

## **Review excerpts for Self-reflexive Videogames: Observations and Corollaries on Virtual Worlds as Philosophical Artifacts**

“The videogame that is part of the article sucks. It is not fun to play, it is not exciting to explore, and its aesthetics are off-putting. In other words, it succeeds in its job perfectly. It provides a functioning role model for academic software: a quickly testable appendix that the reader can consult in case they wish to deepen their comprehension of the verbal argument. As scholars, we do not want to spend our working hours on processes that we already know more than well.

I would, however, like to play the devil’s advocate for one more moment, and point out a potential issue related to the following description of the videogame: “The monster has, in fact, no functionally useful options for interacting with the room: the door does not open for its little red paws, the chest contains nothing, and the objects that are already in the room respond to the players’ actions as if they were cheap theatrical props.” While playing the videogame indeed confirms the description, it also reveals the paradox of play (most prominently addressed by David Myers’ long-lasting position): some players might actually find the unrewarding structure of the videogame rewarding since it enables a unique anti-environment for play. By enabling exploration and potential epiphany via winning (despite the semantically charged “game over” screen), it already succumbs to the standards of genre, mechanics, and theme. Probably, the only way to avoid the paradox would be to not provide the reader the possibility to play at all would be leaving the videogame unpublished cohere with the argument better, reframing it rather a potential, *conceptual work* of academic software?”

*Reviewer 1 – Veli-Matti Karhulahti, University of Turku, March 2016.*