the world. Playing in the game transcends any preceding common visions of life. Playing offers countless possibilities to the player. Games in the virtual distinctively own this power of reordering thought from images and moving screens. When playing, the player projects her experience in a way that could not be seen or felt in any other scenario. By envisioning her involvement through the game, the player is permitting the actions to develop while unconscious impulses become more accessible. By imitating and representing objects and characters in the game to oneself, there forms a release of intellectual bondage. Thus, a life, just as a game, can become a theatrical event constantly changing and being revised, guiding internal drama through play.

Play is an activity where the mind is being used in new ways. When playing, the individual offers a willingness to divorce herself from the obvious reality she is a part of. Play becomes a voluntary detachment from physical forms as they exist in the world. Playing is an activity where one explores her own individuality and is able to examine the possibilities of human connection. Playing is quite clearly one of the main components of the virtual game. When playing, one might be mimicking or might be modeling.

Plato views play within the context of education. He discusses early education mainly in the *Republic*, written about 385 BC and speaks about it further in his later

work, *Laws*.<sup>284</sup> Plato is interested in children gaining an education in virtue, rather than preparing for a trade. This is forward thinking. Plato also feels that people should be trained to be free and that people should not have a fear of death. In the virtual game, the player is confronted with death at incalculable rates, and learns to accept it, rather than cower and block it from their thoughts. Further, as has been mentioned previously, Plato's admittance that creativity, art, and play offer such a large extent of power that they can overcome one's mind brings more influence and potential to the concept of the video game as a form of discourse that empowers.<sup>285</sup> Through play, and through the game, a person is able to face fears and understand the nuances that are rarely discussed. In the *Republic*, Socrates discusses with Glaucon how important play is in reference to the education of philosophical rulers:

“Well then, the study of calculation and geometry, and all the preparatory education required for dialectic must be put before them as children, and the instruction must not be given the aspect of a compulsion to learn.”

“Why not?”

“Because the free man ought not to learn any study slavishly. Forced labors performed by the body don't make the body any worse, but no forced study abides in the soul.”

“True,” he said.

“Therefore, you best of men,” I said, “don't use force in training the children in the subjects, but rather play. In that way you can better discern what each is naturally directed toward.”<sup>286</sup>

## **Free Play and Development of Character**

With these ideas considered, it is seen that a child is shaped by play and creative thinking when young—and character will only develop in the adult if she continues to or resumes playful activities. Plato believes that the utmost way of instruction should be free play, though it should be motivated, structured, and not completely random in order to promote development of future adults to offer themselves towards a civil society and contribute to the good itself in the state.<sup>287</sup> Free play abounds in the virtual game, though it holds an underlying structure.

Plato sees that the planning and designing of the city can be viewed as a playful game in which adults indulge. He believes the ideal city should be treated more lightly and not taken too seriously.<sup>288</sup> Furthermore, Dutch theorist and historian, Johan Huizinga, speaks largely on the benefits of play and how they too relate to culture and creativity:

In play there is something “at play” which transcends the immediate needs of life and imparts meaning to the action. All play means something. If we call the active principle that makes up the essence of play, “instinct,” we explain nothing; if we call it “mind” or “will” we say too much. However we may regard it, the very fact that play has a meaning implies a non-materialistic quality in the nature of the thing itself.<sup>289</sup>

## **Vehicle of Detachment**

It is important to consider that play and imagination apply modes of detachment. The vehicle of detachment is close to the activity of play in the way a person might alienate herself from reality in order to understand universal concepts internally. The creative journey for the inner self is similar to all forms of creativity in that artists need to reflect into forms of detachment at times. Forms of creating can be seen as a kind of detachment. To illustrate this one step further, Andy Warhol finds a place of openness with the same zen-like concept:

Sometimes people let the same problem make them miserable for years when they could just say, "So what." "My mother didn't love me." So what. "My husband won't ball me." So what. "I'm a success but I'm still alone." So what. I don't know how I made it through all the years before I learned how to do that trick. It took a long time for me to learn it, but once you do, you never forget.<sup>290</sup>

In the virtual space, the creative player becomes disengaged from conventional existence and moves deeply into what they construct to replace it. In the virtual, players may latch on to new ideas and worlds that may surpass beliefs. Further, reaching a level of not caring can add to a new understanding of self. Some people push themselves to a new level of not caring in order to get past limiting beliefs. We can see detachment done through play. One pretends and acts. Virtual activity may thrill the soul and opens up new worlds and possibilities to the player. When playing, it is as if a window to new worlds have been opened through detaching. Through gameplay, a person can unleash her creative imagination more freely. For, ways of commu-



nication with one's self-image can only be performed through creative imagining, and not as much as commonly believed—willpower. As specified previously in this chapter, one's visualizing of their self-image will be accepted as being real—even if the person has knowingly created a false or contrived image. As it may be seen by many, a large difficulty in overcoming the change in one's self-image is the internal critic. The individual needs to find a way to develop her belief or her self-image to overcome the critic inside.

Of course, an authentic self-image cannot be reached by moving away from reality indefinitely. By retreating into a virtual place via the game, or something such as a room of one's own, one can uncover hidden truths about their ultimate self.<sup>25</sup> With this concept, the game can be seen as the proverbial room of one's own. Within the virtual, a personal space can be created through the imagination and a person can envision these mental pictures of who they want to be. The importance of choice of self and actions cannot be underestimated. In the virtual, it is learned that we have choice as to who we are to become.<sup>292</sup>

### **Myth as Cure to Anxiety**

In his text, *The Courage to Create*, Rollo May discusses the Oracle at Delphi from the time of Plato. In the chapter entitled, "The Delphic Oracle as Therapist," May discusses the Greek Oracle as a place that offered an opportunity to create the self. The Delphic shrine was believed to be the counsel of Apollo. The shrine helped Greeks during a time of great transition—it was a re-creation of their society and their

identities. May relates self-creation with the notions of myth and symbol—in essence, he sees the concepts work in concert with the ability to know thyself. Self-creation through myth and symbol can be found, too, in the majority of virtual games.<sup>293</sup> The Delphic Oracle provided symbolic comments that helped people overcome the anxiety they faced. Further aligned with today, May states that this emotive experience occurred through “the apprehension that accompanies a formative, fermenting, creative, powerfully expanding period.”<sup>294</sup> There is a clear connection to today’s rapid developments that commonly cause anxiety in society. People rush home from their place of work to engage in virtual play just as the people traversed to Delphi in order to relieve societal anxiousness. Moreover, Apollo was the god of reason and logic, healing and wellbeing, and because of the relationship between form and beauty—he was also known as the god of art. Greeks traveled to Delphi in their hopes of a cure to their anxieties and insights to their own becoming. May points out that the oracle given by the priestesses of Apollo at Delphi were open-ended, inviting the seeker to search her own inner wisdom for meaning and direction.<sup>295</sup> The unrestraint can be seen similarly to the virtual experience today, and is no less thrilling or pertinent than when it was conceived and brought to the public during the Greek ages. This experience with the Oracle then and the game today is about the process of knowing the self—even if there is no “self” as it is commonly known. In other words, the “self” is always changing and transforming. It is a constant evolution. The “self” is continually born and dies in a cycle. Thus, the concept of the authentic self is indeed a conun-

drum, as it always transforming. The loss of self, then, is the highest attainment because then the subject is simply aware.

The Delphic Oracle aided in the occurring of creation by giving a space and ritual that generated and supported the symbols and myths that the Greeks held in their imaginations during this time of becoming. Rituals were practiced that allowed them to transition into an altered state of consciousness. The Oracle allowed the Greeks to experience meaningful myth-making in ways they would not ordinarily attempt. Ultimately, the oracle represents communal meaning, which can be seen as necessary to the evolution of humanity. May states that the oracle represents the “unconscious collective insights of the group.”<sup>296</sup> Thus, these same experiences can be seen in virtual gaming communities. The game offers new myths for the player to ponder, along with insightful experiences to contemplate. Room is left available for the player to work out any thoughts or anxieties and come to her own conclusions.

A playful form of dialogue can be found in myth. Plato’s myth of the *Allegory of the Cave* gives a perfect example of a story used in order to link education of the citizen and the community in Plato’s *Republic*. The power of a myth can be wrapped around the concept of play. Very often, myth and play are intertwined in video game narratives. In *The Quest for Myth*, writer Richard Chase states:

Myth is an aesthetic device for bringing the imaginary but powerful world of preternatural forces into a manageable collaboration with the objective (i.e., experienced) facts of life in such a way as to excite a sense of

reality amenable to both the unconscious passions and the conscious mind.<sup>297</sup>

Myth, then, brings together the literalness of experience and the dreams of one's furthest desires. Both myth and the act of play offer a means to embody the human condition by viewing and understanding life within plots and characters. When playing the game, and, in a sense, subjectifying a world through this activity, many players might share a communal vibration of internal oneness. By witnessing, albeit virtually, cause and effect scenarios through playing a game in the virtual, a person might construct a new idea of what could be beyond her own identity and circumstance. Through playing and myth, infinite life concepts and emotions might be sensed and structured differently due to aesthetic appeal and the clandestine captivation of art and symbol.

By interacting with internal concepts through the game, a person might find her own way by working with new forms to represent unique ways to understand complex ideas. Through the coupling of game and myth, ethereal concepts evolve into concrete visuals. With past myths, this transformation occurred through stories. Here, in the virtual game, we have the story, the intense visuals, and interactivity. If a person has certain concerns built up inside, the bottled-up emotions need expression. The dynamic experience through the virtual game, then, can open a virtual portal so the player's anxieties can be released. As it is understood, the same relieving was once done through myth. Myth once helped to shape identity and offer release. Now,

the virtual space offers this many times over through interactivity paired with the best of mythic qualities. Within the game, there is a superfluous range of images and identities that provides patterns to which growth may aspire.

In Greek myths, both mastery and play are spread throughout the stories. In the virtual game and myth, these forms of cleverness are offered with a supernatural boost. In the virtual game that utilizes myth, one can encounter forms of knowledge through an innumerable array of characters.<sup>298</sup> Characters are offered in a form of class that can be chosen. Just as class is structured in society, there are also hierarchies in the game—though in the virtual, the choices are transparently malleable. In the game, players can consciously choose their class. This important distinction alone—that one may be able to willingly choose her social class—can provide the concept to the player that she might also have the chance to choose her own class in her physical reality—if, perhaps, she learns to harness her authenticity. When playing the virtual game, players are offered flexible class systems. In certain games, when choosing a class or level, the player can decide on her abilities, skills, her origin, education, and place of residence.

Just as in myth, the character is both competent and idealized. In physical reality, the human has been known to strive for proficiency yet simultaneously desire her original state of innocence. The virtual game can be seen as a glorified novel—only now the reader is in the story and is able to watch and navigate at once. The gamer now becomes part of the story—she is no longer a bystander. The game—just

as the novel—becomes the individual’s new internal map of what she can become. A person no longer needs to experience a lone search for identity. Through the virtual, the internalization of the personal story becomes a communal experience. Likes, followers, and friend requests come to the player easily.<sup>299</sup> She only will be alone if she chooses so now. She has the choice to alienate herself or take turns in uncovering new layers of self and then come back to the community.

### **Story**

The evolution of the virtual is changing the way we interact with images and communicate with others. Never before in history has it been easier to see such imagery at a glance or to connect with others through this higher realm of interactivity. Just prior to interactive play in the virtual space, one’s media entertainment commonly came in the form of television. The viewer who watched television had little choice as to what to view. Through playing the virtual game now, however, one has complete ability as to what she chooses to watch, who she chooses to become, and how she would like to interact with others. The game now offers one the search for truth. The individual can discover her authentic potential. Through play, a mental window is opened and one’s self-image is more readily available to see herself more clearly. There is now opportunity to experience an honest self-assessment. One’s self-image is essential to how she might act in life. Her beliefs dictate to her what she feels she deserves.

Self-beliefs have to do with stories people tell themselves. People are told stories by other people, and they also tell themselves stories of past events and present occurrences. Those who may feel bewildered in their life, perhaps, do not know how to tell themselves a new story about their life that could occur for them positively. Thus, one's own story has the potential to change a person's life. Humans have been led for thousands of years to listen to and respond to stories. One might even say that there is nothing more engaging than a good story. Stories invoke creative listening and, thus, higher cognition to listeners, readers, and players.

Humans hold deep desires for experiencing and engaging in story, as they feel as if they are part of something larger than themselves. Stories open up the mind to higher mental functioning in which it has the capability to work at its highest potential. Going through a storied event together with other people (virtual or real) is a core piece of the notion of the ritual. Connecting stories with rituals are incredibly strong experiences, as a ritual can be among the most powerful bonds that humans have with one another. These elements of story connect others and, thus, create close affinities. Players in the virtual space and those who engage in gameplay through social media are part of large and interconnected networks and communities.

Elements of story and play occupy central roles within various areas of knowledge.<sup>300</sup> The game can become a form of personal discovery through the narrative—however linear or non-linear. Contrasting myth, the novel recognizes the distinction between subjective and objective. Both myth and fictional stories are fre-

quently found in the virtual game, which offers a dynamic interaction that cannot be found in other outlets of activity in such a way.

Through visual aesthetics and the plot, some games can be seen as rich and beautiful, while others are impoverished and crude. Some games appear to be quite contemporary while others appear archaic. Juxtapositions between play and the aesthetic interest offer effective surprise to the player with an anticipation as to what might be next. These are functions of reward and pleasure within the game. Thus, the virtual game offers cognitive interest through its transformative story-telling. A seemingly limited experience can spread its power over a range of time while playing a game. The video game shows what is possible through visuals and action. The person who cannot visualize what is possible may not attempt to move. Thus, the virtual creates illumination. Through various means of departure, one can move aggressively toward a preferred reality, which means uncovering hidden truths about oneself and thus encompass greater frequencies of contentment.

In *The Psychological Novel*, author Leon Edel discusses the element of time in myth and the novel. He states:

Like William James, Bergson taught that we are remolded constantly by experience; that consciousness is a process of endless accretion, so long as mind and senses are functioning; that it is 'the continuation of an indefinite past in a living present.'<sup>301</sup>



Similar to the novel and myth, the virtual game has turned the uses of metaphor to an exploration of modes of awareness. For, if technology is and remains the servant of humans, the story and myth that engage the player will enhance her intuitions and offer a harmonious experience.

The story in the game can also be seen as a form of psychic energy. Jung saw psychic energy as a basic life-force which would manifest itself as needed.<sup>302</sup> Jung says that we should regard the self as the most important archetype, as it keeps everything surrounding it together. Jung states, “The reason for evil in the world is that people are not able to tell their stories.”<sup>303</sup>

Stories offer a way of thinking powerfully and more abstractly, which can easily be seen in the virtual. When engaged in a form of power thinking within both story and game, an individual might understand that everything is neutral. A person realizes over time that things may not have meaning other than the meaning a person gives to it. Thus, due to the game, people can learn to create a story and give life its meaning. Thinking such as this recognizes that if one is creating her own meaning and story, there is no reason not to create a story that is supportive to the individual. The cycle of form and reformation in the game connect to the stories one learns and tells herself. Telling oneself a new story becomes something that is resourceful and creative—a person has to think about what can be produced from the old cast-off parts of the past. Rollo May states, “The poet’s labor is to struggle with the meaningless and silence of the world until he can force it to mean; until he can make the si-

lence answer and the non-being be.”<sup>304</sup> The vision of form arising from new stories becomes a special sort of moving material into being.

By changing the stories a person tells herself, she becomes involved in a form of re-setting. If a video game mistakenly turns off without saving, a player may cry out, “I’ve lost all of my worlds! Now I need to make them over again.” Re-starting the game turns play into fiery change for the better at times. When playing in the world of digital space, glitches will occur, power outages happen—and players have to start over again. These experiences teach the player the laws of cause and effect and teach the deeper processes of re-birth. This re-setting can be likened similarly to prescribed fires in the wild. In the physical world, controlled fire is executed on certain land areas to attain what is organically necessary in a specific space. Controlled fires are created and maintained enough so they are able to eradicate unnecessary components in a forest. Interestingly, fire is a normal and beneficial occurrence in the wild. Many forms of life depend on fires and wildfires as well. The similar process of re-starting in the forest, and also in the virtual game, then, is a path towards an enlightened form of being in all areas of life. Re-setting is a part of gameplay that many do not notice, though they become acclimated to re-starting and may learn intuitively that re-setting clears space in order to begin again anew. The subliminal negation of negation concept may not be something that is an obvious benefit to the player, though it is clear that it can cause positive effects over time. When one decides to be-

come aware in her life, these mechanisms allow one to come to new realizations of the self.

## Chapter Six

### **Particulars Within the Virtual**

The revealing that rules throughout modern technology has the character of setting-upon, in the sense of a challenging-forth. That challenging happens in that the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is stored up is, in turn, distributed, and what is distributed is switched about ever anew. Unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching about are ways of revealing. But the revealing never simply comes to an end.

—Martin Heidegger  
*The Question Concerning Technology*

### **Lying Beneath Technology**

After considering many areas that offer the player the power to become more through forms of being and doing, the concepts of technology should be examined for further understanding. It is further important to question the organic nature of technology. It is through forms of technology that people are able to move further in their evolution. It is evident that technology is moving humanity at an unprecedented pace. Thus, technology can be seen as a tool that connects with consciousness and pushes forward. While technologies in primitive time periods were utilized by putting together objects used for obtaining food and shelter, technology today can be seen in terms of ideas and actions through art and word now being formed in order to come to a higher realization of the self. The term “technology” can be broken down into the

Greek terms *technē* and *logos*. *Technē* is defined as “art” and *logos* as “word.” Art and word form together within the virtual world.

Through technology, the virtual world of encompassing play emerges as a natural progression. Within the considerations of technology, we come to Heidegger’s thoughts within his text, *The Question Concerning Technology*. While Heidegger looks highly to technology, he also believes it is dangerous when people become obsessed with it. With this in mind, he believes we can avert the obsession through art forms within the technology.<sup>305</sup> Thus, he sees real benefits within technology, though it can be said that a contemplative energy needs to be included within the technology in order for the progression to work effectively. It can further be seen that the virtual, in such an ephemeral state, is also continuously revealing. Heidegger sees technology as a constant form of revealing or *aletheia*. Heidegger comments on the following:

But where have we strayed to? We are questioning concerning technology, and we have arrived now at *aletheia*, at revealing. What has the essence of technology to do with revealing? The answer: everything. For every bringing-forth is grounded in revealing. Bringing-forth, indeed, gathers within itself the four modes of occasioning—causality—and rules them throughout. Within its domain belong end and means, belongs instrumentality. Instrumentality is considered to be the fundamental characteristic of technology. If we inquire, step by step, into what technology, represented as means, actually is, then we shall arrive at revealing. The possibility of all productive manufacturing lies in revealing. Technology is therefore no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing. If we give heed to this, then another whole realm for the essence of technology will open itself up to us. It is the realm of revealing, i.e., of truth.<sup>306</sup>

To consider the premise further, Heidegger indeed views technology as a saving grace. Heidegger states that we commonly see technology as having a thingly quality—such as the equipment associated with technology. If, however, we liken technology to metaphysical conclusions, we can see that technology may be even more superior than the thingly. Heidegger sees technology as showing consciousness what was not there to be seen prior. The revealing experience he associates with technology brings together the concept of a revelation, which he calls *Dasein*, and the perception of technology itself. Interestingly, Heidegger comments that *technē* “is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman but also from the arts of the mind and the fine arts. *Technē* belongs to bringing forth, to *poiēsis*; it is something poetic.”<sup>307</sup> Here, we see technology as something quite transcendent and imaginative. Heidegger understands where the *concept* of technology began in the times of Plato—and how the term *technē* was intertwined with both art and *poiesis*. Heidegger sees art as a connected part of society before the covering up or veil evolved. He asserts that art had a pure interconnectivity and was coupled with being in the times of Ancient Greece. Notably, Heidegger sees the downfall of society occurring when the authenticity of art, life, and creation became masked and truth became hidden. Heidegger believes that the saving grace within the essence of technology manifests itself as a truth of being, in which both the simultaneous revealing and concealing of being arises. He sees convenience and apathy as what keeps us in a stagnant mode. If there is

no sense of urgency or real desire, authentic art and creativity cannot occur. For, new technologies are created within the thoughts of a creative humanity.<sup>308</sup>

Furthermore, *technē* is commonly linked with *epistēmē*, and as such, both terms display the knowingness that is constantly in the process of revealing.<sup>309</sup> Heidegger sees this synthesis of technology and poetics as a force that is natural. The revealing-ness of technology brings to the forefront what is completely human. Heidegger states that this “enframing” is what we recognize in our life and being that is because of the truth that technology stirs about. Furthermore, Heidegger discusses the German term, *Gestell*, and says that it lies below current technology. This “lying beneath technology” has then become enframed. Heidegger states:

Enframing means the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve. Enframing means that way of revealing which holds sway in the essence of modern technology and which is itself nothing technological.<sup>310</sup>

Heidegger, too, sees a very real paradox within the notion of technology. He understands the potential for a danger that could occur due to the way society enframes technology. However, the paradox is found in the fact that technology equally holds the key to revealing the oppression of humanity to itself. When Heidegger questions the essence of technology, he understands that his notion of “essence” is quite dissimilar to Plato. Plato sees “essence” as a permanent condition. Heidegger sees “essence” as the process of developing and enduring. With his formulations, he de-

constructs the thoughts that Western civilization have been resting on for over two thousand years.<sup>311</sup>

In addition, Heidegger sees that humanity becomes more fluid through art. He sees the aestheticization of art keeping it in the place of subject and object. He looks to art as something that has the ability to change, rather than subjectify. He, interestingly, urges humanity to approach art and life from a post-aesthetic frame of reference.<sup>312</sup> Heidegger believes that people need to experience the origin of art in their own way, and recreate it in their own mind to receive the full experience. Heidegger believes it is possible for art to open up the point of view of being in the human that is necessary for survival. This process can easily be translated to the virtual world. Heidegger believes an intimate knowing is discovered once a significant understanding of art has been met.<sup>313</sup>

Further into the particulars of the virtual, Theodor Adorno sees humanity as being oppressed by the advents of capitalism and its hold on ultimate knowledge. He calls on new prospects for humanity—and nature as well. Thus, while the unassuming citizen might see the virtual world of play as moving further away from nature, it can be seen that the virtual is moving closer to forms of truth within the mind of the individual. The virtual game offers an opening to the individual in order to see what is available—if only she decides to suspend disbelief and grant access to her ever-curious imagination. Adorno states:



Technology is said to have ravished nature—a turn of phrase that derives essentially from bourgeois sexual morality. In a framework of different productive relations, the same technology might be able not to violate, but to help nature realize some of its aims (*wohin sie vielleicht möchte*) right here on this old earth.<sup>314</sup>

Thus, the virtual world via technology can be seen as an organic process in the human longing and search for access to the infinite self. If technology is first created through thought, a whole new function of thinking about virtual play through technology may be considered. When the uses of technology are more fully known, one might look beyond idle setbacks and analyze how it is can be productive. If this understanding is not made known, the truth of technology serves no purpose, and it is simply an objective medium.

The virtual world through technology has the ability to take people somewhere else than they expected to be. Thus, the virtual depicts truths. The experience of truth is expressed into the virtual which then expresses back to the beginning of the first experience, thereby revealing the truth. The experience appears on the virtual screen, as an object. Through the virtual, the object is no longer hidden. By viewing a “new world” within the virtual, the player has the ability to immortalize objects and envision them as more significant than they are in physical reality. The player is able to visualize what has happened, what lies within, and what is available. While it can easily be said that the virtual offers the player a mere illustration of one’s imagination, the hyper-likeness to physical and imagined worlds rather offers the player a chance

to notice exquisite details that make up forms of the real. Unexpectedly, the player discovers a higher form of self-awareness within the virtual.<sup>315</sup>

### **Action**

After considering technology within the virtual, action can be understood as a bridge between inner and outer worlds. Action is progressive, and the most effective method to growing is actively “doing.” Physically doing, even if it is in a virtual setting, allows the mind to believe it is moving forward. Activity itself propels one into progress. Movement and a sense of progress reward the player with a state of accomplishment. If a character moves within the game, the image of the actionable movement becomes imprinted in the mind, and it allows one to experience increased capabilities. Forms of action will encourage a person to change and establish behaviors. Any form of action, particularly with repetition, will create new ways of being. Once a person is playing in the game, new circumstances are all-encompassing. Once a spark of possibility enters the mind, a new way of thinking has been disclosed. Playing in the virtual, then, can be seen as a habit that strengthens.

Active play can quickly relieve prior conditioning within the individual. The act of play can deepen the knowingness of the player, as the experience has the ability to find her ideal self due to her actions. As a result of the evolution of the virtual, people can grow to discover deeper clarity in their life. Through the game, the player can re-align her unique energy and develop an authentic mode of being with more

benevolence. The virtual experience is not about being on one's own in mental isolation. In the virtual, there is a capacity to represent to the individual her personal freedom and power by backing away from oppressive thought systems. Finding the authentic self in the game is further found through experiences of communion. Many games encompass communal aspects of sharing, following, networking, connecting, working together, and communicating—virtually. Group participation allows the player to grow as a unique entity while having the ability to learn from others. The experience in the virtual game can easily translate into the physical dimension. To see the world within the screen, the player may then see the world's reflection outside.

### **Thought**

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle calls the mind the place of forms because it is able to grasp objects apart from physical matter. Aristotle says that the mind has no physical form, and it thinks its way through images. Therefore, the imagination is not fully dependent on the body compared to the faculties of perception. Aristotle asserts that thinking, then, is up to humans themselves. Thought does not rely so much on perception, but rather the imagination. Further, Aristotle claims that he wrote his *Nicomachean Ethics*, “not in order to know what virtue is, but in order to become good.”<sup>316</sup> Through his findings, Aristotle claims that one needs to not only perform good acts, but do them in the right way. Aristotle further claims that the ultimate end for the human is happiness, which can also be called *eudaimonia* (εὐδαιμονία) in

Greek. The state of *eudaimonia* is said to be the highest state that a person can attain. Aristotle states that this is the most worthy form of excellence to strive for in life. The journey toward *eudaimonia* contains important forms of character that include courage and pride. The interweaving of friendship is also formed when one reaches this ultimate mode of living, says Aristotle.<sup>317</sup> The process and searching for the utmost attainment as a human being is similarly found in the virtual game. In virtual play, the process of becoming and recognizing one's own courage is understood.

Aristotle further describes the three types of intellectual discipline. The three forms closely correlate to gaming and its characteristics. The three disciplines are termed productive, practical, and theoretical.

1. The mode of productive discipline focuses on the external formations that one might create, such as building a structure or a house. Quite interestingly, many games focus on the player constructing buildings, forms, towns, cities, and worlds.

2. The practical discipline lies in the realm of ethical considerations. This mode is centered on the concepts of action and decisiveness. These characteristics are crucial for the experience of the game activity.

3. The last Aristotelian discipline is the theoretical form. This is the discipline that is concerned with truth alone for the sake of it to be known.<sup>318</sup> These universal forms of recognition bring about important factors for the individual and player alike.

Further, in *Poetics*, Aristotle discusses tragedy and the elements of dramatic theory. He states that the plot is the first and main principle of a great work. The plot alone should move one to strong sensations. Both tragic plays and gameplay hold similar qualities as they have the ability to spark fervent emotion in the viewer. Only now, the viewer is engaged in the intensity of experiential-ness. The plot is quite central to many virtual games. The components of gameplay or plot are different compared to narrative components to the game.

Aristotle holds the basis of poetry to be imitation. He theorizes that imitation provides forms of pleasure due to the fulfillment of the learning process that happens because of the creative nourishment. For, Aristotle states that learning is—or should be—pleasurable. He says that people enjoy learning when they see a likeness in what they are studying.<sup>319</sup> Clearly, the virtual game covers an expansive field of genres, though it does hold close affinity with the rules Aristotle sets out. A large number of games allow one to ponder over the nature of the story and time itself. The cathartic qualities in gameplay can be seen quite clearly, as they are a method to release fretful feelings. When a player comes to the game with any sense of anger, aggression, frustration, anxiety—she may be able to work through these negative energies and find a purifying effect through the renewing aspects present in the game.

As it can be seen, then, creating an authentic self can indeed occur within the digital world of the virtual. Formative beliefs are taught by family, friends, society, media, and acquaintances which work to create a person's identity when young. It is

commonly found that when a person becomes a certain age after adolescence, she may search for who she truly is if driven enough to become more. Thus, a new sense of autonomy is born by consciously creating the self again. Once the mind has been developed, a person has the ability to create and re-create her identity as much as she desires in order to fit her awakened state. Gameplay offers the person who seeks a higher sense of self-awareness the virtual tools to do so again and again if desired. As humans are artistic beings, the adolescent who has grown and matures into an adult may come to find herself with an urge to explore a way to create again.

Action and thought together comprise a creative moment. While playing the game offers immense leaps into new modes of possibilities, character adjustments can be achieved through self-discipline and control of the self. Through these forms of self-balance, a person can intuitively learn how to re-invent the self. The experience of acting in the game is also an interesting topic to consider. Acting can be viewed in various ways, though it is constructive to observe acting as akin to playing. A person consciously changes her persona when acting. The player, then, acts in the virtual game, which offers a chance to create the self. The formative process is more than contemplation, as it delivers to the player a larger space to become. Thus, while the activity of playing a game in the virtual may commonly be seen as a repetitive pastime, it remains essential to see that the moments played in the game consist of making worlds, forming new identities, interacting with the self and others—all offering immense forms of creativity.

With reference to the interactive participation within the game, the player is necessary while the game is the tool. The player automatically controls all perceptions and experiences, thus, it is imperative for the individual to consciously discipline these modes. Once the player becomes aware this she is indeed the programmer of her self, she can create her identity as she desires it to be. Nietzsche says, “Why does man not see things? He is himself standing in the way: he conceals things.”<sup>320</sup> In the game, then, the player slowly learns to consciously direct her actions—and essentially gets out of the way. Through this process, the individual becomes a conduit of creativity and may attain her highest state of self. By playing the game, the player sees that more can be accomplished with enough persistence. For, there is an all-encompassing, yet non-transparent, commentary from society and mass media that teaches the individual that she needs a crutch—that she has no power. When a person plays the game and sees that she does have power, she might feel that it is a false assumption at first, though the more she plays and feels a fulfillment and recognition, the deeper she will come to recognize her abilities.

Moreover, the conscious act of thought is closely tied together with the concept of self-reliance. Humanity has been seeking to find the highest state of awareness of the self. People have been searching for this natural power and connection to the eternal nature of being. However, the incalculable strength of the individual has persevered and the relentlessness of hope has peeked through the stratosphere of oppression. Here and there, occurrences arise where an individual does indeed find her self-

confidence and decides to empower herself. In his text, *Self-Reliance*, Ralph Waldo Emerson writes that there is nothing outside of ourselves that can bring us peace, that we are the only ones who we can rely on to live an authentic life. He says further:

A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages. Yet he dismisses without notice his thought, because it is his. In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty. Great works of art have no more affecting lesson for us than this. They teach us to abide by our spontaneous impression with good-humored inflexibility then most when the whole cry of voices is on the other side. Else, tomorrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take with shame our own opinion from another. There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better, for worse, as his portion; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till. The power which resides in him is new in nature, and none but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried.<sup>321</sup>

In addition, Emerson offers similar sentiments, and relays that the boundaries between humanity and truth are conformity and consistency. In order to recreate civilization, an individual must look within and begin to question what she is being told. Emerson says, "It is easy to see that a greater self-reliance must work a revolution in all the offices and relations of men; in their religion; in their education; in their pur-



suits; their modes of living; their association; in their property; in their speculative views.”<sup>322</sup> Emerson also sees action as promoting change. He does not believe in relying on the past to move forward. We can see this progression occurring in the virtual, as it is a momentum that builds and looks ahead, rather than behind. Through exploring the power that the worlds of the game encompass, it is clear that an energy is building. The continual evolving of independence through the game allows people to see what is conceivable. The force within the virtual propels creativity into a mode that can be expressed by the player uniquely. Creativity, then, is a relentless force that will not be buried.

Ideas are interchangeable through thought. Once a person begins to see her thoughts from a point of view that becomes inter-disciplinary, the individual can make adjustments. An educational tool to help people achieve mastery of skills can be found in what is commonly called the “Conscious Competence Matrix.” The method of understanding coincides with the known statement coined by Christ and, then, discussed by philosophers, including Žižek, “For they know not what they do.”<sup>323</sup> This ladder of learning has been taught within business and human development, though it corresponds to the awakening experience in the virtual nicely. It is seen here in the conscious competence matrix that conscious growth takes place in four steps.

1. The first step is determined as unconscious incompetence, where the person is not yet aware of what she does not know.

2. The second step is conscious incompetence in which the individual now knows what she does not know.
3. The third step is conscious competence. Here, she is consciously aware of what she is learning and willingly framing into her mind. She engages in repetitive acts in order to create effective change. We can see this as a crucial step in the virtual.
4. The final step of the conscious competence matrix is unconscious competence. Here, the player behaves as she desires, without question.<sup>324</sup> The behavior becomes automatic. This similar formation can occur within the game where the player begins not knowing, and, if she plays a sufficient amount of time, she becomes proficient without trying. A training of better behavior that is automatic is the goal in this structure.

While this practice towards becoming may seem somewhat abstract toward the concept of creating the self through the virtual, it is seen that the player begins with an unconscious awareness of who she is. As a player progresses in the playing of the game, she grows to realize that she can locate her authenticity. After playing for some time, she comes into her inner self without conscious thought.

We may further consider similarities between classic forms of art and the engagement with the game. The prior form of interactivity while viewing art was a passive experience. Playing in the virtual is now an interactive one. The virtual world offers the player physical, mental, and spiritual experiences where the player dictates

the moves and motives behind the character or circumstance in the game. While it can be said that video game creators are the designers and regulators of what is being applied to the player, it can also be inferred that the virtual game experience holds massive potential for conscious creativity. Furthermore, intuitive interfaces, systems, and coding now make the capabilities available so the player can develop and build their own games with ease. The player is no longer a passive consumer or spectator.

### **Détournement and Spectacle**

Twentieth century French Marx theorist and writer, Guy Debord's, analyses of the spectacle of society, along with his thoughts on détournement and the dérive through the Situationists International are still quite prevalent today.<sup>325</sup> I argue that the virtual world cannot be seen completely comparable to the spectacle, as the spectacle does not cause room for productivity. While, of course, there are games that do not lead to productivity, the amount of room for growth and knowledge through the video game outweighs the effects of absurdity through the spectacle. In addition, Rancière claims that we need to push further than the détournement.<sup>326</sup> Perhaps the 1960s seemed to be a radical way of being, and can be seen that way even now—though this is because the patriarchal control will not allow an actual rupture of the symbolic order. Societal restrictions are so rigid that any form of autonomous thought or movement is quickly dismissed, ignored, silenced, and squelched.

Nevertheless, it is helpful to become reacquainted with the concepts of the spectacle and détournement to see how these forms of power can be used to the best of our abilities within the virtual. In the late 1950s and 1960s, Debord and his group, The Situationists International, called for deliberate activity in contrast to mind-numbing passivity. Here, the SI is addressing situational aesthetics within the cultural spectacle. Within the situationist movement, the person or group would consciously create their physical situation. The belief behind this experiment was that the individual who realizes that she controls her life and creates it moment by moment will begin to have power in her own self and create new, more authentic, worlds.<sup>327</sup> The SI states, “Art can cease being a report about sensations and become a direct organization of more advanced sensations. The point is to produce ourselves rather than things that enslave us.”<sup>328</sup> In a game such as *Second Life*, the player has free ground to create her character, identity, and actions. She has control to roam in the virtual world. The player learns that she is always in the middle of her own experiences. Thus, a self-aware consciousness unfolds in the virtual. The consciousness passes through to the material world. If all things begin with consciousness, the virtual game is an evolutionary pathway for an individual to find her highest self.

The Situationists’ concept of détournement is an early post-modern form of re-creating by means of sabotaging a former spectacle-based image or icon in popular media and completely changing the meaning. To compare détournement to the virtual world of play, players are continuously re-inventing the creative flow in the game.

Players can code or hack the former and original game and create new versions of the previous game in many instances. This can be seen similarly to détournement and most art forms that have prevailed and changed dominant culture. Thus, while détournement means “overturning” or “derailment,” it can be seen as a positive force that rescinds conditions into creative experiences. Détournement, which is an appropriation from popular culture into a new, subversive meaning is expeditiously turning over new forms of mimesis into itself to promote greater innovative production. The benefit to the virtual is that, while the mode of production is quickly speeding, the mode of creativity is enhanced and being engaged.

Détournement is established as a rip-off of popular media. Looking to the virtual space as a mode of détournement, the world of play sustains an unending cycle that will continue to change and evolve as it is continued. In the game, the viewer becomes the director and can change the ending as much as she pleases. She creates and de-constructs the entire script—learning while playing. The situationists see the notion of the détournement as an opposition to the spectacle. This form of activism against behemoth media opens up new ways to allow creativity into one’s life. The stifling effect of the spectacle envelops such a large number of passive viewers that the virtual game, akin to the idea of détournement, opens up a space for the player to breathe and play. The détournement becomes a social construction that is meant to be a production of activity, rather than passivity. Here, the individual becomes involved in her life. She becomes an active and interactive member in the story she creates.

While the spectacle of society creates unreal scenarios for the passive viewer to consume, the game in the virtual, too, provides unreal scenarios, though the player is now engaged and conscious areas in the mind become expanded.

The spectacle is pinpointed as the downfall of productivity and is quite invisible since it is promoted perpetually at all times. The spectacle does not challenge the spectator. Here, we can see the virtual game falls in two camps. Our knowledge of these two camps will aid us in delineating how we can see the virtual as conducive to creating the self of not. To be sure, not every virtual game will be considered a form of personal creation. Depending upon one's definition of creation, of course, that will dictate what form of the game is art or not, however, for our purposes in this discussion, let us look to art as paths and forms of expression. Within these two camps, one encompasses the game that is indeed available for expression and the ability to find the inner self. The second falls into the spectacle category and is all about itself and brings the player into what the SI call "an increasingly full-time spectator of the established absurdities."<sup>329</sup> While the spectacle can be seen as a form of thought control, we can look to the virtual as a space for personal control of thought.

The game, then, is a prospect for a sophisticated avenue in becoming more. Instead of discarding the entire medium and chalking it up to a spectacle, it can be looked upon as a framework that allows for superior ways of creating. In their essay, "The Use of Free Time," Debord and his group comment the following:

There is no revolutionary problem of leisure—of an emptiness to be filled—but a problem of free time. As we have already said: “There can be no free use of time until we possess the modern tools for the construction of everyday life. The use of such tools will mark the leap from a utopian revolutionary art to an experimental revolutionary art.” The supersession of leisure through the development of an activity of free creation-consumption can only be understood in relation with the dissolution of the traditional arts—with their transformation into superior modes of action which do not refuse or abolish art, but *fulfill* it. In this way art will be superseded, conserved and surmounted within a more complex activity. Its traditional elements may still be partially present, but transformed, integrated and modified by the totality.<sup>330</sup>

Many video games indeed have much to do with commodity and consumption on a corporate scale. When virtual games are created, there are multitudes of designers creating for a large company looking to produce a hefty revenue. Many video games, then, are created to pacify and lead the player nowhere. However, it is imperative to see the unrealized probabilities that the game holds in light of the philosophical concepts offered. Independent video game designers are already at the pulse of creative aspects that are changing the game into a dynamic mode of becoming. This is similar to many forms of evolution in the arts where subversive off-shoots of larger capitalist entities have by-and-large changed history.<sup>331</sup> There are many examples of games that have been created to offer the player an improved sense of self-awareness within mainstream game publishing, independent game publishing, and fine arts as well. As technologies grow and the virtual field expands, the space of virtual play and games is taking hold rapidly. Not only is there now a genre of “serious games,” but the ex-

pansion of the said virtual reality headsets, Google glass, and 3D printing are putting the virtual into an important position.

The game in the virtual, then, is able to flip the spectacle on its head—as it is becoming more and more productive. While Debord sees the spectacle as the moment that is never—and actual physical life becomes cheapened—the game becomes significant in that it can affect physical life for the better. When the player leaves the game, she is renewed. She has, perhaps, meditated through play, trained her mind according to her needs, and performed in a global arena. Moreover, the game offers an increasing amount of experiences in which players play with one another in real time and eventually forge actual friendships and relationships in the physical world.<sup>332</sup> Often, then, relationships are cemented through the process of experiencing the game amidst others.

Viewing the game in terms of Debord's theory of *dérive*, it can be understood as a mode of passage that one takes through controlled spaces, while keeping the element of chance intact. The concept of *dérive* is based on the coupled actions of play with a stroll. It is seen as a drifting. The *dérive* enhances one's appreciation for the various changes in scenery and ambiance on the walk, which can be summarized as a matter of paying attention to one's surroundings. The *dérive* is a process of affirming excitement by one's environs. The comparison to virtual games cannot be denied in this illustration. The experience of the *dérive* is freeing, as an individual may



choose to examine her setting however she chooses. For, in Debord's *Theory of the Dérive*, he quotes Marx, "Men can see nothing around them that is not their own image; everything speaks to them of themselves. Their very landscape is alive."<sup>333</sup>

### **The Virtual Game as Art**

Video games that are indeed productive forms of becoming are being created and sold both within capitalist outlets, and also within museums. In the video game, *The Vanishing of Ethan Carter*, the player is situated in a space that encompasses beautiful vistas that indelibly immerse one in a gorgeous and moving world. Beauty abounds and is everywhere. Within the game, there are mysteries, puzzles, learning opportunities, and murder mysteries to solve. This particular video game has no time limit and there are no tutorials. The player has the ability to roam in the world as she pleases in the non-linear virtual space. In this video game, she is on her own to play as she wishes. As many video games are known to coddle the player and be fast-paced, this game offers the player absolute space for free play.<sup>334</sup> Designer of the *The Vanishing of Ethan Carter*, Adrian Chmielarz states in an interview with respect to the game, "We believe that games are a very potent story-telling medium, and we hope to be a part of the movement trying to evolve story-telling in games."<sup>335</sup>

Further, if we look to an earlier video game from 2006 that is based in war, we see the player is transported to historical events. In the game, *Company of Heroes*, the story takes place in the middle of World War II. The player is dropped into the war

and re-lives a historical moment in history through extreme virtual interaction and immersion. The explanation of the game is as follows:

A real-time strategy (RTS) game set in World War II, *Company of Heroes* brings to life—in full cinematic detail—the greatest war mankind has ever known. Gamers will experience the journey of the brave men of Able Company in a deep single-player campaign that begins with the invasion of Normandy through their fight across Europe. *Company of Heroes'* completely destructible environment means no two battles ever play out in the same way. Advanced squad AI brings soldiers to life as they interact with the environment and execute advanced squad tactics to eliminate the opposition forces.<sup>336</sup>

While the place, theme, and plot may be quite harsh and unsettling, the basic conception of the idea that one can be dropped into a moment in time of history allows one to see the many possibilities the virtual beholds. To be virtually transported and hold the ability to experience in full detail a historical time and space is unprecedented. Thus, while games based in war are not necessarily productive to one's becoming, we can see that there is budding potential underlying the concept of re-living occasions and participate in historical moments in time. The beauty to behold is that re-living moments in time through the aesthetic experience brings the concept of historical painting to a new intersection in the history of art.

In addition, the virtual game continues to find its way into the art world further. The entrance of video games into the arts was discussed in the first chapter, and we can see two additional examples here. Within the past fifteen years, the digital age

has spilled into the work of many artists. Visual artists are frequently using sources from digital media and interactive technologies—with this, the world of gaming is influencing and overflowing into artwork substantially. Contemporary artist, Feng Mengbo, created a large-scale installation that was purchased by the Museum of Modern Art in New York entitled *Game Over: Long March* in 2010. In the piece, Mengbo composited large swaths of video game imagery along canvases stretched eighty by twenty feet.<sup>337</sup> The enlarged imagery of a superimposed game gives the viewer the opportunity to feel enveloped by it. The experience offers the viewer in the museum a sensibility that they are inhabiting within the video game. In this space, viewers are miniaturized and feel like the character. This experience explores various topics in reference to the shifting of perspectives—particularly, the location of the self as spectator, player, and viewer in the space of the virtual. When inhabiting the space that Mengbo has created, concepts break down as to what is reality and what is representation. There has become a simulacra through the experience, as realities and truths have been suspended and the viewer is disoriented. This experience could not have occurred otherwise if it weren't for the experience playing the video game initially. Thus, it is clear that we see video games function as critical discourse within a museum setting, which shows promise for the medium and all forms of virtuality.

There are a myriad of other instances of the video game within a museum space. Contemporary visual artist, Harun Farocki's video installation, "Harun Farocki: Images of War (at a Distance)" in the 2011 exhibition "Serious Games I-IV," dis-

plays four videos playing at once. Farocki questions the reality we are given as a people, particularly within the age of controlled media. In his videos, Farocki shows four videos. The videos display soldiers preparing for combat by training through video game simulators, a mock site that is created to look like Iraq, though it is based in California, an instructor explaining the gaming procedure for combat use, and the last video shows soldiers working with video from war footage used to encounter memories from war in order to confront post-traumatic stress disorder. The final blow to the viewer is to discover that the last footage is a staged depiction to promote video games for soldier post-traumatic stress.<sup>338</sup> Here, in this exhibit, we see knowledge and experience intertwined in perplexity. Any form of ideal is shattered and what we believe to be real or trustworthy is negated. Farocki played with and examined how we see the world through media, and how the virtual can shape us unwittingly. This example of the video game as a form of simulacrum shows the manner in which spectacle is used to promote the state of insecurity. Illuminating, this critical form of discourse is becoming well-known in the minds of the viewers, as it is given them an opportunity to see past the curtain and understand that ideologies can easily be created through subversive tactics.

Of further relevance, it is worthy to note that MoMA and Smithsonian have acquired video games for their collections. While MoMA curator Paola Antonelli sees video games as interactive design, the Smithsonian sees the games they purchased as works of art. Smithsonian director, Elizabeth Broun says in relation to the games they

purchased, “We acquired them as great works of art.”<sup>339</sup> Michael Mansfield, Smithsonian curator, likens the skepticism of the video game as art to the birth of photography as art. Mansfield states, “There were concerns about photography being a viable art form. I think one critic defined it as the bastard child of science left at the door of art. The same issue has been raised with video and performance art.”<sup>340</sup> These examples show clearly there is a growing power beneath the video game, though it is not yet widely known.

### **Spontaneity**

Within the virtual game, quick decision-making is a crucial and constant part of the process. Making decisions while playing acts as an outlet for becoming. The repetitiveness of forming quick decisions is essential to one’s intelligence and capacity for problem-solving. Active decisions cause a person to grow in mental aptitude and confidence, which allows for one to quickly search for viable solutions. When deciding to make a move, then, the game offers the chance to re-live the creative process, while approaching moments from hybridized perspectives. If a person understands she can experience what she thinks through the virtual game, the process of becoming is enhanced in physical reality. Within the process of becoming more than ego, an individual grows farther than the sense of absence.

Re-connecting to spontaneity allows one to become aligned to her higher self. Decisions within the game act as a channel for the player to experience the designing

of her life. Decision-making coupled with action enhances the experience and also, subtly, gives the player a sense of responsibility to her creativity. The player sees that she can enjoy unlimited play. A chance of play is offered to the player where she can see a manifestation of her power from the virtual to the physical. Playing presents a *joie de vivre*, as the player awakens to new awarenesses. Decision-making allows one to see that challenges are central to becoming more authentic. Rather than ignoring challenge, the player is confronted with as many challenges as she desires in the game. When playing the game, the level of challenge is frequently difficult, though it is not an unconquerable feat. The challenge might be demanding enough that the player is motivated to conquer the goal, yet does not feel defeat. Paradoxically, because what the player learns can benefit her mind, the ability to affect the physical is feasible. Further, the player can choose any mode in the game, just as in her actual life. She can choose to make the level easy, medium, or difficult. She can choose to jump over continuous hurdles, receive multiple power-ups, share with others, fight others, love others, dance, learn how to do an act that would never be attempted in physical reality. The player can be competitive or free. She can remain under a timer or play in creative mode. She can act under surveillance or she can create a city. Here, in the virtual, she is free and possesses choices.

### **The New Aura**

The virtual can further be seen as having a new aura. Walter Benjamin discusses technologies of mass reproduction in his “The Work of Art in the Age of Me-

chanical Reproduction,” stating that current technology adds a new aura to art—an essence that has not been set upon humanity before. Just as Kant calls for the old philosophy to be destroyed in order to see the new philosophy begin, Benjamin sees the reproducibility of the form to be an enlightening ability.<sup>341</sup> Thus, the virtual game can be seen as holding a revised aura for the viewer. Reality is structured within evolving networks and does not stay still, and certainly, the intangible uniqueness incorporated within the virtual offers the player various levels of thought that are unbounded. Here, now, we see aesthetic capability spill out into the arms of the people—it is no longer kept by a certain elite few. Benjamin sees the mechanical reproduction as a positive prospect for art and humanity. The relationships created within the virtual are only beginning, and it is clear that the evolution of digital interactivity is creating new forms of authentic auras. Benjamin, too, sees that the duplication of the work is something that we have been leading up to in the perspective of human history.<sup>342</sup> Interestingly, Benjamin states:

During long periods of history, the mode of human sense perception changes with humanity’s entire mode of existence. The manner in which human sense perception is organized, the medium in which it is accomplished, is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstances as well.<sup>343</sup>

Benjamin sees technology and reproduction as a positive, and believes this evolving becomes needed as to the changing points in time. The original is now not necessarily necessary to experience the aura of the work. His belief is that the reproducibility will affect artists and their viewers for the better, through the use of these tools we are

now able to access. Benjamin states: “The cathedral leaves its locale to be received in the studio of a lover of art: the choral production, performed in an auditorium or in the open air, resounds in the drawing room.”<sup>344</sup>

### **The Virtual as Interrupter**

Heidegger deconstructs and peels away layers of non-truths. Heidegger wants humanity to be free—and sees that it may be attainable through art.<sup>345</sup> Heidegger acknowledges that there is potential in art and that we can avert danger through art, being, and thus, *dasein*.<sup>346</sup> Heidegger cares most about humans finding their essential being-ness in a world of things. Heidegger states:

*Dasein* exists. Furthermore, *Dasein* is an entity which in each case I myself am. Mineness belongs to any existent *Dasein*, and belongs to it as the condition which makes authenticity and inauthenticity possible.<sup>347</sup>

Just as Nietzsche believes all humans have the potential for genius that can transcend bourgeois consciousness, Heidegger, too, believes we all have the ability to create our higher self. An individual, then, can emancipate herself through self-creation. By departing oppressive systems in a creative way, an individual may become her authentic self.

Further, Rancière sees art as the interruption of the everyday. He sees genuine artistic activities that takes people from their usual places and creates in them a form of function.<sup>348</sup> Essentially, this can be seen as a form of *dérive* as the person disrupts



common patterns and chooses to consciously create her surroundings and experiences. Using creative thought to a high degree can be seen as an innovative form of living. The virtual dimension that allows the player to begin to think on her own is not to be seen as an outright revolution either, but rather as a form of quietly revealing truth. Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Rancière believe that truth will indeed reveal itself—and it appears that an evolving form of art through the virtual is a discourse needed to implement the seeking of truth.

Rancière sees that citizens in society willingly remain obedient and participate in the illusory game of authority, and those in power prefer this inauthentic situation.

Rancière states:

This is exactly what Aristotle says in Book I of the *Politics*, when he distinguishes political rule (as the ruling of equals) from all other kinds of rule; and again in Book III, when he defines the citizen as ‘he who partakes in the fact of ruling and the fact of being ruled’. Everything about politics is contained in this specific relationship, this ‘partaking’ (*avoir-part*) that needs to be interrogated as to its meaning and conditions of possibility.<sup>349</sup>

Democracy began as a concept, Rancière states, that was to benefit those in power. With the word *demos* meaning “common people,” the concept of democracy was seen as the lesser group of people who were not and would not be privileged enough to make a difference in society. Complacency may be seen to evolve here.<sup>350</sup> The common people were never meant to know they had any power, nor were they meant to

be heard. Thus, the facade that is known as a democratic community has been a constructed illusion for quite some time.<sup>351</sup> To contrast this long-standing inequality, a loophole has occurred through, first, the dissensual act that is art, and second, the virtual world where anyone can be free and in power. It is clear when seen from this disruption of the common rose-tinted view of history that the virtual world offers a formidable challenge to authoritative rule, if accepted.

Rancière discusses the concept of the police state, and its chimerical form of control that is nothing more than a deviation from a false premise. Thus, the current system that is based on an outdated model still exists. Rancière comments on the illusion and set-up of the ideal city-state that Plato constructed. It was treated as the only mode of life. It is said that ancient cities have evolved and are, perhaps, more superlative to current cities today, though the very concept of democracy in politics is still a paradox.<sup>352</sup> Rancière addresses the countless methods as to how politics portray the assumption that there is an unequivocal strength on the other side.<sup>353</sup> He acknowledges the question—how can the paradoxical concept of democracy be understood?

He states:

To re-open the gap, Derrida contrasts a *democracy to come* to a democracy which has reached itself or reached its *self*. A democracy to come, as Derrida sees it, is not a democracy that will come in the future, but a democracy employed within a different time, a different temporal plot. The time of a ‘democracy to come’ is the time of a promise that has to be kept even though—and precisely because—it can never be fulfilled. It is a democracy that can never ‘reach itself’, catch up with

itself, because it involves an infinite openness to that which comes—which also means, an infinite openness to the Other or the newcomer.”<sup>354</sup>

We can see the contradictions Rancière discusses similarly to the notion of Debord’s spectacle in society and twists Baudrillard’s concept of simulation and simulacra. A distinctive bend with Rancière, however, is that he believes the mode of this false democracy and police-state can be transformed through the dissensus via art. These concepts can be connected together with the standpoint that the virtual experience as a new way of seeing can be viewed as a new form of art that has the ability to transcend common reality.

To connect these points via Rancière, we look towards Jean-Luc Nancy’s *Inoperative Community*. Nancy remarks that society is unknowingly longing for a “natural” connectedness between others, though the common contrived community are not the place for actual communal-ness.<sup>355</sup> Thus, these false constructs created for the people, such as democratic society and community, are predicated on completely erroneous information. The limitless worlds of the game within the virtual, then, offer immense probability as to how they will disclose what is achievable and what is indeed fictitious. It appears that people have always had an unconscious knowing that they are missing their freedom while they are constantly informed that they are free. The reminder that they are free coupled with the need for a police state does not allow room to wonder what might be truth. The primordial urges for real communal gather-

ing and a true creative life simmer inside of each person, knowingly or not. The possibilities to be informed now have potential to be given through the virtual.

While it might be commented that the virtual offers a false community behind a facade of something that is unattainable, it may also be seen that the virtual game offers all that one could hope for in order to discover authentic community and authentic self. Furthermore, while it may be said that the same choices can be found in life as in the game, this is the point that, perhaps, the virtual space will offer the chance to find truth through the awareness that freedom must exist somehow.

Thus, in order for freedom to occur, a dissensual state or way can be seen as essential. Rancière views the artist and philosopher as agents of change that indeed have the power to transform issues of non-freedom. Rancière states:

In this way, it is possible to define a certain dissensual practice of philosophy as an activity of de-classification that undermines all policing of domains and formulas. It does so not for the sole pleasure of deconstructing the master's discourse, but in order to think the lines according to which boundaries and passages are constructed, according to which they are conceivable and modifiable. This critical practice of philosophy is an inseparably egalitarian, or anarchistic, practice, since it considers arguments, narratives, testimonies, investigations and metaphors all as the equal inventions of a common capacity in a common language. Engaging in critique of the instituted divisions, then, paves the way for renewing our interrogations into what we are able to think and do.<sup>356</sup>

Nietzsche's thinking is similar when he discusses the free spirit in his text, *Beyond Good and Evil*.<sup>357</sup> Nietzsche sees the free thinker comparable to the dissensual citizen. Nietzsche also looks to the Buddha for the sense to become a free spirit and thinker.<sup>358</sup> Just as Rancière, then, Nietzsche believes that we have been taught a simplistic version of what life is and could be. Humans are not given knowledge of what power they hold. Nietzsche sees the free spirit as one who lives to seek this truth and independence. What Rancière sees as a dissensual free spirit, Nietzsche sees as an experimenter of life.

### **Speed of Realistic Representation in the Virtual**

To further contemplate the nature of visual aesthetics within the game, it is useful to consider the rapid development of visual representation in the virtual. Video games were first created in the 1960s, and the speed of realistic representation is remarkable. Aesthetic realism within virtual games is advancing so quickly, of course, due to fast-paced developments in technology. The expeditious pace in depicting highly accurate mimetic representations is worthy of critical introspection. In our time, the most contemporary virtual games appear to approximate something such as a living painting. The moving imagery in the game appears quite real and almost assumes a transcendent quality of being. This, of course, can be speculated in various ways. While Plato sees the artist as a liar, and imitative representations as the lowest form of earth, we can observe the promising qualities that have the ability to access

one's higher awarenesses.<sup>359</sup> I propose that we look to the rapid movement of aesthetic growth in the virtual as promising. While a frame of a video game could pass for a painting, it is a splice in time as moving image within the game. Ordinarily, within the viewing of a painting, the viewer examines the work and walks away. Here, however, the viewer controls the image and creates an experience within the artwork.<sup>360</sup> The world of the virtual has given contemporary culture the ability to form the future into any mode it chooses at this point. Aesthetic growth can be seen as occurring quickly, particularly if viewing the timing of the progression of various forms of art and the quick pace that video games are moving forward. Fast-forwarding to contemporary painting today, the attainment of hyper-realism is a common artistic ambition. While much of art still pushes boundaries in expressionism, abstraction, and conceptual thought—hyper-realism is typically seen as a high crux of attainment. This exertion for the real shows itself in the virtual now, however, as the transformation from crude to hyper-real imagery has occurred over a span of thirty to forty years, compared to over 17,000 years, it can be seen that the rapid evolution of aesthetic realism has multiplied thousand times over in chronological time.

### **Originality and Genius**

The concept of genius can be discussed in order to understand the benefits of the virtual game. While the idea of genius can be thought through language itself, we begin to rid the bourgeois subject with Nietzsche, as he declares that we need to take

up the notion of Kantian genius and reconstitute ourselves. Thus, while it may be said that the artist is considered to be genius, it can further be said that every individual is genius. Particulars within the virtual game further encompass the notion of genius and originality within the game space. Playing within a virtual experience has the ability to remove the player from a world of ineptitude. Perhaps, the apparatus or Foucauldian dispositif can change one's life in an optimal way. Of course, digital devices are transforming every day life for consumers in contemporary society. Household appliances are created with digital interfaces, cars are created with premium GPS screens and computers, the mobile phone can be seen as a mobile computer. How might virtual *play* be thought of differently? A major premise to the specialness of the play in the virtual is that it has the potential to create more genius in society. While these other applications create greater interactivity and new ways of thinking about objects and the space around us, the game in the virtual is the only application that has the capacity to enhance a mind and spirit in a quantifiable way.

While the digital interface on the electric toaster has the ability to save the consumer's time, create less mess, and transform a mundane task into an event, the virtual game has the ability to change a person's self-awareness and teach the person to have an improved self-image and perception of the world she physically inhabits. While society is becoming networked via the internet, the aspects of the virtual game should be seen as a specific powerful tool that can fruitfully be used to implement positive change in the authentic self.

Hence, we see that the virtual world can create the genius. People look to the virtual as if it offers too much assistance, however, we can see this as cooperation for the future. People have achieved an astonishing amount of skill and, through virtual technologies, this benefit can be seen to propel the evolution of society. While playing and learning can be seen as a united concept due to the complexity with which play allows the player to discover herself, current ideological systems and institutions may be looked upon as to what does or does not create genius. For, it is known, intuitively or not, that creative play indeed creates genius, thus, it almost seems to be no question that play should continue into adulthood. In the virtual game, the adult player becomes a new version of herself. If play is beneficial, then, taking play to the next level may be seen as an evident measure.

It may be seen that it is important to change one's thinking or access thinking from another place to model in order to solve problem in life. If a person needs to change her self-image, she may need to pull ideas from elsewhere. By thinking the same way and not playing with spontaneity, little will change. Similar views are addressed within the scientific article, "Why No New Einstein?" In his article, quantum physicist, Lee Smolin discusses that the common way that most people live their life today is the narrow path toward security. We find here that most burgeoning independent thinkers are formed to follow societal codes that assure their future in an em-



ployment position that is purportedly secure. Rarely are those who think more creatively given full rein of experimental experiences. Smolin remarks:

Many of Einstein's contemporaries testified that he was not unusually talented mathematically. Instead, what enabled him to make such tremendous advances was a driving need to understand the logic of nature, tied to a breathtaking creativity and a fierce intellectual independence. One can cite many examples showing that big advances in physics come when unusually creative and intellectually independent individuals ask new questions and forge new directions.<sup>361</sup>

Here we see an important aspect to grasp with reference to the potential of using the creative mind without concern for security. Within structured inequality, the need for security is so prevalent, that creative and independent thinking is consistently extinguished in society, the workforce, and tradition. If we understand that Einstein used his creative and independent thinking abilities, it might be understood that these are what strengthen the genius mind, and can be further established within gameplay. Kant defines genius as the following, "Genius is the inborn predisposition of the mind (*ingenium*) through which nature gives the rule to art."<sup>362</sup> Thus, it is beheld that genius is a natural force and can be deepened further when a person has deep desire to understand more.

With respect to the concept of discovering genius within creative thinking, the topic of education can be addressed. In his text, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Rancière discusses the teacher Joseph Jacotot, who comes upon the duty to teach a subject in which he has no knowledge. If we look at the system of education and reverse our

tracks back to Plato, we might notice that creativity, perceptual awareness, self-empowerment, nor a positive mindset have not been given high precedence in most systems of knowledge. While the premise that reading and mathematics are crucial to one's development is understood, we might, perhaps, look to creative thinking as an educational tool to enhance independent thinking further. If all people are given equal access to creative and independent thought, perhaps, more instances of genius would be found. Rancière states:

Public instruction is the secular arm of progress, the way to equalize inequality progressively, that is to say, to unequalize equality indefinitely. Everything is still played out according to a sole principle, the inequality of intelligence.<sup>363</sup>

While there are various methods to educating using the creative mind that are not as conventional, the majority of common education can be seen to keep the general public in a state of constant injustice.<sup>364</sup> It can be seen within virtual play that creative modes are necessary to re-initiate genius.

## Chapter Seven

### **Ethical Implications**

Computer games have pioneered virtual reality, and within ten years—but probably more like five—these will be totally convincing, full-immersion virtual realities, at least for the visual and auditory senses, and there will be some simulation of the tactile sense. To fully master the tactile sense we have to actually tap into the nervous system. That will be a scenario within 20 years. We'll be able to send little devices, nanobots, into the brain and capillaries, and they'll provide additional sensory signals, as if they were coming from your real senses. You could for example get together with a friend, even though you were hundreds of thousands of miles apart, and take a virtual walk on a virtual Mediterranean beach and hold their hand and feel the warm spray of the moist air in your face.

—Ray Kurzweil,  
*How the World Will Change*

### **Effects of the Virtual**

Philosophical thinking has become more attainable for individuals today due to ease of access to information via the virtual. Because of the attainable access to interpretations of truth, more people are in search and discovering it. Plato's cave has never been more poignant than a time like this. It has been discussed throughout the dissertation that people have the ability to leave the cave and witness truth. Many people, however, fear leaving the cave. They are additionally apprehensive to go back and reveal to the cave-dwellers for concern that the others will not believe. The world of the virtual offers the ability to perceive and absorb—truth, authenticity, and free-

dom. With the ability to access forms of truth, more people have larger capabilities to expand their imagination.

Thus, the world of the virtual can be seen as a space that is just as important as the real. Both worlds are inhabited by humans—through mind, spirit, and essence. The virtual allows one to experience and meditate upon micro and macro relationships to the self and the world. An article by contemporary writer, Annie Murphy Paul in the New York Times points out, “There is evidence that just as the brain responds to depictions of smells and textures and movements as if they were the real thing, so it treats the interactions among fictional characters as something like real-life social encounters.” Further, she discusses recent psychological studies, “Individuals who frequently read fiction seem to be better able to understand other people, empathize with them, and see the world from their perspective.”<sup>365</sup> Here, we might understand better the grand responsive effects through fiction and imagine the effects magnified due to the intensity of the virtual.

### **Fragments of Death**

On one’s own, the creative mind is able to visualize other worlds, instances, and essences of being. With assistance through the virtual, the creative mind can interact with the origins of thought and further visualize all. Creative mind through imagination easily invents and forms any thought that is conceived—and the virtual is an aid in discovering truths. By visualizing and understanding time and essence, the

individual can access more effortlessly concepts in reference to the soul, mortality, and death. In *The Republic*, the main concern of Socrates was the care-taking of one's immortal soul. He illustrates this concept through the story of Er. Interestingly, Socrates (Plato) believes that poets focus on the impure elements of the soul in order to retain their readers, and thus, poets corrupt all souls.<sup>366</sup> This spirit of caution can be likened to what many people are skeptical about within virtual play.

Within this context, it is understood that people use the immersion of video games as an aid to explain reason behind repulsive acts. Fingers can be pointed in any number of areas to blame or understand why people become enraged, addicted, or violent, as accountability and personal responsibility have largely been removed from the locus of the individual. Ironically, Plato states that the artist leads people away from the ideal search for truth, and the only poetry that should be allowed in the State are "hymns to the gods and praises of famous men."<sup>367</sup> It may be seen that this way of thinking contributes to a conformed effect of society rather than an empowered and independent model of thinking. In Plato's view, the arts inhibit the ability to truly appreciate nature by filtering and altering human perceptions. The fear of distorting truth is a valid point, though art as a distortion that should be banned is a misguided approach. Art, poetry, and games in the virtual can be found as further awakenings on a view of a subject. Thus, while it can be said that art does have the capacity to distort reality, the fear-based mentality of the loss of self and state would not be conducive to

a flourishing culture that has the ability to possess immense heights of perception and imagination.

Further addressing the issues of the virtual and technology in more of a nihilistic sense, media theorist Friedrich Kittler is looked upon. In his text, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Kittler comments that life is becoming a purely digital experience. He says, “Media determine our existence.”<sup>368</sup> He does not believe in art, being, sacredness, or the human. For Kittler, subjectivity does not exist and the human is most certainly de-centered. Kittler believes that technology has effectually replaced the subject. For Kittler, there is not even a point in discussing freedom, as there is no subject to free. He sees the powers of the patriarchy are and have been using humans as testing specimens. Kittler sees that humans will no longer know death or fear—as they will become infinite through technology. The human is not the center of the universe—the human is way past the point, Kittler believes.<sup>369</sup> Interestingly, there is truth to be found in Kittler’s theories. While it may be biting to think that technology looms over humanity as an overpowering formation, it can also be seen that technology does have the ability to transcend more fragile states of being.

### **The Virtual is Real**

The power that people can create what they perceive is such a dynamic concept though it is rarely informed. Thus, most individuals are taught to be resourceful with a deficient mentality, rather than with a creative-based understanding. It is clear,

when understood, that people can be just as resourceful with a prosperous consciousness. In his *The Psychology of Imagination*, Jean-Paul Sartre asserts:

The consciousness appears to itself as being creative, but without positing that what it has created is an object. It is due to this vague and fugitive quality that the image-consciousness is not at all like a piece of wood floating on the sea, but like a wave among waves. It feels itself to be a consciousness through and through and one with the other consciousnesses which have preceded it and with which it is synthetically united.<sup>370</sup>

When society understands “the role of the image in mental life” has the ability to control one’s consciousness, the interconnectedness between image and intention will be seen.<sup>371</sup> When it becomes known that the virtual is just as integral as the real, the question whether the virtual will control people becomes irrelevant. Viewing the virtual in terms of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl speaks of perception, consciousness, and the presence of temporal-spatial objects:

If we produce in free phantasy spatial formations, melodies, social practices, and the like, or if we fantasy acts of experiencing of liking or disliking, of willing, etc., then on that basis by “ideation” we can see various pure essences originally and perhaps even adequately: either the essence of any spatial shape whatever, any melody whatever, any social practice whatever, etc., or the essence of a shape, a melody, etc., of the particular type exemplified. In this connection, it does not matter whether anything of the sort has ever been given in actual experience or not.<sup>372</sup>

Thus, as mentioned previously, the mind feeds off of experiences and fantasies. If humans connect to story, interaction, and image, it is clear that occasions in the virtu-

al can strengthen awareness of various realities. Considering the connections between the virtual and the engagement in reading books, contemporary writer Anne Lamott responds:

Writing and reading decrease our sense of isolation. They deepen and widen and expand our sense of life: they feed the soul. When writers make us shake our heads with the exactness of their prose and their truths, and even make us laugh about ourselves or life, our buoyancy is restored. We are given a shot at dancing with, or at least clapping along with, the absurdity of life, instead of being squashed by it over and over again. It's like singing on a boat during a terrible storm at sea. You can't stop the raging storm, but singing can change the hearts and spirits of the people who are together on that ship.<sup>373</sup>

Regarding virtual games and reading fiction simultaneously, the affirmative aspects for the player and reader can be seen. It is a tool that can accelerate humanity to understand life and the world. Just as through the book, the player can learn and understand concepts of reincarnation, infiniteness, eternalness, and renewal. In the video game, the player has the ability to understand structures and consciousness, and how one's thoughts constructs one's life.

### **Need for More**

Turning to past artists who look to artistic expression to help them understand life and purpose more clearly, both Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin confessed to loved ones that they were lonely and longed for artistic community.<sup>374</sup> Their art prac-



tice gave them some sense of purpose that they desired though they still anguished for connection to a group. Paul Gauguin's search for meaning can be echoed in humanity today, whether aware or not. In Gauguin's paintings, he seeks truth. In his paintings, he asks, "Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?"<sup>375</sup> In his text, *Noa Noa*, he states, "All the joys—animal and human—of a free life are mine. I have escaped everything that is artificial, conventional, customary. I am entering into the truth, into nature."<sup>376</sup> This quote can be looked upon as the seeming paradox between his experience entering his life in Tahiti and living in truth and nature while painting. To correlate this to the video game, the player too retreats from the "artificial, conventional, and customary" of contemporary society into a virtual living and breathing space where the player can have time to enter into her interpretation of truth.

It may further be pointed out that there is a need for outlet via Marxian theory, as it can be seen that humans have a need for communal harmony. To rid oneself of alienating aspects of common day-to-day work life, the person seeks to become self-actualized and find a new way toward a natural state of communal essence. There is also a need for purpose and belonging. The worker further feels compelled to work toward something that is larger than her self. Even if she works in alienated circumstances and does not partake in creative endeavors during the workday, she is free to engage in the communal aspect of the gaming world in which she not only feels that she belongs, but also feels that she is contributing to something larger. If the player

continues to save needy characters, defeat villains, recreate villages, or turn into a super-hero, she will feel a sense of purpose whether these acts occurred in physical or virtual reality. When involved in playing a virtual game, it is rare for the player to believe the fantasy is truly occurring. The player does, however, have her needs met in that she feels quite accomplished in saving and protecting. Whether it is virtual or not, the satisfaction remains. This is just as simple as the release the writer feels when crafting stories, lands, dialogue, and heroes. The writer knows this space is virtual yet she gains immense joy from the creative process. Further, people have had psychological issues for thousands of years. Violent or troubled youth is not a new concept.

### **Narcissism**

Considering the struggle for identity in reality, we can further review artists who are continually painting portraits and self-portraits. This can be seen as narcissism for sure, though the subject of narcissism runs quite deeper in Lacanian and Freudian terms. The one who believes herself to be at the center of the universe can be seen as narcissistic. Further, we can combine the Greek myth of Narcissus together with immersion in the virtual. In the classical myth, Narcissus drank water by a lake and was enamored by his beautiful reflection in the water. He died because he could not physically access his beauty in his reflection. To turn the myth of Narcissus over to today, along with Lacan's narcissistic-based theory of the mirror stage, we see now in the virtual that the player can see her reflection and change, alter, and metamor-

phose her appearance throughout the game. In turn, she can realize this capability outside of the game. Here, this concept alone can be seen as a saving grace for the virtual. The player becomes the center of her universe and sees that she has the ability to attain the appearance and shift it however she pleases. Interestingly, Lacan speaks about narcissism, Freud, and his reasoning behind the mirror stage theory:

It all happens so differently in man's world, whose structuration is seemingly highly neutralised, exceptionally loose in relation to his needs. Well, then, the Freudian notion of narcissism gives us a category which enables us to understand to what extent there is nonetheless a relation between the structuration of the animal world and that of the human world. What did I try to get across with the mirror stage? That whatever in man is loosened up, fragmented, anarchic, establishes its relation to his perceptions on a plane with a completely original tension. The image of his body is the principle of every unity he perceives in objects. Now, he only perceives the unity of this specific image from the outside, and in an anticipated manner. Because of this double relation which he has with himself, all the objects of his world are always structured around the wandering shadow of his own ego. They will all have a fundamentally anthropomorphic character, even egomorphic we could say. Man's ideal unity, which is never attained as such and escapes him at every moment, is evoked at every moment in this perception. The object is never for him definitively the final object, except in exceptional experiences.<sup>377</sup>

Within the concept of narcissism, the individual is at the center, and all seems to revolve around the person in her mind. The notion of personality disorders can be examined as well, in reference to narcissism and the virtual game. For, if a person is confronted with many personas to utilize, some may not have the necessary cognition

to understand that choosing a persona is about self-empowerment. In psychological interventions, therapists will work with people who have personality disorders by utilizing Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and Cognitive Therapy (CT). Importantly, within these therapies, the psychologists address any detrimental core beliefs about the inner self, outer self, and ideas about the world. Cognitive therapists, then, work on the core awarenesses and comprehensions of their patients.<sup>378</sup> My claim, however, is that these dysfunctions and disorders are so prevalent that it is bound to occur that personality disorders do and will exist. However, the issue is not about making them worse through the virtual game, but assisting the player in learning about her core truths that have always been with her. Just as Rancière states in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, people are all born with equal freedom. All individuals do not necessarily need a teacher or therapist to teach them core beliefs necessarily.<sup>379</sup> What is needed is to come back into contact with the individual core beliefs to deconstruct and replace with healthier concepts of reality. Dialectical Behavior Therapy and Cognitive Therapy might be obtained through play in the virtual.

A counter-argument to my stated argument could be that the misunderstanding of self is situated within concepts of self-directed desire, self-absorption, and conceit. My contention is that it has become necessary for individuals to come into this place of being for higher self-awareness. It is imperative for people to become absorbed in the self and learn to self-direct to a point that is empowering. Of course, any tipping point above the need will be too much. Over-indulgence of anything will not be con-

ducive to success. Thus, maintenance of self-belief is not a negative concept. However, living in victimization and absence will never lead to a higher self-awareness. The best place to begin, then, is to recognize where we are today and move forward to where we can go. Through learning confidence and self-awareness, self-worth and self-value are taught. Mainly want and oppression are subtly taught and outright displayed. It is not made straightforward enough for a person to discover their self-worth on their own—to an extremely high and independent degree. Thus, the virtual game becomes a stepping stone to create that self-awareness that is not commonplace in contemporary society.

### **Catharsis and the Virtual**

To illustrate further the fine arts regarding similarities and the virtual, the still-life genre, *vanitas*, can be thought upon. These paintings place symbols of known physical destiny which allows the player to contemplate eventual physical mortality. This concept coupled with the notion of catharsis makes sense when discussed regarding violent games. While the common attitude is that virtual games portray violence and death, it might be a contrasting notion to look at the video games in terms of the *vanitas* concept. Thus, by way of the *vanitas*, the symbols of death might evoke an understanding that is necessary for the individual.

Aristotle proposes that people seek to imitate and represent various objects. This may occur through conscious creating or while unaware. A pertinent question is whether the nature of a story has a corrupting or cathartic influence on its audience. It can be said that virtual games will provide catharsis to players, as catharsis is defined as a purification or purging of emotions. As it has been discussed, the virtual game has the ability to act as a vessel for the player to become purified and grow into more. Aristotle believes that humans are instinctually led to rhythm and imitation, as the rhythm makes the tragedy more pleasurable. Thus, tragedy is seen as imitation and is the most sophisticated development of poetry, says Aristotle. Here, action is connected with purification, and is known as catharsis.<sup>380</sup> Aristotle sees emotions as necessary and mature.

Aristotle's beliefs are completely opposed to Plato's belief that emotions should be suppressed—as Plato sees that artistic expression gives the chance for a person to become out of control.<sup>381</sup> Thus, as it has been discussed, Plato sought to banish art and emotion from the state due to its potential lawless behavior that can be left behind, while Aristotle sought to promote art, specifically drama. Primarily, Aristotle looks upon high dramatic arts because of the cathartic benefits to the viewer. The virtual game can be seen similarly to the Platonic view that the game will take hold of the player and cause her to become uncontrollable in her physical life. However, my claim is on the side of Aristotle's held thesis that catharsis heals the overload of emotions. Aristotle maintains that the act of catharsis will leave emotions more balanced,

due to the effect of tragedy removing any excess loss of force.<sup>382</sup> Thus, the argument that playing the virtual game too often will lead to corrupt behavior can be seen as groundless when using the theory of Aristotle.

### **Addicted to the Virtual**

Contemporary French theorist, Paul Virilio, claims against technology concentrate upon the impending loss of physicality with others. It may be looked upon that varying age groups are addicted to virtual games, but it cannot be said what will make them behave a violent way. There are people who enjoy playing video games and watching action movies because they are entertaining media. However, those who do not understand reality from fantasy, may not have been taught the difference. Anyone who over-uses or abuses anything can be seen as addicted. The underlying reasons as to why the addiction has occurred, however, do not largely stem from the virtual game itself. The stimulating effects are quite clearly taking the place of a human need that is not being nourished. It is a delicate line to determine how a virtual game can affect an individual who has no prior receptivity to violence or an unstable mindset. Thus, just as it can be said that an individual can, in effect, become addicted to anything, it can also be held that a human can become addicted to playing video games. Quite clearly, the virtual offers outlets for humanity that have wonderful benefits. The cause of addiction, though, primarily stems from far larger issues.

It is often said that video games are being structured and created to be persuasive, manipulative, and specifically allow for higher rates of addiction in order for the player to keep buying. However, there is great hope for the potential of the virtual to enable people to become empowered through the virtual. While manipulation may be a factor in mainstream video games, awareness of the fact will be important. While Virilio critiques the state of the nation and sees much doom ahead, he also discusses the brooding theme of fear that prevails over the world. He states that this sense of terror is, “a purely media phenomenon.”<sup>383</sup> Virilio discusses the mute sense of mass panic that is spread without calling attention to it, akin to what Rancière calls the “politics of protection.”<sup>384</sup> Thus, the general public becomes powerless by believing they are insecure and need to be protected. Virilio explains that we have “reached a high degree of “soft” stupor, we simply contented ourselves with ticking off the events, with enumerating the unfortunate victims of our scientific reverses, our technical and industrial mistakes.”<sup>385</sup> Virilio considers how we have lost traces of our senses and inner wisdom through each passageway of technological or mass-reproductive invention.<sup>386</sup> I claim that we have also lost these traces through non-creative modes of living.

### **Forgetting**

The concept of forgetting arises with Virilio, Arendt, Derrida, and Nietzsche. Arendt says that those who do choose to conduct evil or “immoral” deeds during their life will force themselves to forget what they did. Virilio mentions that people who go



through traumatic experiences will fall into “a forgetting, or a paramnesia.”<sup>387</sup> Incidentally, in Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*, translator Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak comments upon the concept of essential forgetfulness in reference to the philosopher:

This continual risk-taking is the affirmative play in Nietzsche that Derrida will often comment on. “I do not know any other way,” Nietzsche writes, “of associating with great tasks than play.” “Wisdom: that seems to the rabble to be a kind of flight, an artifice and means for getting oneself out of a dangerous game; but the genuine philosopher—as he seems to us, my friends?—lives ‘unphilosophically’ and ‘unwisely,’ above all imprudently, ... he risks himself constantly, he plays the dangerous game.” This imprudence, constantly attempting to bypass the prudence of stabilizing through “interpretation,” is amor fati, the love of what Derrida calls “the game of chance with necessity, of contingency with law.” This is the dance of the Over-man, a dance Nietzsche describes in terms of himself with a certain poignancy: “How wonderful and new and yet how gruesome and ironic I find my position vis-a-vis the whole of existence in the light of my insight!... I suddenly woke up in the midst of this dream, but only to the consciousness that I am dreaming and that I must go on dreaming lest I perish—Among all these dreamers, I, too, who ‘know,’ am dancing my dance.” The “knowledge” of the philosopher places him among the dreamers, for knowledge is a dream. But the philosopher “knowingly” agrees to dream, to dream of knowledge, agrees to “forget” the lesson of philosophy, only so as to “prove” that lesson. ...It is a vertiginous movement that can go on indefinitely or, to use Nietzschean language, return eternally. This precarious “forgetfulness,” “active forgetfulness,” is what Derrida emphasizes in Nietzsche’s Over-man.<sup>388</sup>

Thus, we see that this flow of knowing, forgetting, and eternal return is a necessity in order to grow, and to transcend toward what Derrida calls, “The truth of Being.”<sup>389</sup>

This forgetfulness, Spivak comments, is both a protective limitation and a way to remain out of a trap of certain knowledge:

Like everything else in Nietzsche, this forgetfulness is at least double-edged. Even in his early writings “forgetfulness” makes its appearance in two opposed forms: as a limitation that protects the human being from the blinding light of an absolute historical memory (that will, among other things, reveal that “truths” spring from “interpretations”), as well as an attribute boldly chosen by the philosopher in order to avoid falling into the trap of “historical knowledge.”<sup>390</sup>

The states, then, of knowing, remembering, and forgetting become renewed paths to finding truth. Of further interest, we look directly to Nietzsche and his correlation to the need for alone-ness to allow a better understanding of the individual self. The following passage from *On the Genealogy of Morality* encapsulates this conscious notion of forgetting and slipping into quiet in order to re-discover the inner self quite nicely:

To shut the doors and windows of consciousness for a while; not to be bothered by the noise and battle with which our underworld of serviceable organs work with and against each other; a little peace, a little *tabula rasa* of consciousness to make room for something new, above all for the nobler functions and functionaries, for ruling, predicting, predetermining (our organism runs along oligarchic lines, you see)—that, as of mental order, rest and etiquette: from which we can immediately see how there could be no happiness, cheerfulness, hope, pride, *immediacy*, without forgetfulness. The person in whom this apparatus of suppression is damaged, so that it stops working, can be compared (and not just compared—) to a dyspeptic; he cannot ‘cope’ with anything... And precisely this necessarily forgetful animal, in whom forgetting is a strength, representing a form of

*robust* health, has bred for himself a counter-device, memory, with the help of which forgetfulness can be suspended in certain cases...<sup>391</sup>

Thus, it is seen that Nietzsche calls for a conscious forgetting that can be utilized at will, though always is coupled when needed with memory. This deliberate act of forgetting can be further linked to Freud's theories of repression in that people repress their true desires when in civilization. Can, then, the use of the virtual game offer a person the chance to unleash and re-open her ultimate desires in a space that requires no former neuroses to be covered? It is at this point where one can consider the need to understand these concepts in order to create new channels for human evolution.

### **The Will**

Furthermore, Nietzsche ponders over the will to power prevalently throughout his writings. Nietzsche's disdain for the past and his time period was predicated upon the belief that people no longer used their own will to power—they lost ambition. The people believed what they were told. He sees immense promise if only the people would awaken and claim their individual truth. Nietzsche sees that if the person would become aware and claim her inherent will to power, perhaps she would become a larger being through her self-creation.<sup>392</sup>

In order to have that degree of control over the future, man must first have learnt to distinguish between what happens by accident and what by design, to think causally, to view the future as the present and anticipate it, to grasp with certainty what is end and what is

means, in all, to be able to calculate, compute—and before he can do this, man himself will really have to become *reliable, regular, necessary*, even in his own self-image, so that he, as someone making a promise is, is answerable for his own *future!*<sup>393</sup>

Nietzsche's view of the time he was in—and it can be assumed all the more so now—was seen as a ground of fertile change for the people to create their lives how they wish. Nietzsche foretold a time such as now. Once humanity sees that they hold their own power, a shift may occur.<sup>394</sup> It is important to understand as well that Nietzsche sees humans as artists of their life in a metaphorical sense. He does not say that all people are visual artists or creative writers or dancers. His conjecture runs deeper than the obvious—rather, he believes people can be artists of their personal life—creators of their identity. In his text, *Nietzsche As Philosopher*, Arthur Danto remarks on this enigmatic inference:

“Art,” then, has both a wide and a narrow use in Nietzsche's writings, and the wide use takes its meaning from the narrow one. Because we know what artists in the narrow sense distinctively do, we are able to see how we, in other activities, are artists as well. Nietzsche thus means to claim that our original and most fundamental involvement with experience is artistic and transforming, that we spontaneously seek to express, in images and apposite cadences, the way in which we feel and perceive the world. He speaks of a “primal faculty of human fantasy” through which the human individual functions essentially as “an artistically creating subject.”<sup>395</sup>

### **Living-with-myself**

In her text, *Responsibility and Judgment*, Hannah Arendt discusses the notions of moral conduct and the self.<sup>396</sup> Arendt responds to the idea of the human conscience, which can be connected to the conversation within the virtual game—and ideas between violent and transcendent behaviors. Arendt discusses the concepts of “living-with-myself” and humans as “two-in-one” in their thoughts.<sup>397</sup> Arendt states:

Thinking in its non-cognitive, non-specialized sense as a natural need of human life, the actualization of the difference given in consciousness, is not a prerogative of the few but an ever-present faculty in everybody; by the same token, inability to think is not a failing of the many who lack brain power but an ever-present possibility for everybody—scientists, scholars and other specialists in mental enterprises not excluded. Everybody may come to shun that intercourse with oneself whose feasibility and importance first discovered. Thinking accompanies life and is itself the de-materialized quintessence of being alive; and since life is a process, its quintessence can only lie in the actual thinking process and not in any solid results or specific thoughts. A life without thinking is quite possible; it then fails to develop its own essence—its is not merely meaningless; it is not fully alive. Unthinking men are like sleepwalkers. For the thinking ego and its experience, conscience that “fills a man full of obstacles” is a side effect. No matter what thought-trains the thinking ego thinks through, the self that we all are must take care not to do anything that would make it impossible for the two-in-one to be friends and live in harmony.<sup>398</sup>

What she states through Kant, Plato (Socrates), and Aristotle is that each person lives with their self and speaks with their self. This two-in-one can, of course, be seen as the conscious and subconscious. Thus, the conscious and subconscious can be looked

upon when addressing the relationship one has to her self when playing the virtual game. While the person is playing the game, the other self is always there.

Arendt says that one will fear losing her self in that she will no longer be able to talk with herself since she is always in the company of herself. Thus, she says, the way we behave with others has to do with the way we behave with our self.<sup>399</sup> Further, in her *The Life of the Mind*, she discusses the conversations that occur between the self and the other self in the mind, which can be seen as conscience. These ideas, again, offer much to the concepts of the conscious mind and subconscious mind. The thoughts and directions an individual creates in her life ultimately have to do with whether the individual wants to stay friends with the other self in her mind.<sup>400</sup> Thus, it can be considered that most players will not commit violent crimes due to the suggestions of video games, as people unconsciously know they have to live with their other self. They only have their self to talk to in their minds, and might understand that they need to be their best friends and ally internally (in the mind).

It may be said with assurance that actual violence and peer pressure will create more violent criminals than a video game. I argue that life circumstances and the absence of integral mindful education will create more harm than any influence from the virtual. Thus, physical life experiences will dictate one's life deeper than violent video games. I claim, then, that violence in the virtual is more of an effect than a

cause. It is difficult to make the video game a cause for violence, rather than a cathartic release to remove violence from previous scars.

### **Death Drive**

Violence can be examined in the virtual game as a method to release possible pent-up aggression. It is essential, too, to discuss the topic of the death drive with reference to virtual games. The term “death drive” is also known as *thanatos*. The death drive is the drive in humans that propels them toward chaos and self-destruction. Freud discusses the death drive, as well as the polar counterpart, life drive or pleasure principle, which is also known as *eros* or the instinct for survival and procreation. The death drive motivator in the virtual game, however, is akin to the qualities of catharsis as Freud sees the death drive as a libidinal form of expressing aggression.<sup>401</sup> Freud states:

If we are to take it as a truth that knows no exception that everything living dies for internal reasons—becomes inorganic once again—then we shall be compelled to say that ‘the aim of all life is death’ and, looking backwards, that ‘inanimate things existed before living ones.’<sup>402</sup>

Thus, Freud states that humans have an underlying desire to return to the original state. Freud says that we desire to become inanimate and will invent ways to end living. Freud looks to both *eros* and *thanatos* as paradoxes in life, that move in and out

of one another in an individual. Similarities can be found within the paradoxical energies of Apollo and Dionysos. Freud asserts:

On the basis of theoretical considerations, supported by biology, we put forward the hypothesis of a death instinct, the task of which is to lead organic life back into the inanimate state; on the other hand, we supposed that Eros, by bringing about a more and more far-reaching combination of the particles into which living substance is dispersed, aims at complicating life and at the same time, of course, at preserving it.<sup>403</sup>

Here, Freud sees these dual forces at work within the individual—and these forces can be seen as well in the individual today. If Freud's theories are assumed, it may be seen that the player may have these tendencies toward self-destruction, and perhaps, a beneficial mode to outliving the death drive is to simulate the death experience. Thus, an interesting hypothesis is that the virtual offers the fulfillment of the death drive if unconsciously desired—thus, extending physical life.

Lacan, too, speaks of the death drive and catharsis in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XIV: The Logic of Phantasy*. Lacan states that catharsis is purifying as it relates to a form of discharge that enables the individual to return to a renewed state of normalcy. Further, he says that the aim of tragedy is catharsis—the expelling of fear and pity.<sup>404</sup> Within these concepts of the death drive and a purging catharsis, it might seem relevant that the virtual game offers these forms of atonement to the player who desires the chance to be renewed.



Furthermore, with reference to death and the individual, Heidegger does not view death in terms of morbidity. Rather, he sees the inevitability of death as what might make the individual live a more authentic life, as she is always aware of her impending death. Heidegger sees the understanding of death as a possibility or as a “not yet.” The experience of being and becoming authentic has come to the understanding that death is possible, and the inauthentic always holds fear as if the death is occurring.<sup>405</sup> As such, it makes sense that living as an authentic presence will cause a higher sense of self to be reflected. The experience, then, of playing violent virtual games, may be time spent that is necessary to understand what is hidden to the psyche, though after playing repetitively it does come time to realize that a cathartic experience is beneficial. Interestingly, the conflict between acceptance of life and death can be seen to bring about destruction and chaos, though also can be redeemed by the ability to bring meaning and a more connected focus to human endeavors. Contemporary philosopher and author Simon Critchley states in reference to Heidegger’s concept of being-towards-death:

Being is time and time is finite. For human beings, time comes to an end with our death. Therefore, if we want to understand what it means to be an authentic human being, then it is essential that we constantly project our lives onto the horizon of our death. This is what Heidegger famously calls “being-towards-death.” If our being is finite, then an authentic human life can only be found by confronting finitude and trying to make a meaning out of the fact of our death. Heidegger subscribes to the ancient maxim that, “To philosophise is to learn how to die.” Mortality is that in relation to which we shape and fashion our selfhood.<sup>406</sup>

Thus, interestingly enough, Heidegger speaks about the necessary states of anxiety and the confrontation with the nothing. With both anxiety and the nothing, humans discover their self. Heidegger states:

The receding of beings as a whole that closes in on us in anxiety oppresses us. We can get no hold on things. In the slipping away of beings only this “no hold on things” comes over us and remains. We “hover” in anxiety. More precisely, anxiety leaves us hanging because it induces the slipping away of beings as a whole. This implies that we ourselves—we humans who are in being—in the midst of beings slip away from ourselves. At bottom therefore it is not as though “you” or “I” feel at ease; rather, it is this way for some “one.” In the altogether unsettling experience of this hovering where there is nothing to hold onto, pure Da-sein is all that is still there.<sup>407</sup>

As seen here, Heidegger maintains that anxiety and the nothing are essential for the authentic self. Anxiety is a form of awareness. It is a moment of awakening. Heidegger says, “Original anxiety can awaken in existence at any moment. It needs no unusual event to rouse it.”<sup>408</sup> Thus, anxiety is the state of confronting the nothing. While Heidegger also claims that it is humorous that both mind and science do not even take much note of the nothing, it can be seen that the virtual is an embodiment of the nothing—as it is always slipping away. It is not an object to be held. It is continually disappearing. Heidegger aptly states, “The question of the nothing puts us, the questioners, in question. It is a metaphysical question. Human existence can relate to beings only if it holds itself out into the nothing.”<sup>409</sup>

## Unnecessary Bodies

Twentieth century French philosopher, Jean-François Lyotard, discusses the concepts of the active memory and technolosos. He identifies the technological age as what helps to actively select on a more decisive plane. Lyotard observes the use of technology to be a benefit, similar to language, as it works as a type of scanning. He further distinguishes the scanning aspect as a “conquest of the unknown.”<sup>410</sup> Lyotard states, “God, nature, destiny too are “scanned”.”<sup>411</sup> He says:

It is clear that with techno-science in its current state, it is a power to ‘put in series’ that is at work on planet Earth, and that the human race is its vehicle much more than its beneficiary. The human race even has to ‘de-humanize’ itself, in the sense that it is still a bio-cultural species, so as to rise to the new complexity, so as to become tele-graphic. The ethical problems raised by techno-science are there to prove that the question has already been raised.<sup>412</sup>

Furthermore, Lyotard tells us that French poet Guillaume Apollinaire wrote, “More than anything, artists are men who want to become inhuman.”<sup>413</sup> This statement can easily liken the player in the virtual to the artist in the studio. Both understand the power of creating and both tap into the notion of the self beyond common terms.

Many philosophers look to free past concepts of identity and outdated senses of what it is to be a human. Deleuze and Guattari examine inside out the concept of the body without organs. They say that the body without organs or what they abbreviate as BwO is “what remains when you take everything away.”<sup>414</sup> There is no way to

attain the body without organs, Deleuze and Guattari explain, though people are always in search of the elusive and transcendent subject. They see that people should not relate with their bodies as much—as they are just bodies. People can indeed live without organs and many body parts. They ask, how far can one go, then, with a disorganized body if the body is just the body. What is the limit? Deleuze and Guattari comment further:

We are continually stratified. But who is this we that is not me, for the subject no less than the organism belongs to and depends on a stratum? Now we have the answer: the BwO is that glacial reality where the alluvions, sedimentations, coagulations, foldings, and recoilings that compose an organism.<sup>415</sup>

Thus, these thoughts raise important questions about the body, the need for the body, and the limits of the loss or addition of body parts in order to become an actual identity. Thinking of the body without organs within the concepts of the virtual, we can again turn to the concept of the artist or poet who is able to disconnect from the concept of the physically grounded self and play with many forms of possible self—without feeling severe attachment to the concept. Nietzsche states:

Yet this ‘I’-ness is not the same as that of the waking, empirically real human being, but rather the only ‘I’-ness which truly exists at all, eternal and resting in the ground of things, and through the images which are copies of that ‘I’ the lyric genius can see down to that very ground of all things.<sup>416</sup>

As it might be seen, when the I or authentic sense of identity is looked upon as both the everything and nothing, the self may begin to play.

Contemporary critic and theorist N. Katherine Hayles discusses the concept of the posthuman in her text, *How we Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. In Chapter One of her text, entitled “Toward Embodied Virtuality,” Hayles first quotes Ihab Hassan:

We need first to understand that the human form—including human desire and all its external representations—may be changing radically, and thus must be re-visioned. We need to understand that five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end as humanism transforms itself into something that we must helplessly call post-humanism.<sup>417</sup>

This statement sets up the concept that a shift is clearly on its way. Hayles discusses a book that brought her horror as a child that described how it would one day “be possible to download human consciousness into a computer.”<sup>418</sup> Hayles discusses how (1) Information lost its body (2) The cyborg was created as a technological and cultural icon after World War II (3) The human is becoming a new construction that is called the posthuman. Hayles states:

In the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals. To elucidate the significant shift in underlying assumptions about subjectivity signaled by the posthuman, we can recall one of the definitive texts characterizing the liberal humanist subject: C. B. Macpherson's analysis of possessive individualism. “Its possessive quality is found in its conception of the individual as essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities, *owing nothing to society for them*. The human essence is *free-*

*dom from the wills of others, and freedom is a function of possession.*"<sup>419</sup>

Hayles discusses Macpherson's analysis and says that he sees the new and free self as a market-produced self, whereas the natural self has been removed within the posthuman. Hayles goes on to discuss the impossibility that the natural human cannot be found, as it is always-already connected to the will of an other. Hayles discusses the disembodiment of information and questions the cybernetic construction of the posthuman. Hayles claims:

Interacting with electronic images rather than with a materially resistant text, I absorb through my fingers as well as my mind a model of signification in which no simple one-on-one correspondence exists between signifier and signified. I know kinesthetically as well as conceptually that the text can be manipulated in ways that would be impossible if it existed as a material object rather than a visual display. As I work with the text-as-flickering-image, I instantiate within my body the habitual patterns of movement that make pattern and randomness more real, more relevant, and more powerful than presence and absence.<sup>420</sup>

Further, Hayles comments on self-possession and self-control, which go hand in hand with concepts that can be found when playing in the virtual. As such, films can be looked upon as examples that put forth ideas of the loss of self, absence of subject due to a robotic formation or discovering that one is being controlled by a power larger than what could be comprehended.<sup>421</sup> In these films, the very real idea that one can

lose their traction with the real portrays a sensibility that does seem that it could indeed be a possibility.

Contemporary theorist and philosopher Wolfgang Schirmacher discusses similar concepts and sees that, if these artificial possibilities might be accepted, the entrance into virtual can become more of a natural movement in society.

Schirmacher contends:

Truth is a gift of Dasein, which is our place and activity in the world's process. As artificial beings by nature, our body as well as our mind is “a happening of truth at work” every lived-through moment. Even in the most inhumane enterprises, truth is still at work in humanity as a silent cry toward its absence. According to Heidegger, truth is not about being right or wrong but accepting “aletheia,” the powerful interplay of revealing and concealing, which shapes humanity's destiny.<sup>422</sup>

Schirmacher takes an empathetic view on the subject and sees that the truths that people are living in are what they need to contemplate and understand who they are as a people. Schirmacher says, “It is within this cultural environment that we decide how we should act, what we hope for, and, finally, what it means to be a human being.” Affirmatively, Schirmacher believes media and virtual reality might be seen as manifestations of humanity. He sees the beauty of truth even in extreme situations, as in these instances, we notice the beauty that is not there. Schirmacher replies:

A philosophical challenge without precedent lies in discovering and reinforcing those traits already in accord with this new type of being. We could not have discov-

ered gene technology or virtual reality as a human capability if it did not belong to our nature and if it were not a characteristic of our life technology. If we understand homo generator not as an extreme case but as the norm, one of our conjectures about humanness is then strengthened, one which has long determined us subconsciously but is uttered only with great aversion. If we penetrate all the dissemblance and tear away the last veil of analogy between human and animal, it then becomes irrefutable: we are but artificial beings among all other beings, our bodies are artifacts by nature. Homo generator's body politics is to see/hear/smell/touch/taste/think before you act, it claims aesthetic perception as the basis of comprehending and interaction. Homo generator has no fear of his or her mistakes, for they are inseparable from his or her succeeding—as body politics teaches us. Responsibility also means being able to assume one's guilt and to reject blame for anything you have not caused yourself. Homo generator is a substantial beginning, unique but not original, self-care without egotism.<sup>423</sup>

The above passage is quite crucial to contemplate in reference to this dissertation and the state of the virtual today. As Schirmacher states in the second sentence, the virtual would not even occur if it was not a form of human evolution. Technology is not a glitch in humankind—nor is it an assault on nature. It is a service that aids in universal progression. If the virtual is seen as natural, and not alien, further progress may be made. The virtual can teach what it is to be human. However, it will take a higher form of maturity for people to see the virtual as an ally. As it has been said throughout this writing as well—the ego will need to step aside in order to recognize the potential in the virtual.

### **Reconstituting the Self**



When reconfiguring the notion of the self in the virtual, the concept of the reflection is important to consider. In the reflection, a person encounters double meanings. Thus, by reflecting the self, the person reflects the other. Through this double contemplation, the individual discovers her self. While it can easily be argued that technology destroyed chance, it can be viewed slightly different and understood that the underlying structure beneath technology offers improved forms of chance. Perhaps, then, the structure of the virtual has been a necessary base to “become” more extraordinarily. Through the virtual, a new form of art is beheld that will allow one to have a greater understanding of her self and humanity.

The main complication in finding the true self in the virtual lies within the importance placed on the ego-self. As long as an individual allows the inauthentic other, and what Heidegger calls the “they” to dominate her mind, she no longer has control of it.<sup>424</sup> Others or the “they” (Das Man) will not allow freedom of mind if the individual is unaware of her own power. Once the individual is cognizant of her creative mind, she reinstates her self. The virtual game can be considered as a necessary vehicle to return back to the origins of what makes a human “human.” My argument is not based on the notion that children or all people should connect to the virtual. Rather, I argue that the ability to utilize the virtual indeed offers new ways to respond to the world and re-create the self—and it is available to anyone who is motivated to do so.

## Chapter Eight

### **The Virtual in Reality**

We consider the system of our ideas, not in its being, but in its becoming. Philosophy becomes genetic; that is, it allows the whole necessary series of our ideas to arise and take its course, as it were, before our eyes. From now on there is no longer any separation between experience and speculation. The system of nature is at the same time the system of our mind, and only now, once the great synthesis has been accomplished, does our knowledge return to analysis.

—Friedrich Schelling  
*Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*

As it has been covered, within the virtual, there is room to play. The premium component of the virtual experience is based on emotion where the feeling of action is sensed, even through simulation. This cache of perception is largely unused amongst humanity, and it is not well understood. Within my writing, it has been shown that the Metaverse within the virtual offers unlimited pathways to form the authentic self. The appreciation of the power of the creative mind is important for an evolution in creative thinking and becoming. Through the application of philosophical methodologies and exploration of historical views of subject formation, we discover why and how the virtual can be seen as a new form of creative expression.

As mentioned, Heidegger stated that only a God can save humanity now. When asked about this new God and a declaration of an absolute technological state in an interview from 1966, Heidegger responds with the following:

The world cannot be what and how it is through human beings, but neither can it be so without human beings. In my opinion that is connected to the fact that what I call “Being,” using a traditional, ambiguous, and now worn-out word, needs human beings. Being is not Being without humans being needed for its revelation, protection, and structuring. I see the essence of technology in what I call the *construct*. This name, on first hearing easily misunderstood, points, if it is properly considered, back into the innermost history of metaphysics, which still determines our existence [*Dasein*] today. The workings of the construct mean: Human beings are caught [*gestellt*], claimed, and challenged by a power that is revealed in the essence of technology. The experience that humans are structured [*gestellt*] by some-thing that they are not themselves and that they cannot control themselves is precisely the experience that may show them the possibility of the insight that humans are needed by Being. The possibility of experience, of being needed, and of being prepared for these new possibilities is concealed in what makes up what is most modern technology’s own. Thinking can do nothing more than to help humans to this insight, and philosophy is at an end.<sup>425</sup>

Heidegger predicts a liberating experience in which humans can re-think the future through potential forms of technology. He says that the new age has only begun—through thinking—and forms of cybernetics are ways to come to new understanding. Despite Heidegger’s claims, however, he further states that he does not know exactly what will change the future, but a new form of thinking in preparedness will likely pave the way.<sup>426</sup> We can see, then, the open path through the virtual might allow entry into new ways of thinking. Heidegger says, “We come to know what it means to think

when we ourselves try to think. If the attempt is to be successful, we must be ready to learn thinking.”<sup>427</sup>

Nietzsche states, “It returns, what finally comes home to me is my own Self and what of myself has long been in strange lands and scattered among all things and accidents.”<sup>428</sup> The sense of freedom found within the virtual, then, answers the original question I set to answer in the thesis, What is the saving grace of technology today? Thus, the answer is that the virtual allows the individual a free state to enter, learn, and become. Through no objective purpose in the game, the player comes out with greater purpose due to the previous sense of anxiety that has been lessened in the virtual.

Furthermore, due to the knowledge that obtaining more is not necessarily a better situation—and addiction is easy to come by through both and real and virtual worlds—it is clear that finding the inner self is important. As what might be understood through Nietzsche’s notion of the herd mentality, we can see that the power of the individual is missing from society. Nietzsche states:

A traveller who had seen many lands and peoples and several of the earth’s continents was asked what quality in men he had discovered everywhere he had gone. He replied: ‘They have a tendency to laziness.’ To many it will seem that he ought rather to have said: ‘They are all timid. They hide themselves behind customs and opinions.’ In his heart every man knows quite well that, being unique, he will be in the world only once and that no imaginable chance will for a second time gather together into a unity so strangely variegated an assortment as he is: he knows it but he hides it like a bad con-

science—why? From fear of his neighbor, who demands conventionality and cloaks himself with it. But what is it that constrains the individual to fear his neighbour, to think and act like a member of a herd, and to have no joy in himself? Modesty, perhaps, in a few rare cases. With the great majority it is indolence, inertia, in short that tendency to laziness of which the traveller spoke. He is right: men are even lazier than they are timid, and fear most of all the inconveniences with which unconditional honesty and nakedness would burden them. Artists alone hate this sluggish promenading in borrowed fashions and appropriated opinions and they reveal everyone's secret bad conscience, the law that every man is a unique miracle; they dare to show us man as he is, uniquely himself to every last movement of his muscles, more, that in being thus strictly consistent in uniqueness he is beautiful, and worth regarding, and in no way tedious.<sup>429</sup>

Thus, it is seen that the herd mentality keeps humanity stuck in the mob thought—or way of inauthenticity. In order for humanity to re-discover their authenticity, then, more need to retreat into the meditative and aesthetic state in order to redefine their actual self. The virtual, then, can be seen as necessary to arrive at an authentic understanding of the self. To look at the world of virtual play as a stain on society is not a viable option to move forward. It is important that independent designers continue to create games that offer individuals greater promise in their life. Perhaps the history of the creation and attainment of the self should be taught to people at this time.

I claim that the virtual is a conduit to better understand and live the real. Through the negative, a positive aspect to the real is revealed. Through losing the self, one finds the self. Through the mirror, one discovers possibilities. Through the screen,

the world is seen. By experiencing the nothing, the quench for living is born. Furthermore, an inner authenticity grows when the physical world is silenced. The player retreats from the physical—and enters the spiritual through the virtual. The inner identity, then, may evolve through these forms of meditative interactivity in the virtual—where one learns how to think and react independently of any other realm of existence.

Through conscious levels of self-awareness, the player arrives at a new state of self-thought. While discourse keeps us going, it can also stop progress. The concept of becoming is crucial. Mindfulness is enhanced and the player moves into ephemeral states of transcendence through the engaging experience of play. The purposelessness discovered is the reward in the game. An object as compensation is not necessary to receive at the end of the game. The pure state of free play is the benefit. When it is understood that there is not one essential pure state, the importance to become creative and work with a compounded approach is imperative. To understand that addiction is not a problem in reference to the culture of video games—but rather, it is a human matter—is significant. Heidegger can be looked upon further when he says:

We all still need an education in thinking, and before that first a knowledge of what being educated and uneducated in thinking means. In this respect, Aristotle gives us a hint in Book IV of his *Metaphysics*. It reads *esti gar apaideusia to me gignoskein tinon dei zetein apodeixin kai tinon ou dei*. “For it is uneducated not to have an eye for when it is necessary to look for a proof,

and when this is not necessary.” This sentence demands careful reflection. For it is not yet decided in what way that which needs no proof in order to become accessible to thinking is to be experienced. Is it dialectical mediation or originary intuition or neither of the two? Only the peculiar quality of that which demands of us above all else to be admitted can decide about that. But how is this to make the decision possible for us before we have not admitted it? In what circle are we moving here, inevitably? Is it the *eukukleos alethein*, well-founded unconcealment itself, thought as the opening?<sup>430</sup>

The imagination is an unbroached reserve for unlimited growth. The concept of play can be seriously considered as we move forward in the looming largeness of the virtual. The understanding of the foundations of creation remains essential today. Poetry, novels, fiction, fine arts, music—all tap into these larger forms of understanding and expression. Combining and placing these elements together with interactivity are enormous benefits to the virtual. The belief that fantasy and imagination are swept away as the child becomes a teenager and adult are removed when engaged in play. Indeed, fantasy and imagination are readily available to all who wish to partake. One can remain mature and play. The stigma attached to playing as an adult can be removed. While we cannot get out of the systematization of life, we can be aware of it, and, in a Derridean sense, use the systems in place to promote greater understanding of thought and being. Derrida states in relation to these concepts:

This limit is surpassed in *productive* imagination: self-intuition, the immediate relation to oneself such as it was formed in reproductive imagination, then becomes a *being*; it is exteriorized, produced in the world as a thing. This singular thing is the *sign*; it is engendered

by a fantastic production, by an imagination that shows signs of itself, making the sign (*Zeichen machende Phantasie*) as always, emerge from itself in itself.<sup>431</sup>

While many critics look to the virtual as an enemy or something to be concerned with, I differ by saying that play in the virtual world is a needed component to move forward in a higher understanding of self-awareness. To be cognizant that play and becoming aware of the individual self is not egotism—but a needed precondition to authentic living—is imperative. Through these methodologies and philosophical means of grasping the underlying truths, new ways of thinking about higher self-awareness may emerge.

When unraveling formerly told truths, we see that individual imagination has been veiled for quite some time. The capacity of the creative mind has become disempowered. The need for further research regarding the imagination and the virtual as mechanisms to allow authentic growth is essential. Through the processes of becoming, one can indeed create her ideal self. The virtual is needed today in order to perceive the real.



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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by a gamer after playing the game ‘*To the Moon*’ which lasts four hours total and leads one into an emotional and contemplative state about the life of the protagonist and their own life, as the player felt as if they went on a journey with the main subject, only to discover the end of the game was meant as a dream. Quote taken from <http://www.gamesradar.com/to-the-moon-review/> Retrieved on May 2, 2013. This game can be found on [http://freebirdgames.com/to\\_the\\_moon/](http://freebirdgames.com/to_the_moon/) Retrieved on December 14, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> <http://gamelab.mit.edu/study/> <http://interactive.usc.edu/> <http://gamecenter.nyu.edu/> Retrieved on December 14, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> There is debate amongst what game was the first “video game.” The debate depends upon how one might define the word video game. The first games are said to be *Spacewar* (1961), *Odyssey* (1966), *Galaxy Game* (1971), *Computer Space* (1971), and *Pong* (1972).

<sup>4</sup> <http://recode.net/2015/03/04/oculus-vr-will-go-full-consumer-with-samsung-by-years-end/> Retrieved on April 4, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Narrative and interactive fiction can be considered a game, which takes the player on a journey through aesthetically pleasing graphics and visually pleasing atmospheres. The game primarily does not have game components such as competition or shooting. These games tend to take the player to places unknown, imaginatively and visually, which lead to an emotional ending.

<sup>6</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Trans. by A.V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 110–19.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 111-119.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>9</sup> The trailer for *Façade* can be seen at the following link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmuLV9eMTkg> Retrieved on December 14, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> While multiple endings are already programmed in the video game, the player can choose among upwards of thousands of decisions in order to see and delight in cause and effect experiences within the game. Of further interest, many games are available to play in free creative mode vs. a strategic mode that had challenges and objectives.

<sup>11</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les Presses du reel), 2002.

- <sup>12</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein and Zeit* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1932), 195.
- <sup>13</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Trans. by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (London: Blackwell, 1992) 398.
- <sup>14</sup> Stephen Houlgate, “Hegel’s *Lectures on Aesthetics*” in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel-aesthetics/> Retrieved on December 14, 2013.
- <sup>15</sup> This could be seen as indifference or a detachment from personal experience to Kant.
- <sup>16</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 218.
- <sup>17</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus* (Raleigh, North Carolina: Alex Catalogue, 199 B.C.), 172.
- <sup>18</sup> This sense of release can also be seen as a state of catharsis, which will be discussed in Chapter Six.
- <sup>19</sup> <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/the-art-of-video-games-101131359/?no-ist> Retrieved on May 1, 2015.
- <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/gamesblog/2014/jan/08/video-games-art-and-the-shock-of-the-new> Retrieved on May 1, 2015.
- [http://www.askmen.com/top\\_10/videogame/top-10-video-games-that-approach-art.html](http://www.askmen.com/top_10/videogame/top-10-video-games-that-approach-art.html) Retrieved on January 8, 2014
- <sup>20</sup> *Applied Design* at MoMA March 2, 2013 through January 31, 2014 in Architecture and Design Galleries, third floor. <http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/1353> Retrieved on December 14, 2013.
- <sup>21</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is The Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (New York: Bantam Books, 1967).
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Noumenal can be defined as a “thing-in-itself” via Kant. Things in themselves as separate from one's cognition of it.
- <sup>24</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 218.

- <sup>25</sup> Immanuel Kant, "Letter to Marcus Herz, February 21, 1772" in *Immanuel Kant: Philosophical Correspondence, 1759-1799*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967).
- <sup>26</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 121.
- <sup>27</sup> Karl Marx, *Manuscripts*, Ed. David McLellan. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 15.
- <sup>28</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 106.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.
- <sup>30</sup> Jacques Rancière, <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jacques-ranciere/articles/art-of-the-possible/> Retrieved on May 1, 2015.
- <sup>31</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, Trans. by James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 174.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>33</sup> <http://secondlife.com/> Retrieved on January 2, 2014.
- <sup>34</sup> <http://www.businessinsider.com/second-life-today-2014-7> Retrieved on September 5, 2014.
- <sup>35</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), Chapter 24.
- <sup>36</sup> <http://braid-game.com/> Retrieved on January 2, 2014
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>38</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*. "What is Metaphysics?" 1st Harper Perennial Modern Thought Edition. Ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 106.
- <sup>39</sup> Hubert Dreyfus, "Heidegger on Gaining a Free Relation to Technology," *Reexamined: Art, Poetry and Technology* (California: Routledge, 2002), 171.
- <sup>40</sup> *Surviving Progress*, film. Created 2011. Release date: April 6, 2012.
- <sup>41</sup> Osho, *Vedanta: Seven Steps to Samadhi: Discourses on the Akshya Upanishad* (Pune: Rajneesh Foundation, 1976), 249.

- <sup>42</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), Book I. Analytic of the Beautiful.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.
- <sup>44</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, (New York: Taylor and Francis, 1977), 172-175.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.
- <sup>48</sup> Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage." *Social Theory: The Multicultural Readings*. Edited by C. Lemert (Philadelphia: Westview Press, 2010), 343-344.
- <sup>49</sup> Stuart D. B. Picken, *Essentials of Shinto: An Analytical Guide to Principal Teachings* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1994), 86.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 131.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.
- <sup>52</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. by A.V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 104-105.
- <sup>53</sup> *Philosophie der Geschichte* is a collection of lectures given by Hegel in 1821, 1824, 1827, and 1831. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, trans. by T.M. Knox and A.V. Miller, 454-457.
- <sup>54</sup> This is of interest to relate to Marx's philosophies on private property and Communism in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*.
- <sup>55</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, Trans. by T. M. Knox, ed. Stephen Houlgate (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 67-78.
- <sup>56</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, Trans. by T.M. Knox and A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 490.
- <sup>57</sup> Günter Zöllner, *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy: The Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1998.
- <sup>58</sup> Alexandre Kojève discusses Hegel's analogy of master and slave in 1947. His interpretations highly influenced Jean-Paul Sartre and Lacan.

<sup>59</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Trans. by A.V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 111.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>61</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Prose Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Volume 3 (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1880), 11.

<sup>62</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Trans. by A.V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), Lectures on Aesthetics, Volume One.

<sup>63</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, Trans. by T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), Volume One, "Limitation and Defence of Aesthetics."

<sup>64</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1970), 83.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>66</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, Trans. by T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), Volume One, "Introduction to Aesthetics" Chapter 3.

<sup>67</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Kant* (Munich: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1962), 39.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>70</sup> There are, of course, many examples of non-gaming digital interactivity, though none so fully interactive that embrace such abundant forms including aesthetic discourse and play combined.

<sup>71</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Kant* (Munich: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1962), 18.

<sup>72</sup> To define negation of the negation, it can be seen as a contradiction or paradox. Without one part, there is not an other.

<sup>73</sup> "Wu-wei" can also be defined as action by non-action.

<sup>74</sup> Holmes Welch, *Taoism: The Parting of the Way* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), 84.

<sup>75</sup> Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching* Chapter 52, "Practicing the Eternal"

<sup>76</sup> Wei Wu Wei. *Ask the Awakened* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul), 1963.

- <sup>77</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols and the Antichrist*. Trans. by Thomas Common (Dover: Mineola, 2004), 14-27.
- <sup>78</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 30.
- <sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, “Of Old and New Law-Tables.”
- <sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, “Of Virtue That Maketh Smaller.”
- <sup>81</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), “Man in Society.”
- <sup>82</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), “Out of the Spirit of Music,” Section 17.
- <sup>83</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 51, 64, 319.
- <sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 89, 105.
- <sup>85</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2006), 90.
- <sup>86</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 18.
- <sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.
- <sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.
- <sup>89</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- <sup>90</sup> Lyubomir T. Gruyitch, *Time and Consistent Relativity: Physical and Mathematical Fundamentals* (Oakville: Apple Academic Press, 2015), 59.
- <sup>91</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1970), 463-467.
- <sup>92</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Trans. by A.V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 45-46, 400-401.
- <sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 54-61.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., Preface.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 147, 230.

<sup>97</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion; The Lectures of 1827*, Ed. Peter C. Hodgson, Trans. by R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 202.

<sup>98</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 40.

<sup>99</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1970), 416.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 394.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 394.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., Preface.

<sup>103</sup> Adolph Gottlieb, "Statement" *Tiger's Eye*, New York, Vol. 1, No. 2, December 1947, 43.

<sup>104</sup> Mark Rothko, *Writings on Art* (New Haven: Yale University, 2006).

<sup>105</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Trans. by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press), 47.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 50-65.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>112</sup> <http://www.wsj.com/articles/gaming-no-longer-a-mans-world-1408464249> Retrieved on September 1, 2015.

<sup>113</sup> <http://www.esrb.org/about/video-game-industry-statistics.jsp> Retrieved on May 1, 2015.

<sup>114</sup> <http://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2013/01/27/women-remain-outsiders-video-game-industry/275JKqy3rFylT7TxgPmO3K/story.html> Retrieved on May 1, 2015.

<sup>115</sup> *Second Life* is an online virtual game that can be seen as a virtual world. There is no objective in the game, so it is more of a purposeless place for exploration where the player can do as she pleases. The Metaverse can be seen as a role-playing experience or game, though the word video game is still very much attached to the world.

<sup>116</sup> [http://www.ntu.ac.uk/news\\_events/news/archive/2008/78278.html](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/news_events/news/archive/2008/78278.html)

<sup>117</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>118</sup> Judith Butler, "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*." *Yale French Studies*. Simone de Beauvoir: Witness to a Century. No. 72, 35-49, Winter 1986.

<sup>119</sup> Julia Kristeva, and Leon S. Roudiez, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 131.

<sup>120</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Approaching Abjection*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 60.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>123</sup> Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York; Routledge, 1991), 149-181.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 149-181.

<sup>125</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Trans. by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 283.

<sup>126</sup> Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 42, 79.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 107-108.

<sup>128</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/28/arts/video-games/assassins-creed-liberation-examines-colonial-blacks.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/28/arts/video-games/assassins-creed-liberation-examines-colonial-blacks.html?_r=0) Retrieved on June 1, 2014.



<sup>129</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Wahington Square Press, 1984), 569.

<sup>130</sup> Osho, *Zarathustra: A God That Can Dance: Talks on Friedrich Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Volume 1 (Mumbai: Rebel Publishing House, 1987).

<sup>131</sup> <http://www.freegameempire.com/games/SimEarth> Retrieved on December 1, 2014.

<sup>132</sup> Gaia hypothesis is to be understood as a conceptual metaphor that earth is a living organism that adjusts like a large cell to minute changes intelligently and holistically. To read further on the gaia hypothesis, see Toby Tyrrell, *On Gaia: A Critical Investigation of the Relationship between Life and Earth*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013)

<sup>133</sup> Life simulation games can be seen as modes of simulating instances that occur in physical reality. The player is, most commonly, the creator of their activity or project.

<sup>134</sup> <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/11/06/game-master> Retrieved on December 4, 2014.

<sup>135</sup> Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (New Left Review, 1984), 146.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 94, 150.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>138</sup> Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in *Postmodern Culture*, Hal Foster, ed. London and Sydney, 1985, 114.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>140</sup> Fredric Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping." Nelson, C./Grossberg, L. [ed]. *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press), 190, 347-60.

<sup>141</sup> Frederic Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London: Verso, 2002), 215.

<sup>142</sup> <http://www.metamodernism.com/> Retrieved on May 1, 2015.

<sup>143</sup> <http://www.metamodernism.com/2010/07/15/what-is-metamodernism/> Retrieved on May 1, 2015.

- <sup>144</sup> Georg Simmel, *The Metropolis and Mental Life* by Kurt Wolff in: D. Weinstein, ed. *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (New York: Free Press, 1950), 409-424.
- <sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 415.
- <sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 409-424.
- <sup>147</sup> Roger Fry, *An Essay in Aesthetics*. *New Quarterly*; reprinted in *Vision and Design*, 1909.
- <sup>148</sup> Piet Mondrian, “Neo-Plasticism: The General Principle of Plastic Occurrence” in Harrison, Charles, and Paul Wood. *Art in Theory, 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2003). 289-291.
- <sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.
- <sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.
- <sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.
- <sup>152</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1984), 441.
- <sup>153</sup> Matt Ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious: Schelling, Freud and the Birth of the Modern Psyche* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 75.
- <sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.
- <sup>155</sup> Friedrich Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 145.
- <sup>156</sup> Friedrich Schelling, *The Ages of the World*. Trans. by Jason M. Wirth (New York: State University of New York Press, 1815), 3.
- <sup>157</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* (London: Penguin Classics, 2005), Section 249 b-c.
- <sup>158</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), 4.
- <sup>159</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (New York: Verso, 2008), xxvii.
- <sup>160</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2008), Sections A 42/B 59.

- <sup>161</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic (1830), Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*, trans. by Theodore F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), 72.
- <sup>162</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (New York: Verso, 2009), 132.
- <sup>163</sup> Ibid., 130.
- <sup>164</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* (London: Fontana Books, 1977), 174-5.
- <sup>165</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), 39.
- <sup>166</sup> Robert Stam, *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism and Film* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 4-5.
- <sup>167</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 39.
- <sup>168</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, Trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 7-8.
- <sup>169</sup> The carnivale can be traced back to the Dionysian festivities of the Greeks and the Saturnalia of the Romans.
- <sup>170</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 11.
- <sup>171</sup> Ibid., 34.
- <sup>172</sup> Latin phrase meaning the love of one's fate.
- <sup>173</sup> The Feast of Fools was a festival originating in Medieval times in which sacrilegious events took place during an annual celebration of life. The Feast of Fools was later forbidden in the fifteenth century.
- <sup>174</sup> Ibid., 317.
- <sup>175</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. and ed. by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 123.
- <sup>176</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>177</sup> Empathy represents the power to feel or understand others' feelings and emotions through their sense of imagination.

<sup>178</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), Introduction.

<sup>179</sup> Kakuan. *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones, A Collection of Zen and Pre-Zen Writings*. (Garden City: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1961). This story was a tradition of Taoists. It was re-iterated and re-introduced by 12th Century C.E. Chinese Cha'an master Kuo-an Shih-yuan.

<sup>180</sup> Words and images can be seen at: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/mzb/ox-herd.htm>

<sup>181</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, Trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 39-40.

<sup>182</sup> C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Trans. by R.F.C. Hull (London: Routledge, 1968).

<sup>183</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, Trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 19.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 409.

<sup>185</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), 198.

<sup>186</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Trans. by A.V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), Preface.

<sup>187</sup> *The Skin I Live In*. Film published October 14, 2011. Directed by Pedro Almodóvar.

<sup>188</sup> Orlan. *Carnal Art Manifesto*. <http://www.orlan.eu/texts/>

<sup>189</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 77, 240.

<sup>190</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *On Escape =: De L'évasion* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 53.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 53, 54.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

- <sup>193</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea* (1938), Trans. by L. Alexander (Norfolk, CT: The New Classic Series, 1972), 127.
- <sup>194</sup> Clive Bell, "Art and Significant Form" *Art*, 1913.
- <sup>195</sup> Clive Bell, "The Aesthetic Hypothesis" *Art*. (New York: Chatto & Windus, 1981).
- <sup>196</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: The Spirit of Gravity* (Chicago: H. Regnery, 1957), 151.
- <sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.
- <sup>198</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: The Spirit of Gravity* (Chicago: H. Regnery, 1957), 25-28.
- <sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, Part One.
- <sup>200</sup> Henri Bergson, *Mind-Energy: Lectures and Essays*. Trans. by H. Wildon Carr (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1920), 165.
- <sup>201</sup> Aldous Huxley "Human Potentialities," *Control of the Mind: Man and Civilization* (San Francisco: McGraw Hill, 1961), 60-76.
- <sup>202</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology* (New York: International Publishers, 1947), 83.
- <sup>203</sup> Karl Marx, *Early Writings* (London: Penguin Books 1974), viii - xxii.
- <sup>204</sup> Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (New York: International Publishers, 1964), 307.
- <sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, "Need, Production and Division of Labor."
- <sup>206</sup> Karl Marx, *Early Writings* (London: Penguin Books 1974), viii.
- <sup>207</sup> Jacques Derrida speaks of the book and what it is, all the while critiquing within a book. Examples can be found in his texts, *Paper Machine*, *Writing and Difference*, *Of Grammatology*.
- <sup>208</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (New York: International Publishers, 1947), 42.
- <sup>209</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 58.

- <sup>210</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 6.
- <sup>211</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 33.
- <sup>212</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *The Painters of Modern Life and other Essays*, Trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (New York: Phaidon Press, 2012), 13.
- <sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.
- <sup>214</sup> Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 181.
- <sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.
- <sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.
- <sup>217</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 385.
- <sup>218</sup> <http://www.malling-hansen.org/friedrich-nietzsche-and-his-typewriter-a-malling-hansen-writing-ball.html> Retrieved on December 4, 2014.
- <sup>219</sup> Panexperientialism can be found in the writings of Alfred North Whitehead's *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, (New York: FreePress, 1978).
- <sup>220</sup> Some examples of philosophers are Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, Bergson, and Deleuze.
- <sup>221</sup> Gilles Deleuze, "What Can a Body Do?" in *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (New York: Zone Books, 1990), 226.
- <sup>222</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, trans. by Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2007), 1.
- <sup>223</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, Trans. by Steven Corcoran (Continuum International Publishing, 2010), 155, 187-188.
- <sup>224</sup> Maslow's theories focus on a psychological framework of a hierarchy of needs to the highest attainable form of self-actualization. See for more information: Abraham Maslow, *Dominance, Self-Esteem, Self-Actualization: Germinal Papers of A.H. Maslow*. (Monterey: Brooks/Cole Pub. Co, 1973)

<sup>225</sup> In stating productive activity, I believe the act of playing a video game can be seen as a productive activity even if there is no physical reward. It is productive because it induces the authentic mode of evolving and becoming.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>227</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, Trans. by Steven Corcoran (Continuum International Publishing, 2010), 106-108.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 134-151.

<sup>229</sup> “The Body You Want: Liz Kotz interviews Judith Butler,” *Artforum* 31, No. 3 (November. 1992): 82-89.

<sup>230</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 200.

<sup>231</sup> Nietzschean transvaluation is a call from Nietzsche to re-evaluate all past morals and form new questions as to why humans do what they do without challenging outdated systems.

<sup>232</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 200-201.

<sup>233</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, Ed., Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 103.

<sup>234</sup> German term for suffering-with.

<sup>235</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2006).

<sup>236</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Fantasy Reloaded*. <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/slavoj-zizek/articles/fantasy-reloaded/>

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *You May*. <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/slavoj-zizek/articles/you-may/>

<sup>240</sup> Immanuel Kant, *An Answer to the Question: “What is Enlightenment?”* Königsberg in Prussia, 30th September, 1784.

<sup>241</sup> It may prove difficult for a person to find her purpose in life without being her authentic self.

<sup>242</sup> The term and notion of virtual reality is a redundant concept. The idea of the virtual is that it is another dimension, not necessarily a false dimension. The virtual is another way to view reality.

<sup>243</sup> Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006). Frankl was a Holocaust survivor who lived through Nazi Germany. He saw the majority of people give up and submit to dying, while he saw other people escape and find ways out of the concentration camps. He realized this was because the survivors held onto certain purpose and meaning in their life.

<sup>244</sup> Albert Camus, *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), 253.

<sup>245</sup> <http://game savedmylife.tumblr.com/> Retrieved on December 14, 2013.

<sup>246</sup> The Buddha, *The Dhammapada: Buddhist Philosophy*, Chapter 1: Verse 2 from Hamilton, Clarence Herbert. *Buddhism, A Religion of Infinite Compassion: Selections from Buddhist Literature* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1952).

<sup>247</sup> <http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn18117-how-your-brain-sees-virtual-you.html#.U7K6Dy-FfEY> Retrieved June 28, 2014.

<sup>248</sup> This concept is quite similar to Nietzsche's concept of the eternal return.

<sup>249</sup> Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 109.

<sup>250</sup> Logotherapy is claimed to focus on the future, rather than the past.

<sup>251</sup> [http://www.logotherapyinstitute.org/About\\_Viktor\\_Frankl.html](http://www.logotherapyinstitute.org/About_Viktor_Frankl.html) Retrieved June 27, 2014

<sup>252</sup> (Osho) Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh was born Rajneesh Chandra Mohan in Kuchwara, in central India. At the end of his life, he changed his name to Osho.

<sup>253</sup> Osho, *New Man for the New Millennium* (India: Penguin Books, 2000), 40.

<sup>254</sup> Osho, *Vedanta: Seven Steps to Samadhi Discourses on the Akshya Upanishad* (India: Ma Yoga Laxmi Rajneesh Foundation, 1976), 254.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.



<sup>256</sup> Michel Foucault introduced the term, heterotopia, between 1966 and 1967. The concept of heterotopia is that which connects two distinct forms that do not make apparent sense from the juxtaposing terms, though work abstractly in a hybrid form. Foucault did not write or discuss very much about this concept, though he did tie it together in terms of "different spaces." "Of Other Spaces." *Diacritics* 16 (Spring 1986), 22-27.

<sup>257</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions* (New York: Citadel Press), 60-61.

<sup>258</sup> Osho, *Vedanta: Seven Steps to Samadhi Discourses on the Akshya Upanishad* (India: Ma Yoga Laxmi Rajneesh Foundation, 1976), 154.

<sup>259</sup> Anaïs Nin, *The Diary of Anaïs Nin: Volume 4: 1944-1947* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 127.

<sup>260</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions* (New York: Citadel Press), 65.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 65-66.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>263</sup> Dukkha: Buddhist term that means suffering or anxiety.

<sup>264</sup> The Buddha, Udāna Verse 5.5: Uposatha Suttaṃ, The Observance, Trans. by the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

<sup>265</sup> Rollo May, *The Courage to Create* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.), 11.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>267</sup> The Upanishads have influenced countless numbers of philosophers over time including Plato, Socrates, Schopenhauer, and Schelling.

<sup>268</sup> Hermann Oldenberg, *The Doctrine of the Upanishads and the Early Buddhism*, Trans. by Shridhar B. Shastri (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1991).

<sup>269</sup> *The Upanishads*, Trans. by Alistair Shearer and Peter Russell (New York: Harper & Row, 1978). *The Upanishads* Trans. by Swami Paramananda, 1919.

<sup>270</sup> Other translations mention the golden disk as the golden vessel or lid.

<sup>271</sup> *Buddhism*, Edited by Peter Harvey (New York: Continuum, 2001), 240.

- <sup>272</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 81
- <sup>273</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1954), 27.
- <sup>274</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 127.
- <sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.
- <sup>276</sup> <http://synthesislearning.com/article/brwav.htm> Retrieved on May 1, 2015.
- <sup>277</sup> William James, *The Will to Believe* (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1896), 26-29.
- <sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.
- <sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.
- <sup>280</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, Trans. by C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004), Book Ten.
- <sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, Book Seven.
- <sup>282</sup> Carl Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967).
- <sup>283</sup> Carl Jung, *Jung on Active Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 5.
- <sup>284</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, Trans. by C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004). Plato, *The Laws* (London: Penguin Classics, 2005).
- <sup>285</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, Trans. by C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004), Book Two, 377-383.
- <sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, Book Eight.
- <sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, Book Seven.
- <sup>288</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
- <sup>289</sup> Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge and Kegan, 1950).

<sup>290</sup> Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1975), 112.

<sup>291</sup> Virginia Woolf discusses the need for a room of one's own in order to find one's ideal personal state to discover the truth of one's art. For more information, see: Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1957).

<sup>292</sup> In *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant states, "Kneeling down or prostrating oneself on the ground, even to show your veneration for heavenly objects, is contrary to the dignity of humanity... one who makes himself a worm cannot complain afterwards if people step on him."

<sup>293</sup> We can also find extensive philosophical thoughts on myth and symbol via Levi-Strauss, concepts of semiotics, and structuralism. For more information, see: Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (New York: Atheneum, 1968).

<sup>294</sup> Rollo May, *The Courage to Create* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.), 96

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 96, 99, 101.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, 98, 100, 101.

<sup>297</sup> Richard Chase, *The Quest for Myth*, *Midwest Folklore*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Summer, 1951), 123-128.

<sup>298</sup> We might find characters encompassing warriors, rangers, nomads, heroes, geniuses, barbarians, soldier, knight, fencer, crusader, dark knight, dragon knight, samurai, lord, sorcerer, magician, illusionist, rogue, thief, assassin, ninja, scout, priest, doctor, inquisitor, bard, dancer, monk, engineer, alchemist, psychic, and many more.

<sup>299</sup> This is prevalent in forms of social media as well as newer game systems that involve real-time community in which players are online simultaneously and are able to like player's posts and follow them.

<sup>300</sup> This would encompass areas such as world knowledge, sensorial knowledge, extra sensorial knowledge, self-knowledge

<sup>301</sup> Leon Edel, *The Modern Psychological Novel* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964.)

<sup>302</sup> Examples would include eating, moving, thinking, sex, remembering, etc.

- <sup>303</sup> Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud, *The Freud-Jung Letters: The Correspondence Between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*. Trans. by Ralph Manheim and Richard Francis Carrington Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- <sup>304</sup> Rollo May, *The Courage to Create* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.), 79.
- <sup>305</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper), 1977.
- <sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.
- <sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.
- <sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, 320-322.
- <sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.
- <sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.
- <sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.
- <sup>312</sup> Krzysztof Ziarek, "After Aesthetics: Heidegger and Benjamin on Art and Experience." *Philosophy Today*, Vol. 41, No. 1, Spring 1997.
- <sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>314</sup> Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception. Dialectics of Enlightenment*. Trans. by John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 1-33.
- <sup>315</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings* "On the Origin of the Work of Art," (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 143-212.
- <sup>316</sup> Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics." *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. Trans. by W. D. Ross and J. O. Urmson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), Book 2, Chapter 1.
- <sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, Book 2, Chapter 2.
- <sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, Book 2, Chapter 2.
- <sup>319</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* (London: Penguin Books, 1996), "Plot," Chapter 10. 1.

- <sup>320</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, Ed., Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Section 483.
- <sup>321</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self-Reliance and Other Essays* (New York: Dover, 1993), 20.
- <sup>322</sup> Ibid., 32.
- <sup>323</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (London: Verso, 2008).
- <sup>324</sup> Doman Lum, *Culturally Competent Practice: A Framework for Understanding* (Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole Thomson Learning, 2003), 260-261.
- <sup>325</sup> Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (London: Rebel Press, 2000).
- <sup>326</sup> Jacques Rancière *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, Trans. by Steven Corcoran (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2010), 144.
- <sup>327</sup> Guy Debord, *The Situationist Manifesto*, 1960. <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/manifesto.html>
- <sup>328</sup> Guy Debord, *Theses on Cultural Revolution*, 1958, Internationale Situationniste #1 (Paris, June 1958). Trans. by Ken Knabb. Situationist International Anthology (Revised and Expanded Edition, 2006).
- <sup>329</sup> The Situationists International. "The Use of Free Time." Internationale Situationniste #4, 1960 <http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/317>
- <sup>330</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>331</sup> Some examples: jazz music, rock music, punk music, Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, DIY movements.
- <sup>332</sup> <http://blog.us.playstation.com/2013/01/12/psn-community-spotlight-how-i-met-the-love-of-my-life/> Retrieved on March 10, 2015.
- <sup>333</sup> Guy Debord, "Theory of the Dérive" in *Les Lèvres Nues* #9 November 1956.
- <sup>334</sup> <http://www.theastronauts.com/2013/02/the-vanishing-of-ethan-carter/>  
<http://ethancartergame.com/>

<sup>335</sup> <http://www.adventuregamers.com/articles/view/27060> Retrieved on March 20, 2015.

<sup>336</sup> *Company of Heroes* video game. Video game that is played in real time and encompasses strategy measures within the gameplay. Developed by Relic Entertainment. Released September 2006.

<sup>337</sup> [http://www.moma.org/explore/inside\\_out/2010/02/04/new-acquisition-feng-mengbo-long-march-restart](http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2010/02/04/new-acquisition-feng-mengbo-long-march-restart) <http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/creators/feng-mengbo>

<sup>338</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/26/arts/design/harun-farocki-video-installation-at-moma-review.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/26/arts/design/harun-farocki-video-installation-at-moma-review.html?_r=0) Retrieved on March 10, 2015.

<sup>339</sup> <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Video-games-in-museums-fine-art-or-just-fun/36905> Retrieved on March 10, 2015.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

<sup>341</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” in Walter Benjamin, Hannah Arendt Ed., *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), 219-253.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid., 218-219

<sup>343</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>345</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, “On the Origin of the Work of Art,” (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 210.

<sup>346</sup> For Heidegger, *Dasein* means being-there. *Dasein* is known as existence, presence, being.

<sup>347</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Trans. by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (London: Blackwell, 1992), 78.

<sup>348</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, Trans. by Steven Corcoran (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2010), 1-3.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid., 33.

- <sup>352</sup> Ibid., 50.
- <sup>353</sup> Ibid., 52-57.
- <sup>354</sup> Ibid., 58-59.
- <sup>355</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).
- <sup>356</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, Trans. by Steven Corcoran (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2010), 218.
- <sup>357</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
- <sup>358</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*. Trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 154, 204, 239.
- <sup>359</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, Trans. by C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004).
- <sup>360</sup> A clip of the game in action can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xaI7ZPA9I1c>
- <sup>361</sup> Lee Smolin, “Why No ‘New Einstein’?” *Physics Today*, June 2005, 56-57.
- <sup>362</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 186.
- <sup>363</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 131.
- <sup>364</sup> Schools and institutions that develop creative mind and development include Montessori schools, Waldorf/Rudolf Steiner, Sudbury school method, home schooling, cyber education, and unschooling.
- <sup>365</sup> Annie Murphy Paul, New York Times “Your Brain on Fiction,” March 17, 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/18/opinion/sunday/the-neuroscience-of-your-brain-on-fiction.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/18/opinion/sunday/the-neuroscience-of-your-brain-on-fiction.html?_r=0)
- <sup>366</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, Trans. by C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004), Book Ten.
- <sup>367</sup> Ibid., Book Ten.

- <sup>368</sup> Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), xxxviii.
- <sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.
- <sup>370</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination* (Secaucus: Citadel Press, 1980), 19.
- <sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.
- <sup>372</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. by Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2014), 14.
- <sup>373</sup> Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird* (New York : Anchor Books, 1995), 237.
- <sup>374</sup> Vincent van Gogh, *Dear Theo: The Autobiography of Vincent Van Gogh* (New York: Penguin Group, 1969).
- <sup>375</sup> Paul Gauguin, “*Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?*” Oil on panel, 1897.
- <sup>376</sup> Paul Gauguin, *Noa Noa* (V Praze: Kamilla Neumannová, 1919).
- <sup>377</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II: the Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, Trans. by Sylvana Tomaselli. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 166.
- <sup>378</sup> <http://www.apa.org/monitor/mar04/treatment.aspx> Retrieved on March 10, 2015
- <sup>379</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 15, 19, 21.
- <sup>380</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* (London: Penguin Books, 1996), xvi. - xxix.
- <sup>381</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, Trans. by C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004), Book Ten.
- <sup>382</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* (London: Penguin Books, 1996), xxxviii.-xlii.
- <sup>383</sup> Paul Virilio, *The Original Accident* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 57.
- <sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*, Page 58 and Jacques Ranciere, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, Trans. by Steven Corcoran (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2010).



- <sup>385</sup> Paul Virilio, *The Information Bomb*, Trans. by Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2005), 36.
- <sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.
- <sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.
- <sup>388</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, Translator's Preface by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), xxx.
- <sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*, xxx-xxxi.
- <sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxi.
- <sup>391</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 35-36.
- <sup>392</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 406-407.
- <sup>393</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 36.
- <sup>394</sup> Interestingly, too, to correlate these ideas to the subliminal marketing messages through the video game developer, Nintendo, many of their selling phrases toy with these larger than life concepts. Three of their subversive and enlightening commercialized catchphrases associated with their products have been, "Too Much Fun," "Now You're Playing With Power," "Who are you?" "Change the System," and "Born to Play."
- <sup>395</sup> Arthur C. Danto. *Nietzsche As Philosopher*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).
- <sup>396</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, (New York: Schocken Books, 2003). 90-96.
- <sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, 90-91.
- <sup>398</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: 2 Vols. Volume I: Thinking, Volume II: Willing*, (New York: Brace Harcourt.1978),191.
- <sup>399</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, (New York: Schocken Books, 2003). 96.

- <sup>400</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: 2 vols. Volume I: Thinking, Volume II: Willing*, (New York: Brace Harcourt.1978), 97, 191.
- <sup>401</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Trans. by C J. M. Hubback. (London: International Psycho-Analytical Press, 1922), 69, 77, 83.
- <sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.
- <sup>403</sup> Sigmund Freud, "The Ego and the Id," *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Trans. by C J. M. Hubback. London: International Psycho-Analytical Press, 1922.
- <sup>404</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XIV: The Logic of Phantasy: 1966-1967*, Trans. by Cormac Gallagher, (London: Karnac, 2002) 245-247.
- <sup>405</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (New York: SUNY Press), 229 - 236.
- <sup>406</sup> Simon Critchley <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/jul/13/heidegger-being-time>
- <sup>407</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*. "What is Metaphysics?" *Basic Writings*, "On the Origin of the Work of Art." 1st Harper Perennial Modern Thought Edition. Ed. David Farrell. (Krell. New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 101.
- <sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*, 106
- <sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.
- <sup>410</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 53.
- <sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.
- <sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*, 53
- <sup>413</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 2.
- <sup>414</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 151.
- <sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>416</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*. “Out of the Spirit of Music.” (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 31.

<sup>417</sup> N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Post-Human* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 1.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>421</sup> Topics such as these are found in the films *Tron*, *Blade Runner*, *RoboCop*, *Her*, and *The Matrix*. *Tron* 1982, *Blade Runner* 1982, *RoboCop* 1987, *Her* 2013, *The Matrix* 1999.

<sup>422</sup> Wolfgang Schirmacher. *Homo Generator: Media and Postmodern Technology*, New York, 1994 <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/wolfgang-schirmacher/articles/homo-generator-media-and-postmodern-technology/>

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>424</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (New York: SUNY Press), 119-121.

<sup>425</sup> Martin Heidegger, “*Only a God Can Save Us.*” The Spiegel Interview, 1966 from *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, Ed. Richard Wolin (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993).

<sup>426</sup> Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* Trans. by J. Glenn Gray (New York: Perennial, 1976), 5-6.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>428</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None* (New York, Cambridge University Press), 114, 132.

<sup>429</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1997), 127.

<sup>430</sup> Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, Trans. by Joan Stambaugh (New York, Harper & Row Publishers, 1972), 72-73.

<sup>431</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1982), 78.