

## FROM REPRESENTATION TO VISUALIZATION: REFLECTION ON THE TWOFOLD COGNITIVE INTERPRETATION OF CORPOREALITY

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**Abstract.** In what content would human knowledge be able to envelop the corporeality and incorporate it as its subject? The relation between the subject of knowledge and the body as a primary phenomenon is problematized in different fields of science, uncovering the specific problems lying in the essence of this relation. This interpretation starts with Schopenhauer's conceptualization of body and then goes through the projection of body in some specific areas, explicating corporeality in its virtual form through the concept of "symembodiment", analyzing the real body as opposed to, on one hand – the cinematic body and on the other – the virtual one. By using the examples of Maderna's *Schopenhauer*, Campbell's *Green Lantern*, RPG series *Final Fantasy VII*, the virtual platform *Second Life*, the main goal is to deliver a comment and reveal the twofold nature of corporeality (mediate and immediate) through its theoretical justification.

**Keywords:** Schopenhauer, corporeality, virtual, symembodiment, cinema, role-player game.

### **Philosophical justification of corporeality – Schopenhauer as “The Philosopher of Body”**

This inquiry will undertake the theoretical justification of body as a starting point, as well as a boundary and a medium, serving as a differentiation between the inner world of the subject and his “entering” into the objective reality. By presupposing these reflections we are able to reach an explication of body in two major aspects. In this sense, the goal is to bring forward these differentiated theorizations of corporeality and its interpretations in a strict connection to cognition.

The first theorization concerns corporeality in its philosophical dimension. The central idea here is going to be explicated through Schopenhauer's reflections on this specific subject. It is clear that in the history of philosophy this problem is revealed in many ways; it also has projections in different philosophical systems. From Ancient Philosophy to the Middle Ages we are able to see in a partial way how body was perceived as opposed to the Soul. However, the most comprehensive

conceptualization of body in Modern Philosophy finds its grounds in Descartes' dualism, leading to the debatable, but yet still actual in present day discussion of body-mind problem. From Descartes on "body-problem" could be expressed as a significant philosophical reflection in one way or another and it also has partial projections in the two main pre-Kantian methods of cognition – empirism and rationalism. But still all these theorizations are not sufficient enough to give us the central role of body in relation to knowledge. The focus here, then, will be on Schopenhauer's philosophical approach of body and how it is related both to the world as representation and the world as will, according to his main and most significant work *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*.

In his book *Schopenhauer. On the Character of the World: the Metaphysics of the Will* John Atwell describes Schopenhauer as: "the philosopher of the body" and then adds that: "to a greater extent than anyone before his time, and even since then, he makes the body that, one's own body (*der eigene Leib*) the primary focus and indispensable condition of all philosophical inquiry" (Atwell, 1995: 81). Atwell's characterization is really accurate for it shows the crucial role that body plays in Schopenhauer metaphysical system. At first glance, it seems that Schopenhauer's interpretation of body involves only its ontological dimensions or the fact that body is perceived for the most of its parts only as a material object through which we are able to obtain knowledge for other objects or using Schopenhauer's words *a mere intuitive representation*. So far this is true, for it shows the first side of his theorization of corporeality and in fact the exact part that is going to serve us here.

But for the sake of understanding we cannot exclude his second theorization, which shows us in the clearest philosophical way his claim of giving "the transition from the phenomenon to the thing-in-itself, given up by Kant as impossible" (Schopenhauer, 1966: 191). Schopenhauer's claim is directed towards Kant's awareness of the unknowableness of thing-in-itself (*das Ding an sich*) and its complete disassociation to appearances. This is probably the most discussed problem in post-Kantian philosophy for it shows the abyss between the actual real world and the world as we perceive it in our minds. Schopenhauer's answer to this question is yet again a unique and innovative one; this is the reason why it has widely spread as a subject of investigation not only in philosophy, but later in psychology and psychoanalysis as well. The most obvious example of this influence we are able to see in Philipp Mainländer's *Philosophie der Erlösung*, mainly in the theoretical parts of his philosophical system, adopting the Schopenhauerian interpretation of the affirmation of the will<sup>1)</sup>.

This second theorization of body has its core in the idea of will as the thing-in-itself and as such the irrational, unknowable and absolute metaphysical ground of all that exists. In this sense body is interpreted as immediate "objectified will" (*objektivierter Wille*) and as such it has partial immediate cognition of the thing-in-itself as will and as ground of its own existence and the existence of every other

object. Accordingly, this idea of the presupposed immediate identity between will and body is the first philosophical base of perceiving the subject of cognition as an individual, as a willing human being. As Schopenhauer states: “The subject of cognition is an individual precisely because of this special relation with the one body that, aside from all this, is only a representation like any other” (Schopenhauer, 2010: 128). In conclusion, we must first differentiate the two approaches on how Schopenhauer perceives the body in relation to knowledge in his concept:

First, body as a primary phenomenon or initial, intuitive (empirical) representation and as such perceived as any other material object – *through the mediation* of the principles of our cognition, e.g. the fourfold principle of sufficient reason.

Second, body as an “objectified will” or as Atwell describes it “individual, embodied knowing subject” (Atwell, 1995: 83) and as such perceiving *immediate inner knowledge* of himself.

These two approaches could also be seen as a new dialectic of body in a purely theoretical aspect. If we go further into conceptualizing this twofold explication and how it is connected to our cognition, we would be able to reach a sufficient understanding of the Inner Self, I – both as a subject of cognition and individual and its relation to the material substance. Following the latter two aspects of Schopenhauer’s differentiation of corporeality in relation to cognition the question if a third option is possible raises. As we have already seen the Schopenhauerian dialectic of corporeality explicates body in two major aspects. In this sense, the way we perceive and know our body is revealed through the categorization of different ways of knowledge.

In his theoretical system he differentiates four autonomous ways of cognition: *First* – as a representative interpretation of appearances, through the principle of sufficient reason; *second* – as aesthetical and pure cognition, explicating the objective reality; *third* – as a philosophical cognition or body as immediate cognition of the thing-in-itself as will and *fourth* – as nihilization of all these forms, or the idea of *das Nichts* where the subject and object are thought as synthetically identical. The latter is widely problematized in the context of Eastern philosophy, but it could also be interpreted in the context of European philosophy through the concept of the *antipessimistic nihilism*.

Insofar as there is an argument, it may be summarized as follows: the problematization of corporeality is explicated through the first and the third way of cognition, revealing the mediated and immediate apprehension of body. This implies the idea that in the representational (in Schopenhauer’s sense) and theoretical context some kind of “mediator” is absolutely necessary for us to obtain knowledge of the body. This “mediator” is undoubtedly the principle of sufficient reason and the application of its four roots in the process of cognition. The immediate cognition of body, or the philosophical one, is explicated in a purely metaphysical sense, e.g. it reveals the immediate relation between will and body.

### **Cinematic images – or the visualized idea**

In short the main idea here is to show how a specific philosophical concept is mediated through the usage of cinema. I am not going to take up a traditional approach explicating this exact problematization by using the familiar concepts in cinematic visualization. The focus here, then, will be on concrete examples, showing how Schopenhauer's ideas are incorporated in a film, posing the question of how we are able to interpret a known philosophical theorization in a completely new hermeneutical horizon.

The main titles that would be investigated are Giovanni Maderna's *Schopenhauer* (2006) as well as Martin Campbell's *Green Lantern* (2011). The first part engages Maderna's vision of the subjective interpretation as well as the expression of sensuality incorporated among people. We shall look at how Maderna reaches both of them and explicate the introspection of the human mind, its ambivalence as well as cognitive dislocation and existential contradiction of personality. All this is expressed in the context of a new knowledge achieved by the characters and the process of its mediated assimilation. Then, we will take upon the demonstration on how Schopenhauer's metaphysical will is visualized as "willpower": the visualized will as an energy source and engine of being, a basis of everything that exists. *Green Lantern* displays a comprehensive interpretation of the will as a ground of all being and in the same way as a creative positive power that differs from Schopenhauer's metaphysical interpretation of the will, but engages Nietzsche's thoughts on the subject. Therefore, the will in *Green Lantern* might be considered as a symbiosis of Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's voluntaristic philosophy – both explicating the "will-power" as an immediate characteristic of body.

The art of cinema provides an extensive spectrum for interpretation of philosophical ideas – it brings a bilateral perception. On one hand, ideas that are intentionally set out therein and on the other – ideas that the viewers can put in it, based on their own experience. As every kind of art the art of film has its own theories, genres and importance to the whole. But unlike the most arts it can be considered as a contemporary and modern form of art in the sense that it also transmits the planned ideas and adhere to the basic frame but also goes beyond them. Contemporary and progressing in the sense that it does not pause in one place and since its inception continues to evolve and use technology to its advantage.

If we start with the question: What is the philosophical in the art of film, we would make a huge mistake by subordinating it. The art of film is not only an aesthetic phenomenon, but it also reveals infinite in content surfaces. Unlike many other art forms it has progress to provoke not only one sense but all, and in this situation a human being is transferred into the film itself and in this trance, real surroundings are playing an insignificant role. Therefore, we must isolate the question of what the philosophical in the art of film is and begin to ask how to find and reveal the layers below, under which the philosophical meaning is hidden. Such

intention may be deliberately misleading, although we must consider explicitly the meaning, which is always present – either if it was incorporated by the creators of the work or the receptive party.

It is with this intension – to reveal the philosophical content, this inquiry would undertake. The movies in question in this paper are not about certain philosophers; they are neither documentaries, nor they reveal and reflect in some aspect certain philosophers' life. The main goal that we set ourselves, challenging the content of these films, is to explicate the parts, which directly reflect on certain Schopenhauer's ideas and show us the visualization of concrete phenomena in the context of corporeality.

Directed by Giovanni Maderna *Schopenhauer* is a film, the total length of which is only 65 minutes, in which the seeking for knowledge is revealed by two university students, confronted with existential questions about themselves and their being in the process of living in the villa of an old writer. At first glance, the movie title suggests what can be expected. Maderna, however, surprises the viewers very pleasantly with his complex interpretation of how Schopenhauerian view can be explicated. One of the remarkable things about this movie is that the pulse of Schopenhauer's philosophy is felt in a transfigured form complying with our time. What Maderna shows is an expression of the relationship among people – relation not relying on words but on self-discovery that changes and develops, promoting the expression of other characters. What is also unique for the film is how a selected minimum number of dialogues, emphasis upon physical gesticulation, body language, eyes, etc. and the characters communicate with each other at a much higher level. All this reveals Maderna's attempt to present visually the incorporated ideas in the film. More importantly, the lack of dialogues reveals the seeking of a new way of expression, provoking the audience to uncover the philosophical content themselves.

The symbolic behind specific scenes from the movie is a crucial part in the film-narrative, for it shows the essence of the characters and what their development is. I would like to distinguish several specific and problematic moments that appear through the film and also try to interpret their symbolic meaning. The film itself explicates deep symbolic contents, but there are concrete episodes, in which the symbolic is relative to our enquiry. If there is one character that is complete and can fully relate to Schopenhauer's philosophy, this would be the old retired writer. His persona is the complete representation of ascetic life. Maderna shows this through the whole movie and the very fact that he isolates himself from every form of carnal sins, meditates through the day, singling of freedom and the self-torture is the ultimate recognition of what is expressed by the German philosopher in the fourth book of *The World as Will and Representation*.

Ascetic, described by Schopenhauer, "mortifies the will itself, he also mortifies its manifestation, its objecthood, the body: he feeds it meagerly, so that its exuberant thriving and prospering will not revive or stir up the will, of which he is merely the

expression and mirror. So he takes to fasting, he takes to castigation and self-torture in order to keep breaking and deadening the will through constant deprivation and suffering, since he recognizes and abhors the will as the source of his own suffering existence and that of the world” (Schopenhauer, 2010: 409).

There are of course other ways to interpret the writer figure. One of them is through his surroundings and the location, where he spends his time. It is of great significance that he lives in isolation on the last floor of the villa. The only sign of him are the sounds when meditating and singing. We are opposed to his complete figure almost at the end of the movie. As we stated before the writer can be interpreted as a representation of the ascetic, described by Schopenhauer. The mental superiority of the writer can be seen in the very fact that he is living on the last floor of the villa. Just before the scene, where he is for the first time presented Maderna shows us a dark room, where one of the students goes for a smoke – suddenly we can hear the old writer singing in the same room. Normally, we can interpret the last floor in psychoanalytic terms as the last stage of consciousness or the Super-Ego, but we have to consider also the meaning and importance of the dark room – which in any sense represents the unconsciousness.

Consequently, this idea could be interpreted and expressed by the concept of *das Nichts*, which we already mentioned before. In this sense the differentiation between separate stages of conscious and unconscious is overcome and they are merged into one clear and independent of anything external state of mind. As Schopenhauer describes it in a note at the end of *The World as Will and Representation* “this is precisely the Pradschna-Paramita of the Buddhists, the “beyond of all knowledge”, i.e. point where subject and object are no more” (Schopenhauer, 2010: 439).

As we started with the intension to uncover the layers of philosophical meaning, until now we can clearly see how interpreting the scenes can be useful in terms of discovering new truths about the film itself, the characters as well as the creators. We are going to dive even deeper in the symbolic interpretation by taking things like ping-pong games and shoes as medium of meaning.

First, let us start with the ping-pong game, which can be described as one of the most important actions in the acolytes’ everyday life. There are a few different approaches towards the intention to interpret the game itself through the film:

**First:** the game is played always *outside*. What can this fact tell us about the game itself? As every game it satisfies the need of affirmation of the will. (*Direct reference to Schopenhauer*). **Second:** the fact that it is played outside shows us the distinction between the followers of *the writer* and the writer himself. He distinguished himself from the game not only *mentally* but also in *time and space*. Strictly speaking the body is isolated in the terms of time and space from the other bodies.

**Third:** Through the film we can see 3 games that can be interpreted as a tool showing us how the characters draw closer to each other. (*Direct reference to the film itself*).

– In the **first game** we see the two acolytes playing and the two students watching from inside, through the window. This is their first encounter with the game as *observers*, who are not only excluded from the game, but they are also in a different space. In the end the boy goes outside and takes a closer look at the game.

– The **second time** they are both outside watching the game. The boy is asked to join the game. This is the scene where the first encounter is made. The boy has already taken a closer look at the game and now he is a part of it.

– The **third time** is when the girl plays with the younger acolyte. This game can be interpreted as a prelude to their gathering and later sexual encounter.

The next symbol is revealed by interpreting the shoes as a representation of the intended change in corporeality. The interesting part about them is that they appear both at the beginning and at the end of the movie. The first appearance is when the two students are in the car driving to the villa. The male-student is watching the shoes of the female with peculiar interest, while she is driving. Later, this can be explained as a symbol of his awareness that he wants to change his sex. Shoes also appear in the end when the girl takes her shoes off. The symbolism behind the taking of the shoes by the girl at the end of the movie is clearly a realization and opposition of her insignificant existence and reliance towards other people. The symbolic behind the shoes can be interpreted as a form of release and the first step to independence; it can also be taken as a representation of a new life resulting from the experience in the villa and true understanding of the writer's teaching. The latter is supported further by the graffiti on the wall behind her, mainly the yin-yang one.

The second part would consider some ideas from Campbell's *Green Lantern* in a relation to Schopenhauer metaphysical will. First, we should see how the idea of the superhero Green Lantern is born and developed through the years reaching finally complex human body visualization in Campbell's film.

The character was first created in the mid- 1940's by Martin Nodell, combining inspiration from Chinese and Greek mythology and also Wagnerian cycle of four operas "Ring of the Nibelungs" (*Der Ring des Nibelungen*), based on the epic German poem "The song of the Nibelungs" (*Nibelungenlied*). Nodell takes the idea of the ring from the opera and transforms it for the story using the ring as a generator and carrier of the will-power.<sup>2)</sup>

The storyline of the film evolves around the character of Hal Jordon and his gradation as a Green Lantern Corp, or the so-called intergalactic peacekeepers. Consequently, when we have the character of a superhero there is always a negative power that opposes the good and represents the supreme evil. In the *Green Lantern* case the villain is Parallax. The character of Parallax represents a force, which becomes stronger by feeding from people's fear.

In particular, the film meditates on the attempt to distinguish two main forces, they would be as follows:

– On one hand the force of will, which symbolizes the individual human strength and is considered as the greatest power that exists. The will-power is visualized as green energy source and engine of being, a foundation of everything;

– Parallax, on the other hand, is a yellow force that feeds from fear and also comprises weakness or the absence of will-power. Fear could be interpreted as a fear of recognizing life as ultimate value. Likewise, fear is equal of negation of the will and its status as a supreme representation of life. The latter can be both related to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, for whom “will” is the utmost hegemonic power and source of existence.

The philosophy of the nineteenth century can be understood as a cornerstone between rationalism and existentialism, also between the conscious and the unconscious. Consequently, Schopenhauer’s philosophical system determines a new way of perceiving the world and the forces that dominate human existence in its primal essence. The latter can be deduced from the fact that the will, as described by Schopenhauer, represents the very core of the universe, the absolute source, the metaphysical foundation of all – from the inorganic nature to human body itself as the greatest manifestation and objecthood of the metaphysical will.

His ethical study represents an investigation of human value and concludes from the absurdity of human life itself, stating the meaningless striving and affirmation of will to live. However, his firm and absolute pessimism – as concluded by Thomas Mann, Schopenhauer did not completely disregard the possibility of salvation. On the contrary, he manages to affirm the ethical and aesthetical way of overcoming the power of will by negation. The aesthetical way of negating the will is through art or the concept of the pure subject of knowledge. The ethical can be described with the image of the ascetic that we have already seen in Maderna’s *Schopenhauer* through the image of the old writer.

The pure subject of knowledge in Schopenhauer’s philosophy plays a peculiar role; the main concept is that a human being can negate the will by the very act of purifying himself through art. Since the work of art copies the eternal Platonic ideas, which are not subordinate to the principle of sufficient reason, making the multiplicity in the world as representation possible, therefore by the act of recognizing the art itself, the intellect overcomes and prevails over the will. Further, Schopenhauer expresses this overcoming as a brief moment, which cannot be perpetual. The *Green Lantern* and the whole concept behind the universe’s mightiest power – the will-power, could easily be explained and represented by Schopenhauer’s metaphysical will. For the first time “will” acquires metaphysical status and is completely separated from reason. Through the history of philosophy will is presented as a module and element of human rationality, not only does Schopenhauer extricate it from reason but even subject the reason to the will.

The visualized green energy or will-power in *Green Lantern* is the ultimate driving force of existence and the similarity of the whole concept is strikingly similar



to Schopenhauer's metaphysical will. Nevertheless, as we have already mentioned that in his concept, will is not only the source of existence but also the source of suffering. Here Schopenhauer's pessimism shows its true colors. The idea of the pure subject and the purification by art finds its manifestation in Nietzsche's philosophy, namely in *The Birth of Tragedy*. The pure subject of knowledge in Schopenhauer is a temporary state and what is the turning point in Nietzsche's concept is that the world and life itself must be perceived as artwork. He takes the idea of will and transforms it into the will to power. If the world is artwork, the will to power is the brush, with which a human being paints. So here we can see the will to power as equivalent to the will-power in *Green Lantern*, for it represents the creative positive agency of the will.<sup>3)</sup>

Discovering the film-style in the two titles mentioned above we are faced with two different narratives. In Maderna's *Schopenhauer* the actual story is unfold in 4 days, there is no manipulation of cause and effect, nor parallelism, which makes the structure of the film more accessible, but pressing deeper we are able to discover strict patterns of development in the story from the beginning to the end. These patterns are expressed strictly for the purpose to support the main context of discovering new knowledge<sup>4)</sup>. Not only are there sequences that can help the viewer to orientate, but also the strong natural sounds and environment helps the patterns to unfold themselves. The perfect example is the sound of the ping-pong ball, which we can hear several times through the film. The same effect is revealed by the sounds from the old writer in his meditation. We cannot see the actual meditation, or the writer himself, but we already know that these sounds are created by him and we know what they represent as a component of his body.

In Campbell's *Green Lantern* we have the story of an ordinary man and his transformation to a superhero. The sequences of events help the viewer to understand the inner struggle of a human being in the process of becoming responsible not only for himself but towards mankind. The realization of the inner power in a human being and how actually to use this power is one side of the story-line; the other one expresses not only the realization of a human being towards his inner power, but the realization of the will as an ultimate drive force. In this sense, we see the pure visualization of power in body and how it changes the whole narrative. Through the will-power the body of the main character transforms not only physically, but also mentally. Accordingly, this transformation shows us how the abstract term power could be visualized and mediated through corporeality.

### **Virtual body – Symembodiment and symbolical presentation of virtual body in reality**

The subject here is revealed in the field of virtual, and more specifically the problematization of virtual bodies or avatars in virtual worlds. The relation between the Self and the virtual body is essential, for it shows the specific processes and

moduses, rooted in the core of self-knowledge. The intensive usage of the term “symembodiment” in the literature, concerning the exploration of virtual worlds, is giving us the foundation on which we can pose the question about the visualization of virtual body as a “pure” self-reflection. Moreover, in a purely interpretative way we include the concept of symbolical presentation of virtual body in reality, e.g. the case with the real-based character of Genesis Rhapsodos from the RPG series Final Fantasy.<sup>5)</sup>

In addition to these preconditions, I would also like to state that the interpretation of body is going to be carried out in a twofold way. First, as initially mediated objectivization of the Self through avatars in virtual reality and then, second, as autonomous objectivization, leading to immediate self-reflection. If we accept that the virtual body or avatar is visualization of the Inner-Self, then it shows us in the most sufficient way how we perceive ourselves. In this sense, the avatar as our virtual Self has no boundaries. Furthermore, the investigation of virtual becomes more and more problematic, leading to the need of new approaches. One of those new approaches towards virtuality is Jeri Finks’ Psychotechnology, defining the virtual as “something that exists in the mind without actual physical fact, form, or features... virtual realities occur in inner mental space, reflecting internal environments”<sup>6)</sup>.

Consequently, it may be said that interpreted in a psychoanalytical way this idea of “no boundaries in virtual” would state, that we don’t have the need to project or sublimate our inner desires and unsuitable for the society impulses, for virtually there are no cultural restrictions – and in this exact sense man has returned to his original free state. There are numerous of discussions about the body in relation to its presence in virtual worlds or the so-called GVR’s (group virtual realities)<sup>7)</sup>, whether the users are revealing their true selves or they are just deceiving “others through their online self-representations” (Boler, 2002: 336).

In her research *Representing Bodies in Virtual Space: The Rhetoric of Avatar Design*, Beth Kolko concludes: “Driving these narratives of a “disappearing” or “mediated” body were admittedly laudable goals of innovative communication strategies that would help assuage all manner of discrimination in interpersonal communication. Without a physical body to mark gender, race, or age, it was argued, speakers would be freed to exist in the realm of ideas...” (Kolko, 1999: 177).

Virtual spaces or three dimensional worlds are not only a way to express ideas but also to visualize these ideas. In particular, the research interest of avatar is related to its construction – the inner processes behind the creation of this self-representation, how it reflects the real, physical body and afterwards what the base of its behavior towards others is. In 2012 Daniela Villani and other researchers made a “Drawing me” graphical test among young Italians, comparing body image representation in real (drawings) and virtual (avatars). The results of this test showed that: “virtual body representation is more characterized by the sexual features related to body, face, and clothes and by a major number of context elements than the

real body representation...” (Villani, 2012: 435). This is just one more indicator of how people perceive themselves in a virtual context.

There are numerous investigations on this subject, but I would also like to draw a special attention to Paul Messinger’s analysis, measuring the role of attractiveness in the process of constructing an avatar. The inquiry presupposes the two main tendencies in the creation, which are: *self-enhancement* and *self-verification*. The results of Messinger’s research are as follows: “We found that people, balancing motives for self-verification and self-enhancement, customize their avatars to bear similarity to their real selves, but with moderate enhancements. We also found that virtual-world behavior is similar to real world behavior, but somewhat less restrained by normal inhibitions. Lastly, we found that people with more attractive avatars than their real selves are more confident and extraverted in virtual worlds than they are in the real world, particularly those who have low confidence and are introverted in the real world” (Messinger, 2008: 15).

In the contemporary situation virtuality has become as important as reality, for it allows people to interact through their virtual body in real time. Consequently, virtual worlds become more popular with each day, offering a different way of communication, and if I may say more sufficient than the real one. Today the biggest platform of virtual existence is undoubtedly *Second Life* – one of the most completed and sophisticated 3D virtual worlds. It offers literally everything – from education in all of its aspects<sup>8)</sup>: language learning centers (Language Islands); Secondary and Higher Education (Virtual Online Campuses of Universities from all over the world), work and business possibilities to simple, everyday life experience like visiting libraries, shops, galleries and so on. Donald Jones describes the essence of this world as the creation of “space where anyone can create and build an avatar body and dreamlike spaces that fulfill their desires, a world that will function as “real,” transcending the bounds of flesh and circumstances of the actual, tangible world” (Jones, 2006: 2).

I try to draw the attention to this specific platform, because it enables us to see the full potential of body in its virtual state. Unlike other similar platforms *Second Life* is an immanent world, in the sense that all of its content is built through the participation of many subjective consciousnesses. Accordingly, it represents a complete vision, created by multiple projections, where people are able to construct and exist actively in one specific virtual space. The complexity and variety of avatars in *Second life* is a perfect example of how the self-awareness of body is mediated through technology.

Following the interpretation of body as virtual self-presentation in the context of *Second Life*, we are faced with a variety of problems, such as the embodiment-disembodiment dilemma. I will not go into further consideration of this dilemma, for it was discussed by many before<sup>9)</sup>. Here, I am going to analyze a specific solution of the embodiment-disembodiment problem, proposed by Handan Vicdan and Ebru Ulusoy in their paper: *Symbolic and Experimental Consumption of Body in Virtual*

*Worlds: From (Dis)Embodiment to Symembodiment.* The term symembodiment was proposed as a resolution of the two different approaches towards virtual body, and it has a real potential in the contemporary literature concerning virtual worlds.

Symembodiment literary means “symbolic embodiment”, and as such it presents the idea of the actual presence of body in virtual worlds. The two important statements that are formulated in the paper are: “1) To present the shift from the body as medium of self-presentation to body as experience 2) To provide an alternative perspective to the embodiment/disembodiment debate concerning the presence of the body in virtual worlds” (Vicdan, 2008: 18). Following the latter, body in its virtual state is conceptualized as an active and present visualization, and as such it directly reflects the inner state of the individual. This immediate presence is revealed through the construction of virtual body and the possibilities of its transformation, corresponding to people’s present desires and projections of themselves.

Usually this situation is considered in one direction – when body is virtualized as a presentation of the real-self, copying the real life image in a new, virtual context. I would like here to include in short some reflections on the opposite side of this problem, or to pose the question: What happens when the virtual body is considered as a model for the real one? By using the example of the Japanese RPG series *Final Fantasy VII*, we are able to dive deeper into this case.

First we should acknowledge the great importance of the graphics, and the 3D representation of the characters. A known fact is that the Japanese RPG’s are highly sophisticated, the same goes as well to animes as an example of body presentation<sup>10)</sup>. As Gek Low states: “Never before had so much money gone into the making of an RPG. Over a hundred artists worked on producing the most amazing computer graphics ever seen in a video game. Beautifully rendered full-motion video (FMV) sequences were woven directly into the gameplay, and the game played out pretty much like a movie. Pre-rendered backdrops graced the screen throughout the entire game world” (Low, 2001: 6). I have chosen this exact quote because it shows the importance of the FMV’s included in the gameplay. In this sense the 3D body is visualized as part of the story, incorporated inside the revealing game action. Structurally speaking this method of presentation is used mainly for the sole purpose of revealing the historical background of the characters or to visualize their reaction in a specific context.

The considered character in this interpretation Genesis Rhapsodos is based on a real person – Gackt Camui, which means that the indicators, used for his creation are already mediated. The knowledge that we perceive about such a character is not a new one, but it is explicated in a completely new environment. Thus, the hermeneutical approach in the interpretation is revealing the familiar face and body components, acting in a situation presupposed by the storyline<sup>11)</sup>. The influence of this character projects itself into different cultural spheres, reviving the 3D based-image in a real situation. Respectively, this situation may be considered as a mediation of the real body through the virtual/3D one.

In conclusion, it may be said that body is always explicated in a twofold way: through its mediateness and through its immediateness. This twofold understanding of the theorization of body is equally accurate both to its conceptualization in relation to cognition in a purely theoretical sense as well as a visualization in the context of virtual.

## NOTES

1. Mainländer follows the Schopenhauerian concept of affirmation of the will to live, transforming it into an affirmation of will to death (*Wille zum Tod*) in relation to *das Ding an sich*. In opposition to Kant he affirms the immanence of the thing-in-itself rejecting its transcendental and unknowable nature. See: Rademacher, 2008: 149-150 and Mainländer, P. (1876). *Philosophie der Erlösung*. Erster Band. Berlin: Verlag von Theobald Grieben.
2. It is probably entering into details, but it should be noted that Wagner was especially influenced by Schopenhauer's philosophy right after he wrote the first part of the opera. As Thomas Mann states in his essay about the philosopher – the influence of Schopenhauer on Wagner is probably the greatest one between a philosopher and composer. In the first drafts of the ending of "The ring" there was even an ending named to Schopenhauer or "Schopenhauer ending" from 1856 describing Brünnhilde's resignation and negation of the will, entering the state of Nothingness or non-being, e.g. Schopenhauer's *das Nichts*.
3. The latter is represented in a scene, in which Thomar-Re explains to Hal Gordan how by thought will turns into reality. The creativeness of the will is according to Nietzsche embodied into every product derived by man.
4. This is one of the main techniques of Maderna – to reflect on seeking new knowledge – through differentiated quotes, through sounds and images. As we can see in *Heaven without Earth* one of the main methods is to question everything. There Maderna tells the story of a father and a son and their journey in the mountains, through the whole film the son asks different existential questions.
5. More about this relation: See: Cholakova, A. (2013). Beyond Final Fantasy VII: Symbolism and conflict in Genesis Rhapsodos' image. In: *Philosophy of fantastic – Visualization in Art*. Blagoevgrad: Neofit Rilski University Press, pp. 142-161. Online edition: [http://issuu.com/exentaser/docs/sbornik-full\\_-\\_e-edition](http://issuu.com/exentaser/docs/sbornik-full_-_e-edition)
6. Quote taken from Jones 2006: 4 – 5. Originally in: Fink, J. 1999. *Cybereducation*. Reality in the age of Psychotechnology, USA: Prometheus Books, p. 22.
7. Kolko, 1999: 177.
8. More about the educational dimensions of Second Life – See: Hoffmann M. 2007. Language Learning in Second Life show potential, in. *LoD Viewpoints*, Pub. SRI.

9. See: Meijsing, M. Real people and virtual bodies: How disembodied can embodiment be?. In: *Minds & Machines*, 16/2006, pp. 443-461; Mennecke B., An Examination of a Theory of Embodied Social Presence in Virtual Worlds, in: *Decision Sciences*, Vol. 42/2, 2011, pp. 413-450. On deindividuation and avatars see: Merola, M.; Peña, J. The Effects of Avatar Appearance in Virtual Worlds, in: *Journal of Virtual Worlds Research*, Vol. 2/5, 2010.
10. See for example: The body-mind problem in *Black Butler* and *The Betrayal knows my Name*; the change of corporeality in *Death Note* etc.
11. FF VII is a single player mode game, which means that the narrative and actions of the other characters (except the main one – Zack Fair) are already presupposed in the reveling storyline.

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