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"When I dwell in human form," says the charioteer of the *Bhagavad Gita*, "the confused ones have contempt for me, not knowing my highest nature as the great lord of beings."[1] This charioteer is called Krishna, but only because his divine nature—Vishnu—is hidden from bodily eyes. The supreme Hindu god has descended from the eternal into time, from the immaterial into embodiment, in order to instruct a warrior, and through him the rest of us, about the self, reality, and the proper conduct of life. Each of us has a divine nature, likewise descended into a human body, but with its death we return to another one, and another, and so on, until we recognize who we really are. This self-knowledge promises to liberate us from the doleful cycle of birth and death into the disembodied unity of pure divinity. Vishnu guarantees that "when one sees the multiplicity of states of being abiding in one, and spreading out from that one alone, one then arrives at Brahman."[2]

Zoe is an American woman who has found that "drawing the line and standing firm has always made me feel like a bitch, and, actually, I feel that people saw me as one too."[3] For two years, however, she played an online role-playing game using a male character where "as a man I was liberated from all that." She made mistakes in her unfamiliar role, but learned from them. "I got better at being firm but not rigid," she says; "I practiced, safe from criticism." Case is an American man, who plays a similar game but always appears as a woman. He travels within its virtual world, interacts with others through their characters, and contemplates why all his own are women. "My female characters are interesting," he says, "because I can say or do the sorts of things that I mentally want to do, but if I did them as a man, they would be obnoxious."[4] In *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*, Sherry Turkle records these and other fascinating accounts of people who achieved liberation through online games. Both Zoe and Case, despite differing in gender, used them for the same purpose. "Playing this woman," says Case, "lets me see what I have in my psychological repertoire."[5] Gender-swapping allowed each to be more assertive, something they found difficult to do otherwise. "A virtual gender swap," writes Turkle, "gave people greater emotional range in the real."[6]

To achieve this liberation, as in Hinduism, they used avatars: appearances of themselves in a world less real than the one they fully inhabit. "Avatar" derives from a Sanskrit word (*avatara*) meaning descent, but because of stories like those of the *Gita* the word is also taken to mean incarnation, embodiment, the taking on of flesh. The god's avatar permits him to manifest himself for a time in this world; he is more fully elsewhere. The same is true of those who play online games. An avatar may be killing dragons atop a steed in cyberspace, but in "meatspace" the real person who plays it is sitting before a keyboard in Pittsburgh. To capture this similarity, gaming pioneers deliberately adopted the Sanskrit word and Hindu notion, decades before our technology made the comparison irresistible. In both cases, after all, an avatar is an appearance in one world of someone more real from another. The similarity is not idle. It may help us understand who we really are and what we should do with ourselves.

1. Games

There are too many online games to survey here, but the most interesting for our purposes are the MMORPGs: Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games.[7] There are always new ones, ever more sophisticated in their verisimilitude, but our goal is not to keep abreast of even just this one portion of the gaming phenomenon. Our goal, instead, is to investigate how these sorts of games resemble the meatspace we inhabit with our bodies. In the lingo of their players, this meatspace is called RL, for "real life." From the perspective of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Platonism, however, the meatspace is not our real life. It is a super-game, and our bodies are avatars. Into the game we descend, adopting our avatars in order to seek wisdom and ultimately an escape from embodiment altogether. Calling our meatspace reality, then, would presuppose these religions and philosophies to be wrong. Let us begin by suspending judgment about them and explore the analogy between them and online gaming. These new technologies may allow us to experience afresh the ethical outlook of these ancient traditions. But they may also help us to dust off some of their best arguments.

For those unfamiliar with online gaming, how does it work? Turkle's book is twenty years old now, and the games she discusses, like the computers on which they ran, are all gone. Yet the potent engagement of imagination and emotion remains the same. Unlike video games—most famously, *Super Mario Bros.* or *Pac-Man*—where players try to overcome obstacles scripted by the games' designers, online role-playing games are virtual worlds in which there are no scripts, except those improvised by the players together. They are played simultaneously by many people (sometimes hundreds of

thousands) whose avatars interact in a virtual world. The most popular at the moment of writing seems to be an installment of the *Final Fantasy* franchise (XIV) which boasts over two million registered players, a quarter of whom log-on each day. The most well-known to people outside this sub-culture has probably been *Second Life*, where there are no universal obstacles or goals; each player decides for herself what the game is about. She creates and manipulates an image of herself, anonymously, often with great freedom. The common purpose of all players, then, is to appear as they wish, without the constraints imposed by the meatspace (notably the physical constraints of their own bodies, but just as importantly the moral constraints of their own cultures).

Why do millions of people around the world play these games, sometimes to the exclusion of all but the necessities of their embodied lives? More particularly, why—from the infinite variety of avatars available in many of them—do they create the avatars that they do, manipulating them some ways rather than others? It's a world of appearances, so perhaps the answer is obvious: the fulfillment of wishes and fantasies. But all these appearances must to some extent be a reflection of the meatspace where the wishes and fantasies were conceived, otherwise their fulfillment would be hollow. "For virtual reality to be interesting it has to emulate the real," says one of the players Turkle interviewed, "but you have to be able to do something in the virtual that you couldn't do in the real."[8] Let's therefore put our question this way: how do the contours of someone's meatspace contribute to the appearances he crafts in his cyberspace?

Among Turkle's most interesting anecdotes are those of gender-swapping. But this does not require a computer. Shakespeare dramatizes its benefits in *As You Like It*, where characters cross-dress and find that through their deception they can more easily find the truth about themselves. Masks and role-playing games have always offered players this low-tech route to self-knowledge. Turkle recounts the story of Julee, a college student whose Catholic mother disowned her when she had an abortion. In a role-playing game of political intrigue soon afterward, Julee played a member of a spy-ring, a mother whose daughter was part of the same ring. The script of the game eventually revealed the daughter to be a counter-spy, destined to kill her mother unless she were punished with death herself. Julee's character refused to execute the punishment, instead engaging her daughter in hours of tearful, spontaneous conversation that Julee experienced as therapeutic. By playing the mother, and rewriting the script both of the game and of her own adolescence, "Julee was able to sculpt a familiar situation into a new shape."[9]

So cyberspace does not introduce a new possibility, as technological utopians would have it, but it does intensify one that has always existed. Some players feel emboldened to enact violent fantasies with impunity. Others play altruistic roles that, for whatever reason, they find themselves unable to realize in the meatspace. Nearly every role that exists here exists there, in addition to others that exist only in our dreams. Some avatars are chaste, others are promiscuous, and many sell cybersex. Taking the currencies of cybergames to exchanges in real life (secure websites with links to credit-card companies), cyber sex-workers can earn enough to support themselves in RL. Indeed, there are hundreds of ways to make money in these games, so that virtual economies have developed, as have laws and judicial systems, politics and education, masters and slaves. Hearts are broken, fortunes are made, and it all happens very fast. Online games intensify the effects of traditional role-playing in two crucial ways: first, an infinite range of avatars and actions fosters more anonymity and freedom; second, these games can be played continuously for years, giving them a legitimate claim to be alternate worlds. Sometimes second lives, sometimes third or fourth.

In these alternate worlds, the adult can rediscover the imaginative scenarios of children's play, with all the emotional risks and moral complications of the schoolyard, but without the prohibitive cost of the only other activity where he can sustain that experience over years: psychoanalysis. To the players of the online games Turkle investigated twenty years ago, "what happened was consistent with what the psychoanalytic tradition calls 'working through.'"[10] And the same is true nowadays. But what is that? The term first occurs in "Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through," which Jonathan Lear calls "the most significant article Freud wrote."[11] In it he distinguishes between repeating a destructive pattern of thinking or behavior, remembering the events that caused the repetition, and 'working through' it. Repeating is the reason people go into analysis in the first place; remembering is the Hollywood version of analytic cure: the epiphany on the couch that banishes all demons. But this is a fantasy of analysis; memory is insufficient, as Freud himself recognized. 'Working through' is required, although it is far from clear what this involves.

2. Objects

"The shadow of the object fell upon the ego."[12] With this vatic sentence—hidden in the middle of "Mourning and Melancholia," another important little essay by Freud—he set psychoanalysis on a new theoretical course. The name that would eventually be given

to this new course ("object-relations") stems from Freud's early distinction between the object and aim of a desire. If the lips, for example, are the object of someone's desire, kissing them could be one of his aims, so too could biting, or touching, or looking. Sometimes the objects of our desires are body parts, other times they are whole people. For fetishists, moreover, they may not be people at all, but instead inanimate objects. "Object" is a useful bit of jargon because of this ambiguity, as well as another. We relate to the objects of our desire in the external world, right from the moment we are born, but once these relations become habitual, and we begin to represent them to ourselves within our own imaginations, we then relate to inner objects as well—namely, images or representations. An "object" can thus be a part of another person, that person's whole, or no person at all; likewise, it can be external or internal.

Freud thought depression could be understood as a toxic relation with one of these inner objects. When a lover is frustrated in her love, whether by the death of her beloved or disappointment with him, she most usually withdraws her desire for this object over time, slowly learning how to live without him, and gradually displacing it onto another. This is mourning. But sometimes, according to Freud, the desire for the original object stubbornly persists. The lover cannot let go. Rather than withdrawing and displacing that desire onto someone else, she keeps the beloved alive in unconscious fantasy, effecting "an identification of the ego with the abandoned object."[13] In short, the beloved becomes a part of her. Whatever feelings she had for the original object, she now experiences toward herself. When hate as well as love characterized her original relation (an ambivalence Freud sees in nearly every human affection), she will feel the self-loathing so characteristic of the depressed, above all when a guilty conscience tricks her into feeling responsible for the abandonment. Melancholia, in short, is failed mourning.

Whether or not Freud was right about depression, he tendered a plausible explanation of how we become who we are. For as we grow, love, and grieve, the shadows of our objects fall upon our egos. Your self is a graveyard: everyone you have ever loved is buried there. A century has passed since Freud first advanced this idea; naturally, it has become more sophisticated in subsequent psychology. Its most well-known advocates have been Melanie Klein and D. W. Winnicott, but the best version is that of Otto Kernberg, who has synthesized it with other strands of Freud's thought—especially the drives—with which it was formerly considered opposed. Rather than internalizing just the objects of our desire, according to Kernberg, we internalize our

whole relationship with them. We create an internal representation of the object, yes, but also a "self-representation interacting with an object representation under the dominance of a certain affect."[14] Together these three—representations of the two people or parts involved in the relationship, suffused with the emotions characteristic of it—comprise the object-relation.

For example, anger and guilt often characterize the relationship between a father and his toddling son. The son deliberately breaks the rules in order to experiment with his new independence and to test the resolve of his father to enforce them. Thus challenged, the father often grows angry and the son usually shows guilt, but sometimes the father feels guilty that his anger got too hot, while the son gets angry that the assertion of his will failed to achieve its goal. In Kernberg's theory, this tangle of representations and emotions will be internalized by the toddler as one whole object-relation. Later, when he has matured into an adult, perhaps even a father, he will re-enact this object-relation. He may seem to grow angry at his children, but in fact his anger is a re-enactment of his father's ancient anger at him, or perhaps his own ancient anger toward his father. In any case, when his aggression appears disproportionate to the present, these manifestations of his early relationship now in his adult life will be easily misunderstood as evidence for an aggressive *drive*—something innate, impersonal, pushing for discharge. From the perspective of object-relations theory, this is the common misunderstanding of pure drive psychology, whether it's found in Nietzsche, Freud, or their successors. According to Kernberg, the earlier object-relation explains the aggression rather than the other way round.

But the internalization of aggression, excitement, and the relationships they suffuse goes back further than our toddling, back to the first days of our infancy. After birth, when newborns cannot conceive of a whole person, neither another nor themselves, their representations of both will be partial. Thus, when feeding goes smoothly, a baby will internalize an image of something like its mother's breast, something like its own mouth, and an intense feeling of satisfaction. Or, if something goes wrong with feeding, it may instead suffuse the same images with the acute pain of infant hunger. If these infantile object-relations resurface in adult life, so too will everything associated with them: thinking will become chaotic, and passion extreme, as is typical of an infant—or someone making love. Earthquakes often destroy the architecture of the present, but sometimes they also bring archaic ruins to light.

Our adult minds are collections of such internal object-relations—some in harmony, many in conflict. In short, we contain multitudes: layers of these relations,

some shifting according to the vicissitudes of our lives, most remaining buried by our perpetual efforts to seem all grown-up while avoiding searing pain. After all, relationships of childhood no less than adulthood are fraught with emotions such as shame, guilt, fear, and sadness; to diminish their pain, when we internalize these relationships, we layer them over with others that feel better. Recall Julee, who could not access the object-relation that characterized her adolescence without playing a game. According to Kernberg's theory, she developed a sense of herself by internalizing this relation, a conjunction of two images (herself and her mother), but also the particular emotions that characterized them (maybe anger and guilt). The game gave her an opportunity to enact this object-relation, and to some extent update its script, something not so easily done in everyday life without serious consequences. Imagine a life of repeated betrayal—a doomed, unconscious effort to rewrite that script—and you see why Freud favored Heraclitus's aphorism: "character is destiny."[15]

Notice that if object-relations theory is correct, it would not have mattered whether she played the mother or the child, the traitor or the betrayed, the angry judge or the guilty criminal, so long as the relation itself was activated. Moreover, with that object-relation helping to constitute her self, when the role-playing game gave her license to play her mother's role, it allowed her to be (a part of) herself. She could feel what otherwise she might have been unable to feel, and recognize these feelings as her own. In other words, she could integrate both these feelings and the whole object-relation which they suffuse into a more accurate sense of herself. Finally, she could adapt her script—improvising according to present circumstances, rather than repeating lines more suited to another time and place. This is working-through: a vivid experience of one's inner object-relations, a recognition of them as constitutive of oneself, and finally an adaptation of them as well as one's self-image. It's a technical term for growing-up. Children begin this work alone when they play with dolls or speak with imaginary friends, and they continue it together in their schoolyard games. In his ideal education, Plato insisted on the superiority of play over compulsion.[16] In his account of becoming himself, Nietzsche said "I know of no other way of dealing with great tasks than that of *play*."[17]

A hint of the great task of maturity is available in a brief role-playing game, such as Julee experienced, but the revelations of intense moments seldom effect real change in the structure of a self assembled from the object-relations of childhood. Revising the script of a human life is not the work of a weekend. What is required, at the very least, is something more sustained: something one plays daily, with others who do the same,

for many months or even years. This is what cybergames make possible. "Players sometimes talk about their real selves as a composite of their characters," writes Turkle, "and sometimes talk about their screen personae as means for working on their RL lives."[18] It is not unusual that one player will create several avatars. The variations may be infinite and idiosyncratic, but they are far from random. Each is externalizing inner object-relations, transferring them to the playground of the game.

A woman playing a man may be working through the gender roles inherited from her family, which have constituted but inhibited her in RL. Adopting the man's role in this script, she can rewrite it from within, integrating it and the assertive advantages it now offers into her self-image. A man playing a woman may be experiencing for the first time in decades a part of himself—his childhood relationship with his sister—that he lost access to when she died tragically. He buried this object-relation deep within himself because of the sadness that came to suffuse it. Thanks to the hard work of play online, he exhumes her by becoming her, thereby recognizing more of his graveyard as his own. As an adult, he can understand her death in a way he could not as a child, so now he rearranges the graveyard according to the needs of his present rather than those of his immature past.

Some can accomplish this rearrangement in solo fantasy, reminiscence, and narrative writing. With great luck or discipline, it is possible to return to one's childhood. Thanks to the taste of an infused madeleine, for instance, Proust's narrator recovered a moment of lost time, complete with its emotions as well as its sensations. But it took him years of disciplined writing to reclaim much of the rest. Even then, his memories alone were insufficient to give meaning to his adult life. He had to edit, arrange, and synthesize these memories to produce the great novel that would achieve that feat. When lesser mortals remember, we do so down familiar paths, well-lit and supervised by our present preoccupations. Some of our memories approximate authenticity, but many are confabulated, and most lack the vitality of feeling. Stock images accompanied by stereotyped passions decorate memory lane. Repetition characterizes our trips down it as well as our behaviors in RL: we find ourselves re-enacting the same object-relations with other people; when we introspect, in order to understand why this is so, we typically recall only what that script deems relevant; when we nonetheless bring truths about ourselves to light, the uses to which we put them are almost always familiar. Solo therapy is all but doomed by our psychological inertia.

The intervention of other people, however, can disrupt it. They have their own scripts and will never fully permit you to re-enact yours. Indeed, someone will cooperate in your re-enactment at all only if you have a role that approximates one of his. Your two scripts must overlap enough to trick you both into believing there is no script at all. Only so can you both play it with feeling. This is as true of the schoolyard as it is of virtual worlds. Your childhood friends are the ones who like to play the same games as you do; so likewise are your adult friends. Lovers marry when their scripts seem to overlap, and they divorce when they discover too wide a divergence. It's the same in a cybergame as in RL, only online everything happens faster. It's easier to believe that your script overlaps with another's, that someone is your dream come true, when there is so little of the physical and moral resistance that slows things down in the meatspace. The enhanced freedom and anonymity of cyberspace, by contrast, bring buried object-relations quickly to the surface. With them come their associated passions, sometimes hot.

Anyone skeptical that sexual satisfaction can be found online—while disembodied, so to speak—should consider the phenomenon of the wet dream, which has always testified that imagination alone is sufficient for sexual excitement. And so, for example, a dominant lesbian enters *Red Light Center* to achieve the satisfaction she cannot find in the conservative culture surrounding her isolated farm. She creates an avatar with this description, and she wanders its clubs and bars until she finds another woman looking to submit. Their avatars couple as they co-write the script of a fantasy. She may never know who the other player really is, and it may not matter. For a time, she enjoys playing her role, and the other player—for whatever reason—enjoys the complementary one. But let us imagine that she becomes curious about that other role and creates a second avatar, a submissive lesbian, permitting her to enact the obverse role of the object-relation which elicits her most intense passions. Maybe she abandons the first avatar and has the new one assume both roles, becoming a switch. Or maybe she keeps her online roles separate, reserving their combination for her rare sexual opportunities in the meatspace. In either case, she is on the way to integrating the fullness of that object relation into her self-image. She is coming to know herself, in sum, and thereby refashioning herself. But what is that—her self?

3. Selves

"As for the I," wrote Nietzsche in one of his last books, "it has become a fable, a fiction, a play on words."[19] Looking within himself, he found no central node of selfhood, but

instead a tangle of moods and emotions. He inaugurates the observation in one of his first essays, *On Moods*, written when he was only twenty years old: "When I eavesdrop on my own thoughts and feelings and silently attend to myself, it is as if I heard the hum and buzzing of those wild factions."[20] But at this stage he still speaks of an "I," observing, a "myself," observed. With the publication of *Birth of Tragedy* eight years later, however, he begins criticizing the principle of individuation, which produces the appearance of distinct selves. It is merely an Apollonian veil that hides the Dionysian reality of undifferentiated unity.[21]

Nietzsche sustains this critique of selfhood through most of his subsequent books. In *Daybreak*, for example, the ego is only "so-called."[22] In its place are "anger, hatred, love, pity, desire, knowledge, joy, pain," which are themselves but "names for *extreme* states: the milder, middle degrees, not to speak of the lower degrees which are continually in play elude us, and yet it is they which weave the web of our character and destiny." Here an introspection that reveals only separate components is conjoined with a doctrine that introspection is limited, that it reveals only the mountain peaks of a varied mental landscape. As for the self, or rather the illusion of it, this is a product of language and habit. By saying 'I,' by repeatedly imputing a unity to the internal cacophony, we bestow a specious substance on this illusion. "*Our opinion of ourself,*" our self-image, "is thenceforth a fellow worker in the construction of our character and destiny."[23] With these views, Nietzsche seems to have anticipated the conclusion of object-relations theory about selfhood. For neither are you one thing if your self is nothing but a collection of internalized object-relations.

Turkle endorses this conclusion in the more radical version she attributes to Jacques Lacan and other French philosophers of his era: the self is fragmented, its unity an illusion. Although she studied in post-1968 Paris, it wasn't until she played roles online, "where Gallic abstractions are concrete," that she finally understood their point: "what we experience as the 'I' can be likened to something we create with smoke and mirrors." Online gamers may know nothing of French philosophy, but they assimilate this vertiginous insight whenever they play multiple avatars. In cyberspace we easily distinguish between a self (at the keyboard) and a self-image (the avatar). But if this French chorus is correct, then so too in the meatspace must we draw the same distinction: self, a collection of fragments; self-image, a stubborn illusion of unity. But what produces this illusion, and why is it so stubborn?

Object-relations theory answers these questions neatly. The fragments are inner object-relations, as we have seen, together comprising the self; but when one object-

relation prevails over all the others, its self-reflection becomes the whole self's image of itself. Typically, though, this self-image misrepresents the whole self. This illusion persists so long as this object-relation prevails—which is to say, so long as the self retains its structure, so long as the repressed emotions remain too painful to bear. But even when the structure changes, and a new object-relation prevails, the old illusion will simply be replaced by another. The details of our illusions may change ("I was a victim but now I'm empowered," "I was a sinner but now I'm saved," "I was sexy but now I'm disgusting" or whatever), but their substratum remains the same ("I am I: one, real, substantial"). No wonder that the Apollonian imperative of the oracle at Delphi is so difficult to follow.[24] Indeed, as Nietzsche observed, "the maxim 'know thyself!' addressed to human beings by a god is almost malicious."[25]

You might feel proud, for instance, because pride is one of the emotions that characterize the object-relation—between you and your father—that has prevailed over the others in your self. Although this emotion feels crucial to your happiness, it is really an echo of the contempt he felt for you when he returned home from the bar and beat you. Whenever you feel this pride, then, you are playing his role, and thus need someone else to play the ashamed and fearful child. Your wife? Your own children? Your subordinates at work? Your life becomes a series of frustrating relationships in which your illusion of happiness requires the denigration and intimidation of others. And this illusion requires another, a self-image, which ignores what's really happening here. By contrast, achieving self-knowledge—whether through psychoanalysis, an online game, or some other means—will require working-through: courageously recognizing, reclaiming, and revising alienated fragments of your self, beginning with the searing shame and chilling fear of your childhood.

Yet something essential is missing from this account of selfhood, as the following three sets of questions aim to make clear. First of all, some of our relationships are internalized, while others leave no trace. According to this account, we internalize a relation when its object is something, or someone, we desire. But which objects do we desire? And why? Secondly, of all the object-relations we internalize, some predominate, scripting our engagement with others and determining our image of our self, while others sink into the depths, escaping our awareness. Why? By what criterion do we arrange the object-relations that comprise our self? Third, and above all, who is this 'we'? It cannot be our self, let alone our self-image, for this mysterious agent controls both. Who then is this lover of objects, this architect of their inner relations?

These are difficult and abstract questions. We can pose them more concretely through the graveyard simile. If our selves are like graveyards, there must be a sexton. He accepts some bodies for burial, but rejects others; he allocates plots, deciding to bury this body here, that body there; he permits this one to receive a headstone, that one a mausoleum. Only so does the graveyard become a graveyard, properly speaking, rather than a landfill of rotting corpses. Nietzsche elaborated a similar metaphor: "One can dispose of one's drives like a gardener and, though few know it, cultivate the shoots of anger, pity, curiosity, vanity as productively and profitably as a beautiful fruit tree on a trellis."[26] Some prefer a garden in the French fashion, others in the Chinese, and so on. But it is also possible "to let the plants grow up and fight their fight out among themselves—indeed, one can take delight in such a wilderness, and desire precisely this delight, though it gives one some trouble, too." We can garden well or badly, but how we do so is up to us. "All this we are at liberty to do," Nietzsche adds. But who is this free gardener within us? What guides his decisions? To what end does he exercise his freedom?

Let us try to answer these difficult and abstract questions by returning to the experience of online gamers. Those who become addicted begin to feel that their virtual lives are at least as real as their embodied ones, sometimes more so. "RL is just one more window," says one such player, "and it's not usually my best one."[27] This is a radical ontology—that our embodied life is just one more window, a game no more real than those online—which seems at first to complement the fragmentary psychology shared by philosophical psychoanalysts from Freud to Kernberg, Nietzsche to Lacan. A unitary self for human bodies, according to them all, is a misleading appearance, an illusion—like an avatar. The lives of avatars, furthermore, are like the lives of bodies inasmuch as all are dramas scripted by fundamental object-relations. It wouldn't matter what sort of world (virtual or physical) serves as the stage for the enactment of these dramas, if the radical ontology—whether of the ancient Sophists or the recent postmodernists—were correct and there is no ultimate reality, or meta-narrative, only narratives and perceptions without end.

If bodies are more real than online avatars, however, it could be because they are playing roles in a special sort of game: RL. For not all games are created equal. Cyberspace depends on the existence of the meatspace, but not the other way round: obliterate cyberspace and the meatspace endures; obliterate the meatspace, and with it goes cyberspace. There is thus a hierarchy of reality. This argument undercuts the gamer's testimony that RL is just another window, one game equal in reality to those

online, but it leaves untouched the idea that RL is nonetheless a game, a special one, a super-game. Indeed, this idea agrees neatly with the fragmentary psychology we have been exploring. When you sit your body before a keyboard to play cybergames, you are embedding roles within the super-roles you already play in the super-game called RL. Whether doing so permits you to work through the roles you play here, or entrenches them with mere repetition there, these are ultimately roles within roles, games within a game. But is it games and roles all the way down? This would be the consequence of the conjunction of our fragmentary psychology with any ontology according to which there is no basic reality, no ultimate self.

It would also be incoherent, because there cannot be a game without a player. This is true of any sort of game, but consider only the online ones which suggest otherwise. Many avatars in these virtual worlds are "bots," lively features of the virtual environment, some more sophisticated than others. All of them, however, are determined by the same computer program that creates the environment. Walk your own avatar into a shop, for example, and a bot may offer a canned greeting and begin a tour. Bots perform all kinds of functions in these games, but there could be no game populated entirely by them. As interesting and meaningful as this experiment could be—as a social simulation, for instance, run by economists—it would not be a game. For there would be no players, no one making choices. Whatever significance it had would have to be imposed from outside it (by the economists); no one within it would be able to grant anything meaning or value. If the postmodern use of fragmentary psychology were correct, then, RL could not be a super-game, or a game of any sort; it would be populated entirely by the bodily equivalent of bots: object-relations.

To deny that RL is populated entirely by bodily bots, to assert that some who appear in the meatspace are agents, capable of free choice, we must find something within ourselves that makes us who we are—the lover of our objects, the architect of their inner relations, the sexton of our selves. Our discussion of online games could help us locate this mysterious agent, for if the meatspace is a super-game, we should expect this agent to play the roles of embodied life for the same reasons a gamer plays the roles of her avatars. We concluded earlier that she does this for two reasons: first, to know herself better, by recognizing alienated parts of herself and adapting her self-image to her whole self; and second, to make this whole self better, by revising the scripts of its object-relations according to her present circumstances. When she plays roles in her embodied life, accordingly, we might expect her to be seeking the same goals. This agent, this gardener within, would engage her body in love and work in

order both to know herself better and to create the best possible version of her self. If so, this gardener would also share two goals of Nietzsche himself: self-knowledge and self-creation.[28]

4. Dramatists

Before he proposed the image of the gardener, Nietzsche had a grander theory of who we are. "The secret ground of our essence" he supposed to be a world will, "whose phenomenal appearance we are."[29] Nietzsche borrowed this theory from Schopenhauer, who introduced elements of Indian philosophy into the German tradition by fusing them with Kant.[30] Behind the phenomenal veil of Maya, according to Schopenhauer, was the noumenal Will of the world.[31] "I feel myself compelled," Nietzsche agreed, "to make the metaphysical assumption that that which truly exists and the original Unity, with its eternal suffering and contradiction, needs at the same time the delightful vision, the pleasurable appearance, for its continual redemption."[32] In Nietzsche's version, then, the experiences of our senses, including the experiences of ourselves as separate individuals, are pleasant illusions projected by the original Unity for its continual redemption. "For only as an aesthetic phenomenon," famously, "are existence and the world justified to eternity."[33]

The world is thus a stage, according to *Birth of Tragedy*, and we are merely players. More precisely, the world Will makes a stage upon which it then plays. "This 'self' is not the same as that of the empirically real waking man," Nietzsche writes, echoing the *Upanishads*, "but rather the only I which truly exists, the eternal I."[34] What about us? We are merely the characters this Self invents for its own aesthetic pleasure: "our innermost being, the substratum common to us all, experiences the dream with profound pleasure."[35] So we are its dream-images, avatars of the eternal Self. "This is a dream," he imagines it saying to itself, "I want to dream on!"[36] This is not to say we are altogether inert. Just as Hamlet, Shakespeare's character, can stage a play within his play, so too can we artfully re-present the appearances of our empirical lives.[37] Our dreams are such representations—nocturnal re-appearances of the appearances from our daily lives. They can be beautiful, but the most beautiful of our representations, in Nietzsche's estimation, are our works of art. Greatest of these were the Attic tragedies, especially those of Aeschylus, but every artwork earns his approval if it represents the terrible truth that we are only avatars, created and destroyed for no purpose other than the joy of our one Will.

This substratum is the real artist, creator both of us and of whatever we create, just as Shakespeare is the real dramaturge, writer both of *Hamlet* and of whatever its characters stage within it. Let us pause for a moment and dwell on this comparison, which clarifies several important but subtle points about drama and the distinction between appearance and reality. Within the virtual world of *Hamlet*, Hamlet is an agent capable of creating a subordinate virtual world, complete with characters of his own choice, who speak lines of his choosing, in the way he advises. And he does this. King Claudius does not know this, so Hamlet does not *appear* to him to be the director of the play. He is wrong. To Horatio, by contrast, Hamlet does *appear* to be the director of the play. He is right. Within the virtual world created by Shakespeare, then, Hamlet *really* is the director of the play. But in the world inhabited by Shakespeare, our empirical world, Hamlet only *appears* to be that director. After all, Shakespeare writes those lines; he is the *real* dramaturge. The play within the play would not even exist were it not for him, nor would Hamlet. There is in drama, as with cybergames, a hierarchy of reality.

Nietzsche's dramaturgical view of the world and ourselves in *Birth of Tragedy* accordingly construes RL—"real life" to online gamers, "empirical reality" to philosophers—as a super-game. Speaking without qualification, your reading this paper is an illusion, as was my writing it. In fact, the super-gamer is reading now a paper it wrote earlier, for whatever reason. But when we add a qualification, making it clear that we are considering the empirical level of the cosmic drama, it's not an illusion at all, but really happening: you are really reading this, just as I really wrote it, and anyone who thinks otherwise is wrong. After all, the world of Shakespeare's play is virtual, but in it the King and Queen of Denmark are really watching a play that is really directed by Hamlet, whatever they think. He had his purpose for doing so: catching the conscience of a King. So too, when you dream or write plays, you create avatars for your own purposes. However, beneath you—you and Hamlet, not to mention Shakespeare too—is the creator and player of a super-game in which all of us (as we typically think of ourselves, anyway) are merely avatars. Downstream from the *Brahman* of Indian philosophy, Nietzsche's dramaturge is who we really are: sexton, gardener or artist; one Will, cosmic dreamer, or eternal I.

He preserved these conclusions about drama and dream even after he abandoned the dualistic metaphysics of Schopenhauer. "I must go on dreaming lest I perish," he repeats in *Gay Science*, for example, where appearance is no longer "the opposite of some essence."[38] The real world has become a fable, as Nietzsche will later write, so that anyone who credits a reality beneath appearance has merely been tricked by

certain kinds of appearance.[39] Playing his role in a new sort of drama, nonetheless, he "belongs to the masters of ceremony of existence." *Masters*: plural. Gone is the one dramaturge, the original Unity, the eternal Self inherited from Indian philosophy. In its place are manifold new artists: the bodily drives, the infinite and perhaps purposeless strivings of a material world.[40] This is as evident in the passages on the notorious will-to-power as it is in his new understanding of the human self. Is it still capable of accounting for dramaturgy? In other words, is it capable of accounting for the special power of the gardener within, who cultivates some of our drives while weeding out others, all in order to live a better life—however that be understood?[41]

5. Commanders

"'Body am I and soul' – so speaks the child," as though memorizing a catechism of Platonic origin.[42] Nietzsche's Zarathustra encourages us to put aside our childish ways and awake from the nightmare of ascetic history: "the awakened, the knowing one says: body am I through and through, and nothing besides." As for soul, it "is just a word for something on the body." Without soul, however, it is not clear what remains of *us*. The body is not one thing, after all, but a multiplicity, and Nietzsche never loses sight of this fact. It's "a war and a peace, one herd and one shepherd." The war and the herd are easy enough to discern in his writing, but what about this peace, and who is the shepherd? Formerly, according to Platonism, these were the immaterial soul and the fruit of its mastery over the body. What are they now, for body awakened to its independence?

The shepherd is not the 'I,' the 'ego,' or any notion that smacks of consciousness, because they all become subordinate to the body. They are its activities. "Your body and its great reason," Zarathustra declares, "does not say I, but *does* I." If there is any selfhood left in this account, then, it must stand behind our conscious activity. "Behind your thoughts and feelings," then, "stands a powerful commander, an unknown wise man—he is called self." In case there is any lingering doubt about his composition, Zarathustra adds, "he is your body." But how can a body, a multiplicity of drives, be its own commander? By the action of its great reason, Nietzsche answers, and this seems to be its supreme drive, the one powerful enough to arrange the body's other drives. This is the self. Its arrangement, in turn, determines what pains or pleases you: "The self says to the ego: 'Feel pain here!' And then it suffers and reflects on how it might suffer no more." Likewise for pleasure.

When your supreme drive remains unconscious, you feel that you are being pushed or pulled by a foreign power. But that is only because you mistakenly think of yourself as consciousness, rather than as this commanding self. When your supreme drive becomes conscious, however, you feel a power that you could easily mistake for freedom. "Freedom of the will," Nietzsche writes later in *Beyond Good and Evil*, "that is the word for that complex pleasurable condition experienced by the person willing who commands and simultaneously identifies himself with the one who executes the command."[43] Your body may be a teeming garden, but one plant comes eventually to dominate the others; *it* is the gardener. This is the wild garden Nietzsche envisioned earlier, the one that "gives one some trouble, too." Yet can a plant garden—not just other plants, but itself? Can a drive command—not just other drives, but itself? "The one who cannot obey himself," after all, "is commanded."[44]

A military analogy makes Nietzsche's point quite clear. The captain gives orders, and thus commands, but his orders can be remanded by the major, whom he must obey. The major's orders too, can be remanded by the colonel, whom he must obey. And so on up the chain of command until we reach the supreme commander. Her orders alone cannot be remanded; there is no higher authority whom she must obey; for she commands herself. But is self-command possible for a drive? Nietzsche's notion of drive (or will) is far from clear, but one of the following two varieties is most commonly assumed: force or matter. Understood as a force, first of all, it is difficult to see how a drive could command itself. Self-command is a type of self-reflection, after all, a turning back upon the self. If a force were somehow able to turn back upon itself, though, it would cancel itself out. Self-reflection for a force would thus be tantamount to self-annihilation.

Self-reflection—and thus another of its types, self-knowledge—is also impossible for matter, as Sextus Empiricus argued against the Epicureans and Stoics, his materialist opponents.[45] It requires the self to play simultaneously two roles: subject and object of reflection. For a chunk of matter to play two roles, though, it must be divided into two parts: a part that is doing the reflecting, the subject, and a part that is being reflected upon, the object. If the subject and object of reflection are different, however, this will not be a case of *self*-reflection. If they are the same, no division occurred, and there could be no self-*reflection*. The paradox goes back to Plato, who poses it differently in different dialogues. In *Republic*, 'self-command' seems impossible. "The stronger self that does the commanding," Socrates observes, "is the same as the weaker self that gets commanded, so that only one person is referred to in

all such expressions."[46] We cannot be both weaker and stronger than ourselves, can we? In *Charmides*, self-knowledge seems impossible, for similar reasons.[47] Yet this is a goal, if not *the* goal, of Platonic philosophy! "What we need," Socrates thus begs, "is some great man to give an adequate interpretation of this point in every detail, whether no existing thing can by nature apply its own faculty to itself but only towards something else, or whether some can, but others cannot."[48]

6. Knowers

Plato seems to be that great man, beginning to resolve this problem by dividing us into parts. In *Alcibiades*, Socrates makes the simplest distinction, between body and soul. A human being commands his body, and the commander must be different from the commanded, so the human being cannot be his body.[49] Instead, he is the only other alternative—the soul.[50] Even if there is a soul, however, the problem of self-command recurs. What commands the soul? Fortunately, Socrates warns that his simple argument lacks rigor. It's enough to convince Alcibiades, who is eager to become supreme commander of the Athenians before he has learned to command himself. He needs to learn, first, who that self is; in other words, he needs to acquire self-knowledge. If he learns that he is a soul, however, he cannot be supreme commander unless the soul that he is can somehow reflect upon itself. This is what the psychology of other Platonic dialogues permits.

"To anyone who cannot see what is inside, but sees only the outer shell," writes Plato in *Republic*, "it will look like a single creature, a human being."[51] We are deceived, he thinks, by the uniform appearance of our outer shell, our skin. But looking beneath it—which is to say practicing psychology, *psychê-logos*, or the study of the soul—he sees a multitude. Colorfully, he compares our souls to "one of those ancient creatures that legends say used to exist," namely, "the Chimaera, Scylla, Cerberus, and the numerous other cases where many different kinds are said to have grown together into one."[52] Plato also compares our inner fragmentation to a zoo, where a many-headed beast represents our unruly bodily appetites and a lion represents our emotions (or at least our longing for social status and our anger whenever this longing is frustrated). Had he stopped there, he would simply have anticipated the problem considered by Nietzsche. Like him, Plato sees the need for a sexton, a gardener, a commander—in this image, a zookeeper. To manage the many-headed beast and the lion, then, he installs a little human being. The task of this homunculus is to tame our beasts, directing their

energies toward the best possible life. This is the difficult task of ethics, but it requires knowing the best objects of desire and arranging our embodied life to achieve them.

According to Plato, this knower and arranger is reason: the homunculus within the human being, the real self within the embodied self. But to perform its tasks—knowledge, self-knowledge, and self-government towards true goodness—it must be able to accomplish what the bodily commander could not: self-reflection. His argument that it can occurs across several dialogues, drawing our attention to a remarkable feature of knowledge that distinguishes it from belief, true belief, and even true belief with an account.[53] Let us try to compress it into an example. A student claims to know the Pythagorean theorem. She says that the square of the hypotenuse is the sum of the squares of the other two sides, and she shows that she is able to calculate it for any triangle she is given. But that is not knowledge of the theorem. It may simply be the repetition of a formula she was commanded to use at school, the way a soldier repeats his orders and then puts them into effect. Her teachers may know the theorem, properly speaking, and they may tell her about it, but she does not know whether they are right, any more than the soldier knows whether his orders are good. He may believe they are, and he may be right; she may trust her teachers, and her trust may be well-placed; but true belief and prudent trust are not knowledge.

Knowledge requires a more intimate relationship between its subject and object—in this case, the student and the Pythagorean theorem. There cannot be the sort of gap introduced, as here, by the authority of others. Indeed, there cannot even be the narrow gap introduced by the authority of an account. For if knowledge depended for its security on an account, and were therefore only as secure as this account, this account too would have to be known, requiring its own account, and an account of that account, setting us on an infinite regress. To be knowledge, then, the knowledge must authorize itself, and must therefore be knowledge of itself. If so, all knowledge is both self-knowing and self-commanding. Echoing Delphic Apollo, whose inscriptions enjoined temple-goers to self-restraint as well as self-knowledge, Socrates reminds Alcibiades "we agreed that knowing oneself was the same as being self-commanded."[54] To perform these self-reflective functions, as we have seen, reason cannot be either force or matter; it must be immaterial. This is Plato's view: although the embodied soul includes appetites and passions, its true nature, discernible only when it is disembodied, is purely rational.[55] Only so can it function as the commander, the director, the gardener; only so, in short, can it play the game.

He compares the embodied soul to the sea-god Glaucus, an avatar whose radiant form has been dimmed and deformed by immersion in the waves. So too our reason, after descending into the meatspace, becomes "maimed by its partnership with the body."[56] When it is pure, however, it is not "full of multicolored variety and dissimilarity and conflict with itself."[57] The hint of its purity—our real self—is available from "its love of wisdom" (in Greek, its *philosophia*).[58] Whoever we are, in other words, we are the ones asking who we are, what kind of world we really live in, and what we should do with ourselves in reality thus understood. Plato embedded his answers to these central questions in an allegory of a cave, which is susceptible of many correct and complementary interpretations.[59] Among them is the following eschatological tale: after purifying itself of bodily attachments in order to recognize itself, reality, and the supreme value that suffuses both, the soul must nevertheless return to the darkness of embodiment, a virtual reality of mere images.[60] But why?

One motive might be philosophic—that is, the love of wisdom and the search for understanding. Nowadays, when we want to understand ourselves and our reality, with dozens of sciences investigating relevant questions, one lifetime is obviously insufficient to answer them all. "Life is short," the Hippocratics knew, "but the art is long."[61] Even if it were long, though, the particularities of embodied life impose certain restrictions on our pursuit of knowledge. Is sex more pleasurable for a man or a woman? This is something the Greeks wanted to know, it seems, for one of their myths recounts a debate on this question between Zeus and Hera, each maintaining that the greater pleasure was available to the other. To resolve it, they turned to Tiresias, the legendary seer, for he had known the bodily experience of each gender. After seeing one pair of copulating snakes, he changed into a woman; he changed back into a man, later, when he saw another pair. Asked this pregnant question, Tiresias answered that the woman enjoys it more—for which Hera blinded his eyes but Zeus compensated him with the gift of prophecy.[62]

Wisdom was also the goal of reincarnation for Plato, his Pythagorean predecessors, and the Indian philosophers whose original doctrine they transmitted to the Greeks. In an earlier version of this doctrine, a soul transmigrates haphazardly through different species, as well as different types of human existence, until it has seen the cosmos from the perspective of every sort of living being. Only so can it finally transcend the limits of these many perspectives and understand the one world as it really is. "There is no diversity," reads the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, and "he gets death after death who perceives here seeming diversity."[63] Escape from these cycles of embodiment is the

final reward of someone who finally learns that "as a Unity only is It to be looked upon, this indemonstrable, enduring Being."[64] A later version moralizes the doctrine. Rather than transmigrating haphazardly, the soul ascends or descends a hierarchy of lives according to its merit (*karma*). The *Chandogya Upanishad*, for instance, promises rebirth to an upper-caste mother for good deeds; for bad, transmigration into "the womb of a dog, or the womb of a swine."[65]

The doctrine of reincarnation appears in Greek texts not long afterwards, but does so only in this moralized version.[66] Empedocles, for instance, said that he had been a girl, a bush, a bird, and a fish, thus seeing the cosmos from the air and the water, from the perspective of an animal and a plant, not to mention a female as well as male.[67] But his incarnations were not random: he ranked them, deeming the lion the best of animals, the laurel the best of plants, and the best of human roles the ones he himself occupied (poet, priest, physician, and politician).[68] He had ascended through all these lives and now walked among humans, he wrote, "as an immortal god."[69]

Plato seems to have been humbler, yet he adopted the same moralized version of the doctrine.[70] One may descend into a human body and nonetheless fail to learn anything valuable, choosing to see the appearances of the meatspace as originals rather than the images they really are. "Not to be moved abruptly from here to a vision of Beauty itself when he sees what we call beauty here," such an agent plays the super-game of the meatspace the way someone plays an online game, repetitively, for nothing more than amusement or immediate gratification: "he surrenders to pleasure and sets out in the manner of a four-footed beast."[71] Whether according to cosmic justice or his own postmortem choice, Plato suggests in *Phaedo*, he will be reincarnated as an animal.[72] But an agent who manipulates her avatar—that is, her body—in order to know her world, to know her self, and to arrange a better life will ascend a ladder of incarnations whose summit permits her to kick the ladder away and become an immortal god.[73]

7. Charioteers

In *Phaedrus* Plato also imagines the soul as a chariot, drawn by two horses—a more obedient one representing our emotions, an impetuous one representing our appetites—and conducted by a charioteer who represents our reason.[74] This charioteer tries to direct our desire toward the higher reality of the Forms, and thus away from the debasing illusions to which we are naturally drawn by our embodiment (appetitive pleasure is the focus of this dialogue on love; *Republic* focuses on the glamor of wealth

and status). Failing, after catching a glimpse of the divine procession, he falls below to another embodiment; succeeding, he remains above. "When they think in this way," says Krishna, charioteer of Vishnu, "the insightful ones who are gifted with creative contemplation, are part of me."[75] Whether or not he did walk among the Greeks as an incarnate god, Empedocles' ambition to divinity was not a betrayal of the tradition but instead its fulfillment.

The truth of this untimely contemplative ethics depends, of course, on the truth of the many doctrines it presupposes, beginning with the unfashionable one that our agent within, our true self, is non-bodily, immaterial reason. Whatever we think of the arguments marshaled to support it—most of which could not be reproduced here—something as valuable as conviction is nonetheless available to us now. For whether or not we subscribe to these ancient traditions, and whether or not we credit the arguments to be made in their favor, we can still experience their outlook by absorption in a cybergame. Religious experience, in other words, is available online. These games can train us to recognize that what we typically think of as the self, whether the lover's or the beloved's, is merely an image. This recognition is a denigration of the body, as is sometimes charged, only if these ancient traditions are wrong about selfhood. If you hold a picture of your beloved, after all, you honor him and it by recognizing them each for what they are. There is a world of difference between caressing an image and caressing its original. True love demands that we acknowledge this difference.

If these ancient traditions are right, true love also requires you to treat "real life," the meatspace, as a virtual world, into which you have descended. This time you have assumed one sort of body, but next time it may be another—maybe of a different gender, class, or race; maybe of a different ability, sexuality, or even species—and so on with others, until the purpose of living has been achieved. Hearts will be broken, fortunes made, and it all happens over eons. But to what end? From the perspective of an avatar—in the cosmic super-game with which we are concluding, no less than in the role-playing games from which we began—the purpose of life will be to achieve knowledge of self and reality, to reorient our desire toward the most satisfying object. For Platonism, as we have seen, this is the Good; for Hinduism, Vishnu. Yet this answer to our initial question only brings us to the porch of a more imposing one: why does divinity itself descend? Why does it create? Why not remain within its own perfect solitude?

We must remain standing on this porch. Although there are hints of an answer in Plato, Platonists have followed these hints into metaphysical labyrinths, often losing

the thread that would have returned them to the world. For this reason among others, Nietzsche tried to reject the Platonic tradition, but he may have inadvertently supplied it with the straightforward answer to this question that it was seeking all along. His cosmic dramatist stages a tragedy for its own sake, for beauty alone, because "only as an aesthetic phenomenon are existence and the world justified to eternity."[76]

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Notes

[1] *Bhagavad Gita* 9.11. All references to this text are to Patton 2008.

[2] *Bhagavad Gita* 13.30.

[3] Turkle 1995: 221.

[4] Turkle 1995: 219.

[5] Turkle 1995: 214.

[6] Turkle 1995: 222.

[7] For brevity's sake, MMORPGs will henceforth be called simply "online games" or "cybergames."

[8] Turkle 1995: 219.

[9] Turkle 1995: 188.

[10] Turkle 1995: 188. See also 207–8.

[11] Lear 2005: 133.

[12] Gay 1995: 586.

[13] Gay 1995: 586.

[14] Kernberg 2005: 72.

[15] For Freud, see *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 3; for Heraclitus, see DK22B119. See also Nietzsche *Daybreak* 2.115.

[16] *Republic* 7.536e1–7.

[17] *Ecce Homo* "Why I Am So Clever," 10. See also *Beyond Good and Evil* 4.94. For quotations of Nietzsche, see Pearson and Large 2006.

[18] Turkle 1995: 192.

[19] *Twilight of the Idols*, "The Four Great Errors," 3.

[20] Pearson and Large: 22.

[21] *Birth of Tragedy* 1.

[22] *Daybreak* 2.115.

[23] *Daybreak* 2.115. See also *Daybreak* 2.199 and *Beyond Good and Evil* (1.12, 16, 17, 19–21, 2.32).

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[24] *On the Utility and Liability of History for Life* 10. See also *Birth of Tragedy* 4; *Daybreak* 1.48; *Gay Science* 3.120; *Beyond Good and Evil* 2.32; *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Preface 1; *Ecce Homo*, "Why I Am So Clever" 9, "Why I Am a Destiny" 1.

[25] *Gay Science* 3.335

[26] *Daybreak* 5.560.

[27] Turkle 1995: 13.

[28] *Gay Science* 3.270, 4.290, 4.319, 4.335; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 1, "On the Way of the Creator"; *Beyond Good and Evil* 2.32, 6.211; *Gay Science* 5.354; *On the Genealogy of Morality* Preface, 1; *Ecce Homo*, "Why I Am So Clever," 9.

[29] *Birth of Tragedy* 4.

[30] Janaway 2002: 4, 18, 51.

[31] See, e.g., *World as Will and Representation* 1.1.3.

[32] *Birth of Tragedy* 4.

[33] *Birth of Tragedy* 5.

[34] *Birth of Tragedy* 5.

[35] *Birth of Tragedy* 1.

[36] *Birth of Tragedy* 1.

[37] This famous line finishes the second act: "The play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King" (2.2.605–6). The play itself appears in 3.2.

[38] *Gay Science* 1.54.

[39] *Twilight of the Idols*, "How the Real World Finally Became a Fable."

[40] Anticipating Freud, Nietzsche speaks of drives (*Trieben*), and not of object-relations. However, as was shown earlier, Kernberg's theory makes it possible to translate talk of drive into talk of object-relation. For simplicity's sake, this paper does not perform the translation.

[41] Here are some Nietzschean candidates for a better life: knowing oneself (*Beyond Good and Evil* 6.211), becoming oneself (*Gay Science* 4.335; see also 3.270), styling oneself (*Gay Science* 4.290).

[42] *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "On the Despisers of the Body."

[43] *Beyond Good and Evil* 1.19.

[44] *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 2, "On Self-Overcoming." "Such," he adds, "is the nature of the living."

[45] *Against the Logicians* 1.310–12.

[46] *Republic* 4.430e11–431a1. This is a slight adaptation of the translation that appears in Reeve 2004 ("command" has been substituted for "control," in order to keep consistent the terms of Plato and Nietzsche on this question). All translations of other Platonic dialogues, besides *Republic*, are from Cooper 1997.

[47] 167a–169c. See also Aristotle, *De Anima* 3.2, 425b12–28, where a related puzzle arises for vision. For a discussion, see Sorabji 2006:201–11. Plotinus responds directly to Sextus, it seems, in *Ennead* 5.3 (especially 5.3.1–2), but his Platonist response is, not surprisingly, already scattered throughout Plato.

[48] *Charmides* 169a1–5.

[49] *Alcibiades* 129c2–e7.

[50] *Alcibiades* 130a1–c2.

[51] *Republic* 9.588d10–e1.

[52] *Republic* 9.588c2–5.

[53] See, e.g., *Theaetetus* 187a–210a, *Meno* 80d–86c, 97a–100b, and *Phaedo* 73c–77a, 78b–80b, *Republic* 5.474b–480a, 6.509d–511e.

[54] *Alcibiades* 133c7. For the Delphic inscriptions, see *Charmides* 164d4 and *Alcibiades* 129a2–4, 132c9, as well as *Phaedrus* 229e6. For a similar equation in *Charmides*: 165a1 and 165c4–6.

[55] Even if it can be shown that (i) knowledge must be self-reflective, and that (ii) only something immaterial can be self-reflective, this does not show (iii) how the immaterial thing does this (that is, how exactly it avoids the pitfalls of material self-reflection). Showing this, (iii), is a principal task of Plotinus's *Enneads*, especially the fifth (and particularly 5.3, 5.5, and 5.9).

[56] *Republic* 10.611b9.

[57] *Republic* 10.611b1.

[58] *Republic* 10.611d9.

[59] *Republic* 7.514a–518c1.

[60] *Republic* 7.516e2 –5.

[61] *Aphorisms* 1.1.

[62] The story comes from the pseudo-Hesiodic *Melampoda* (*Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd ed. 1530).

[63] 4.4.19. All translations of the *Upanishads* are from Radhakrishnan and Moore 1989.

[64] 4.4.20.

[65] 2.23.3. These two *Upanishads* are generally considered the earlier, from pre-Buddhist India, and are typically dated to the 7th or 6th century BCE, a century before Empedocles.

[66] For a fuller story of this doctrine's transmission from India to Greece, see Miller 2011, ch. 3.4–6, working especially with McEvilley 2001.

[67] DK 31B117. For Empedocles, and the other Pre-Platonic philosopher cited in this paper (Heraclitus), see McKirahan 2011.

[68] DK 31B127.

[69] DK 31B112.

[70] For a fuller account of this adoption, see Miller 2011, ch. 4.

[71] *Phaedrus* 250e1–4.

[72] *Phaedo* 81d5–82a8. See also *Phaedrus* 248d1 and 249b4, as well as *Phaedo* 82a–b and *Timaeus* 90e ff.

[73] See, e.g., *Phaedo* 82b–c. A fuller account is available in Miller 2011, ch. 4.8.

[74] *Phaedrus* 246a–256e.

[75] *Bhagavad Gita* 10.8

[76] *Birth of Tragedy* 5.

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