# PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

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# An Exegetical Interpretation Of The Esoteric Powers Working Through Fantasy Role-playing Games as A Catechism of the Occult

by

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# Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my children: Meaghan and Kristin.

May you acquire the wisdom to discern between the truth and the purported truths

> ***And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.***
>
> ***Philippians 1:9-11***

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# Acknowledgements

With love, respect and deep appreciation, I offer my innermost gratitude to Prof Dr Connie MJ Brand. Your unrelenting love and encouragement equipped me with the courage to persist and persevere. Thank you for being my mentor and spiritual leader. My further appreciation extends to the academic personnel of Râdâh Academy.

My utmost gratitude to my Heavenly Father, whom I stand indebted to for every ray of light. You instilled on me the vision, and entrusted me with the ability to understand and interpret the truths that You presented to me during the course of my research for his Thesis.

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# Summary

**AN EXEGETICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE ESOTERIC POWERS WORKING THROUGH FANTASY ROLE-PLAYING GAMES AS A CATECHISM OF THE OCCULT**

By

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Modern society finds itself in a tumultuous state. The sureties of the past have been stripped away. The utopia predicted by the Modern age has not arrived. Society is characterized by a search for identity, for new meanings or new truths. Change has become the norm. Society has emerged from the dream of Humanism and Modernism and found itself in the flexible realities of Post-Modernism.

Society has increasingly turned to Information Technology to provide the means to re-enchant its disillusioned world, to fulfil its growing needs for effectiveness and efficiency, for entertainment and pleasure, and to provide the means to transcend nature's constraints. This mass implementation has resulted in Information Technology penetrating all aspects of society, specifically increasing in computer- generated online role-playing games.

This thesis is intended to address the unanswered questions that lurk in the back of many people's minds. It exposes how Massive Multiplayer Online Role-playin games (MMORPG), virtual realities, communication superhighways and ubiquitous computing have become the defining characteristics of today's technologically saturated society. Information Technology has risen to be the preeminent technology of today with the computer becoming synonymous with the emerging global, networked society.

It reveals how this pervasiveness of Information Technology and specifically role-playing games (RPG) in all aspects of life inevitably has a massive impact on society and the individual. Through Information Technology, society has experienced a revolution that is comparable to that of the Industrial Revolution. Society is being reshaped and remoulded around the principles of virtual environments. The Biblical Image of God is being distorted, Truth is being "mixed" with Paganism and personal identities are being pushed to the extremes. This new *cyber*-society, along with the powerful capabilities that computer technology presents to the individual, has served to render Biblical Truth's and Godly principle's inadequate as guiding structures.

 Sir Winston Chutchill once noted *"Must people sometime in their lives, stumble across truth. Most jump up, brush themselves off, and hurry on about their business as if nothen had happened."* Due to compromise, syncretism, ignorance, confusion and the intenional deceit of humanity by fallen ethereal beings, magical and mytholoical games were designed to keep people from the truth.

Computer role-playing games has brought massive changes to concepts, such as mind, consciousness, experience, reasoning, knowledge, truth, godliness and immortlity. Unwittingly humanity has embraced and re-envented reality and identity so as to have different meanings, yet behind them remain the cunning ruses of an ancient spatial being, who seeks to be worshipped by means of trickery, perpetrated upon everyone alive.

There is so much Paganism, Witchcraft, Occultism and demonology active in these role-playing games that there can be no doubt that this was deceitfully placed into the games, then through fraud and disguise, obscured with new meanings. This camouflaged Paganism and Magic pollutes and rots the spiritual condition of the gamer who plays these games, unaware of the end result.

It is the contention of this thesis that through MMORPG, society has finally found complete emancipation, but in doing so, has in effect set itself adrift. Through understanding and examining the influences of Information Technology and Computer games in this paper, the authors attempt to prove that Information Technology acts to promote the various permutations and facets of Post-Modernism, in fact that Information Technology acts as an agent of Post-Modernism.

Our age is one that has largely ceased to believe in the supernatural at all. This is partly due to the advance of Science in its various branches. Man is regarded as the master of his own fate and the determiner of everything.

But even in the Church today, and among those who claim to believe in a supernatural realm, there is evident and increasing forgetfulness of what the Apostle Paul teaches in Ephesians 6:10-13: *"Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armour of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armour of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm."*

In a world of collapsing institutions, moral chaos and increasing violence, never was it more important to trace the hand of *"the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience,"* and then, not only learn how to wrestle with him and his forces, and also how to overcome them-

***"by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony"***. If one cannot discern the chief cause of our ills, how can we hope to cure them?

This thesis is written from the perspective that there is a Creator, as well as a spiritual Enemy loose on earth; and that that the written Scriptures or the Bible alone represents the incorruptible truth and authoritative record that a Holy God has given His people. God's Word is absolutely sufficient in itself for final truth and authority.

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> *Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.*
>
> *Psalm 119:160 KJV*

The Apostle Paul declares the total sufficiency of Scripture:

> *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*
>
> *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

Confidently this thesis will lift some of humanity out of the dense fog of history and awaken people that are dreaming, as the walk into a new dawn of living-with an eternal perspective. Love, the most powerful force in the universe, will save your life.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The intend of this thesis will deem to understand the influence of Fantasy Role Playing Games (FRPG) on a person participating on a continuous and regular basis. One needs to understand exactly what a FRP game is and how it differentiates from card games or board games before any hypotheses could be consummated.

Another Enigma concerning the subject matter pertains to the problem that the variety of role-playing games make it inherently challenging to provide a common definition. However, as suggested by the name, a role-playing game can be defined as a game in which players assume the roles of the characters in a fictional setting.

According to Cover, players take responsibility for acting out these roles within a narrative, either through literal acting, or through a process of structured decision-making or character development.[1]

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[1] Cover, Jennifer Grouling (2010) The Creation of Narrative in Tabletop Role-Playing Games. NC: McFarland & Company, p. 6.

On the other hand Tychsen suggests that actions taken within the game succeed or fail according to a formal system of rules and guidelines.[2]

In spite of the fact that there are several forms of Role-Playing Games, this thesis will focus primarily on **role playing games** in electronic media[3] or playing a character virtually in digital media. Emphasis will be placed on character development as the central premise of these computer RPG's.

Some integrative trans-disciplinary exploitation in fields encompassing critical themes like gnosis, magic, mysticism, esotericism and hidden occultism will bring lucid insight into a scarcely known tradition and praxis.

The long overdue text on the subject of RPG as seen through an exegetical point of view will bring new definition, nuance and clarity to the field in an erudite manner as an extremely useful tool for seekers, scholars, educators and players alike.

In view of this it is necessary to expand on the background introduction, leading the argument into the subfield of Esotericism by explaining the subtopic for a better illumination on such a hidden, covert subject.

## 2. ESOTERICISM AS A FIELD FOR ACADEMIC INQUIRY

There is an ongoing debate whether esotericism could be a meaningful subject for educational studies and until recently, the field of "esotericism" or "esoteric studies" remained disregarded in academia. There were, naturally, major individual works devoted to the field in the mid- to late twentieth century.

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[2] Tychsen, Anders (2006) Role Playing Games- Comparative Analysis Across Two Media Platforms. Australia p.76.

[3] Definition of Electronic Media; specifically computer gaming such as *Online text-based role-playing game* and *massive multi-player online role-playing game* that involves many players using some sort of text-based interface and an Internet connection. These games are played in real-time.

One thinks of the books of historian Frances Yates, and of the many books and articles of Antoine Faivre, a major force in the development of Western esotericism as a domain of inquiry.

Faivre[4] correctly points out that, from an empirical/historical perspective, there can be no question of discussing the nature of esotericism *an sich.*[5] [6] Accordingly, he is critical of that kind of religious universalism, which discerns "esotericism" in all religious traditions of the world.[7]

To the historian, the term refers to a Western phenomenon, which has ancient roots,[8] nevertheless becomes visible as a relatively autonomous phenomenon only in the modern period (since the end of the fifteenth century).

Faivre describes esotericism as an identifiable *"form of thought"* or *"ensemble of tendencies"* On the basis of six characteristics , namely 1. Correspondence, 2. Living Nature, 3. Imagination and Meditation, 4. Experience of Transmutation, 5. Praxis of Concordance and 6. Transmission.[9]

The first four are intrinsic to the definition of esotericism; they are more or less inseparable, but should be distinguished for analytical purposes. The two latter ones are called relative or non-intrinsic; they are frequently present but need not be.

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[4] Parts of this French publication are translated in Faive (1992b). A complete version has appeared in Faivre 1994.

[5] *"Sans doute n'existe-t-il rien de tel"* ['undoubtedly, no such thing exists']

[6] Faivre, Antoine (1992b) Introduction I. In A. – J.Needleman. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, pp. xi – xxii.

[7] Faivre, Antoine (1992a) *L'esoterisme.* (Series "Que sais-je?") Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, p. 7.

[8] Faivre, Antoine (1992c) Ancient and Medieval Sources of modern Esoteric Movements In A. Faivre – J.Needleman. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, pp. 1-70.

[9] Faivre, Antoine (1992a) *L'esoterisme.* (Series "Que sais-je?") Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, pp. 5,7,12.

 **(1) Correspondences**. Correspondences, symbolic or real, are believed to exist between all parts of the visible and invisible Universe. *"These correspondences are considered more or less veiled at first glance, and they are therefore meant to be read, to be decoded. The entire Universe is a great theater of mirrors, a set of hieroglyphs to decipher; everything is a sign, everything harbours and manifests mystery."[10]*

A distinction may be made between correspondences between visible and invisible levels of nature, and between nature (the cosmos) and history as exemplified in revealed texts.

**(2) Living nature**. Nature is not a collection of objects to be manipulated, but alive and connected via hidden, subtle forces that can be awakened and drawn upon through *maia naturalis,* natural magic.

**(3) Imagination and mediations**. The idea of correspondences implies the possibility of mediation between the higher and lower worlds, by way of rituals, symbols, intermediate spirits, etc.

The imagination, far from being mere fantasy, is regarded as an *" 'organ of the soul' by means of which a person can establish cognitive and visionary rapport with an intermediary world, with a mesocosm,"[11]* or *mundus imaginalis. Imaginatio* is the main instrument for attaining *gnosis;* it is *"a tool for the knowledge of the self, of the world, of myth; it is the eye of fire penetrating the surface of appearances in order to make meanings, 'connections', burst forth, to render the invisible visible ..."[12]*

**(4) Experience of transmutation.** This alchemical terminology is perhaps most appropriate to define the concept of transmutation as a metamorphosis, sometimes of natural substances (as lead into gold via alchemical work) and sometimes of the individual (from ignorance to illumination).

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[10] Faivre, Antoine (1992b) Introduction I. In A. – J.Needleman. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, p. xv.
[11] Faivre et al, p. xvii.
[12] Faivre et al, pp. xvii-xviii.

**(5) The practice of concordance**. The practice of concordance involves the propensity of Esotericists to see parallels between various traditions, as when in antiquity one finds Hermetists who are also Gnostic Christians. Faivre explains that it is very close to syncretism- the joining of various traditions in practice.

**(6) Transmission**. Faivre emphasize the importance of the initiatic chain- the transmission of secret knowledge from master to disciple- a tendency found in traditions as disparate as alchemy and magic.[13] As such, they serve to demarcate a distinctive "form of thought", the historical manifestations of which may be widely divergent. Faivre's definition was developed against the background of detailed historical research into specific movements and persons.

Given his undisputed expertise in these generally under-researched areas, critics are unlikely to challenge the validity of Faivre's characteristics as adequate generalizations about the phenomena in question.

They might, however, question his conception of esotericism as a *"form of thought"*, particularly if the latter is used to legitimate the view of esotericism as a religious *tradition.*

**The combination of both implies that the study of esotericism focuses on the historical emergence and subsequent development of a specific mode of thinking. This, of course, makes the study of esotericism into a subfield of what is usually referred to as the history of ideas.**

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[13] Faivre, Antoine (1994) Access to Western Esotericism. Albany: SUNY Press, pp. 10-15.

In spite of this, throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there had remained almost no acknowledgement in academia that "esotericism" could be seen as constituting a whole area of study, that such diverse customs or movements as astrology, magic, mysticism, alchemy, Rosicrucianism and theosophy all bear certain defining elements in common and should be considered in the larger historical context of Western esoteric traditions from antiquity onwards.[14] This situation has begun to change.

Only nowadays is it viable to gain knowledge in these various areas and to incorporate the many aspects of esotericism. The comparative fields of religious studies, history, culture and traditions require great sophistication of knowledge in a range of fields and languages, as well as extensive general knowledge of various areas.

Due to the explosion of technology and easy accessibility of limitless volumes of information in many respects, only now are such comparisons even possible. In short, it appears that one stands on the brink of a new era for scholarship in esotericism.

Out of the above one can conclude that firstly, "esotericism" is a serious and important field of study, which will likely lead to fresh perspectives on several adjacent areas and, second, that the emancipation of the study of esotericism into an accepted part of the academic study of religion requires serious reflection on methodology.

In addition, the discussion of esotericism suggests that the general methodological debate in the academic study of religion is very relevant to sub-areas of that study, but that the specific methodology appropriate to such subareas is at least as relevant to the general debate. One can argue that this last point is too often ignored.

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[14] Versluis, Arthur (2007) Magic and Mysticism. An Introduction to Western Esotericism. Playmouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

## 3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

For over three decades, there has been much controversy surrounding the use of fantasy role-playing games (FRPG). The media and other groups have linked the use of FRPG to violence, suicide, murder, Satanic practices and other detrimental outcomes. FRPG have also been blamed for causing players to become depressed, isolated, obsessed and suicidal. Of course, the creators off FRPG deny that they are promoting witchcraft.

Empirical research on the effects of FRPG on players is inconclusive. Heavy use of these games has been linked to negative outcomes. The above-mentioned factors contribute to the inspiration that urges the candidate to give a realistic depiction of these so-called "games and to present a viable possibility to a better outcome.

Forming on of the major genres of games, role-playing games have proven an extremely portable concept, and the games are situated across various cultural and format-related boundaries. In contemporary society, RPG's are everywhere and are utilized for personal enjoyment and satisfaction, as well as on the job, in training, teamwork and simulation exercises.

*"Many people holding a wide variety of religious beliefs enjoy role-playing games, and there's even a society of Christian role-players on the web, as well as some Christian RPGs."*[15]

RPG's have been ignored by liberal, mainline and by most conservative Christian ministries. However, starting in the late 1970's, these games came under severe attack by so-called Fundamentalist and other Evangelical Christian individuals and groups who claim that these games contain occult content and inspire people to suicide or criminal activity.

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[15] Boff, Arthur. *Rumours & Reality. The RPG Defence League.* (http://www.geocities.com/AJBoff/)

People defending RPG's such as Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) claim that the game permits an enthusiast to choose the role of "Lawful good alignment" or to play a holy warrior on a noble, ethical quest. According to them, people opposing to RGP's never seem to mention this alternative.

After the death by suicide of Irving "Bink" Pulling in June 1982, his mother, Patricia Pulling, organized B.A.D.D. (Bothered about Dungeons and Dragons). Bink had been depressed after he was unable to find a manager to handle his campaign for election to school council. He was apparently an emotionally disturbed student who admired Adolf Hitler.

Unfortunately, his mother kept a loaded gun in the house that he was able to access; he used it to commit suicide. Patricia became convinced that the death had been triggered by her son's involvement with *Dungeons and Dragons*; she believed that his teacher had placed a curse on Bink during a game.

She brought a lawsuit against the teacher and school. It was thrown out of court. She then organized B.A.D.D. and started to speak out against RPG's. Initial charges against RPG's were based on allegations of players casting hexes or evil spells on teachers and parents.

By the mid 1980s, the emphasis switched to the potential of *D&D* and similar games to induce players to commit suicide.[16] [17]

Michael A. Stackpole has investigated Ms. Pulling and B.A.D.D. and written an extensive report.[18] In January,1985 B.A.D.D. joined up with another one-person organization, the *National Coalition on Television Violence (NCTV)* and issued a Press Release from Washington.

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[16] Cardwell, Paul (1994) *The Attacks on Role-Playing Games.* Skeptical Inquires, Vol. 18, No.2, Winter 1994, pp. 157-165. Online at: http;//www.rpg.net/252/quellen/cardwell.

[17] Schnoebelen, William *New Updated Research: Should a Christian Play Dungeons and Dragons.* http://www.chick.com/articles/frpg.asp.

[18] Studies about Fantasy Role-playing Games (http://www.rpgstudies.net/#2).

NCTV chairperson Dr. Thomas Radedki, a psychiatrist at the University of Illinois School of Medicine, said:

*"The evidence in these [suicide] cases is really quite impressive. There is no doubt in my mind that the game Dungeons and Dragons is causing young men to kill themselves and others. The game is one of non-stop combat and violence. Although I am sure that the people at TSR mean no harm that is exactly what their games are causing. Based on player interviews and game materials, it is clear to me that this game is desensitizing players to violence, and, causing an increased tendency to violent behavior."*

B.A.D.D. and N.C.T.V. *"asked the U. S. Trade Commission to require that warnings be placed on the covers of all D&D books, stating that the game has caused a number of suicides and murders; and to require that CBS, or others, warn viewers and request them to get the message of the Surgeon General on entertainment violence."[19]*

The *Federal Trade Commission* sent the petition to the *Consumer Products Safety Commission.* The latter decided that D&D was not a danger to the U.S. public. A third group actively opposing gaming is the *Cult Crime Action Network* (CCAN). Some experts, on all sides of the debate over cults, (religious or otherwise) altogether object to the use of the word "cult," considering it to be a pejorative term designed to trigger a negative response. CCAN accused RPG's of luring young people into the occult.

During the late 1980's, the emphasis changed again. Fears were raised that RPG's caused the players to commit murder. As with the concerns over spells and suicide, factual data was insufficient. During the course of 1990, another change occurred.

This time, RPG's were linked to Multiple Personality Disorder (also known as Dissociative Identity Disorder)[20] and Satanic Ritual Abuse.[21] [22]

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[19] Attacks by some conservative Christians. (http://www.religioustolerance.org/d_a_d2.htm).
[20] **Dissociative identity disorder** is a psychiatric diagnosis that describes a condition in which a person displays multiple distinct identities or personalities (known as alter egos or alters), each with its own pattern of perceiving and interacting with the environment. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dissociative_identity_disorder)

By the early 1990's, the controversy had largely died down. At present, the games are still attacked periodically. For example, the *Christian Life Ministries* has said that *Dungeons and Dragons* contains many references to cannibalism and sadism. People defending *D&D* is of opinion that such topics are rarely discussed in any form of fantasy role-playing games and that when they are mentioned, they are not promoted but are shown in a bad light.

In June 1996, fantasy role-playing game industry in Italy came under attack. As in the earlier attacks in North America, games have been accused of causing teen suicide, and distorting minds.

They claim that RPG players usually impersonate killers or death-row inmates. The "*Stop the Nonsense*" campaign was mounted to respond to this threat.[23]

Some books on Satanism and the Occult opposing to RPG's are:

- Joan Hake Robie writes: "*Dungeons and Dragons is not a game. Some believe it to be a teaching [sic] the following:*"

She then lists 22 activities, including blasphemy, assassination, insanity, sexual perversion, homosexuality, prostitution, Satan worship, and necromancy.[24]

- Neil Anderson & Steve Russo claim that the game negatively "*affects a person's self-image and personality and opens him to satanic influence.*"[25]

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[21] **Satanic Ritual Abuse**: Can be defined as the psychological, sexual, and/or physical assult forced on unwilling human victim, and committed by one or more Satanist according to a prescribed ritual, the primary aim of which is to fulfil their need to worship Satan.

[22] Cardwell, Paul (1994) *The Attacks on Role-Playing Games.* Skeptical Inquires, Vol. 18, No.2, Winter 1994, pp. 157-165. Online at: http://www.rpg.net/252/quellen/cardwell.

[23] RPG scare in Italy. (http://www.sincretech.it/3M/Stop-Non-Sense/Index-English.html)

[24] Robie, Joan Hake (1994) The Truth about Dungeons and Dragons. Lancaster: PA: Starburst Publishers, p. 67.

[25] Anderson, Neil; Russo, Steve (1991) The Seduction of our Children. Eugene OR: Harvest House, p. 78.

- Bob Larson mentions that young people who call his radio talk show often mention fantasy games as "*their introduction to Satanism*".[26]

- Johanna Micaelsen criticizes games for their "*promotion of occultism and violence*".[27]

- Russ Wise writes: *"God is able to deliver those who seek Him. Victory is ours. But first, we must receive God's power...We have been discussing the problems of satanic involvement. Whether we become deceived by use of the Ouija Board, music, divination or by Dungeons and Dragons, the end result is the same occult bondage."[28]*

- Chick Publications sells a cartoon religious tract, "*Dark Dungeons*." Written in 1984, it shows how, in their belief, RPG's entrap people so that they cannot differentiate between their RPG characters and their own life. Authors of the article appear to believe that D&D are closely integrated with the religion of Wicca.[29] In opposition to this statement by Chick Publications, some argue that in reality, the vast majority of Wiccans do not play RPG's furthermore the vast majority of RPG players are not Wiccans.[30]

Conversely many Christian ministries do ignore RPG's and its subsequent influences on the player. Many individual Christians play the games and find them challenging and entertaining.

The esoteric powers working through these FRPG's and it's consequent effects on a person spirit, soul and body is however a subject of which very little is known. This study will explore through various methodologies the effect of these games on a person, which includes the evidence of esoteric powers at work.

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[26] Larson, Bob (1989) Satanism, The Seduction of America's Youth. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. 49.
[27] Michaelsen, Johanna (1989) Like Lambs to the Slaugter. Eugene OR: Harvest House, p. 232.
[28] Wise, Russ. *Satanism: The World of the Occult.* Probe Ministries. (http://www.probe.org/docs/satanism.html)
[29] Chick Publications cartoon book (1984) *Dark Dungeons.* (http://www.chick.com/reading/tracts/0046/0046_01.asp)
[30] Wicca- See Terms and Definitions.

**Chapter One** will examine roles, role-playing and personhood in the context of popular role-playing games. Role-playing games constitute a unique environment in which fantasy, imagination and reality intersect.

Therefore the purpose is to understand the significance of the unique ways these role-playing games configure fantasy, imagination and reality as participants necessarily negotiate between persona, player and person.

Leviticus 19:26 say not to practice any kind of magic. A very popular online game: Dungeons & Dragons claims to involve the players in the worship/service of other gods. Exodus 23:13 forbade man not to mention the names of other gods… *D&D* contains much information and encourages activity that deals with the occult world.

The thesis will argue that fantasy role-playing consist of collections and performances resembling magic ritual acts. The various relationships between role-play and magical ritual performances will be discussed.

Some scholars would to a certain extent refer to this play-style as **self-play.** That is, play as being themselves without adopting a fictional role. Rather, creating a personal avatar in a virtual world that represents human incarnation into its own creation.

In **Chapter Two**, the thesis elucidate that when a human being take on the form of a virtual Avatar, the powerful esoteric powers working through these avatars will calculatingly influence such a person's whole existence with a possibility with possession.

Acting through these Avatars will influence one's thoughts and actions, it will shape one's personality and it will negatively restructure a person's life according to the blueprint that is determined by the Avatar. It is an effective, magnificently packaged doorway into occultism.

A Literature Study which will include the fields of Psychology, Theology, Sociology and Anthropology.

**Chapter Three** will illustrates how Avatar use continues to rise, as the technology to make them more real and more customizable also increases However, more research is needed by those in the fields of Psychology, Sociology, Education and particularly Theology to explore the capability of online avatars influence humans on a spiritual and physical level.

Therefore, it is important to examine the implications of avatars on Psychology, Society and Culture, especially as their impact extends into the real world.

Users may feel a sense of power in designing their avatar or through guiding it within virtual environments, but as this chapter reveals, avatars have an affect beyond the virtual. Ultimately, the relationship between avatars as users is reciprocal: As humankind influence avatars, they influence humans on a very deep, spiritual level.

The following questions will be argued:

1. Can a Christian play these games without subscribing to a Magical Worldview? A worldview axiom in death and destruction?
2. Considering the high level of emotional and intellectual commitment these games require the question arises whether or not the participant could stay truthful without being trapped in devastating deception and prone to Lying spirits?
3. These games engage the whole person at deep levels and it can last months if well played. How can a person, Christian or not, immerse themselves in a reality view so deeply and not have an impact on the rest of their lives?

**Chapter Four** will present case studies to illustrate the possible devastating consequences on body, soul (mind, will and emotions) and spirit of a person involved in FRPG. The Case Study of Anders Behring Breivik will be discussed in detail.

This chapter will show that RPG's is utterly in opposition to the Word of God, considering the highly demonic and magical content of much of these games. It violates the commandment of 1 Thessalonians 5:22 *"Abstain from all appearances of evil."* It is a very high price that the individual and in most cases such a person's family, have to pay for not honouring God's Word.

The case studies presented will show that where large amounts of time was spend to play the game seriously, their minds became "re-wired" by its immersion into a world where demons, magic and spells are real.

This is all the more true because of the high level of intellectual and emotional engagement involved. Unless the gamer is a person of strong moral fibre, it is likely he/she will eventually be drawn in by the seductive power of magic into thinking thoughts that are entirely contrary to the thoughts of God, consequently creating a perverted mind. A mind that will eventually co-equal that of the demonic.

**Chapter Five**, on Godly Restoration will illustrate how God's Grace and God's Healing abounds when a person repents and commit themselves to Jesus Christ as their only Saviour and how He restores those who turn to Him for salvation.

> *"Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal their lands"*

> *2 Chronicles 7: 14*

God's order for man to find fulfillment as man is to maintain proper order of spirit, soul and body, subject to the Word of God and Spirit of God.

Any violation or corruption in these areas of man's being brings chaos.[31] Man was created by God[32], for God, to be filled with God.[33] Apart from God, man finds neither purpose nor fulfillment in life. Thus man becomes self-willed, frustrated, self-centered, confused and a continual vacuum: spiritually, emotionally and physically. The man who finds completeness and fulfillment in life is the man who knows God.

This thesis will attest that Counseling, Inner Healing, Deliverance and Renewal of the mind are the only true solutions of breaking the bondage of addictions to RPG's, occultism and witchcraft.

Considering the significant impact on the minds of the players, one is exhorted to bring "***into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5).***

This research proposes to conclude with what the Bible states in ***Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25: "There is a way that seems right to man, but in the end leads to death."***

Proponents who are convinced that RPG's have no effect whatsoever are deceived about the falsity of their beliefs and especially about the source of their misguided mind-set. This source is none other than Satan, the Father of lies and the god of this world.

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[31] Brand, Prof Dr Connie MJ (2007) Spiritual Warfare Three: The Sin War. Self-Published. Râdâh Academy, Pretoria, South Africa, p. 16.
[32] See Genesis 1:27.
[33] Man was like a branch and God was the vine - the life that flowed through the vine flowed into the branch to give it life. (See John 15:1-11)

The Bible warns in ***1 Timothy 4:1 "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving head to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."***

Occultism, witchcraft and magic through RPG's involve interaction and trafficking with demonic spirits, whether or not proponents know or acknowledge this fact. Therefore, the Bible condemns idolatry and occultism in all its forms, and if not heeded, the judgment of God for participating in such abominable activities will befall the sinner.

## 4. PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE (AIM) OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate, introduce and demonstrate the effects of FRPG with occultic and demonic content on the player's body, soul and spirit for example *World of Warcraft, Diablo, Guild Wars*, *Dungeons and Dragons* among others.

It is hypothesized that the content and the materials of the games themselves, in many cases, serves as an introduction to evil, contains authentic magical rituals and teach the players real magic along with facilitating intense occult training. It will shows that these FRPG is a recruiting tool of Satan.

### 4.1 The Objective of this Thesis is to answer the following questions

1. Does the media in books, magazines, television or radio that is opposed to any form of RPG give a distorted, untrue view of the effects of these games?
2. Are they completely misinformed, or intentionally deceptive about the nature of these games?
3. Is the Christian view that FRPG's is a platform to promote Satanic worship, Magic and mind control inaccurate?

Further, is the end result of the Christian's observation challenging the nature of RPG's a means to create fear and insecurity in the minds of gamers in order to scare them away from plying this type of game?

4. Is the claim that role-playing games are occultic (among other such claims) founded in ignorance? Is it a misconception or worse, a lie?

5. Is the gamer actually becoming the pretended character/avatar?

6. Can the gamer be described as kneeling and reciting an incarnation?

7. Are RPG's linked to manipulative black magic that can harm other people?

8. Is the gamer involved in evil, spiritual forces? Do they participate in evil sorcery, recite incantations, curse other people? Do they engage in magic or spells to dominate, manipulate and control others?

9. Is playing these games an "open door" into Occultism, Satanism, and/or demonic oppression?

10. Has RPG's definite positive benefits such as building teamwork, improve listening skills and develops good memories?


## 4.2 Aims


1. Providing an overview of the game history, gaming sub-culture and modern society's viewpoint on FRPG's

2. To expose the strategies used by the Enemy, and to highlight the dangers and pitfalls of playing FRPG's.

3. To present FRPG's as something dangerous and utterly contrary to the will of God. The Bible is clear in 1 Samuel 15:23 ***"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry".***

4. To educate people about the powerful forces working through FRPG's with magic as its root. To teach gamers that magic is a kind of spiritual lust. It is a business of deceiving people.[34] It is about power and about rebellion that leads people away from the truth.

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[34] Conway, D J (2003_ Magick of the Gods and Goddesses. Invoking the Powers of the Ancient Gods. Berkely. Toronto: The Crossing Press, p.4.

5. To proof that this games envelopes the player in an entirely different fantasy world in which the power of magic and violence is pervasive. Further, it is a game with a distinct and seductive spiritual worldview that is diametrically opposed to the Bible.

6. To exegete a Biblical view regarding what the Christian Church should teach concerning the problems of Satanic involvement.
   Whether this deception is due to the use of Ouija Board, music and divination or by Fantasy Role-playing games. The end result is the same occult bondage.

7. Give an account of case studies with the possibility of drawing conclusions relating to FRPG's as an important tool that promotes an un-Biblical worldview within the mind of the gamer.

## 4.3 Objectives

The thesis will proof that the mind is the primary battleground of one's spiritual destiny. It will show that Satan works on the minds of men and women to get his work done, to achieve his purposes.

> *"The god of this age [that is, Satan] has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."*
>
> *2 Corinthians 4:4 (NIV)*

It will provide evidence that the values of the RPG's are to engrain within the player an entirely different way of looking at life: what the anthropologists call the "Magical World View."

This thesis will demonstrate that this Magical Worldview is far outside the cultural norms of most societies and certainly outside the realms of Biblical values. The game's worldview does not represent the moral universe God created. In place of the Creator God, its universe is governed by a multiplicity of gods and demigods to create the idea of a one world religious system.

Moreover, unlike the Biblical perception of the world, its universe is not infused with an absolute, inherent morality: good and evil in the game is presented as equal. Herein imbedded would be the danger for generations to come.

This research proposes to conclude that these worldviews cannot exist in the same moral Universe. They cannot both be true. Thus, one cannot be a Christian and believe in the Magical Worldview without being some sort of hypocrite or deceived person.

> *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows in the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life."*
>
> *Galatians 6:7-8*

## 5. THESES AND HYPOTHESIS AND RESEARCH STATEMENT

The thesis deems to include a compendium of several interlocking hypotheses. The first hypothesis that this thesis will proof is that real magic does exist. People involved in the occult are not just misled people that falsely believe that they are using magic. Rather, they really do have this power and the power comes form dark forces, most notably Satan. For these people, magic is very real and very evil. As brand explains the theodicy (problem of evil) directly concur to the person of Satan.[35]

The second hypothesis this thesis will show that it is necessary to believe that the above mentioned FRP games is more than just a game.

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[35] Brand, Prof Dr Connie MJ (2006) Exoteric and Esoteric Evidence Pertaining to the Structures and Strategies to Destruct Christianity- Involving the Theodicy of Darkness. Dissertation for Doctor of Philosophy, UK: Calvary University.

Instead, it must be viewed as training material to be part of the occult, using real magic and that the desired effect of these FRP games is deliberate. The game is being created as part of a plan to bring people into witchcraft, or even Satanism. It is morally corrupting, self-indulgent escapism, it is a form of brainwashing also fundamentally anti-Biblical and sin.

The hypothesis regarding brainwashing and the exoteric deeply hidden powers working on the secrecies of mind-control or working through the games as a mind-controlling device will be addressed.

This thesis will illustrate that magic, as the root of FRP games, is about power and about rebellion. It is a kind of spiritual lust.

Scripture expressly forbids tampering with magic and witchcraft, divination, human sacrifice and many of the other common elements of most FRP games. Playing these games involves a thorough rejection of God's authority and is no less than blasphemy. It is utterly contrary to the will of God.

Another hypothesis that this thesis will attest to is that the worldview of these FRP games is anti-Biblical because it presents a universe without a transcendent, good God. The values of the game are not only pro-violence and death; they also entrain the player in an entirely different way of looking at life: what anthropologists call the "Magical World View (MWV)."

1 Thessalonians 5:22, Romans 12:2 and Ephesians 4:22-23 are the premises, the central theme and basis for argument for this thesis:

> ***"Reject any kind of evil" (NIV)***
>
> ***1 Thessalonians 5:22***

> *"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is- his good, pleasing and perfect will."*
>
> **Romans 12:2**

> *"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds."*
>
> **Ephesians 4:22-23**

The thesis states the following: An Exegetical Interpretation of the Esoteric powers working through fantasy role-playing games as a catechism of occultism.

The study will defend the above thesis statement and attempt to prove that the evil agenda of Satan includes the perversion of the mind and imaginary world of a person, which is the primary battlefield of war. In the process of perverting ones mind, lives are destroyed as John 10:10 states, opening doors into the occult world of esoteric powers to operate.

## 6. DEMARCATION INCLUDING SCOPE AND LIMITATION

The thesis does attempt to provide answers to perplexing questions regarding occult involvement appearing in FRPG's. The thesis will study the relationship between FRPG, such as *Dungeons & Dragons* and *World of Warcraft* and satanic practices.

Rather than to elaborate in great detail to the many rites, rituals, myths, practices, names or paraphernalia on the subject of FRPG's, this research aims to provide only the minimal amount of information needed to establish the facts.

This thesis will investigate the effects of FRPG with occultic and demonic content on the player's body, soul and spirit for example *World of Warcraft, Diablo, Guild Wars*, *Dungeons and Dragons* among others. It is hypothesized that the content and the materials of the games themselves, in many cases, serves as an introduction to evil, contains authentic magical rituals and teach the players real magic along with facilitating intense occult training. It will show that these FRPG is a recruiting tool of Satan.

The thesis will exclude:

1. Sensational reading, keys or guidelines on the occultic/ magical practices of FRPG's.
2. Recommendation about RPG's.
3. Gaming processes. Principles, goals, guidelines, charts, information, pictures and research results in order to teach proponents how to excel in any format of RPG's.
4. Exhaustive treatment and critique of FRPG's.

This thesis is unique in the attempt to provide a valuable contribution to the truth, knowledge and freedom that comes by knowing and doing the right thing with regards to any involvement in FRPG's and its subsequent consequences.

Since the thesis will cover many occultic symbols and illustrations the realistic depiction and hidden meaning of the characters, spells, incantations and symbols portraying in these so called "games" will be illustrated.

## 7. LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review will be used as a basis for further investigation.

Moreover to review the critical points of current knowledge including substantive findings as well as theoretical and mythological contributions the topic of Esoteric powers working through fantasy role-playing games as a catechism of occultism. While addressing practical issues the literature review will be reliant on the collection of primary data in order to resolve the stated problem.

The purpose is to provide an understanding of the current academic debate surrounding the topic of FRP's furthermore draws attention to the major issues and questions in this field.

**NOTE ON LITERATURE:**

None of these Academic publications, Case Studies, Essays, Master- and Doctor Theses and counter statements regarding the investigation of RPG's shows Biblical solutions or viewpoints.

# 8. RESEARCH MYTHOLOGY

This thesis will employ a diverse methodology, using a qualitative research methodology and where applicable historic quantitative data.

## 8.1 Qualitative research

For the purpose of this research an extensive literature study and internet literature representation of the following sub-fields will be undertaken: Anthropology,[36] Art, Ethnography,[37] Hermeneutics,[38] History,[39] Philosophy,[40] Phenomenology,[41] Psychology[42], Sociology,[43] Symbology, Theology,[44] Occultism, Satanism, Esotericism and Mysticism.

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[36] Anthropology- See Terms and Definitions.
[37] Ethnography- See Terms and Definitions.
[38] Hermeneutics- See Terms and Definitions.
[39] History- See Terms and Definitions.
[40] Philosophy- See Terms and Definitions.
[41] Phenomenology- See Terms and Definitions.

This study will include:

1. **Data collection and literature review**. This involves identifying, locating and collecting information pertaining to the research topic. This includes primary sources (interviews, case studies and observational study), and secondary sources (books written about the topic or event, Internet resources, magazine articles, dictionaries, academic publications, Essays, Master- and Doctor Theses).

2. **Audio visual material** such as television programs and –series, documentaries on the relevant subject, television interviews and relevant movies, as well as CD-ROM – material.

3. **Seminars and conferences** attended**.**

4. **Case studies** from Râdâh Ministries and applicable literature as well as Observational data.

5. **Observational Studies** will be used in conjunction with other methods, not to draw conclusions from in itself, however it will be used to develop theories from the findings.

6. **Structured, semi-structured and unstructured Interviews**

## 9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This thesis proposes to comply with Ethical rules governing the conduct of every individual that participates in the research process.

According to Lues & Lategan[45] on Ethical Guidelines, this Research Protocol proposes to pursue the following Ethical guidelines:

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[42] Psychology- See Terms and Definitions.
[43] Sociology- See Terms and Definitions.
[44] Theology- See Terms and Definitions.

[45] Lues, Liezel; Lategan, Laetus (2006) RE:search ABC. Stellenbosch, South Africa: Sun Press.

1. Every respondent will be provided with sufficient information about the research project to make an informed decision whether they want o take part of the research or not. Respondents are free to withdraw from the research at any point.

2. The identities of the respondents will remain anonymous and their personal information will remain private.

3. The respondent's privacy, schedule and comfort will be considered with every interview. All interviews will be arranged with prior planning and notification. Location and distances to be travelled for the interview will be taken into account.

4. If any promises are made to the respondents, the promise will be kept.

## 10. REFERENCING

The Harvard referencing method will be used in the Bibliography and footnotes will be used at the end of each page where applicable.

# CHAPTER ONE

## PhD

### PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

*Abstain from all appearances of Evil*

*I Thessalonians 5:22*

Cover Art for Chapters:        WarCraft, Diablo, Dungeons & Dragons
Graphic Design:                Susan Langeveldt, SL Studios

# A Panoramic Overview Demonstrating the Meaning And Emplacement of Computer Role-Playing Games

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## 1. Introduction

Sir Francis Bacon emphasize knowledge as the road to power; *Tantum possumus quantum scimus"*–**Our power is proportioned to our knowledge**.[1] Bacon was the most powerful and influential intellect of his time. Shakespeare, of course, stood above him in imagination and literary art; but Bacon's mind ranged over the universe like a searchlight peering and preying curiously into every corner and secret space.[2]

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[1] Friedell, Egon (2008) Cultural History of the Modern Age: Renaissance and the Reformation Volume 1. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, p. 335.

[2] Durant, Will and Ariel (1961 ) The Story of Civilization. Part VII: The Age of Reason Begins, a History of European Civilization in the Period of Shakespeare, Bacon, Montaigne, Rembrandt, Galileo, and Descartes, 1558-1648. Simon & Schuster,

The Scientist was stirred and invigorated not by his method but by his spirit. Bacon announced to his times that they were the youth of a world rampant with effervescent life that will far surpass that of Grecian and Roman learning.[3]

*"Verbere se audi"*– **Strike me if you will, only hear me**.[4]

When the enlightenment had burst into the French Revolution the Convention had the works of Francis Bacon published at the expense of the state. Therefore he was placed at the head of the Age of Reason.

Whether he willed it or not, the enterprise that he called for- the comprehensive organization of Scientific research, the ecumenical expansion and dissemination of knowledge- contained in itself the seeds of the profoundest drama of modern times: Christianity, Catholic or Protestant, fighting for its life against the spread of power and Science and Philosophy. That drama had then spoken its prologue to the world of that day.

We are in a time of worldwide transformation and unless a miracle intervenes, we could experience a quantum leap more radical than when the Renaissance appeared, driving the Dark Ages of History.

A New World Order would arrive almost overnight and be unlike anything the world has ever seen, affecting all mankind on the planet. Yet it may not be the Utopian future of universal brotherhood we are all being primed to expect by today's power players and experts.

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[3] Bacon, Francis (1958) The Advancement of Learning in Philosophical Works. Forgotten Books, p 167.
[4] Sir Francis Bacon.

Intellectually speaking, then, this thesis is in search for understanding to uncover the deep and often hidden forces behind the sweeping changes taking place right now. It suggests that certain critical turns in the road of history have remained unknown by the public- internationally.

In today's monopolized information gateway there are, indeed, patterns being kept from public view for the simple reason that this radical transition requires a docile and trusting public- a public that is willing to accept the popular reasons America and other nations have been pushed into a national debt equal to their net worth; why the family continues to disintegrate; why male and female roles blur; and why Christianity and traditional values disappear to be replaced by another system. The financial, military, political and spiritual arms of this powerful agenda have an interlocking purpose that gives the plan almost irresistible power.

Yet it is also true that the growing Leviathan of world government cannot break through as long as America and the free world stand in its way, mindful of their former prowess and virtue. America and the rest of the Western world are fighting for its soul.[5] In this Post-modern age of 2012 political, economic, ecumenical and social change of the now world is imminent.

Christian authors Dave Hunt and T A McMahon write the following disturbing words in their book The Seduction of Christianity: Spiritual Discernment in the Last Days: *"Christianity may well be facing the greatest challenge in its history: a series of powerful and growing seductions that are subtly changing biblical interpretations and undermining the faith of millions of people. Most Christians are scarcely aware of what is happening and much less do they understand the issues involved. The seduction is surprisingly easy. It does not take place as an obvious frontal assault from rival religious beliefs. That would be vigorously resisted..."[6]*

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[5] Brook, Tal (1999) Avatar of Night. Berkeley CA: End Run Publishing, p. 406.
[6] Hunt, Dave and McMahon, T A (1985) The Seduction of Christianity: Spiritual Discernment in the last Days. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, p.11.

Whether the following statement, namely, that **Satan attempts to gain power over mankind through many different avenues** deems to be true, the following questions arise: How did Satan manage to utilize computers and the Internet so undetected while maintaining and increasing his hold on mankind? Simultaneously, why does Satan encourage mankind to *seek divinity,* using Science and Technology? In view of the above-mentioned, this thesis argues the importance of uncovering the deep and hidden forces behind the sweeping changes that are taking place in the post-modern world at this moment.

Considering the direction Science is presently taking as well as what Bible prophecy proclaims to be happening, there are several conclusions to be made. One such deduction is that mankind is racing towards changing this very image man were created in, to disconnect men and women from God forever.

Technological evolution is not happening randomly! An intellectual being namely MAN is guiding it. Only someone who is self-deceived could think that the *transformation of man into a god* is happening via evolution. When man creates his own image, it is not just a Scientific accomplishment, overtly is contains a sinister, evil motive. The secret pertaining to the evil phenomena is to show that man is now the *"Creator"* and not the created. There is a new leap in evolution, namely that mankind can achieve eternal life on its own. For this scenario God is out of the picture, and man is stepping into the self-made position of being the "Creator". This attempt for eternal life is pitiful: a *cyborg*![7]

Since the dawn of time, the joint dream of fallen man and fallen angels alike has been to ascend to the throne of the Most High and transcend into *"godhood"* to unseat God, Himself, from the celestial throne.

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[7] **Cyborg**: a person whose body contains mechanical or electrical devices and whose abilities are greater than the abilities of normal humans.
(http://www.learnersdictionary.com/search/cyborg).

From the moment Lucifer was cast out of Heaven, he and his followers have been at war with all who have chosen to follow the Commandments of God. The Book of *Revelation* reveals:

> ***And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels. And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.***
>
> ***Revelation 12:7-9***

Contemporary evidence shows that Science and Technology had greatly expanded towards the last half of the eighteen hundreds and into the next century. According to this view one needs to note that **Christianity and the Scriptures are not against Science, logic and reason**.

On the contrary, the above-mentioned items are powerful instruments for Christianity. However, Science and intellect are not to be used to create gods, nor are their purpose to invent unified systems of beliefs and practices.

Thus, to use reason, Science and reality to escape to a *virtual world where one can become a god* is in itself a distortion of reality. Seen in perspective, this delusion on the part of a huge number of people is going to lead them into direct confrontation with the Creator.

The question arises whether Satan benefits by watching men pursuing altered states of consciousness and escapism by leaving reality? The answer is a definite Yes. **A life centered on deluding oneself is a destructive life**.

At the Creation in the book of Genesis, the Serpent knew that man was man and that it was a **delusion** for man to try to become God.

***This thesis will reveal that in order for man to delude himself into thinking he is a god, mankind is turning into a transformed image of reality through the internet to escape from daily reality***.

One can ask: How does seeking one's divinity aid in mankind's destruction? New Age Religions hold, that if man chooses to disobey the rule of God and insists on seeking truth on his own, he invariably must discard logic and reason and turns to mysticism, the Occult and the Mystery Religions including Wicca. According to Brand, ***in order to achieve his delusion of godhead, the initiate is encouraged to leave reality by using drugs, self-hypnosis, ecstatic activity such as rigorous physical and sexual activity, psychotic states of the mind and trances***.[8]

Therefore, the objective is to expose the deep forces behind Satan's present and immanent assault on the creation of God. Satan cannot create; therefore, he attempts to transform what God has created into something that he can use to exalt himself above God (2 Corinthians 11:13-25). As Paul tells, Satan even transformed himself into what appears to be an angel of light.

Assuming that the abovementioned sounds like the same vaulting ambition that brought about the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9), the following is affirmed is affirmed: ***"This is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them."***[9]

Likewise, in cyberspace an entity can be anything it wants to be male or female, stern or seductive, brilliant or stupid. It can be a complete fantasy of dragons and ray guns and beautiful crafted human bodies —a persona that has no real world counterpart. The question comes to mind: Does such a *"cyber-person"* really exist?

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[8] Brand, Prof Dr Connie MJ PhD (2006) Exoteric and Esoteric Evidence Pertaining To The Structures And Strategies Te Destruct Christianity- Involving The Theodicy of Darkness. Unpublished, p.35.
[9] See Genesis 11:6 (NASB)

To answer the question whether humankind can self-duplicate its identity in the form of an infinitely complex digital code and then manipulate the code—and thus the identity—at will?

One of the sources for Spirituality and Identity is entertained by a cultural phenomenon called **cyberspace**. The greatest example of cyberspace is the Internet, a worldwide information network. The aim of Chapter One is to create a better understanding of the Internet, what it can achieve and what forces lay behind this phenomenon.

The Internet is at present only in its infancy, but it carries the blueprint of its potential—a consciousness of global oneness and interrelationship that defies the barriers of nationality and geography. It is simultaneously present everywhere at the same time. The Internet is not a hierarchical structure, and despite the desire of some companies or governments to control it, it is globally democratic. At present it is primarily used for accessing information and communication, but has the potential of creating patterns of interrelationship, that will form the network for a global unity and consciousness. The flow of information through an expanded web of individual relationships -throughout the planet- will be akin a cellular structure that comes alive and continuously makes new connections.

As these connections of both knowledge and people become activated, they will make further connections in a way similar to how the brain activates and accesses information. At a critical point the interrelationships and flow of information come alive and begin to function as a unified field—a unified level of consciousness on a global level.

The Internet is a relatively new model through which knowledge and/or information, is readily accessible to anyone, anywhere.

The soul requirement wuld be a computer and a connection and instant access is established to a unified body of knowledge, and the potential for interconnecting with everyone else on the Internet.

The unified connectivity presented by the Internet has been foreknown by mystics, who, in meditation accesses a dimension of oneness in which everything is simultaneously present, and all knowledge is accessible. The experience of universal consciousness (or a super-conscious state), happens on this plane of oneness. But the Internet presents a model of a unified consciousness that is accessible on a more physical plane, accessible to anyone who has access to a computer.

The demystification of nature by technology has left little room for a worldview where God, the Creator of heaven and earth, steers all that is happening in the world. This younger generation consists of many seekers who are uncertain of their beliefs and questions their sense of belonging.

Author, Tal Brooke is of the opinion that Christianity has been called *"a form of sanctified cynicism."* Biblical faith means one cannot be skeptical of the supernatural, but we must be cynical of human nature.[10]

Most people are not accustomed of thinking of cynicism as a quality of Christian thought, but the Gospel—like Christ Himself—is utterly devoid of illusions of assessing human motive and behavior. Christianity is thoroughly cynical in recognizing human fallenness and everything it entails.

It understands fully that fallen human beings are relentlessly self-seeking and grotesquely shortsighted about it; that they are born rebellious, quick to blame and slow to accept responsibility.

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[10] Brooke, Tal (1997) Virtual Gods: The Seduction of Power and Pleasure in Cyberspace. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest house Publishers.

It understands that they obsessively seek to manipulate others (and reality in general) to their own advantage, regardless of the consequences.

Most of all, it understands that fallen humans instinctively recoil from God's presence and reflexively reject His purposes—all the while concealing their real agenda from themselves and others by invoking high-minded excuses for their behavior.

## 2. The Appearance of Virtual Worlds

With the exponential force of its own big bang, cyberspace is exploding into being, before the very eyes of mankind. Just as cosmologists believes that the physical space of our universe bursts into being out of nothing, so also the ontology of cyberspace is *ex nihilo*.

Humankind is witnessing the birth of a new domain, a new space that simply did not exist before. To them, the perfect realm awaits, not behind the pearly gates but behind electronic gateways labelled "*.com*" and "*.net.*"

Like physical space, this new *"cyber"* space is growing at an extraordinary rate, increasing its *"volume"* in an ever-widening sphere of expansion. Each day thousands of new nodes or web sites are added to the Internet and other affiliated networks, and with each new node the total domain of cyberspace grows larger.

Now and then inventions come along powerful enough to push history from one age to another. Such is the case with digital technology, computers, satellites, virtual reality and many other areas.

Brooke states *"with no doubt, this recent technology is a driving force of globalism, literally shrinking the earth with each fibre and impulse as it glues countries, communities and individuals together, making geographical distances of no effect. It is often invisible, yet it is huge. We are entering the digital age."*[11]

People have long been able to pick up a book and travel to a distant place in his imagination or watch a movie to look through the eyes of a film character, but new computer-game applications now allows a person to enter virtual worlds vicariously through the Internet, using avatar characters that one can control. Cyberspace becomes a metaphysical gateway that can transport one out of the reach of physicists' equations into an entirely new realm. When a gamer "go" into cyberspace he leaves behind both Newton's and Einstein's laws. Here, neither mechanistic, nor relativistic, or quantum laws apply.

In some profound way, cyberspace is *another* place. Once these doors into virtual reality open, one can interact with one another and with the virtual environment. *"Our actions in virtual worlds influence the virtual environment and the people in it, and they in turn influence us."*[12]

The question: What do people do in virtual worlds, have long been on the minds of many. Is it to become *"God"* and pursue a life one wishes one had? To cancel out a problem or a mistake on a computer is at times as easy as *"backspace"* or *"Ctrl Z"*. In the real world, every mistake includes a consequence. Scripture teaches on numerous occasions **"the wages of sin is death."**[13] When involving one's self within an online community, man develops a sense of belonging as one creates one's own personality to fit within the social norms within that online community, whether truthful to oneself or not.

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[11] Brooke, Tal (2000) One World: Special Millennial Edition Of When The World Will Be As One. Berkerley, CA: End Run Publishing, p. 93.
[12] Ivory, James D (2012) Virtual Lives. Santa Barbara California: ABC-CLIO,LLC, p. xi.
[13] **Romans 6:23** "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

In the virtual world people can do fantastic things that are not possible in the real world. One can fight heroic battles against fantasy creatures; wander beloved places from literature and films, take great risks and reap legendary rewards. But many others do the same things that people do every day in real world. They go shopping for clothes, they do routine chores; they visit with friends or even fell in love.

Whether people in virtual worlds are engaged in fantastic quests or mundane tasks, their actions have powerful implications in the real world. Millions of people use virtual worlds and what they do in virtual worlds has a significant impact on them as individuals. It may be tempting to dismiss virtual worlds as mere games or silly hobbies, but to do so would be to turn a blind eye to a growing body of knowledge that indicates virtual worlds as having profound effects.

This thesis is a comprehensive resource about virtual worlds and their place in the real world, consequently, it is important to understand the prominent and growing role the virtual worlds have on the body, mind and spirit of the individual and society at present. One of the hypotheses is that a corollary of the virtual reality conjecture is that every portrayal of the virtual world has an unseen and hidden spiritual realm, as a driving force, that has a profound effect on the person playing or existing in this mystical, esoteric world.

Cyberspace opens up a collective space beyond the law of physics- a space where mind rather than matter reigns. To judge from the archetypal images, demonic god-like characters, cultic themes, and mythological habitats that continue to saturate so many computer games, players remains almost enslaved and enticed, however supernaturally, to the deeper patterns of myth.

Joshua Hammerman[14], a Connecticut rabbi and journalist who has been addicted to his computer for the past five years[15] writes that the Internet can be seen as a catalyst for worship and introspection and suggest that the Internet can help one to experience and to approach God.[16] His quest is set forth in this spiritual odyssey, which imaginatively blends mysticism, numerology and the Bible with modern technology. He cites that the medieval Jewish mystics known as Kabbalists, believes that existence is multi-layered and that God's presence becomes more manifest through the unfolding of Creation.

Many scholars concur wrongly, that man's ability to perceive God, increases as one penetrates deeper into anything encountered, be it a force, a personal relationship, a text and for that matter a web site. In man's *"virtual pilgrimage"* traveling tens of thousand of miles in a matter of an instant, from Jerusalem to Mecca, to Chartres, even to Kosovo, and provides a new means of utilizing the vast power of technology to connect man to God and to transcend the artificial boundaries that separate man from his *"Creator"*.[17]

Science writer and feminist Margaret Wertheim[18] took an astute look at the cultural history of Western concepts of space in her book: *The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace:  History of Space from Dante to the Internet*.[19]

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[14] Joshua Hammerman- has since 1992 served as spiritual leader of Temple Beth El in Stamford, Connecticut. His writing has appeared internationally, including three personal essays in the New York Times Magazine. He also writes a regular column for the New York Jewish Week, and his articles have appeared in dozens of periodicals, including the New York Daily News, Newsday, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Hartford Courant, Jerusalem Post and Moment Magazine.

[15] Publishers Weekly (2000) Editorial Reviews. Reed Business Information, Inc. (http://www.amazon.com/thelordismyshepherd-com-Seeking-Cyberspace-Joshua-Hammerman/dp/product-description/1558748210).

[16] Hammerman, Joshua (2000) thelordismyshephard.com: Seeking God in Cyberspace. Florida: Simcha Press, p. xi.

[17] In view of Hammermans' perverted view of cosmology, this Thesis holds that The Holy Bible is the Word of God, written by God-inspired men of God. The Bible attest to the fact that God the Father is the only Creator of Heaven and earth and is to be worshipped alone!

[18] Wertheim, Margaret (1995) Pythagoras' Trousers: Physics, Faith, and Feminism, Crown.

[19] Wertheim, Margaret (1999) The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace: A History of Space from Dante to the Internet. NY: WW Norton & Company.

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The argument arises that cyberspace provides a technological substitute for the Christian view on space for heaven and describes a conflict that has existed between Modernist Science, which seeks to explain everything in terms of the physical world and man's human desire for some kind of spiritual dimension beyond the physical.

Taking into consideration the view from Wertheim, the following question could be posed: Can cyberspace be constructed as a new space for the soul? Is getting encroached in novels, television, cinema, ballet or opera not an escape mechanism? What makes cyberspace so luring?

Wertheim argues that cyberspace is the modern means to experience the spiritual dimension. As a supposedly spiritual realm, cyberspace is an attractive proposition for decaying civilisation, *"a repackaging of the old idea of heaven but in a secular, technologically sanctioned format."*[20] Thus the new dualism is not "*body and soul"* but "*real and virtual*". The Internet, she says, seems to offer an illusive space, setting you free from your physical body with its constraints. Proponents suggest that cyberspace offers man immortality, transcendence and omniscience. It seems to offer a non-physical world, which is rich in icons and images and even offers the hope of resurrection and immortality.

Cyberspace is sometimes regarded as a frontier that has to be colonised and this implies *"an ongoing cultural imperialism."*[21] Corporate interests are now venturing into web space, providing the infrastructure for people to access it. The marketing and commercial implications of this are astronomical.

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[20] Wertheim, Margaret (1999) The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace: A History of Space from Dante to the Internet. NY: WW Norton & Company, p.21.

[21] Wertheim, Margaret (1999) The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace: A History of Space from Dante to the Internet. NY: WW Norton & Company, p.295.

Wertheim also reminds *"cyberspace is an inner space of humanity's own making, a space where the vilest sides of human behaviour can all too easily effloresce"*[22]

However, despite the allure, the modern Internet is not a cyber-utopia. The Internet is a tool, which can be used for good or evil, it contains exploitative pornography that opens the door to cyber-sex; it provides an outlet for deceptive propaganda; and some users find themselves overwhelmed by aggressive and abusive e-mails. It could be argued that sometimes, the web seems more akin to Dante's vision of hell than of heaven.

## 3. The Impact of the Information Age

> "Coming into the Virtual World, we inhabit Information. Indeed, we become Information. Thought is embodied, and the Flesh is made Word. It's weird as hell"
>
> –John Perry Barlow[23]

The interconnectivity of computers around the world has been advancing from relative anonymity in the late 1960s, to prominence, partly due to media exposure of the *"information superhighway".* The possibilities encompassed by this worldwide communication network have evolved into overwhelming fascination.

The oldest, and most important of the computer networks was introduced in the mid 1960s as the ARPANET[24], and served as a test bed for new networking technologies, linking many universities and research centers. The first two nodes that formed the ARPANET, were UCLA and the Stanford Research Institute, followed shortly thereafter by the University of Utah.

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[22] Wertheim, Margaret (1999) The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace: A History of Space from Dante to the Internet. NY: WW Norton & Company, p.296.
[23] Barlow, John Perry (1990) "Crime and Puzzlement: In Advance of the Law an the Electronic Frontier." *Whole Earth Review.* 22 September 1990, no. 68, p. 44.
[24] ARPANET- Advanced Research Projects Agency Network.

Internet, the current (U.S. government-sponsored successor), to ARPANET, is growing in every dimension, at an astonishing pace. These *"data superhighways"* utilize special telecommunication lines and other equipment, to send voluminous amounts of information throughout the network, at very high speed.

ARPANET was introduced around twenty years ago, starting with roughly one thousand users, and at present the Internet has escalated ten million users, linking more than 100 countries with exchange of data; news; and opinions.

Unlike online services -which is centrally controlled- the Internet is decentralized by design. Each Internet computer, called a *host*, functions independently. Its operators can elect the Internet services to utilize, and which local services to make available to the global Internet community. Remarkably, this anarchy by design, works exceedingly well.

The Internet and similar computer networks are the platform on which actual virtual reality will be built. It is deemed a *scientific* magic. It promises to create picture perfect synthetic illusions, that can bend and shape perceived reality, like the powerful spells of the great sorcerers of medieval legends. The genie that provides the engine for this magical illusion is the **computer**.

This artificial environment created with computer- sensory-input hardware, and mentally and emotionally engaging software, is presented in such a way, that it appears and feels like a real environment. This synthetic world has been christened, *"cyberspace,"* a name given to it by cyberpunk novelist William Gibson in his visionary book *Neuromancer.*[25]

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[25] Gibson, William (1984) Neuromancer. Ace Publications.

More than thirty million, modem-equipped, computer users around the world, have discovered that cyberspace allows them to leap over barriers of time; place; sex; human relationships; data; wealth; and power; allowing them to connect with strangers who share a synonymous obsession or concern.

Virtual communities[26] use words on screens to exchange pleasantries and argue; engage in intellectual discourse; conduct commerce; exchange knowledge; share emotional support; make plans; brainstorm; gossip; feud; fall in love; find friends; (and lose them); play games; flirt; create a little high art and a lot if idle talk.

Nothing in cyberspace has not been borrowed or captured from the real world of sights and sounds. Our known world, consisting of living things; is the complete opposite to the cyberspace. Cyberspace is a world of lifeless images created by an apprentice. People in virtual communities do just about everything people do in real life, but they leave their bodies behind. To the millions who have been drawn into it, the richness and vitality of computer-linked cultures are attractive, even addictive.[27]

There is no such thing as a single, monolithic, online subculture; it's more like an ecosystem of subcultures, some frivolous, others serious. The cutting edge of scientific discourse is migrating to virtual communities, where you can read the electronic pre-printed reports of molecular biologists and cognitive scientists. At the same time, activists and educational reformers are using the same medium as a political tool. Virtual communities can be used to find a date, sell a house, publish a novel, and conduct a meeting, and is even used by some as a form of psychotherapy.

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[26] Virtual Communities are social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace.

[27] See Chapter 3 on Addiction.

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Others, such as the most addicted players of *Minitel* in France or Multi-User Dungeons (MUD's)[28] on the international networks, spend eighty hours a week or more, pretending they are someone else, or even pretending to be several different people at the same time, living a life that does not exist outside a computer. MUD's are not only susceptible to pathologically obsessive use by some people, but also create a strain on computer and communication resources. "*MUD-ding*" has been banned at universities such as Amherst and on the entire continent of Australia.

These MUD's are imaginary worlds in computer databases, where people use words and programming languages to improvise melodramas; build worlds (and all the objects in them); solve puzzles; invent amusement tools, and compete for prestige and power; gain wisdom; seek revenge; indulge greed and lust and violent impulses. You can find disembodied sex in some MUD's. In the right MUD one can even kill, or die. Subject under the operation of different rules and moral codes that govern that domain.

Edward Castronova, in quoting an American academic and political activist: Lawrence Lessig, explains that the unusual thing about cyberspace is that one can be both *"here"* and elsewhere at the same time.[29]

Chapter Two will investigate the fascination, the allure, and the reasons why people use the medium of MUDs so enthusiastically, even obsessively. The unique features of this medium, that appeals to people's psychological needs and the deductions that can be made will be discussed in depth in the following section.

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[28] Multi-User Dungeon (MUD): Is a on-line version of multi-player fantasy/role-playing adventure games such as Dungeons & Dragons, World of Warcraft, Doom, Diablo etc. MUDs, which go back at least to the 1970s, have flourished on the Net, with player communities growing up around college and university computing networks. Users interact with the MUD environment and with each other by typing and receiving messages.
[29] Castronova, Edward (2005) Synthetic Worlds: The Business and Cultures of Online Games. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 7.

## 4. Interpreting Technology: "The Medium is the Message"

In Academia, the study of virtual worlds gained sudden traction. In a few short years, a multidisciplinary arena of scholarship emerged, with participation from Media Studies, Organization Studies; Education; Psychology; Anthropology; and Computer related fields, such as human-computer interaction and computer-supported collaborated work.

When Role Playing Games first appeared on the scene, many people perceived them as simply role-playing, with no important connection to anything but gaming. However, since role-playing has become a familiar part of our culture, gamers and scholars have begun to search for its origins, and to develop a broader understanding of what has evolved.

The information age has changed human life profoundly. It has changed culture, language, and it has even changed thought processes. The fundamental difference of modern day RPGs, is that it changes people's way of virtual consciousness. Since the invention of key technology, such as the Internet, and computer networks, the transformation in the phenomenon of RPGs was overwhelming. As a result, the compression of time, distance and language all became global, unifying features. Denoting spatial-temporal parameters, the game situation is dominated by the principle of *"Here and Now."*

Before investigating these ideas further, it is necessary to consider the question of interpretation; how can we construe the implications of technology on the mind of the gamer?

## 5. The Theory, Practice and Significance of The Relationship Between Mind And Technology

Generic to all powers, there is a dark side to this quest for mind expansion and virtual entertainment. To enter this imaginary world or virtual reality, people must first abandon the real world, like ghosts, and descend into their alternate worlds, spending most of their waking lives there. The most serious question that emerges from the early history of MUDs, would be if this is a dangerous form of addiction? The answer is that this phenomenon, like MUDs, does present grave social and spiritual dangers on individuals. The following section will focalize the impact on a person's soul and spirit, thoughts, feelings and relationships by communications technology.

There are many theories that endeavour to address technology, which tends to be associated with the disciplines of Science- and Technology studies and Communication studies. The school of thought that Thorstein Veblen called *"technological determinism"*, interprets technology as a force, largely beyond our control, that shapes our history and culture.[30]

This deduction that technology somehow controls a society's structure and values had a cumulative effect. According to the instrumentalist view, technology is interpreted as "a means to an end". James Carey, in *Communication as Culture* writes: *"Technology is technology, it is a means for communication and transportation over space, and nothing more."*[31]

Author, Nicholas Carr, in his recent book *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*, poses a problem with both the determinists, and instrumentalist positions; both ideologies, depicting technology as something apart from the *mind*.

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[30] Kluver, Randy. *Globalzation, Informatiation, and Intercultural Communication.* Oklahoma City University. Rettrieved 18 August 2010.

[31] Negroponte, Nicolas (http://archives.obs-us.com/obs/english/books/nn/bdcont.htm).

Carr points out that technology can essentially affect the way the brain is wired. For example, experiments have shown that the brains of literate and illiterate individuals differ in many ways. Literacy not only affects persons language proficiency, it also affects how an individual processes visual signals, reasoning abilities, and how memories are formed.[32]

Technological changes in the brain brought about by technology, are, in a sense, irreversible. Carr explains that the brain is *plastic*: therefore, when a person develops new patterns of thought, the brain forms new structures of neural connections. The old neural loops do not remain in place; the brain re-uses them in different ways. This does not mean that old habits can no longer be modified; it simply means that the longer one use new patterns of thought, the harder it is to go back. In Carr's words, "*plastic does not mean elastic.*"[33]

Cognitive science has revealed that technology can no longer be viewed as something separate from the mind. The relationship of mind and technology is dynamic: through use of one's mind, one changes technology, and in return, technology changes our minds. It might be useful to reconsider the work of Marshal McLuhan in this regard.

## 5.1 Marshall McLuhan And His Theory Of Extensions

Marshal McLuhan, in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, suggested that technological innovations should be understood, not in terms of their content, but in terms of how they change society. His famous one-liner *"the medium is the message",* should be understood in this context. He explored this idea metaphorically, by suggesting that media acts as *extensions* of the human body.

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[32] Carr, Nicholas (2010) The Shadows, What the Internet is Doing to our Brains. New York: W.W Norton & Company, p. 46.
[33] Ibid, p. 34.

One example would be when an automobile is viewed as an extension of the feet- it allows man to travel places in the same manner as the feet, only faster and with less effort.

According to McLuhan, most people understand this intuitively, however they tend not to realize that every extension implies an *amputation*. The development of the automobile reduces the need for a walking culture, which in turn influences the development of society as a whole. McLuhan also warns us of the dangers of over-extending technology. When a medium, like the automobile becomes over-extended, the resulting amputations (such as carbon emissions and obesity) may outweigh the benefits of getting to places faster.[34]

When mankind creates new technology, man is changing himself and something has been amputated. When a technology becomes over extended, it is not possible to simply regress. For example, when the automobile becomes over-extended, one cannot go back to a walking culture because one has forgotten how to walk.

McLuhan states, *"Every process pushed far enough, tends to reverse or flip suddenly."*[35] This flip is never a literal return to the past; instead it involves a qualitative change, something radically new that seeks to recover something that has been lost. In McLuhan's words, *"we use the new to do the old."*[36]

**Philippians 4:8** says: **"...fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable."** The question arises: Does RPGs measure up to these standards?

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[34] McLuhan, Marshal (2003) Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man. Hamburg, Germany: Gingko Press.

[35] McLuhan, Marshal and Nevitt, Barrington (1972) The Executive as Dropout. Don Mills: Longman, pp. 3-4.

[36] McLuhan, Marshal (2006) "At the Flip Point of Time- The Point of More return." *Journal of Communication.* Volume 25, Issue 4.

Brooke agrees that virtual reality will be more virtuous as entertainment, than its predecessors in the movie, television, digital satellite television and interactive CD-ROM industries. Unfortunately, the doorway is the **imagination.** To repeat an earlier observation, virtual reality intersects human vulnerability where desires and longings meet the imagination. That makes it a formidable mind-machine. *"With it, man will spin new webs".*[37]

## 5.2 The Phenomena of a Passive Mind, Mind Control And Altered Consciousness

> Your Mind is Software. Program it.
> Your body is a shell. Change it.
> Death is a disease. Cure it.
> Extinction is approaching. Fight it.
>
> - Eclipse Phase[38]

Spiritualism, psychic ability and mind-control are all familiar subjects to just about everyone in the virtual world of games. Characters are given bizarre powers- the ability to hear thoughts; to move objects through force of will; to see into the past, present or future. They can command terrible forces that could easily destroy themselves and every other character around them.

However, to some, psychic phenomena like the above mentioned, have been the content of science fiction, comic books and horror movies for decades. What if these powers that are mentioned above did exist? What if instead of accomplishments in the game-world it can be integrated in the person, receiving the impression in one's mind from the "*virtual agents*" in the real life of such a person?

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[37] Brooke, Tal (1997) Virtual Gods: The Seduction of Power and Pleasure in Cyberspace. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest house Publishers, p. 126.
[38] Boyle, Bob. Eclipse Phase. The Roleplaying Game of Transhuman Conspiracy and Horror.

In game terms, the characters (such as gods and demons) are psychic powers that the characters possess. There is no need to summon or bind them – they're just there, waiting for the opportunity to be used. These are not self-aware, otherworldly entities eager for the chance to corrupt their masters, they are simply a force, -of whatever origin-, is powerful and destructive beyond imagination.

The objective of the game will of course be about the characters that players create and control. Recurring themes will be the facelessness of technology, the unstoppable will of progress, the futility of life and the awful weight of freedom to an extent that no one has ever known before.

This hypothesis suggests that technology allows the re-shaping of mind and spirit. The human may feel enhanced and empowered, liberated from material needs, but also creates opportunities for oppression and puts the capability of destruction in the hands of the gamer. Many threats lurk in the devastating habits of RPGs, -some dangers familiar and some alien.

So many people, unaware of the basic difference between the activity of evil spirits and that of the Holy Spirit, have unconsciously permitted the enemy to enter and occupy their minds.  When one's mind falls victim to the phenomena of RPGs, his mind can sink into passivity.

Mental passivity implies, in its descriptive words: unreasoning, inactive, unenthusiastic, unresponsive, unqualified obedience to the commands of another, lawful or unlawful. Romans 6:16 states that a person will become the slave of whomever you yield your mind to obey.

A person's mind is the battlefield. End-time Deliverance Ministry: *Demonbusters.com,* defines a "PASSIVE MIND" as *"Receiving impression fromexternal agents - not acting - being the objective of the action rather than the subject."*[39]

The passive mind does not accept the Word of God completely as Truth, therefore it is always questioning and wondering. This questioning and wondering weakens the **will**, causing the person to be hesitant to obey God. This is the cause of most of the instability, seen in Christians today. It causes disequilibrium in their minds. God's purpose within is to establish and settle us (1 Peter 5:6-11).

In view of this, one needs to surrender the "*self*" to the Holy Spirit. Romans 12 refer to man's bodies being ***"a living sacrifice."*** If man gives up the protection of the Holy Spirit to his mind and soul one will be susceptible to the deceptions of Satan (1 Peter 5:6-10).

After the mind of the gamer has sunk into passivity he/she will receive many thoughts, injected from the synthetic, occult-invaded game world, notions that are unclean, blasphemous and perplexing, passing through his mind in succession. Although the gamer might elect to depose of these thoughts, he is powerless to stop them or alter his trail of thinking. This person's mind is like a perpetual motion machine: once begun, it cannot be halted.

Regardless of your intentional opposition, you cannot banish those thoughts from your head. The gateway to the soul is thus opened, and evil spirits, and imprints give notions, which are counter-active to the believer's will.

Watchman Nee notes that if any person desires to think, he must possess memory, imagination and reasoning powers, but the person "possessed" instantaneously has lost these powers, and is hence, unable to think.

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[39] Passive Mind. (http://www.demonbuster.com/passmind.html).

He cannot create, deduce or recollect, nor can the person compare, judge and comprehend. He/she is therefore unable to think logically and clearly. Any attempt to do so, will result in an experience, akin to a kind of dazed sensation that stifles any productive thought. [40]

The gamer becomes a slave to corruption, and brought into the slavery of Satan. This is the nature of sin. The gamer is gripped by an intangible chain, which others might fail to recognize. Since a person's mental process is under bondage, one will naturally develop an inordinately off-balanced viewpoint. A so-called magical worldview…!

The person becomes a slave to the habit, a habit that can perpetuate into an addiction to online games. Not only is such a person a slave to sin, but can become a slave to his own addiction. This is also true of lusts. The most extreme form of progression into the occult, is when the desire for Satan, becomes so great, that it results in cybersex- which is sex with Satan himself.[41]

Brand states that Sin, Evil and Satan are intrinsically linked to one another. As a matter of fact, according to Brand, she perceives it as inseparable. To understand the implications and repercussions of sin, and the sinful nature of human beings, as well as sin as an intrinsic part of the universe, it will be necessary to understand the implications of the free will and the fall of man as seen in Scripture. The Scriptures indicates that sin entered the universe through Satan, and then into the human race with the fall of Adam and Eve.[42]

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[40] Nee, Watchman (1998) The Spiritual Man. Volume 3. Living Stream Ministries.

[41] Brand, Prof Dr Connie MJ. March 2012. Personal Interview. Founder and President: Râdâh Academy, South Africa.

[42] Brand, Prof Dr Connie MJ PhD (2006) Exoteric and Esoteric Evidence Pertaining To The Structures And Strategies To Destruct Christianity- Involving The Theodicy of Darkness. Unpublished, p.1912.

Due to a passive mind, (resulted from fierce attack by hidden powers of darkness), the mind of the gamer loses its ability to determine between right and wrong. Due to the passive will, the gamer is drawn deeper and deeper into the esoteric occult world, up to the point where there is no turning back from it. The yearning for the hidden truths becomes insatiable. What does this encompass? It encompasses knowledge of the magical worlds as well as an awareness of evil. In view of this it is imperative to understand that role-playing games can readily be a form of mind-control, which uses real occult techniques to foster possession by evil spirits.

As a result, most of this Massive-Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPG), contain a summary of the principles of and an introduction to the fundamentals of the occult. By repetition and recitation, it enables the gamer to rehearse occultic basics in a so-called *"fun, easy-to-learn"* fashion. Thus, role-playing games really is a catechism of occultism.

The phenomena of a gamers mind under the attack of evil spirits are manifold and various. One principle, however, underlies them all: the gamer could loose control. According to the ordering of God, each of man's natural abilities (among which is the thought process of the mind), should be subject completely to man's own rule. However, should a person knowingly or unknowingly give ground to evil spirits, they may occupy his mental life and take direct action therein, unhampered by the victim's will.

Inactivity in stead of activity, disquietude instead of calm, restlessness due to overflowing thoughts, inability to concentrate, distinguish or remember, confusion beyond control, unproductive labouring, listlessness during the day and dreams and visions in the night, insomnia, doubtfulness, unreasonable fears, disturbance to the point of agony. The evil spirits all nefariously inspires the latter.[43]

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43 Nee, Watchman (1998) The Spiritual Man. Volume 3. Living Stream Ministries.

Each sin proclaims freedom to each of one's desires. Except, the reality is that one sacrifices one's freedom, as one's mind is enslaved to those things. The addiction grows deeper and as desirous an individual is to stop, it is impossible, but the Lord has called mankind to break free from the bondage of sin and slavery. Man must see his true condition: that one does not have any freedom in one's sin. The Bible teaches that man is wearing filthy, dirty rags that are red with sin.[44] However, man can shatter the chains that Satan has placed upon him.

God said in Zachariah 3:4-5 that He will remove those clothes from man and give them royal garments. The *Branch*, the Servant of God, has already come. His name is Jesus. He has removed the sins of all who will walk in His ways and will keep His commandments. It is no coincidence that baptism is depicted as "a washing away of sins". In **Revelation 7:14** the saints are said to be the ones who have **"washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."**

In **Hebrews 10:22** man is told to have **"our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."** Paul was told in **Acts 22:16, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."**

> **The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you." Then I said, "Put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the LORD stood by.**
>
> **Zachariah 3:4,5**

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[44] Isaiah 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean,   and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf,  and like the wind our sins sweep us away. (NIV)

## 5.3 Exploring Altered Consciousness With Specific Significance Of The World Of Role Playing Games

The mind of man is an organ of thought. Through the mind mankind is equipped to know, think, imagine, remember and understand. Man's intellect, reasoning, wisdom and cleverness all pertain to the mind. Broadly speaking the mind is the brain. Mind is a psychological term whereas brain is a physiological term. The mind of psychology is the brain of physiology. Man's mind occupies a large place in his life because his thought easily influences his action.

The question arises: Can technology be used as a weapon of mind control?

That which lure behind the doors of mind-control is experiences, a constant quest for knowledge, power and expansion of abilities. At the seat of the quest for mind expansion is the seemingly capacity, in altered consciousness, to find heightened abilities, godlike powers and universal knowledge. To enter the virtual world offered by the game played, one must first abandon the real world one lives in and descend into a man-mad artificial world full of "unknown" ghosts, monsters, "gods" and hidden esoteric powers.

People would not be so eager to proclaim the reality of online life if they did not derive more enjoyment from it than from everyday life. The most fanatic players know that the game world is an image, and that this image is unable to nourish the body. Imagine a society where half of the people spend all of their time playing online games, while the other half takes care of their bodily needs by supplying food, drink, and other necessities. Even in such a society, the supplies that maintain the bodies of the players alive could be produced in only one of the two worlds.

Moreover, the developers of online games could pull the plug on their worlds, and they would disappear without trace, but the members of online games could not pull the plug on the real world. This asymmetrical relation makes it amply clear that the two worlds do not belong to the same ontological level, even if many players find an essential mean of self-fulfillment in the creation of imaginary identities.

Whether there is a "ghost in the machine" as Brooke refers, with some kind of supernatural interface, the entertainment aspect alone can turn ghosts out of its viewers as they escape to simulated worlds, leaving family and friends behind. In these virtual world created by game masters and fantasy, other hungers (such as a curiosity of the unknown, occultism, magic and escapism) are fed and exchanged for activities in the real world. For them true life is elsewhere! One can read about some of these hungers in the ancient accounts of Sodom and Gomorrah. They were real then and they are becoming real again now. Brooke states: ***"Sin recruits through corruption."***[45]

***As above, so below!*** Simply put, this means that everything on a spiritual or even a universal level is repeated in humankind and our immediate surroundings in a scaled-down form. One could argue that these four words summarize the core of magic.

The significance of this phrase is that it is believed to hold the key to all mysteries. All systems of magic are claimed to function by this formula. ***That which is above is the same as that which is below,*** which indicates that the Macro cosmos is the same as the Micro cosmos. Believers of this philosophy argues that the universe is the same as God, God is the same as man, man is the same as the cell, the cell is the same as the atom, the atom is the same as...and so on, ad infinitum.

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[45] Brooke, Tal 1997) Virtual Gods. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers.

This message theorizes that man is the counterpart of God on earth, as God is man's counterpart in heaven. Therefore, it is a statement of an ancient belief that man's actions on earth parallel the actions of God in heaven. This pivots on the belief that *"all things have their birth from this One Thing by adaptation."*

Magic is more that entertainment. To the magician the magical act, that of causing a transformation in a thing or things without any physical contact, is accomplished by an imaginative act accompanied by the will that the wanted change will occur. The magical act and imaginative act becomes one and the same. The magician knows with certainty that for the **change to occur** he must **will it** to happen and firmly **believe** it will happen. Here it may be noted that magic and religion are akin that both require belief that a miracle will occur.

According to an *Online Encyclopedia Of The Occult, Mysticism, Magic And Paranormal*,[46] the esoteric concept to bring about such a change the magician uses the conception of *"dynamic interconnectedness to describe the physical world as the sort of thing that imagination and desire can effect. The magician's world is an independent whole, a web of which no strand is autonomous. Mind and body, galaxy and atom, sensation and stimulus, are intimately bound. Witchcraft strongly imbues the view that all things are independent and interrelated."*

They falsely believe that these concepts pivot on the principle that all things come from the One Thing, or First Cause, and *"Its power is integrating, if it be turned into earth."*[47]

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[46] Mystica. An online Encyclopedia of the occult, mysticism, magic, paranormal and more. (http://www.themystica.com/mystica/default.html).

[47] Mystica. An online Encyclopedia of the occult, mysticism, magic, paranormal and more. (http://www.themystica.com/mystica/default.html).

Considering the occultic teaching of this pagan belief it is not surprising that they hypothesize that the purpose of all rituals in ceremonial magic is to unite the microcosm with the macrocosm to join *God*, or gods when invoked, with the human consciousness. When such a supreme union is achieved the subject and object becomes one. This is because the magician feels that he is consciously in touch with all elements of the universe, therefore, he can control them. It may be said, the magician feels connected with the universe. This feeling intensifies the more the magician successfully practices his skills. Whenever he experiences a failure he knows that the ritual was not performed correctly.

When feeling in unity with the universe the magician knows he has reached his Higher or True Self because he has attained mastery over himself and the universe. Thus he feels his *"skillful work ascends from earth to heaven and descends to earth again, and receives the power of the superiors and of the inferiors."* Therefore, he *"hast the glory of the whole world therefore let all obscurity flee from thee."*

Accordingly, to these practitioners the miracles are now possible. Some magicians, including Aleister Crowley, claimed that when the magician reaches this ultimate peak of altered consciousness the miracles are no longer important; the extreme goal becomes the direct union with God.[48]

This type of deviousness by Satan aims to change the perception or behaviour of man through exploitative, deceptive, lies!  Nevertheless it's a message that Satan, masquerading as an **"Angel of Light,"** has used to deceive God's people since the beginning of time. God warns mankind about this cruel "**prince of the power of the air:**"

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[48] Mystica. An online Encyclopedia of the occult, mysticism, magic, paranormal and more. (http://www.themystica.com/mystica/default.html).

*How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars... I will be like the Most High.' Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit*

*Isaiah 14:12-15*

## 6. The Role-Playing Game: Defined, Described And Systemized

This section provides an overview of the history, characteristics and language of Role-playing-Games. This background is necessary in order to fully understand the context of the possible destructive nature of these games. In order to reach this goal one must start with an all-encompassing definition of exactly what a role-playing game is:

> **A fantasy role-playing game is defined as a leisure activity that involves a unique form of play where gamers presume the roles of figures in a mythical environment. "The game" is not competitive, has no time limits, is not scored, and has no definitions of winning or losing. Unlike card games, board games, games of chance, or organized sports, the point of fantasy role-playing games is neither merely to play well nor to "win." The advancement can be in the form of leveling (a system within the game that allows players to achieve new skills and abilities upon acquiring enough experience points, usually by completing quests), or in the form of new and powerful equipment.[49]**

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[49] This definition is constructed by the author for this thesis, using various definitions given from divergent academic fields.

While people (especially children) have always played games based on their fantasies, in the middle 1970s the game industry saw the phenomenal rise of a whole new family of games, the structured **fantasy games.** The first of these appear to have been outgrowths of medieval combat simulation games such as *Dark Ages* or *Chainmail,* which had rules for individuals as well as group combat. Science fiction and fantasy fans to allow for combat with dragons and other mythical beasts modified these.

After a few years of experimentation entirely new games were invented in which fantastical aspects took front stage. The action could range from the adventures of small bands of brave and hardy beings to the clash of gigantic armies of elves, orcs, dragons and dwarfs in fantasy campaigns.

The first of the FRP games was *Dungeons & Dragons* or *D&D.* This game caught on with remarkable speed and soon there were both imitations and several highly original competing fantasy games, such as *Empire of the Petal Throne, Chivalry & Sorcery,* just to name a few. In all of these games, players developed and played one or more individual characters that could be Warriors, Magicians, Clerics, Thieves or members of other professions common to fantasy stories.

They ran these **player characters** or **PCs** against referees **—** originally known as **Dungeon Masters** or **DMs,** later known as **Game Masters** or **GMs** **—** who created entire fantasy worlds of deadly dungeons, harrowing wildernesses and perilous cities, populating these worlds with all manners of monsters and supernatural beings with aberrant powers.

Thus in the course of playing each game, the players and the referee would join in the continual creation of a living fantasy novel, unique on each occurrence.

The importance of this approach to gaming is perhaps best summed up in the Introduction to the game, White Wolf's *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* (second edition, 1994):

> *"We no longer tell stories — we listen to them. We sit passively, waiting to be picked up and carried to the worlds we create. We have become slaves to our TV's, permitting an oligarchy of artists to describe our culture to us…*
>
> *…WEREWOLF is about bringing stories home and making the ancient myths and legends a more substantial part of our lives. Storytelling allows us to understand ourselves by giving us a tool with which to explain our triumphs and defeats. By looking at our culture, our family and ourselves in new contexts, we can understand things we never before realized…*
>
> *… WEREWOLF is not only a storytelling game, but a role-playing game as well. You not only tell stories, but **actually act through them by assuming the roles of the central characters. It's a lot like theatre, but you make up the lines.**"*

RPG's can be categorized in two prime groupings:

**a. Single-player RPG** and /or video games form a loosely defined genre of computer and console games with origins in role-playing games such as *Dungeons & Dragons,* on which they base a great deal of their terminology, settings and game mechanics.[50] This translation changes the experience of the game, providing a visual representation of the world nevertheless emphasizing statistical character development over collaborative, interactive storytelling.[51]

**b. Multi-player RPG's** can be classified under Online text based- and Massively multiplayer online RPG's (MMORPG's).

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[50] Barton, Matt (2008) Dungeons and Desktops: The History of Computer Role-playing Games. AK Peters LTD.

[51] Tychsen, Anders (2006) Role Playing Games- Comparative Analysis Across Two Media Platforms. Australia.

**- Online text based RPG's** require many gamers applying some form of text-based program and an Internet connection to play this specific type of RPG.

**- Massively multiplayer online RPG's (MMORPG's**) is a computer-based role playing game (RPG) which takes place in an online virtual world with hundreds or thousands of other players. In the game, a player uses a client to connect to a server, usually run by the publisher of the game, which hosts the virtual world and memorizes information about the player. An MMORPG, like any RPG, allows the user to control a character represented by an avatar, which he directs to fight monsters for experience, interact with other characters, acquire items, and so on.

MMORPGs have become extremely popular since the wider debut of broadband Internet connections and now have millions of subscribers from hundreds of different countries. Some MMORPGs have as many as a million subscribers.[52]

Massive Multi-player online role-playing game (MMORPG) have evolved from a combination of Computer Role-Playing Games (CRPG) such as Richard Garriott's *Ultima series* and Multi-User Dungeons (MUD) and Richard Bartle's *MUD1*, that now have become a global phenomenon in which approximately 50 million people every week venture into a virtual world.[53] Other examples of virtual worlds are the immensely popular computer game *World of Warcraft* or the simulation game *Second life*[54].

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[52] MMORPG (http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-a-mmorpg.htm).

[53] Tyrer, Richard J J (2008) Addiction and Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs): An In-depth Study of the Key Aspects. Thesis for MA in BSc Computer & Video Games. Dissertation Abstract: University of Salford.

[54] **Second Life** is an online virtual world. A number of free client programs, or Viewers, enable Second Life users, called Residents, to interact with each other through avatars. Residents can explore the world (known as the grid), meet other residents, socialize, participate in individual and group activities, and create and trade virtual property and services with one another. *Second Life* is intended for people aged 16 and over, and as of 2011 has about one million active users. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Life).

**For the purpose of this study the central focus will be on MMORPG. Although extensive research has been conducted into their cultural and economic effects, the religious and spiritual dimensions of new media have received considerably less attention in the academic world.**

**6.1 Massive Multi-player Online Role Playing Games (MMORPG)**

*"My character is a Druid. He uses supernatural powers to change his shape and commands the forces of nature. Thus, he belongs to the shapeshifting hybrid class and acts as a healer. Druids are keepers of the world who walk the path of nature, following the wisdom of the Ancient and Cenarius, healing and nurturing the world. Because Druids are good people, and my intention for playing this game is only for entertainment I see nothing wrong,* a World of Warcraft player named Dan argued with me. *"It is a game of fantasy. Playing WOW doesn't mean I have any interest in the occult, or classify me as somebody doing magic even though I use a lot of spell casting in the game.*

Dan wasn't through levelling his bombardment. *"WOW is a intriguing game, and is one of the best designed, fantastically drawn and most mentally challenging games you could play,"* he insisted.

Dan is typical of World of Warcraft players. His interest in fantasy role-playing games fuelled by an inquisitive intellect often left unchallenged by routine rigors of studying and working. He escapes into a fictional realm by becoming absorbed in a fabricated world of medieval imagery, where his mind conjures heroics and adventure within.

*"Isn't it dangerous to fool around with occult realities, even in a illusionary fashion?"* I countered. *"No"* Dan said. *It's a test of your acting and imagination."* *"But you character, the Druid, uses occult forces."* *"It is fantasy power."* Dan responded. *"There is nothing real in WOW."*[55]

It is hard to hear a person's testimony like the one mentioned above without concluding that something quite out of the ordinary must be going on where a line between games and real life has become blurred- drawing people deeper into a realm of experiences that is growing faster than one can examine it.

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[55] The author compiles this case study by means of a personal interview. The name of the player has been changed.

This is a universe that host massive flows of real human interaction — information, commerce, war, politics, society and culture.

Every day, millions of people spend their days in magic worlds exploring undiscovered places, fighting monsters, creating covenants, buying property, chatting, performing magic rituals…Is this fantasy? No, this is an artificial environment called virtual reality. These worlds exist in computer games like *World of Warcraft* and three-dimensional virtual worlds like Linden Lab's *Second Life*. Clearly, there is a fascination with otherworldly realities as presented in The Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter, The Wheel of Time and Narnia.

Fantasy books are booming business. These are grand narratives about heroism, magic and a struggle between good and evil. Besides, they are examples of the apparent need for enchantment that has its parallels in the rise of romanticism in the 19th century.

Through *Second Life* and *World of Warcraft*, people can become involved in such an enchanted world. Fantasy worlds may be functioning as utopia where the life is *magic and exciting*.

The persons in such a world are part of a fairy tale or an epic myth. Reading fantasy literature or watching a film can be a temporal escape from the real, modern and technical world. The same can be said from participating in virtual worlds. Here, one cannot only be a reader or an observer, but one can become actively involved in the fantasy world.

What could be the motivation to live in a virtual fantasy world? Are people mere players who want to have a good time online? The answer to this question will be argued and discussed in Chapter Two.

This is a phenomenon known as **"massive multiplayer online role-playing games"** (MMORPGs).

It is a virtual world where thousands of users interact with one another in the guise of computer game characters, on a persistent basis: many hours a day, all year round. As such, these places are like real cities and fairy-tale cities at the same time, and the numbers these games are producing is astonishing:

Massive Multi-player online role-playing games (MMORPG) has evolved from a combination of computer role-playing games (CRPG's), into a multi-billion dollar industry, with *World of Warcraft* (WOW) alone generating $ 1 billion in annual revenue.[56] Therefore a study into how the MMORPG genre has developed throughout history will be conducted, specializing in games that have been developed in western society (i.e. America and Europe).

This study will also incorporate research pertaining to the motivational reasons for why people play MMORPGs, using several play style models put forward by industry researchers such as Richard Bartle, the creator of the first Multi User Dungeon (MUD).

With the online community of players expected to rise to the 100 million mark by 2010[57], the addiction associated with MMORPGs is only going to rise. Chapter Two will look into the reasons for why addiction occurs and compare them to the reasons why people play online games, with the goal of highlighting the key motivational factors linked to the formation of addictive behaviours.

The thesis of this study is that the synthetic worlds now emerging from the computer game industry are the playgrounds of the imagination and are becoming an important host of ordinary affairs.

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[56] Schiesel, S (2006) Online Game, Made in US, Seizes the Globe. New York, New Yor. Available at: (http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/05/technology/05wow.html?_r=2&oref=slogin&oref =slogin).
[57] Kelly 2 R V (2004) Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games. North Carolina, USA: McFarland and Company

One can argue that much more than gaming is occurring on the Internet. One can add conflict, governance, trade, love, worship and even personal spiritual expression to that list. The number of people who could be said to "live" out there in cyberspace is already numbering in the millions; it is growing and one is already beginning to experience subtle and not-so-subtle effects of this behaviour at the societal level and spiritual level in real life. Even if one hasn't paid much attention to multiplayer game-worlds up to now, soon enough, one could argue that everyone will.

To completely understand what computer role-playing games is about one need to firstly examine roles, role-playing and personhood in the context of popular role-playing games. Role-playing games constitute a unique environment in which fantasy, imagination and reality intersect.

Therefore the purpose is to understand the significance of the unique ways these role-playing games configure fantasy, imagination and reality as participants necessarily negotiate between persona, player and person.

Secondly one needs a basic understanding of what this technology is, and more specific- virtual reality. This technology would allow just about anyone, at a modest cost, to spend as much time as they wished in some kind of alternate reality space that was built and stored on a computer. It will present that this "unreal" world does feel real enough to the gamers that they can fairly easily immerse themselves in it, for hours on end, month after month, year after year, in a sort of parallel existence.

A very popular online game; *Dungeons & Dragons* (just to name one), contains much information on magic, rituals, spell casting, gods and goddesses furthermore encourage activity that deals with the occult world that exist in a dimension other than our own. This, in itself, will be used as proof that the game gets the players deliberately involved in the worship/service of other gods. Leviticus 19:26 declare not to practice any kind of magic as well as Exodus 23:13 forbids man not to mention the names of other gods.

This study will argue that fantasy role-playing consist of collections and performances resembling magic ritual acts. The various relationships between role-play and magical ritual performances will be discussed.

Some scholars would to a certain extent refer to this play-style as **self-play.** That is, play as being themselves without adopting a fictional role, rather creating a personal avatar in a virtual world that represents human incarnation into its own creation. Mere exposure to this phenomenon as it is today is sufficient to render obvious some of the deeper consequences.

Anthropologists see new cultures, entrepreneurs see new markets, lawyers see new precedents, social and political experts see new pressures and looming crises, but most important is that the Church and Theologians see people that get involved in evil overnight.

This study argues that due to the emergence of the seductive world of virtual reality, that there will be significant consequences primarily because events inside and outside the virtual reality spaces cannot be isolated from one another.

While one could make a case for the effects on a number of areas such as Social Science, Economics, Politics and Security this study will focus more narrowly on the effects games have on the spirit, soul and body of the individual. The external effects on sociality, relationships, individual emotions and spirituality will be discussed in depth.

MMORPGs have become much more than a computer game to some people, as Tyrer describes how nine men and women suffering from extreme cases of cerebral palsy use the virtual world to live out experiences they would never have been able to do in the real world.

The game itself has become a devoted, breathing virtual community that exists because people involved in it socially invest their feelings through virtual avatars. [58] Thus, it can be deduced that without the community that exists within the game, there would be no game.

The fact that especially MMORPGs have no end goal and are limitless by design can exacerbate the desire to advance, potentially leading to an addictive behavior. This behavior can also have different psychological effects on different people; similar to some drugs e.g. nicotine.

In spite of this, anthropologists have long noted the deep connection between play and more serious traditional forms of ritual and performance, many of which involve the adoption of alternate roles or personas.[59]  These ongoing play communities tend to be viewed outside the norm. This is especially true of communities whose play cultures are deeply tied to imagination, fantasy and the creation of a fictional character.

The characters (or personas) the gamers choose to play as avatar fall into quasi-occupational classes (for example, barbarians, assassins, or wizards) who have expertise in specialized skills and abilities (such as spell-casting, fighting monsters and enemies, or the handling of medieval weapons). Personas often belong to fantasy races—humanoid beings that have their own special "racial" traits (such as Elves, Dwarfs, Undead, Half-orcs, and Halflings).

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[58] Avatar- The Avatar is the medium through which the player navigates in virtual worlds. Their physical body, sitting in front of the computer screen, is not important to the virtual world. Their virtual appearance is the only way they are visible for others and themselves. Though the player might be strongly aware that they look different in the mirror, they mat be very well identifying with the avatar.

[59] Schechner, R & Schuman M (1976) Ritual, Play, and Performance: Readings in the social sciences/ theatre. New York: Seabury Press.

Most important, participants play fantasy personas: they bestow symbolic personas that are fashioned in the liminal boundaries between interaction with other players during the course of the game and fantasy action in a world of dragons, goblins, valiant swordsmen, sagely wizards, and epic medieval warfare.

Although the thematic setting varies from one game system to the next, this liminal condition is generic to all fantasy role-playing games and obligates participants to actively negotiate distinctions between persona, player, and person.[60] In role-playing games each participant is the fantasy persona he or she plays—a brutal barbarian, a mystical illusionist, a sly gnome.

*"For the game to work as an aesthetic experience players must be willing to 'bracket' their 'natural' selves and enact a fantasy self. They must lose themselves to the game"*[61] Role-playing games are *"not 'ordinary' or 'real' life. It is rather a stepping out of 'real' life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own"*[62]

However, since fantasy personas are played—not merely generated by rules and dice—make-believe remains influenced by the same symbolic processes that mediate non-fantasy public personas. In other words, role-playing games are played with others who come to know fantasy personas (their own and others) on the basis of a collective history of real and fictitious action and interaction.

A participant in role-playing games is also a player; the gamer who plays the imaginary persona. As a player, each participant must know and understand the rules of the game that function as organizational guidelines for action and interaction.

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[60] Refer to Person, Player and Persona.
[61] Fine, Gary Allen (1983) Shared Fantasy: Role-Playing Games as Social Worlds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 4.
[62] Huizinga, Johan (1950) Homo Ludens; A Study of the Play Element in Culture. Boston: Beacon Press, p. 8.

Players must know which dice to roll in what situation, which rulebook to consult in what circumstance and how to manipulate a vast system of practical gaming knowledge that specifies what a fantasy persona can and cannot do, when, where and how.

The characters operate in a virtual world controlled by a referee/narrator figure called the GM or games master, depending on which variant of game is being played (some variants include Dungeon Master, referee, narrator, story teller, etc). The GM creates a virtual world and the players make decisions, based on their characters interaction with that world and moderated by a combination of statistics, probability and characterisation.

The mythopoeic worlds themselves vary from the traditional *Dungeons and Dragons* adaptation of Tolkein-esque fantasy-realms to Cyberpunk, Gothic Horror, Espionage, Space Opera and Westerns and include some settings that are so surreal as to defy simple definitions. Essentially most forms of literature have an expression as an RPG, some much more popular and mainstream than others.

Successful and satisfying games involve players who not only role-play but also possess proficiency in the complex rules. A participant in these games must not only play the role of a fantasy persona, but the player as well. Finally, and perhaps most ironically remote in these gaming sessions, each "player-character" is also a person.

Participants in fantasy role-playing games are not only personas and players; they may also be called students, employees, adolescents, adults, spouses, parents and a wide variety of other statuses they occupy and roles they play in everyday life.

As Fine has detailed, sometimes these other self-investments can interfere with role-playing games and vice versa.[63] However, for the most part, role-playing games are fantasy adventures[64] or activity enclaves.[65]

To some they are hobbies—a form of recreational leisure—a distinct sphere of activity that is segregated from the normal strictures of life; activities most people engage when not preoccupied with routine involvements that otherwise describe mundane life. Conversely it can also become an addictive behaviour.

Consequently, these kinds of activities are *"outside and above the necessities and seriousness of everyday life."[66]* Like most hobbies or leisure activities, fantasy role-playing *"is essentially a separate occupation, carefully isolated from the rest of life, and generally is engaged in with precise limits of time and place."[67]*

To abridge: A FRPG (or RPG, for short) is part improvisational theater, part storytelling and part game. A single person (the gamemaster) runs the game for a group of players that pretend to be characters in a fictitious world. The world could be a mystery game set in the 1920s that takes you adventuring around the globe, a fantasy realm inhabited by dragons and trolls and sword-wielding barbarians, or a science fiction setting with aliens and spaceship and world-crushing weaponry.

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[63] Fine, Gary Allen (1983) Shared Fantasy: Role-Playing Games as Social Worlds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
[64] Simmel, Georg [1911] (1971) Georg Simmel: On Individuality and Social Forms. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 187-198.
[65] Cohen, Stanley and Taylor, Laurie (1992) Escape Attempts: The Theory and Practice of Resistance to Everyday Life. 2d ed. New York: Routledge.
[66] Huizinga, Johan (1950) Homo Ludens; A Study of the Play Element in Culture. Boston: Beacon Press, p. 26.
[67] Caillois, Roger [1958] (2001) Man, Play and Games. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 6.

The players pick a setting that they find fascinating and want to play in. The players then craft their own characters, providing a detailed history and personality to bring each to life. These characters have a set of statistics (numerical values) that represent skills, attributes, and other abilities. The gamemaster then explains the situation in which the characters find themselves.

The players, through their characters, interact with the storyline and each other's characters, acting out the plot. As the players role-play through some scenarios, the gamemaster will probably ask a given player to roll some dice and the resulting numbers will determine the success or failure of a character's attempted action. The gamemaster uses the rules of the game to interpret the dice rolls and the outcome of the character's actions.

As a group exercise, the players control the storyline (the adventure), which evolves much like any movie or book but within the flexible plot created by the gamemaster. This gamemaster plot provides a framework and ideas for potential courses of action and outcomes, but it is simply an outline of what might happen—it is not concrete until the players become involved.

The players write the script of any role-playing session and the story, based upon the character's actions and their responses to the events of the plot, will constantly change and evolve. The best part is that there is no "right" or "wrong" way to play an RPG.

Some games may involve more combat and dice rolling-related situations, where other games may involve more storytelling and improvised dialogue to resolve a situation. Each group of players decides for themselves the type and style of game they enjoy playing!

# 7. Role-playing and Playing Roles: The Person, Player And Persona in Fantasy Role Playing

## 7.1 A Practical Definition Of Role

The International Encyclopedia states that the term "role" continues to be used to represent the behaviour expected of the occupant of a given position or status. Thus, following the implication of the dramaturgical metaphor, an actor assigned to the position (or part) of Hamlet is expected to enact the *role* of Hamlet, the role being characterized by certain actions and qualities.

A person who is assigned to the position of clergyman (or who elects to be placed in such a position in the social structure) is similarly expected to enact the *role* of clergyman characterized by certain typical actions and qualities.

In this definition two features are emphasized: (1) *expectations* (i.e., beliefs, cognitions) held by certain persons in regard to what behaviors are appropriate for the occupant of a given position, and (2) *enactments* (i.e., conduct) of a person who is assigned to, or elects to enter, a given position.[68]

## 7.2 A Study Of Role Enactment In RPGs

Role-playing as a recreational activity is a translation of private fantasy activities such as daydreaming into social and game context that is structured and controlled by an agreed set of rules. The historical roots of role-playing lie in war gaming.

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[68] Sarbin, Theodore R (1968) International Encyclopedia of the Social Science. Thomson Gale.

In 1974, an American war gamer named Dave Arneson created a variation of his medieval fantasy war-game in which his players, rather than commanding armies of troops, took on the roles and personalities of individual fighters and magic users. From this experiment the hobby of role-playing (and the game of *Dungeons & Dragons*) was born.

While there is tremendous variation between different styles of role-playing, the essential elements are common to all. In fantasy role-playing games, participants collectively create and play fantasy personas in an imaginary universe by using a vast system of rules that function as guidelines for make-believe action and interaction. Using their imaginations, players create a personality, ideology and set of interests and goals for their character.

In playing a Massive Multi-player online game, gamers are essentially playing roles that the game's developers have created for them. Anything that can be imagined is a possible subject of a fantasy role-playing game.

Consequently, role-playing games obligate participants to occupy a barely perceptible (liminal) role located in the boundaries of persona, player, and person.

RPGs constitute a unique environment in which fantasy, imagination, and reality intersect and oblige participants to occupy the role of a player character (also known as virtual avatar) — a marginal hyphenated role that is situated in the liminal boundaries of more than one frame of reality.

Therefore, controlling an avatar in a game scenario, the character isn't the person, thus meaning that when a person is playing a Massive Multi-player online game or indeed any game, one is inherently playing a role.

"Games," as Goffman wrote, *"are world-building activities."*[69] Fine further suggests: *"By simplifying and exaggerating, games tell us about what is 'real.'"*[70] Taking cues from Goffman and Fine, one seeks to understand how participants in role-playing games negotiate the precarious boundaries between reality, imagination, and fantasy.

The following section will present how role-players carve out distinct spheres of meaning between themselves, their fantasy personas and status as players of these games. It also illustrates how these distinctions fail, boundaries erupt and role-players prove unable to compartmentalize themselves so discretely.

## 8. The Persona, Player And Person: Role-Playing And Fantasy Adventure

> Fantasy gaming is a social world, luxurious in imagination and filled with mysterious delights. This is a world of distant keeps, regal castles, glistening starships, fierce hippogriffs, rainbow dragons, and fiery jewels. It is also a world of dank dungeons, villainous necromancers, green slime, and omnipresent death. It is a world of dreams and nightmares; yet unlike these constructions of our sleeping mind, these worlds are not experienced in a state of reverie or unconsciousness. These worlds are experienced collectively—they are shared fantasies. This shared component raises issues not present in private fantasies.

> —Gary Alan Fine, Shared Fantasy[71]

Role-playing games can be described, explained and understood as an activity that exists in the unique interstices between persona, player, and person. The following questions arise: How do participants in fantasy role-playing games negotiate these liminal symbolic boundaries?

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[69] Goffman, Erving (1961) Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates. Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, p. 27.

[70] Fine, Gary Allen (1983) Shared Fantasy: Role-Playing Games as Social Worlds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.7.

[71] Fine, Gary Allen (1983) Shared Fantasy: Role-Playing Games as Social Worlds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

To what extent do these decidedly playful negotiations illuminate the ways people actively fashion the precarious distinctions between person and public persona?

Some would argue that since all people inevitably manage a multiplicity of roles; sometimes shifting from one to the next with remarkable fluidity, man is a player of a fantasy role-playing game. To distinct between person, player, and persona one need to adhere to what Fine describes as the *"three basic frames"* that operate in fantasy gaming.

As Fine wrote, each of these frames *"has a world of knowledge associated with it—the world of commonsense knowledge grounded in one's primary framework, the world of game rules grounded in the game structure, and the knowledge of the fantasy world."*[72] Fine's investigation is solidly supported by his use and extension of Goffman's Frame Analysis.

Goffman additionally differentiates person, player, and persona: *"The difference between actual and scripted becomes confused with the difference between personal identity and specialized function, or (on stage) the difference between part and capacity. I shall use the term 'role' as an equivalent to specialized capacity or function, understanding this to occur both in offstage, real life and in its staged version; the term 'person' will refer to the subject of a biography, the term 'part' or 'character' to a staged version thereof."*[73]

The genre of the game integrates traditional mythological themes and archetypes with fiction: action occurs in make-believe scenarios aptly described by Goffman as an *"engrossable realm*."[74]

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[72] Fine, Gary Allen (1983) Shared Fantasy: Role-Playing Games as Social Worlds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 194, 205.
[73] Goffman, Erving (1974) Frame Analysis. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 129.
[74] Ibid, p. 48.

These mythopoeic "realms" of fantasy role-play are not only generated from rule books and dice rolls, but also by a "dungeon master," "referee," or "gamemaster." The gamemaster occupies the most important role in fantasy role-playing games—one that is often described by players as "God-like." Gamemasters create the worlds, plots, and scripts that generate a make-believe setting for game play.

If player-characters are told they are in a city located on an oasis in a vast desert, or that they encounter a mysterious man who invites them to meet with the high priestess of the temple of Venus, it is the gamemaster who not only creates these landscapes and situations but also plays the role of the mysterious man, the priestess, and any other "non- player-character" that participants encounter. Similarly, if player-characters encounter hostile creatures, the gamemaster determines what kind of hostile creatures they are, how they are armed, their combat, and any other actions they might take.

The gamemaster has the power of life and death over the players' characters, and may choose to destroy a character under some circumstances. The object of these games is survival, and their approach is amoral in that players may choose to commit robbery, rape, torture, murder, and employ occult "weapons" such as curses to cause insanity, suicide, or death.

Such activities, which are recognized as perverted or criminal in our society, are acceptable within the content of the game if they help the players' characters to survive. The longer such a character survives, the wealthier and more powerful he or she becomes.

Author Daniel Mackay explains:

*"While players have control over their characters' actions, the gamemaster has control over the results of those actions. Life and death are in the gamemaster's hands. Furthermore, how the characters perform in relation to the story (with its plot twists, villains, and so forth), which most gamemasters script out before the session, will determine the rewards that the gamemaster distributes to the characters. . .*

*The game master is usually in a privileged position of observation in relation to the players . . . .This receptive capacity allows the gamemaster to survey each character, the group of characters, and the players. . . . Without a doubt the gamemaster holds the most power."[75]*

In this way, role-playing games are analogous to improvisational theater that is imaginatively fashioned by gamemasters and players through the use of dice and gaming rules.

Problems with fantasy role-playing games arise when players **lose sight of the fact that it is only a game**. Players report that the action in D&D is often described so vividly that they can visualize it as if they were watching it actually happen. In addition, the game is so complex that players must spend hours in preparation for their roles, including study related to the occult powers with which many characters are invested.

All this contributes to the **extreme emotional attachment** some players develop for their characters, and can result in a **growing inability to distinguish fantasy from reality**. Murphy notes that some teenagers who are heavily involved in D&D assert that they are willing to do anything their DM tells them to do, no questions asked.[76]

If the child does not clearly understand that the game is not "for real," this confusion can have tragic results should the DM direct the player's character to steal, rape, or kill. Pulling cites evidence indicating *"fantasy role-playing games have been a significant factor in at least 125 deaths"[77]* and notes that hundreds of less serious violent incidents have also been linked to these games.

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[75] Mackay, Daniel (2001) The Fantasy Role-Playing Game: A New Performing Art. North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, pp. 94 – 97.

[76] Murphy, K  (1989, October) Law enforcement personnel workshop. Presentation given at Cult Awareness Network National Conference, Teaneck, New Jersey, October 1989.

[77] Pulling, P (1989) The Devil's Web. Lafayette, LA: Huntington House, Inc, p. 85.

While this represents only a tiny percentage of fantasy role-playing game enthusiasts, parents of children who are avid players are advised to discuss the games with them and be sure they understand the difference between fantasy and reality.

## 8.1 Theoretical Interpretations of RPGs

What was particularly new about RPGs in their emergence during the late 1970s, and certainly contributed to their popularity was their potential for escapism. At their most enthralling, RPGs require a multi-layered structure of close social interaction and a mechanism for exploring shared ideals, values, symbols and cultural forms (particularly those derived from literature). They require a unique format that cannot be easily replicated in other games or social activities.

RPGs create a flexible mechanism for exploring virtual worlds, identities, social structures, symbols and cultural norms within a social environment that is detached and segregated from daily life. Moreover, playing in virtual worlds could be considered liberation from everyday life. People can choose and construct a virtual character and play in a fantasy world that is totally different from their daily lives.

This potential for reflexivity, identity formation, close knit networks of social interaction and escapism was certainly a crucial ingredient in the popularity of RPG's and their later equivalents in computer games, Multi User Dungeons and online gaming.

People who prefer to use MMORPGs as a social network can experiment with their social techniques and use this as a testing ground to improve their social interaction within their real lives.

However, certain relationships within the game can lead to a form of social dependences, whereby socially inept people become dependent on their social relationships within the virtual world and use it as a replacement for genuine social interaction in their real lives.

This form of play can also lead to an addictive behaviour, as Keith Bakker, Director of Europe's first video-game addiction clinic states: "*We have kids who don't know how to communicate with people face to face because they've spent the last three years talking to somebody in Korea through a computer. Their social network has completely disappeared.*"[78]

The last component Immersion sees players who are using the game as an escape from the real world. This type of escapism is directly linked to the experiential model of addiction,[79] where people use an addictive behaviour as a defense mechanism to shield them from their fears of the outside world.

This type of play is very addictive, as repeated use of the behaviour can eventually lead to total alienation of the real world. This cycle of addiction, which is highlighted in the experiential model, can eventually lead to an increased anxiety within the player as they come to terms with their addiction but cannot prevent it due to their subjective loss of control.

In agreement is the research by Sherry Turkle, who notes that RPGs have a greater potential for escapism than many other pastimes because they not only allow the players to interact with their surroundings but give them a venue in which they can create their own socio-cultural identity.

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[78] Alitzer, R (2006) Europe's First clinic for videogames addicts opens in Amsterdam. (http://playstation.about.com/b/2006/06/09/europes-first-clinic-for-videogame-addicts-opens-in-amsterdam.htmth)

[79] Peele, S; Brodsky, A (1975) Love and Addiction. New York, USA: Taplinger.

In RPGs the role the player adopts is a means designed to further disconnect the context of the game from reality. The player is not so much role-playing as *persona-playing*. Players are instructed to identify closely with their game characters. By using preposterous and unknown alien-like characters, players can create sufficient psychological distance to believe they have transcended the constraining features of their own socio-cultural identity.

A character has a name, physical attributes and personality distinct from the player but which the player adopts for the game. This allows both an escape from the perceived cultural and social barriers experienced in daily life whilst also serving as a metaphor for exploring these issues in a virtual context. [80]

Unlike MUD's and online computer games, a life-action RPG does require a close level of face-to-face social interaction. They are usually played in an isolated area, typically a room at a private residence, school, university or community centre, marked off from the outside world with paraphernalia unique to the subculture of gamers and involving a great deal of jargon and symbols which have meaning only to those who are part of the group.

Looking through the lens of Victor Turner's theories regarding "Liminality" and "limanoid" phenomena, as well as the multi-faceted notion of "communitas", which Turner often seated in the context of performance; he considered performance a "liminoid" phenomenon. However, Turner was also focused in ritual and the theatre, and this mix of social practices and collective behaviors were central to his thoughts on the collective meanings and social functions of performance in general and theatre specifically. Turner asserted that communitas is an intense community spirit, the feeling of great social equality, solidarity, and togetherness. Communitas is characteristic of people experiencing liminality together.

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[80] Turkle, Sherry (1995) Life on the Screen. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Liminality to Turner is a period of transition, during which normal limits to thought, self-understanding, and behaviour are relaxed, opening the way to something new. "Liminal" is a reference to both time and place. It is a term that can be simultaneously applied to an instance and a space because of a sense of demarcation that separates the space/time from the normal rules and mores of typical social and cultural goings on.

In various ritual settings in many cultures, people involved in or undergoing rituals are allowed to or even expected to invert and/or transgress social norms during the period of the ritual and/or in the ritual space.[81]

Dr. David Waldron, lecturer in Social Science and humanities at the University of Ballarat, in Victoria Australia expressed his view that players actively work to create marked liminal spaces in which they can shake off their mainstream socio-cultural identity and adopt symbols and images deemed inimical to the mainstream cultural construction of the self but which form their own unique anti-structure in opposition to the mainstream socio-cultural order.

He states that thirty five percent of men and twenty percent of women choose to play characters of alternate gender and sixty percent prefer to play characters that are non-human. These high numbers give credence to the anti-structural nature of role-playing games.

Similarly, the game experience lives or dies on the social interaction of its participants. It depends upon the creation of a protected liminoid space in which the social world can be evaluated reflexively and in which a sense of communitas can be created as a crucial component of the success of the game.

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[81] Turner, Victor (1982) From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play. New York City: Performing Arts Journal Publications.

This sense of communitas is experienced both as a heightened sense of closeness, equality, joy and community within the group but also as a blurring of the imaginative and real world through atmosphere, anti-structural symbolism and depth of play.[82]

As one gamer commented: *Have you ever played a game where the real world has all but melted away, and the feelings and actions of you and your character become indistinct? If you have, you most likely feel that this was one of the best games you've ever played, that gaming is at its most brilliant when the boundaries of fantasy and reality become blurred.*

It is this experience of escapism, community and a psycho-social moratorium in which identity, issues and cultural forms can be liberally explored, that lies at the heart of gaming and the gaming sub-culture. It is also the source of many attacks against gamers and RPGs on the grounds that they give a vague impression of the boundaries between reality and fantasy, leading people to engage in immoral or anti-social activities, leading young people to Paganism or Satanism and thus away from the Church.

## 9. Conclusion

There are many different views on virtual worlds, online environments, and the activities of their users.  There is no correct view, or ultimate say in what is assumed as appropriate because virtual worlds have yet to create any social laws to govern their societies.  To the untrained eye, or assumptions of the inexperienced, virtual worlds seem nothing more than games, but to the loyal users of these environments, they are much more.

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[82] Waldron, Dr David (2004) Role-Playing Games and The Christian Right. (http://www.3rdedition.org/articles/viewer.asp?ID=67).

Virtual worlds, such as *Second life*, can be as real as "real life," if not more. Some people choose to express their emotions in virtual worlds, only to find that instead of being easier, it can be more emotionally intense than when interacting in the physical world. These intense feelings can lead to marriage, or even abusive relationships.

There are no controls in online worlds, and users are free to express themselves, whether positively or negatively. To some, online environments are not an escape from real life because to them it is real. It is just another environment to exist in. The virtual world is not limited to only those activities requiring a computer, but can be expressed in things as simple as dreams, books, or anything that can represent who a person is. With the explosion of technological advances, the future of society will probably make a shift into those of virtual online environments. People need to not only recognize this change, but also accept it, as well as continuously improve it.

Advances in Internet technologies have resulted in an unprecedented level of accessibility to information, products, services, communication, and entertainment. The opportunities offered by the Internet are accompanied by unique psychosocial phenomena, many of which challenge the counseling profession. These phenomena are unique in the sense that they are relatively new to the lives of clients, leaving clinicians with a limited base of experience from which to draw when dealing with these issues.

One psychosocial concern that arises with the advent of the Internet is **problematic Internet use**.[83] Problematic Internet use can occur in a variety of settings, impacting the social, vocational, and academic functioning of affected Internet users.[84] [85]

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[83] Young, K (1996) Internet Addiction: The Emergence of a new clinical disorder. (www.pitt.edu/~ksy/apa.html).

[84] Beard, K (2002) Internet Addiction: Current status and Implications for employees. *Journal of Employment Counseling,* Volume 1, p. 39.

Problematic Internet use is characterized by a core set of attributes, including a pre-occupation with Internet use, mood modification, need for increasing amounts of Internet use, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse.[86] The effects of problematic Internet use are varied but often include loss of sleep, strained relationships, and reduced levels of productivity in vocational and academic settings. These effects are associated with not only the amount of Internet use, but also the prioritization of Internet use over other life commitments.[87]

Research indicates that a desire for social interaction and an increased level of social visibility may drive some forms of problematic Internet use.[88] Unlike face-to-face social interactions, the Internet allows for unparalleled anonymity and control when communicating with others.[89] These factors allow individuals to engage in social relationships that carry minimal risk, while allowing them to adopt roles or characteristics that may not be representative of their face-to-face relationships.[90]

Massively multiplayer online role-playing games commonly referred to as MMORPGs, provide a unique platform for developing social interactions on the Internet. MMORPGs allow for simultaneous text-based and graphical communication with others and provide well-defined structures that encourage a variety of social interactions.

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[85] Browne, B L (2002) Confirmatory Factor analysis of internet use and addiction. *Cyberpsychology & Behaviour,* 5(1), p. 53.

[86] Griffiths, M (1998) Internet addiction: Does it really exist. In *Psychology and the Internet: Intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal implications.* San Diego: Academic Press, pp. 61-75.

[87] Griffiths, M (2000) Does internet and computer "addiction" exist? Some case study evidence. . *Cyberpsychology & Behavior, Volume 3*(2), p. 211.

[88] Amichai-Hamburger, Y; Wainapel, G & Fox, S (2002) "On the internet no one knows I'm an introvert": Extroversion, neuroticism, and Internet interaction. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior, Volume 5*(2), pp. 125-128.

[89] Kandell, J J (1998) Internet addiction on campus: The vulnerability of college students. *CyberPsychology & Behavior, Volume 1*(1), pp.11-17.

[90] Amichai-Hamburger, Y; Wainapel, G & Fox, S (2002) "On the internet no one knows I'm an introvert": Extroversion, neuroticism, and Internet interaction. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior, Volume 5*(2), pp. 125-128.

While some forms of Internet use encourage two-way communication, MMORPGs often require high levels of social interaction and facilitate the adoption of new personas and styles of interaction.

Research in this area is limited, but more is needed to understand the full scope on the relationship between MMORPGs and problematic Internet use as well as Internet addiction.[91]

However, certain characteristics of MMORPGs and their users indicate that this form of Internet use may be a powerful facilitator and enabler of problematic Internet use and game-obsession.

Use of the Internet in society is growing at an exponential rate. Although the Internet is an excellent tool for gathering information and for interpersonal communication, dangers exist for those who make it the central focus of their lives. Although specialized research on the topic of Internet Addiction and the possible effects thereof is still in its infancy, investigation has revealed that people, who are dealing with the developmental tasks of identity formation and establishment of intimate relationships, may be particularly susceptible to pathological Internet use.

Over involvement with the Internet, however, can inhibit the development of skills needed for identity and intimacy, creating a spiral of Internet use, difficulties in real life, followed by more Internet use as a means of avoidance and self-medication, and the like.

The following Chapter will expand one's understanding of the function and role of RPGs as facilitators in the alteration of man's identity.

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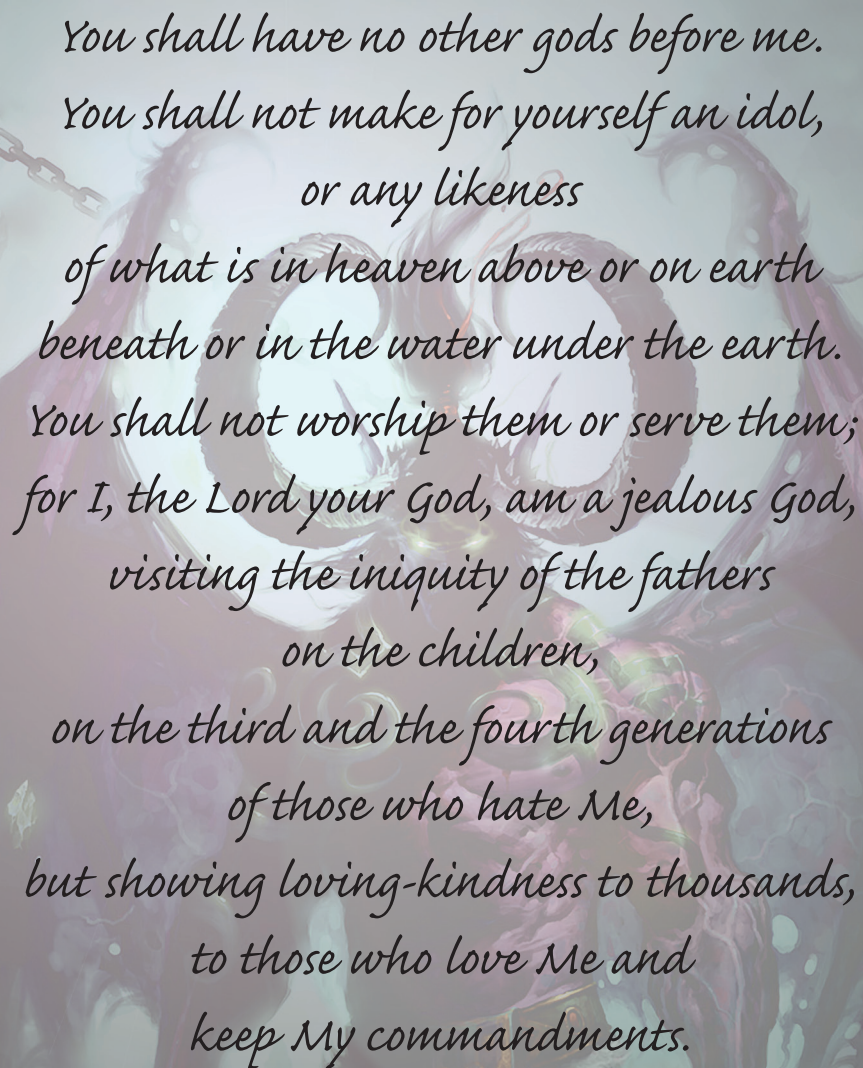
[91] Griffiths, M; Davies, M N O & Chappell, D (2003) Breaking the stereotype: The case of online gaming. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior, Volume 6*(1), p. 81.

It will show how man utilizes the Internet and the virtual communities within it, in the form of MMORPG's in an attempt to create virtual immortality.

The essence of this Chapter will entail and deal with the most important revelation of the individual *image*. The chapter elucidates man was created in God's image, but sinned, and this separated him from His Creator and brought death. Through the death of Jesus Christ and His shed blood for sin, God reversed what man had brought on himself. By faith in Jesus Christ, God will provide a new body that is not fashioned like a virtual avatar, but is is like the resurrected body of Christ. God promised mankind and offers to all believers the assurance of eternal life with Him.

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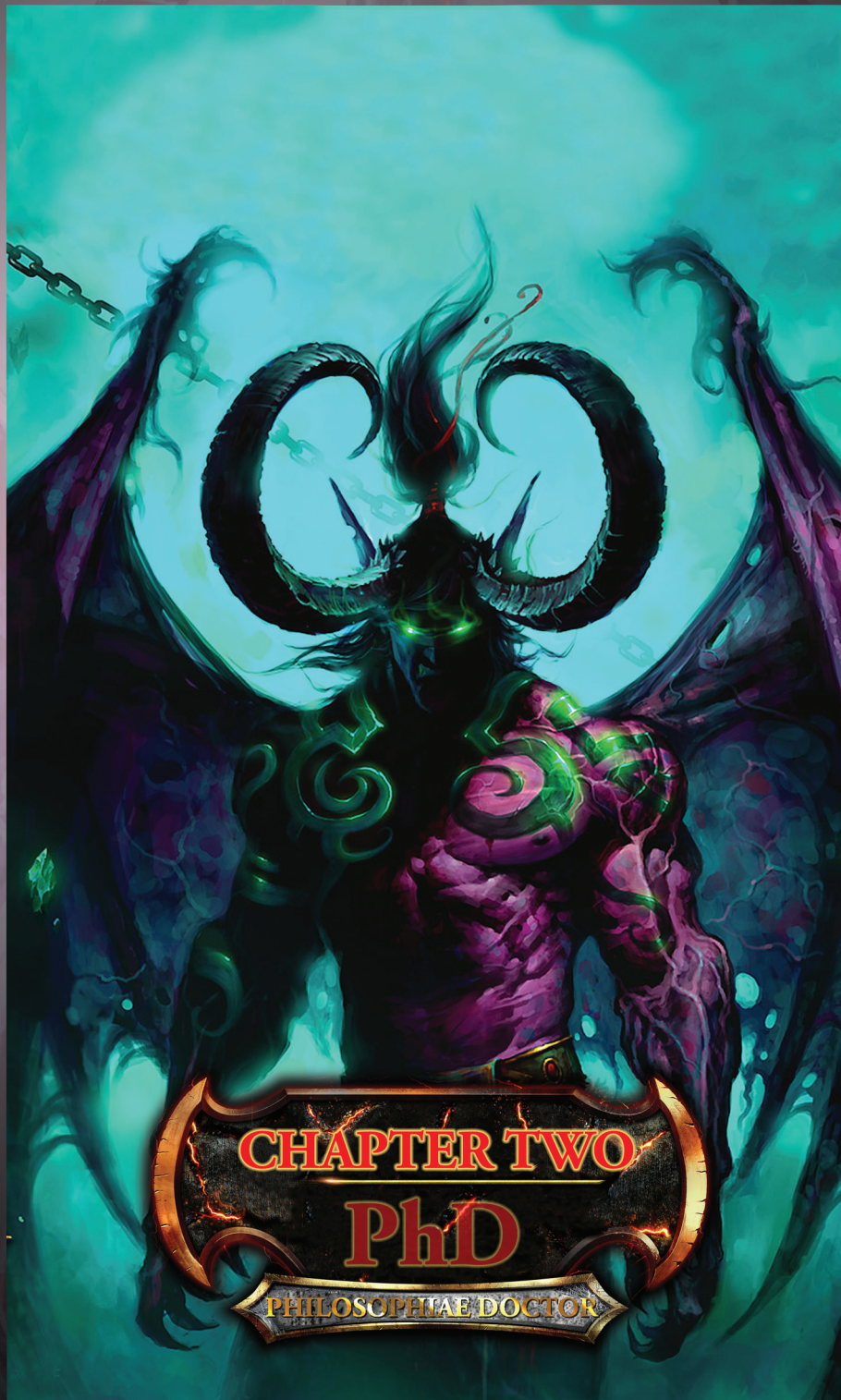
# CHAPTER TWO

## PhD

PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

You shall have no other gods before me.
You shall not make for yourself an idol,
or any likeness
of what is in heaven above or on earth
beneath or in the water under the earth.
You shall not worship them or serve them;
for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God,
visiting the iniquity of the fathers
on the children,
on the third and the fourth generations
of those who hate Me,
but showing loving-kindness to thousands,
to those who love Me and
keep My commandments.

*Exodus 20:3-6*

# An Investigation Into The Function of Role-Playing Concerning Alteration Of Identity

*Professing themselves to be <u>wise</u>, they <u>become fools,</u> and <u>changed</u> the glory of the incorruptible God into <u>an image</u> made like corruptible man…*

**Romans 1:22-23 NKJV (Emphasis added)**

## 1. Introduction

**How can cyberspace be a place where spirituality and identity are to be constructed?**

There are several motivations necessary to pose this question.

Firstly, the relationship between a person's belief on spirituality and cyberspace[1] has received insignificant attention, especially in the sociology of Theology.

In popular debates in the media, printed media and books, a critical and well-balanced view is often missing. At the same time, esoteric literature, magic and New Age movements seem to be disseminating everywhere. The question to be posed is what the major emphasis the New Testament teachings in a **new identity in Christ** are?

Prior to elaborating on the above question, the concept of identity needs to be defined and an explanation is required viewing Scripture's teachings on man's identity, as part of the foundational indicative truth concerning sanctification.

In defining identity, definitions and clarifications can be found in many places. From suggestive glosses to some fairly complicated and opaque formulations, one can selectively elect examples from Politics, Science and International Relations:

1.1. Identity is *"people's concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others"*[2]

1.2. *"Identity is used in this book to describe the way individuals and groups define them-selves and are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language, and culture"*[3]

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[1] Cyberspace is the fast-growing medium where technological, social-economic, cultural and religious developments occur and are communicated. [De Mul, J (2002) Cyberspace Odyssee. Kempen: Klemet.]

[2] Hogg, Michael and Abrams, Dominic (1988) Social Identification: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes. London: Routledge, p. 2.

[3] Deng, Francis M (1995) War of Visions: Conflict of Identities in the Sudan. Washington DC: Brookings, p.1.

1.3. *"Identity refers to the ways in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities."*[4]

1.4. Identities are *"relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self."*[5]

1.5. *"The term [identity] (by convention) references mutually constructed and evolving images of self and other."*[6]

The divergent formulations in definition, reflects the multiple lineages that defines identity within the academy. However, identity reflects an individual's esteem. From a Philosophical, Sociological and Psychological view one can proffer diverse descriptions and formulations for this so-called "self". Thus the following question arises: *Who am I? Why I am here, and where am I destined to go?*

According to Charles Taylor, the self is constructed from several sources. These sources are derived from elements such as culture; education; ethnicity; race; sex, and so on. Taylor argues that there is no autonomous self. This contradicts the Neopaganistic idea of an inner self that has to be realized.[7]

The idea of the *self* as a spiritual identity is predominant in New Age thinking. Self-awareness; self-consciousness; self-image; self-esteem, self-construction and the role of the individual self in a New Age worldview, places major emphasis on authenticity and self-realization.

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[4] Jenkins, Richard (1996) Social Identity. London: Routledge, p. 4.
[5] Wendt, Alexander (1992) "Anarchy is What States Make of It. *"International Organization.* Edition 46, pp. 397.
[6] Katzenstein, Peter ed (1996) The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 59.
[7] Taylor, C (1989) Sources Of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

The autonomous individual-subject, so important in modernity, is omnipresent. The working of the self (self-will; self-confidence; self exaltation; self pleasing) is the greatest sin of humanity, and is at the root of all that is compromising with the world, which is the ruin of many. After all, self-will and self-exaltation was the ruin of Satan.[8]

All people have a sense of identity, pertaining to *"who we are"*. Apart from development of a stable identity, especially in the upbringing of a child's trust is crucial. The child amply trusts his or her parents. Progressively, the child learns to think for him or herself, supported by structures such as family, school, friends, and Church.

Conversely, before the decline of institutions such as the Church and the traditional family, there were long-established rites of passage, such as baptism; communion; graduation and marriage. Since the onset of modernity these formal rites have lost their influence, as it is currently less common to baptize, to go to Church regularly, or to get married. Tradition and habit are replaced by doubt and reflexivity. A Biblical circumscription in the formation of a person's identity is to grasp more firmly what defines man as a Christian. In Christ man has a new identity. There are numerous passages in the New Testament that reminds a person of his/her new position before God.[9]

> ***And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because He first loved us.***
>
> ***1 John 4:16-19***

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[8] Ezekiel 28:6; Isaiah 14:13, 14.
[9] See John 3:3,5; Colossians 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17.

> **If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.**
>
> **Colossians 3:1-3**

As children of God, man is chosen by Him and given a purpose. According to **1 Peter 2:9** it is written:

> **But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness in to his wonderful light.**
>
> **1 Peter 2:9**

Man has been created in such a way, to the image of God, that God Himself could inhabit this flesh.[10] The very co-eternal Word entered into His own creation, and became man and the result was the Salvation of the world.

Through virtual reality, man envisions an opportunity to perform a similar act—to fashion a world of his own design, and then to inhabit that world as one of the created beings. What would the outcome be of such an occurrence? It is an age-old Gnostic dream: to escape from the bondage of this fleshly existence into a universe, inhabited exclusively by man- with no other gods present.

When God came to be with mankind in the person of Jesus Christ, He assumed life in the flesh, in its entire entirety: from conception; birth; childhood; adolescence, and maturity until death. Jesus exclaimed:

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[10] John 1:1,14a *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..."*

> ***I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is <u>my flesh</u>***

**John 6:51 (Emphasis Added)**

This is the basis of man's hope—that God from the realm of the spirit became a man of flesh, akin to mankind, not a man from the realm of flesh becoming a virtual god.

## 2. The 'Cyber-self' - Distorting the Image of God

> ***So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.***

***Genesis 1:27 (KJV)***

What could be the motivations to live in a virtual fantasy world? Are people mere participants, seeking a good time online?

Many will agree that the objective of the game is mere relaxation, and that the game itself is just an illusion. However, this thesis will demonstrate that playing and experimentation with an altered identity, completely different from oneself, (on the Internet), is not what God intended when He created man in His personal likeliness. Regrettably, the playful space of cyberspace, can offer a virtual moratorium or a virtual stage, where people can experiment with their identity and the projection of their image.

The concept of a personal **self,** and how emerging technologies influence it, are a subject of research fields such as Psychology and Sociology. For the purpose of this thesis, a Biblical understanding will be given on how, using the Internet in the construction of one's own social identity, an **online identity**, **Internet identity**, or **Internet persona** is a distortion of the image of God.

Scripture teaches continuously that man is made to the image and likeness of God. In the Judeo Christian traditions, the *imago Dei* is identified in three locations in the Book of Genesis.[11] Made, in His image and likeness, man is made with a spiritual nature like God. This is seen in the **Genesis 1:26** passage, **"let us make man in our image."**

The emphasis on "us" and "our" is a sign of joint activity and relationality. This passage is early Scriptural evidence of God's triune nature, and His relational character has been transmitted from God to humanity. Man has an eternal spirit, which can live on after the physical body dies. God is a "Personal Being" so is man.

Seeing the image of God's relational nature, in that human beings are in a relationship with God, each other and nature, is argued by some contemporary theologians such as Karl Bath and supported by Professor William Struthers in his book *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography hijacks the male brain.*[12]

The relational view argues that bearing the image of God requires one to be in relationship with Him. However, made to God's image and likeness, does not mean that humankind is divine. Being **created** in God's image does not represent a duplication of Gods type or a god.

Some would erroneously teach that God took a reflection of Himself and put it in a physical body formed out of the dust and gave him authority over all physical things on the planet. Akin to Him, being God in heaven, now He's created Adam to be a god of the earth. God did not reproduce Himself in the Garden of Eden and Adam was not God manifested in the flesh!

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[11] See Genesis 1:26,27; Genesis 5:1; Genesis 9:6; 1 Corinthians 11:7; James 3:9.
[12] Struthers, William M (2009) Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography hijacks the male brain. Illinois: IVP Books, pp. 118-119.

Scripture clearly states in the Book of **Colossians 1:15 "He is in the image of the invisible God."** Jesus Christ alone is this image. Man will not be what Christ is in His nature, even when man is glorified. **2 Corinthians 4:4** says, **"In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."**

In **Genesis 5:1**, the fact that man has been created to the image of God is again emphasized: "**This is the book of the generations of Adam, on the day the Lord created mankind, in the likeness of the Lord He made him."** God is an infinite being and has many communicable and non-communicable characteristics. Undoubtedly, man is neither omnipotent nor omniscient, like God. But he does share -to a lesser extent- God's creativity; vision; passion; ability to love, mercy etc.— qualities that are part of God's image and likeness.

The Hebrew word for "image", in all the passages is "*tzelem*", a word derived from the word "*tzel*", meaning, "**shadow**" or "**reflection**." In addition, the Hebrew "*tzelem*" is translated into "*imago*" in Latin and into English as "image".

The word "likeness" in these verses is "*demus*". This word is derived from "*domeh*", meaning "similar." The Hebrew "*demus*" or *"Demuth"* is translated into the Latin as "*similtudo*" meaning "likenesss" in English.

Due to man, bearing the image of God, human life has an inviolable, sacred property. Humankind is to be treated in an exclusive manner, differentiated from the rest of creation. Human beings are not "little gods", or duplicates of God, that has no body, nor form. They are similar in their mastery of the spiritual and physical dimensions of the Maker.[13]

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[13] Quayle, Stephen (2008) Genesis 6 Giants. Master Builders of Prehistoric and Ancient Civilizations. MT: End Time Thunder Publishers, pp.23-24.

In John 14, when Jesus used the expression *"if you have seen me you have seen the Father"*, He's intention is that, as the Son, He is expressing His nature- making the Father known. He is the very substance and nature of God, an exact reproduction.

> *Who's being the brightness of his glory and <u>express image of his person.</u>*

> *Hebrews 1:3 (Emphasis Added)*

The Word uses an illustration of an engraving tool that would stamp its impression on a coin or seal to best describe Jesus. It bears the image produced by it, reproducing an exact duplicating of the original. Yet, the image does not possess the same identity as the seal, neither is the Son the identical image of the Father, except in His nature.

In Romans 8:29 Scripture elucidates, *"to be conformed to the image of his Son."* Man's purpose is to be conformed to the image of Christ, expressed in how he lives; breathes; thinks; acts; worships and glorifies God.

This is a continual process, even though it commences at *re-birth*. Upon spiritual renewal, one doesn't become God, nor will one be exactly like Him in the resurrection. Man is a created being, and will remain this way. When man sinned, that image was marred and perverted -but not lost- resultant hereof is that man cannot be with God in person since man's spiritual composition has been corrupted.

God sent His son to sacrifice His life through crucifixion, to grant humanity the ability to be redeemed and renewed. This sacrifice will be ultimately fulfilled when mankind receives new bodies.

However, something ominous is encroaching on the world: it is Satan's final attempt in the battle to destroy what is left of the newly created image of man, which battle has been raging since the beginning of time. If Satan has the ability to destroy the image, then he can avert his own destruction.

The following section will examine several interlocking hypotheses of the key aspects of Satan's perfect plan, to bring about complete destruction of man's image.

## 2.1 Hypothesis of the Perfect Plan

### 2.1.1 Man Become What He Worships

The word "image" is used 15 times in the Hebrew Bible.[14] The predominant meaning of the word *image* according to the Gesenius Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon (1846) is, firstly, *a shadow*, Psalm 39:7 but also *an image, likeness,* Genesis 1:27; 5:3; 9:6; or an **idol** (2 Kings 11:18). Based on its usage, one can confidently comprise on the following definition: **A living or nonliving representation of something else.**

In eleven of the fifteen verses, image is used to refer to idols. Idols were the image (a physical representation) of a demon (or "men" in Ezekiel), as Paul describes in 1 Corinthians. Paul states that idols were in fact demons: ***"that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice the sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons." (1 Corinthians 10:20).***

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[14] The English Standard Version translate the word as "shadow" in Psalm 39:6: *"Surely a man goes about a shadow!"* and "phantoms" in Psalm 73:20: *"Like a dream when one awakes, [...] you despise them as phantoms."*

In ***Deuteronomy 32:17,21*** one finds the same idea ***"They sacrificed to demons, not to God, to gods they did not know, to new gods, new arrivals that your fathers did not fear. They have provoked Me to jealousy by what is not God; they have moved me to anger by their foolish idols."***

The word "*tzelem*" is used to describe these idols or images which were just representations of demons that were truly being worshipped.[15]

> ***Destroy all their engraved stones, destroy all their molded*** <u>***images***</u>***, and demolish all their high places.***
>
> ***Numbers 33:52 (Emphasis Added)***

The verses from Ezekiel are principally significant since they demonstrate that the images were representations of men—a form one can certainly agree on: ***As from the beauty of his ornaments, He set it in majesty; but they made from it the*** <u>***images***</u> ***of their abominations."*** **(Ezekiel 7:20);** ***"made for yourself male*** <u>***images***</u> ***and played the harlot with them"*** **(Ezekiel 16:17).** Ezekiel 23:14 shows that an image is accurate in its representation of the real thing: ***She saw men portrayed on the wall, the*** <u>***images***</u> ***of the Chaldeans."***

Evidently, an image is not the same as the 'real thing'. An image can't walk or talk in these cases, but they do faithfully depict how the men looked- similar to a modern-day photo of a person, which is not the actual person, but is an image of the person. Therefore, an image conveys only limited information about a person, and not elaborate details.

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[15] Consider also the following verses: 1 Samuel 6:5 *"Therefore you shall make **images** of your tumors and **images** of your rats that ravage the land, and you shall give glory to the God of Israel; perhaps He will lighten His hand from you, from your **gods,** and from your land.* 1 Samuel 6:11 *"The* **images** *of their tumors."* 2 Kings 11:18 *"And all the people of the land went to the temple of Baal, and tore it down. They thoroughly broke in pieces its altars and its **images**."* (See also 2 Chronicles 21:17) Amos 5:26 *"You also carried Sikkuth your king and Chiun, your idols, the star of your gods, which you made for yourselves."*

Genesis 5:3 is an amazing illustration of how man is of the image of God. The verse states that Seth was begotten to Adam in his image.

> **When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his <u>image,</u> and named him Seth.**
>
> **Genesis 5:3 (Emphasis Added)**

Everything that God created bears His seal, and everything is sustained by the right hand of His power. As illustrated, God has created man to be a reflection of Him. How will Satan attempt to manipulate man, to create a refection of something that is not of God- using MMORPG?

By providing a basic definition of *idolatry,* Martin Luther's larger catechism discussion of Exodus 20:3 states **"whatever your heart clings to and relies upon, that is your God; trust and faith of the heart alone make both God and idol."**[16] One can add, *"The idol is whatever claims the loyalty that belongs to God alone."*[17]

Therefore, the word *idolatry* can refer to the worship of other gods, besides the true God, or the reverence of images. According to the Old Testament, an idol or image contained a god's presence, though the presence was not limited to the image.[18]

The ultimate Biblical assessment about the purported divine reality behind idols are well summarized by Christopher Wright:

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[16] The author was pointed to this reference by Rosner, B S (2000) New Dictionary of Biblical Theology. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, p. 571.

[17] Motyer, J A (1980) "Idolatry," in the Illustrated Bible Dictionary vol.2. Leicester UK: InterVarsity Press, p. 680.

[18] Exodus 20:23 "gods of silver or gods of gold"; Leviticus 19:4 "do not turn to idols or make for yourself molten gods"; Joshua 24:14 "put away the gods which your fathers served".

*"Although gods and idols are something in this world, they are nothing in comparison to the living God…While gods and idols may be implements of or gateways to the world of the demonic, the overwhelming verdict of Scripture is that they are the work of human hands, constructs of our own fallen and rebellious imagination…*

*The primal problem with idolatry is that it blurs the distinction between the Creator God and the creation. This both damages creation (including ourselves) and diminishes the glory of the Creator. Since God's mission is to restore creation to its full original purpose of bringing all glory to God Himself and thereby to enable all creation to enjoy the fullness of blessings that He desires for it, God battles against all forms of idolatry and calls us to join Him in the conflict…*

*We need to understand the whole breadth of the Bible's exposure of the deleterious effects of idolatry in order to appreciate its seriousness and reason for the Bible's passionate rhetoric about it."[19]*

Historically reflected in the Old Testament, Exodus reads as follows:

> **You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing loving-kindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.**
>
> **Exodus 20:3-6**

A number of Biblical passages refer to idol worshippers, identifying with the idols around them. Instead of worshipping and resembling the true God, idolaters resemble the idols they worship. These worshippers became as spiritually void and lifeless as the idols they committed themselves to. Not only did the idolater reflect the character of the idol they worshipped, but also suffered the same fate (e.g. being burned in destruction).

Scripture also reveals that God's people in the Old Testament; Israel (whether consciously or unconsciously) did not reflect the God of the Bible.

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[19] Wright, C J H (2006) The Mission of God. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, pp. 187-188.

What they did resemble in their sinful disobedience was a pagan image that brought great confusion amongst them.[20]

> ***Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air,***
>
> ***The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven***.

> ***Deuteronomy 4:15-19***

It is evident from Scripture that all Egyptian, Babylonian and pagan imagery is forbidden by God. The Bible is very clear about God's rejection of occult symbols and religious images: ***And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass. (2 Chronicles 24:18)***

> ***By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin; when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up.***

> ***Isaiah 27:9***

This Scripture clearly illustrates the mindset of God relating to symbols and alien gods.

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[20] See Exodus 32.

According to Mendez, these instances refer specifically to those who base their religious foundation on the sungod and the moongoddess, whose worshipping could be seen in the majority of the ancient civilizations.[21]

It is important to recognize the dramatic contrast between the occultist's sentiment, and that of the God of the Bible. Pagan gods and symbolism, such as is present in the games, will continually and selectively sift out Biblical portions in an attempt by Satan to get the gamer to participate in MMORPGs which reflect and imitate him!

Analogies can be detected between certain symbols and pagan beliefs, and Jesus Christ; (cognizance should be taken of the fact that which is deceptive) will always try to mimic that which is true, as closely as possible, although in essence they are complete parallels. This phenomenon is evident from the scenario to games, in the sense that the deceptions in the online worlds, are so very close to the truths, that it purportedly acquire some form of legitimacy. Despite this, the games are transformed, some names are changed, and their principles are united with the most infernal occult ideology.

### 2.1.2 Ecumenical Philosophy Eliminates The God Of The Bible

Ecumenical thought is based on the idea that a single God, the "Creator of the universe," exists and that it is humanity -through different cultures and religions- that has given Him different names. This view alleged that ecumenicals such as Allah, Jehovah, Brahma, Dalai Lama and so forth are all references to the same "God".[22]

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[21] Ferrell, Ana Mendez Dr (2011) The Dark Secrets of GAOTU: Shattering the Deception of Freemasonry. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, p. 50.

[22] Ferrell, Ana Mendez Dr (2011) The Dark Secrets of GAOTU: Shattering the Deception of Freemasonry. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, pp. 27-28.

This belief preaches that all roads lead to "God"; and by believing in and seeking this "God", the path to peace and unity in the world is acquired. This philosophy, which has unquestionable charm, denounces the God of the Bible by equating Him with all of the rest of the "gods."

God says of Himself:

> ***Fear not, neither be afraid: have not I told you from that time, and have declared it? you are even my witnesses. Is there a God besides me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.***
>
> ***Isaiah 44:8***

There has been much controversy through the ages between people, groups and religions, that are monotheistic,[23] and those that are polytheistic[24]. In occult philosophies, as in almost every religion, one finds a great number of trinities and trilogies, which are quite different from the Biblical trinity.

These religions, depicts a basic trinity in the divine family structure, comprising of the father, mother and son. An example hereof would be taken from Egypt, where one encounters Osiris (the father), Isis (the mother) and Horus (the son).[25]

Whilst studying the gods in antiquity, the famous Wiccan saying comes to mind: "*All gods are one god, and all goddesses are one goddess, and both are one.*"[26]

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[23] Monotheism is the belief in a single, all-powerful God.

[24] Polytheism is the belief in many gods. Polytheistic religions include all religions except Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism, the only monotheistic religions.

[25] Ferrell, Ana Mendez Dr (2011) The Dark Secrets of GAOTU: Shattering the Deception of Freemasonry. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, pp. 28-29.

[26] Conway, D J (2003) Magick of the Gods and Goddesses. Invoking the Power of the Ancient God. Berkerly: The Crossing Press, p. 4.

Does this mean that the Pagans believe in the one God Almighty of the Christian Bible who is the Creator of Heaven and earth? The answer is a definite NO!

Some Pagan religions do acknowledge the existence of one Prime Creative Source of Power that brought everything into being in the beginning of all things.

The gods are however a reality, but not in the reality we are familiar with. Combining the Biblical account, with a host of other sources of Ancient Knowledge, provides us with a vast amount of evidence, that are all descriptive of paganism, initially coming from **The Tower of Babel.**

*Genesis 11:4* affirms ***"Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, <u>so that we may make a name for ourselves</u> and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."***

Within the Babylonian structure, there is Nimrod, Semiramis and Tammuz.[27] According to the Bible, Nimrod was a descendant of Adam, and great-grandson of Noah through the line of Ham. He was the natural son of Cush.

> ***And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.***
>
> ***Genesis 10:8-10***

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[27] See Ezekiel 8:14-17.

The Tower of Babel was catalyst to pantheism, (the belief that God is everything and everything is God); polytheism, (the belief in many gods); and idolatry, (the worshiping of idols*)*. The basic identity of the various gods and goddesses of Rome; Greece; India; Egypt, and other nations originated from the ancient Babylonian religion.

**Nimrod** was worshiped as a god. His wife Semiramis was worshiped as the Queen of Heaven **(Jeremiah 17-19)**. She would thereafter be known as Ishtar in Syria, Ashtoreth in Phoenicia, Isis (the goddess of fertility) in Egypt, Aphrodite in Greece and Venus in Rome. Their son, Tammuz, was worshiped as the sun god **(Ezekiel 8:14-17)**. He became known as Baal in Phoenicia, Osiris in Egypt, Aros in Greece and Cupid in Rome. This religious system would later become known as ***Mystery Babylon the Great, the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth (Revelation 17:5).***

The Bible reveals that all false systems of religion originated in the land of Babylon, and will have their consummation from the spirit of Babylon in the last days. It is interesting to note that every organized system of religion in the world today, has traces of ancient Babylon and can furthermore be classified as a polytheistic concept. In contrast, the God of the Bible, is the sole God, who manifests Himself in three distinct persons[28], and none of them is female or mother.

The ultimate motive is expressed in these words, ***"let us make a name for ourselves."*** From that day on this has been the axiom of humanity! It reveals one of the basic philosophies of humanism: *"Glory to man in the highest, for man is the master of things."*

The longing to create a name or legacy, is a fundamental advocate of a fallen race.

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[28] 1 John 5:20; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:13; Deuteronomy 6:4.

Divinity has been a deep-seated hunger or strive for humankind throughout centuries. This is the fundamental philosophy of society. It is the tower of Babel repetitive.

The gods are therefore a reality, and their legacy continues throughout the entire world. The ideals, or the representative images behind the gods, have been on the forefront of human ideology for thousands of years, and will possibly remain ad infinitum. The influence of the gods and goddesses shows no sign of diminishing.

In particular RPGs frequently use stories of these ancient gods as a backdrop for their quest orientated games. They utilize characters from Greek-, Roman-; Phoenician- mythologies, just to name a few.

Representative of the many gods/goddesses deriving from history is characterized in the games as a metaphor to the whole "ultimate Creating Force" behind all that exists. By personifying each separate ideal, the gamer is more capable of relating to the whole. It is argued that computer role-playing games have one goal: to provide each person with a variety of doorways, to what the gamer believes to be "spiritual growth and development".

*What people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or restoration.*[29] In the first two commandments of Exodus 20, it seems plausible to deduct that the first commandment is to be interpreted by the second, so that to ***"have no other gods"*** before Israel's God, meant that one was not to make ***"an idol, or any likeness"*** of anything in the created world, that was worshipped since it was believed that the divine presence was to be contained in that image.

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[29] Beale, G K (2008) We Become What We worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry. IVP Academic, p.17.

***"God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship in [the] spirit and truth".***[30] To worship an image, or any part of the creation, or the deities of the nation, is to take away from the incomparable glory of God: ***"I am the Lord, that is My Name; / I will not give My glory to another, / nor My praise to graven images" (Isaiah 42:8).*** God is ***"jealous"*** (i.e., intolerant of disloyalty) when people give glory to anything other than Him because He is truly the only Being in the universe who deserves glory.[31]

In expounding in the second commandment, Calvin asserts that representing God by images of his creation, is forbidden due to the fact that when individuals are so bound by physical surroundings, they tend to imagine a created image in connection to the deity, and are hence distracted from God's true spiritual being, and to some extend the deity is conceived in a corporeal way.[32]

It is all the more important, not to create images of God, since such *"idolatrous deceits besiege us on every side, [so that] we shall in the vanity of our nature be liable,"* to turn aside to substitutions for the true worship of God.[33]

*"Since God has prescribed to us how He would be worshipped by us [i.e., apart from any images whatsoever], whenever we turn away in the very smallest degree from this rule, we make to ourselves other gods, and degrade Him from His right place."*[34]

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[30] Though in the context of John 4:24 this refers to worshipers in the inaugurated eschatological age worshiping in the light of and in relation to escalated end-time realities (e.g., the eschatological gift of the Spirit), the principle still holds that since God is Spirit, He must be worshipped as a God without any physical attributes.

[31] Cf. Exodus 20:5; 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:24; 5:9; 32:16,21.

[32] Calvin, John (1964) Commentaries on the Last Four Books of Moses. Volume 2. Grand Rapids: Eerdemans, pp. 116-117

[33] Calvin, John (1964) Commentaries on the Last Four Books of Moses. Volume 2. Grand Rapids: Eerdemans, p. 127.

[34] Calvin, John (1964) Commentaries on the Last Four Books of Moses. Volume 1. Grand Rapids: Eerdemans, p.419.

The idealized, utopian hope of cyberspace, is that it could become the new tower of Babel—bringing unity to the world electronically— and a doorway into hell-on-earth. Unfortunately, this is nothing more than a deception, originating from Satan, to blind the eyes of the spirit, to prevent humankind from ever seeing the One True God. This seed of evil, has now become the most popular theory of our time, in which Satan advances his most ambitious plans.[35]

## 2.1.3 A Need For Biblical Truth Regarding Identification Within Virtual Worlds

Identifying the origin of truth is essential to verifying its authenticity. Finding truth depends upon being able to discover and define the sole holder of the truth. Scripture attests to the fact that, "sole holder", can only be God. Not just any god, but the one and only true God who is Truth Himself. [36]

One characteristic of truth is that it contains no lie. The first epistle of the Apostle John says, ***"I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth." (1 John 2:21)*** There are those who believe that the truth is found in man-made Science.

Once the source of truth can be defined, it provides an important guideline to assist with the determination of what is false. What purports to be false, is not necessarily the definite opposite of truth. It is an imitation, resembling the ultimate truth, the essence of which, is a lie, and inevitably leads to error.[37]

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[35] Ferrell, Ana Mendez Dr (2011) The Dark Secrets of GAOTU: Shattering the Deception of Freemasonry. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, p.30.

[36] Deuteronomy 32:4; John 17:2,3, 17; Psalm 19:19; Psalm 57:10.

[37] Ferrell, Ana Mendez Dr (2011) The Dark Secrets of GAOTU: Shattering the Deception of Freemasonry. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, p.40.

The emotional element of people playing in virtual worlds is present in the people's sense of belonging to the community, for example *Avilion*[38] or certain groups in *World of Warcraft*. They are spending their time in those worlds, as it makes sense to them, to explore this world and communicate with other avatars.

From this point of view, the elements of religious identification can be applied to virtual communities. When, in current new-age thinking, the divine is seen as something inside every human being, and self-realization (the means to access a *divine spark*, the *higher self,* or to some scholars, the soul). This self-realization could happen offline and online.

The main focus, therefore, is on the so-called spiritual core of the human being. A spiritual journey could be perceived as an individual journey, but though modern spirituality is individualized, it certainly has community aspects. In self-spirituality, one strives for personal growth and self-realization, the "sacralization" of the self. The search for the self, is an identification process, whilst forming this identity, mediated and self-reflection is essential, according to these New Age believers.

Spiritual sessions and mediation, takes place in a group of people with the same interests. This is exactly what happens when people go online and log in to their community as in *Second Life* or *World of Warcraft*. They encounter people with the same interest (the virtual fantasy world), and if they are satisfied for the instant, they log off and continue with their daily lives.

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[38] **Avilion** is a world with beautiful landscapes, waterfalls, gardens, castles, tree houses and so on. A part of this world has a mythical narrative as in World of Warcraft. The 'population' is composed of elves, knights, ladies and gentlemen. Before entering Avilion, the avatar is obligated to choose suitable clothes that fit into this world. On the one hand, Avilion looks like a role-playing game, but there are no quests that one has to fulfill. The avatars can dance in a ballroom, chat around a campfire or fight in a tournament field.

The narrative of a mythical past is a motivation to play the game and evolve into the cyber character.

The spiritual dimension, as a search for realization and authenticity, can be shaped by a narrative and by game elements, if the narrative and games are internalized. The rules of the game, or the rules of the world, together with the mythical narrative, do shape the experience of being in the world. Self-actualization can happen when individuals learn how to use their avatar, fulfill hero quests and integrate in the virtual communities.

In the Western world, where the grand narrative has largely disappeared, virtual worlds can mediate the search for identity and spirituality. It evolves around sacred space, radical self-expression and the power to create and direct one's destiny.

In summarization, the conclusion can be made that paganism comes in different forms, and that all variations are based on a common belief system, that defines spirituality in material terms. Pagans believe spiritual and material life are not different concepts, but are one concept, and so they reduce spiritual life to experiencing physical and emotional sensations in the material world. A gamer, playing an avatar, is a reduction to the virtual world. They believe that what people see, hear and feel, in material ways is also in fact the spiritual power, controlling the universe.

David Wells, a professor of Theology, says,

*"To the pagan mind, nature was alive with divine presences, linked to them in rhythms that were cosmic and supernatural. The seasons of sowing and harvesting, the rhythms of spring, summer, fall and winter, of the dying and regeneration of nature- all these were as much supernatural as natural…*

*All things terrestrial were the shadows of things celestial. By the same token, things terrestrial were alive with powers of celestial beings. All the powers of nature- thunderstorm, lightning, drought, famine, earthquake- were personified, and the people saw themselves as inescapably a part of pulsating rhythms of the cosmos.*

*And if one were in contact with the gods and goddesses through these rhythms, then every act… 'in some way participated in the sacred'… every act had divine significance."[39]*

C S Lewis explains that, while Christians believe God is everywhere, pagans (or Pantheists, to use his terminology), believe God is everything. In other words, they are of the opinion that God is the material of which everything consists of, and therefore they deny the existence of anything that is not part of this One-Ultimate-Supreme-Being. As Lewis says, pagan pantheists see God as *"a universal medium rather than a concrete entity"[40]* —a way of thinking sometimes indicated by capitalizing the word *nature.*

Because of this, pagans all think ordinary men and women already are, -or can make themselves- gods and goddesses, and for this same reason they also say there is nothing and no one in all reality greater than ourselves. Of course, this also implies the denial of the existence of any God with power and authority over mankind, and it also strengthens their belief that man should all attempt, with vigor, to act as deities controlling the universe.

For the gamer, believing that a virtual fantasy world can be a source for the construction of a spiritual identity, naturally has an enormous implication:

First, it results in thinking that spiritual life is something a person should be able to control, by manipulating material things. To the gamer, (with faith in a virtual community), religious life does not require submission to God's authority but instead depends on ludic (play) dimensions.  The game promises, in a deceptive manner to ordinary human beings, that they can be gods and goddesses controlling the universe, doing whatever they please.

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[39] Wells, David F (1993) No Place For Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology? Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdemans, p. 266.
[40] Lewis, C S (1947) Miracles: A Preliminary study. New York: Macmillan, p. 86.

Secondly, it produces a form of worship that consists of doing material things in hope of gaining spiritual life or power. For the gamer, spiritual power is something to manipulate and control, not something to obey. Hence, whereas Christian worship requires putting ourselves under God's authority, pagan worship in the game-world never involves submission, and always involves attempts to acquire spiritual power under human control.

Thirdly, it means the pagan concept of **truth** is subjective, rather that objective. Truth, to the gamer, is something known, not by reason but rather through fantasy-acts in the form of an avatar. This truth is not rational, and is not grounded in the Word of God. Rather it is sensual, it is not something that remains unchanging, and applies to all in same manner, but to a certain extent, is something that changes and never applies the same to all.

Fourthly, FRPG consequently affects morality and indulgence in natural desires. All pagans are of the opinion that morality is something that matters only in the illusionary-material world, and that it is completely irrelevant to what they see as the real-spiritual world. They believe that truly spiritual people do not have to be moral. After all, gods and goddesses do whatever they want. They have no restrictions. The reason behind the latter is if everything is part of *The Force,* there can be no ultimate difference between good and bad. Good and bad are akin, at the highest level of spiritual existence.

Finally, the concerns regarding the connection between on and offline lives, challenges the notion of what constitutes real experiences. In reference to gender, sexuality and sexual behavior, the ability to explore these ideas, has resulted in a questioning of how virtual experience may affect offline emotions.

As McRae states, *"At its best, virtual sex not only complicates but drastically unsettles the division between mind, body, and self that has become a comfortable truism in Western metaphysics."* She continues, *"Virtual sex allows for a certain freedom of expression, of physical presentation and of experimentation beyond one's own real-life limits."*[41]

When projected into virtuality, mind, body and the sense of self, all become consciously manufactured concepts, through which individuals interact with each other. Online sexuality and sexual behavior, provides some of the most controversial debates with many concerned about the predatory nature of some users. This has particular reference to concerns about child pornography, and the ability of pedophiles to obscure their identity.

The author gives recognition to the traumatic and devastating effects of online sexual activity and virtual rape —whether through text, animation, malicious script or other means. Despite this, cyber sex, Internet-driven sex, and all its related fields, will not be discussed in this thesis. The author does recommend this as a field for an in-depth study.

## 2.1.4 The Need for Epistemology

Epistemology is the doctrine of fundamentals and methodology behind all scientific knowledge.[42] It is the Science that assists in the development of individual beliefs. Presumably, since the origin of man, humankind has sought the answers to their own existence. Who is man? Who created man? What is man's reason for being? Is there life after death? Philosophers, of every age, have tried to find solutions, and have come up with hundreds of answers to these questions.

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[41] McRae, Shannon (1997) Flesh Made Word: Sex, Text and the Virtual Body. New York and London: Routledge Publishing, p. 75.

[42] Ferrell, Ana Mendez Dr (2011) The Dark Secrets of GAOTU: Shattering the Deception of Freemasonry. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, p.23.

However, for the purpose of this thesis, the absolute certainty of the existence of a single, Supreme God over this marvelous creation, will be acknowledged. This thesis does not take a deistic approach to God, but rather holds that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit is the true and sole inspiration for the Bible, believes in the deity of Christ, miracles and the supernatural act of redemption for salvation.

The Bible is filled with accounts of the miraculous. The Bible is, in fact, entirely an account of God, interfering in His creation. ***Daniel 4:34b-35*** records, ***"His dominion is an eternal dominion; His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back His hand or say to Him: 'What have you done?'"***

The world, history, and humanity, is "clay" in the hands of God. God molds them and shapes them, as He sees fit (Romans 9:19-21). The ultimate act of God, "interfering" with His creation, is when He assumed a human form, in the Person of Jesus Christ (John 1:114; 10:30). Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, died, to redeem His creation from the sin they have brought upon themselves (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

## 2.2 Summary: The Destruction of Identity

Since the misrepresentation of Christianity is so commonplace, it is imperative to present the outlines of a Biblical approach to play, in general, and role-playing in particular. The root of identity alteration, in which case an individual creates an alternate sense of self necessitates exploration.

Leisure was never intended to dominate our lives'; there is a time for everything under the sun (Ecclesiastes 3).

The modern concept of working, with the primary intention of acquiring resources and refraining from play (having leisure activities) is an anti-Biblical concept. The Preacher of Ecclesiastes says that man should enjoy his leisure and his work. He summarizes as follows: ***"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" (Ecclesiastes 9: 10).*** Play, while good in essence, can never become an escape mechanism from responsibilities.

Does the Bible specifically instruct or warn about role-playing? Scripture purportedly assumes that role-playing, or imitation, is inescapable. All people intermittently imitate someone or something. Indeed, it is an intrinsic component of human nature to imitate. Man's first and utmost imitator is his Creator.

Scripture advocates man to not only imitate God, but also to imitate those who are godly. Paul often urges his readers to imitate him (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11: 1; and Philippians 3:17). The author of Hebrews, instructs us to imitate the faithful men and women of the Old Testament, as well as the leaders of the Church (Hebrew 6: 12; 13:7). God even advocated man to imitate animals.

According to Proverbs 6:6, the lazy are counseled to imitate the ant. It would be conclusive for a workaholic to learn to imitate leviathan, as stated by Psalm 104:26. This emphasis on imitation is confirmed by the Biblical understanding of teaching and acquiring wisdom through learning. Teaching and learning are not limited to the intellectual component.

When the Lord ***"taught warfare"*** to the Israelites (Judges 3:2), He did not conduct a seminar with military precision. He taught warfare by leaving foreign powers in the land, for Israel to fight. Israel learned of war, by actual fighting.

Teaching and learning in Scripture, includes intellectual and verbal instruction, but also include imitation or "role-playing;" drill; practice; discipline and rituals.

There seems to be Scriptural motivation for teaching through "role-playing" or "pretending." The value of this kind of training is most obvious in children. Our daughters learn about motherhood by playing with their dolls. Our sons learn courage, by pretending to fight. This role-playing will pay dividends in later life. It's said that Abraham Lincoln learned public speaking by standing on a stump and delivering orations to a pile of split rails. There is also room for non-didactic role-playing, that is, for role-playing "just for fun." The lovers, in the Song of Songs, appear to be engaging in playful role-playing. In the Feast of Tabernacles, the Israelites lived in "booths" for a week.

The primary purpose was didactic, to remind Israel of their deliverance from slavery into the abundance of the land, except it is hard to resist the suspicion that the "role-play" also contributed to the festive atmosphere. Nevertheless, a certain level of identification with a role, is basic to playing games and enjoying fiction and drama.

There are, however, limits to our role-playing. The most obvious is that man is not to imitate those who are rebels against God. Role-play is a powerful means of teaching new behavior. To play the role of a rebel is to learn rebellion.

Thus, the Lord commanded Israel not to imitate the nations. ***Deuteronomy 18:9*** states ***"You shall not learn to do according to the abominations of the nations".*** This passage is especially significant for our purposes, as Israel is specifically forbidden to imitate the foreign nations in human sacrifice, witchcraft, and divination.

Another limitation on role-playing is that the role can never become an identification. This was Adam's sin. He was created to imitate God, but he wanted to be God. Scripture teaches us to imitate the ant, but to become an ant is a surreal distortion and an impossibility.

It is always dangerous to become so attached to a role model that one cannot separate oneself from that role. In some instances, the danger can be explicit, like the child who jumps out of a window, impersonating Superman. In other cases, the danger is more subtle- a confusion of identity can take place.

Sometimes, the identification is relatively innocuous, such as when a player begins to take a game too seriously. Ultimately, all extreme identification with a role is sin, because it involves a rebellious rejection of the role to which God has assigned us.

This motive is apparent in many of the role-playing gamers enthusiasts quoted above. They hate their God-given role, in the God-directed drama of history, and they play fantasy games in order to create their own identity and their own history.

The issue, then, is not role-playing or no role-playing, but which roles and how intensely involved the actor/player become. There is no good reason behind portraying characters that regularly practice what God condemns.

The power of role-play is such that a player can transcend into the character of the roles he portrays. Role-playing has been used as a brainwashing technique, and is regularly utilized by psychologists and humanistic educators as a way to teach new behavior. These effects could be positive, if only the roles they thrust upon their subjects were positive.

After all, some behavior wed to be changed, and role-play could be a helpful way to adopt better habits. If the roles involve the use of pop-psychology; New Age educational manipulation; witchcraft; deception; and gratuitous violence, the habits learned, are bound to be negative.

The crux is that any activity that is not submissive to the rule of God's Law, is bound to have unpleasant and dangerous repercussions. On the other hand, any activity that is submissive to the rule of God's Law, is bound to strengthen and edify.

Subsequently, what should be the answer to children who play with toy guns and plastic soldiers? Is this not a role-playing activity that can lead to violent behavior? It certainly can, if the child takes his role-play so seriously that he starts bullying children in, school for example. War is, Biblically speaking, a legitimate, though undesirable, use of violence. By learning to play war, a child is not necessarily learning to do anything that God forbids.

Indeed, such play can be helpful to instill in a child the reality of the Christian's life-long warfare against Satan and sin. The question of portraying an evil character in a drama is also raised? May a Christian legitimately play Lucifer, Mephistopheles, Ted Bundy or Charles Manson? Clearly, the character's place in the entire context of the work is the decisive factor.

If a play celebrates the perversion of its character, there can be little justification for a Christian playing the role. Another significant question is the factor of identification with the role. This is evidently a sinful level of identification.

After reading *Rolling Stone's* obituary/appreciation of Heath Ledger[43] some readers would concur that it is not entirely frivolous to ask whether *The Joker*[44] might in some bizarre way be responsible for Ledger's death.

If that is indeed the case, what does it imply about the psychic power of fictional characters?

The question arises: Was Heath Ledger so intensely involved in his portrayal of The Joker in *The Dark Night,* to the extent that The Joker took over his mind and eventually ends his life in a horrible, ironic twist, worthy of his green haired alter-ego?

The following lines from the *Rolling Stone,* seems to reinforce, if only subtly at times, the idea that the Joker killed Ledger:

1. *"He couldn't seem to disengage; the inexactness bothered him."*

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[43] **Heath Ledger**- 22 January 2008, Ledger was found unconscious in his bed. After two weeks of intense media speculation about possible causes of Ledger's death, on 6 February 2008, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner of New York released its conclusions, based on an initial autopsy of 23 January 2008, and a subsequent complete toxicological analysis. The report concludes, in part, Mr. Heath Ledger died as the result of acute intoxication by the combined effects of oxycodone, hydrocodone, diazepam, temazepam, alprazolam and doxylamine. It states definitively that the manner of death is accidental, resulting from the abuse of prescription medications. The medications found in the toxicological analysis are commonly prescribed in the United States for insomnia, anxiety, depression, pain, or common cold symptoms, or any combination thereof. The official announcement of the cause and manner of Ledger's death heightened concerns about the growing problems of prescription drug abuse or misuse and combined drug intoxication. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heath_Ledger).

[44] **The Joker** is a fictional character, a comic book supervillain published by DC Comics. He is the archenemy of Batman, having been directly responsible for numerous tragedies in Batman's life. Throughout his comic book appearances, the Joker is portrayed as a master criminal whose characterization has varied. The original and currently dominant image is of a highly intelligent psychopath with a warped, sadistic sense of humor, while other writers have portrayed him as an eccentric prankster. Similarly, throughout the character's long history, there have been several different origin tales; they most commonly depict him as falling into a tank of chemical waste, which bleaches his skin white and turns his hair green and his lips bright red, giving him the appearance of a clown. Critics have repeatedly analyzed him as the perfect villain to Batman, their long, dynamic relationship often parallels the 'Yin and Yang' concept. As one of the most iconic and recognized villains in popular media, *The Joker* was ranked #1 on *Wizard'*s list of the 100 Greatest Villains of All Time. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joker_%28comics%29).

2. *"Ledger had no formal training, and there's this to be said for acting school: it teaches you to approach a role as foreign, as a language you'll temporarily speak. Ledger didn't appear to have that. He needed to dig for (and inhabit) the part of himself that was the character. 'Performance comes from absolutely believing what you're doing,' he said. 'You convince yourself, and believe in the story with all your heart.' It didn't always shut off when a production did, and I think it ground him."*

3. *"As The Joker in next summer's The Dark Knight, he will appear as a man severed from all connection. A 'psychopathic, mass-murdering clown with zero empathy,' is how he described it to the New York Times. On set, Michael Caine said the performance sometimes turned so frightening he forgot his own lines."[45]*

Scripture encourages leisure; play; and even role-playing, though always within the limits of the moral Law. In the context of these standards, however, our imaginations find true freedom. Like the sheep to which Scripture so often compares us. Outside, there is only the bondage of fear that allows for no real leisure.

It can be concluded that role models are reinforced through identification with werewolves; vampires; wizards; and monsters; but also sociopaths who can be cloaked as heroes.

This desensitization and seduction into post-modern pagan spirituality in our culture can be further illustrated by the popularity of occult themes in entertainment.

Gerald Celente, editor of *The Trends Journal* observed,

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[45] Rolling Stone Music. (http://submittedforyourperusal.com/2008/03/01/did-the-joker-kill-heath-ledger/).

*"Clearly society has a desire to look beyond the natural into the supernatural. A lot of society is pulling away from traditional religions and looking to ancient wisdom. There's a growing interest in astrology, tarot, cabala, and paganism, and it's all about a search for inspiration."[46]*

Computer games are a further source for the bombardment of occult violence. As mentioned earlier, games of virtual reality, where participants perceive that they are actually involved in the action, poses a particularly dangerous threat. An example of a recent computer game, which bridges the gap toward virtual reality games, is *Heretic II*, produced by Activision.

Activision's November 30th press release, is titled *"Gamers Prepare for a New Religion ...".* They claim that their software *"will convert gamers to a new religion,"* set in a *"richly animated medieval land"* where players *"embark on an epic journey across an enemy infested continent.... Empowered with an arsenal of spectacular weapons and magical spells."*

The game appears to combine all the problematic elements as described above, but contributes even more realism, as it delivers a three-dimensional (3D) image which *"combines the control and fast paced action of a first person shooter game with an over-the-shoulder third person perspective - a combination that fully immerses gamers into their character's experience."* That includes *"five intense deathmatch levels.... an exhilarating and immersive gaming experience."* [47]

Games and recreation can both reflect, and stimulate, the consciousness of a culture. For the Christian there is certainly nothing wrong with leisure; play; and even role-playing. As always, all of mankind's actions should glorify God, within His moral limits, for both personal peace and a more healthy stability in our culture.

On the contrary, the kind of games described in this section, reflect not only self-indulgent escapism, but also a dangerous and destructive rebellion against all that is pure, holy and good.

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[46] Celente, Gerald. Trends Journal.
[47] *Gamers Prepare for a New Religion as Activision Ships Raven Software's Heretic II.* Activision, Inc.

In addition to the promotion of violence, anarchy, and access to the occult, these types of "recreation" are indicative of widespread dissatisfaction and disillusionment, in the absence of moral absolutes and anchors. These people can be prone to very low self-esteem, experiencing alienation and confusion.

In view of this onslaught of deception and depravity, Christians need to heed to God's word and ***"not be conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of [their] mind[s]."*** [48] Christians need not only shun participation, but also need to share their concerns, and especially their faith with others.

## 3. The Importance Of RPGs As Catalyst For The Birthing Of Imaginations

## 3.1 Introduction: The Appeal of the Unreal

"Imagination is everything. It is the preview of life's coming attractions."

–Albert Einstein

In developing a broader understanding of role-playing, role-playing's connections to other subject areas must be revealed and illuminated. One such a field of study is what the author, Daniel Mackay, as the *"imaginary-entertainment environment"*, refers to. [49]

The concept of imaginary-entertainment expands beyond the role-playing game, and connects any number of popular-entertainment forms to one another.

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[48] Romans 12:2
[49] Mackay, Daniel (2001) The Fantasy Role-Playing Game: A New Performing Art. North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, p. xiii.

It is a prevalent desire for alternatives to the, so-called, real world, for something "out of this world", that surrounds and governs the activities of most people.

The faculty of imagination exist in the realm of fantasy. According to Albert Einstein it is the most powerful and creative force in the universe. It is considered a power of the mind and a "process" of the mind used for thinking; scheming; contriving; remembering; creating; fantasizing and forming opinion.

As a medium, imagination is a world where thought and images are nested in the mind to *"form a mental concept of what is not actually present to the senses."*[50] In the sense of the word as a process, imagination is a form of mediation between what is considered "externalized" reality and internalized man.[51] The term is considered *"often with the implication that the (mental) conception does not correspond to the reality of things."*

Finally, imagination is a term that circulates forms of mass media, when the "internalized" private imagination is presented as public, or expressed in a media form, such as film or in virtual reality technology.[52]

FRPG's is the expression of the imagination itself, by means of using electronic media to create a represented version of perceptible reality. The game is played in one's head. The basic rule of the game is: *"Use your imagination. Stretch it to the limit."* Although there are thousand of rules in the game, the central point of an FRP game is to play a character whose actions are dictated by the player's imagination, not by the rules.

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[50] Online Oxford English Dictionary.
[51] Lacan, Jacques (1977) The Mirror stage as Formative of the Function of Imagination. Ecrits: a selection. NY,NY: Norton, pp. 1-7.
[52] Online Oxford English Dictionary.

Thus, like the imagination, RPG's attempt to express a version of reality that evokes a mental concept that goes beyond that which is observable to the senses. The medium of computer fantasy games attempts to reflect perceptible reality, and reality is represented although it is fabricated.

The game demands of the gamer to make associative connections between images and symbols, thus requiring the work of the imagination. Therefore, where the gamers' imagination is being presented, the individual is requested to identify and internalize with it. The images; smells; sounds and textures of the game- world or cyberspace, as it has been created by the designer of the multi-user dungeon (MUD), are left to the imagination of the player.

The power of these fantasy/role-playing games to encapsulate the imagination of participants is well documented– even to the point that the "reality" of the fantasy world can sometimes spill over into the player's real life, creating bizarre episodes.

Appearing in **Virtual reality** (VR), both in film and in computers, there was a concern that the medium would take over human properties of the imagination. Following Kittler[53], Manovich cites Munsterburg in *The Film: A Psychological Study*, *"the essence of film lies in its ability to reproduce or objectify various mental functions on the screen."* Furthermore, *"Eisenstein speculated that film could be used to externalize- and control- thinking."*[54]

The notion of externalizing the human mind, was exercised in the creation of virtual reality technologies, where a simulated world appears to be activated by the user's mere power of thought and imagination:

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[53] Kittler, Friedrich A (1999) Gramophone, Film, Typewriter. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
[54] Manovich, Lev (2001) The Language of the New Media. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, p. 58.

*"VR pioneer Jaron Lanieer saw VR technology as capable of completely objectifying-better yet, transparently merging with mental processes, claiming VR could take over human memory, not distinguishing between internal mental functions, events, and processes, and externally presented images."*[55]

According to them, this is the ideal communication- to supersede our romantic notions of the untranscendable imagination, or humanity, through technology.

Author Tal Brooke notes that *"Virtual reality is a kind of scientific magic. It promises to create seamless synthetic illusions that can bend and shape perceived reality like the powerful spells of the great sorcerers of medieval legend… The genie that provides the engine for this magical illusion is the computer. As computers grow in power, the spell becomes more convincing and overpowering. Some feel the illusion will eventually surpass reality once there is sufficient power."*

He added that computer visionaries have far-reaching and more extensive and ambitious purposes in mind, than simply playing chess, or keeping track of concepts like cyberspace or the stock exchange. One long-range purpose has been the mind-machine interface that would provide the means of creating a sense-experience realm so palpable, so immediate and convincing, that it could be called "virtual reality."

Part of the vision was the sheer entertainment it would provide. Another was the quest for mind expansion. Other darker visionaries might have intended for it to have the potential for social engineering and mind control — the totalitarian downside. [56]

Consequently, fantasy role-playing games are the expression of the imagination, utilizing it beyond what is often called "common knowledge" to experience the "infinite nature" of imagination for oneself.

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[55] Manovich, p. 58.
[56] Brooke, Tal (1997) Virtual Gods. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, pp. 110-111.

Through the power of imagination using games as a platform, one is able to act on deeply held desires; dreams; visions and goals to become a very real and tangible thing.

The virtual figures of the game-world are formed by imagination, and are constructed by imagination. The restricting functions of the roles of game-players are unrestrained, thus granting the participants unlimited freedom of imagination. It is akin to being in a world that sets powerful forces in motion.

At this level of game formulization, the mental images, pictures and/or conversations are conceived in the mind of man, or in the spirit of man's mind (the imagination). It is mental anticipation of something that the gamer supposes might happen, and is envisioning him/herself in an imaginary environment.

***Jeremiah 23:17*** states ***"They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that <u>walketh after the imagination</u> of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you."*** (KJV)

Walking after a person's imagination means to conceive, in the spirit of the mind, a picture or an image of something that might happen, and then walking it out. In the case of a gamer walking after the imagination, and stepping that way in the virtual world of fantasy, he/she is beginning to act out that fantasy and mental picture, in the form of a virtual avatar, and moves his/her virtual avatar's life in that direction.

Even though the imagination, or mental picture is not factual or genuine in the real life of the gamer the avatar is manipulated, influenced and controlled by the imagination up to a point where the fantasies of the game, substitute real life situations under the principle of "lifelikeness".

The gamer gives life to the imagination. It guides participants into a world of nonmaterial entities, forces and spirits. Evidently, if such beings exist, the line of demarcation between fantasy and reality can easily be indistinct. **There is no assurance that conjuring an imagined entity will prevent a real spirit from responding!**

These picture-perfect illusions, created in the mind of the gamer, such as a goblin casting a fireball spell will be as tangible and real as actual reality. People can become engrossed in the maize of experiences. It can be used to alter consciousness. Boundaries can be broken like never before. As God said in Genesis, ***"and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." (Genesis 11:6 KJV).***

WHAT MEN IMAGINE, THEY WILL BE ABLE TO DO!

Imagination opens doors to the mind and spirit that the Lord intended to remain closed (see Genesis 1:27-29; 2:19-20). The author of the book *Occult Invasion* by Dave Hunt can be quoted with approval, where he states that *"fantasy role-playing games are extremely dangerous because of the use of the imagination, which is the quickest way into the occult."*[57]

## 3.2. Imagination And The Ancient Message Behind Role-Playing Magic

It is a certainty that these RPGs do much more than just entertain. It explores the occult, sex and violence above all.

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[57] Hunt, Dave (1998) Occult Invasion: The Subtle Seduction of the World and Church. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, p. 328.

A very relevant question concerning today's youth can be asked: *What is the moral level of the cyber-culture that is setting the cutting-edge pace of video, Virtual Reality and RPGs?*

*"Magic is the science of the imagination, the art of engineering consciousness and discovering the virtual forces that connect the body-mind with the physical world"* according to *Wired* editor, Eric Davis, in his article about "Technopagans". In demonstrating the impact of pagan thrills on the cold logical world of computer language, he cited a San Francisco Bay area cyber-genius, Mark Pesce as an acceptable case study. Pesce is an M.I.T dropout, who practices witchcraft and coordinates a Bay area coven of fellow software and hardware cutting-edge innovators. He describes himself as a "gay witch."

He does not write games per se, -he is in reality doing much more. He is creating a major cyberspace doorway that would have the power to allow global game playing in three dimensions, among international participants — games of all varieties, such as cyber-Dungeons & Dragons. Davis comments:

*"Mark Pesce is a technopagan, a participant in a small but vital subculture of digital savants who keep one foot in the emerging technosphere and one foot in the wild and woolly world of Paganism.... an anarchic, earthy, celebratory spiritual movement that attempts to reboot the magic, myths, and gods of Europe's pre-Christian people...."*

*"Sure, he spends his time practicing kundalini yoga,[58] boning up on Aleister Crowley's Thelmic magic and tapping away at his book: Understanding Media: The end of Man, which argues that magic will play a key role in combating the virulent information memes and pathological virtual worlds that will plague the coming cyberworld. But he is also the creator of VRML, a technical standard for creating navigable, hyperlinked 3-D spaces and the World Wide Web… As Pesce's technomagical children, WolrdView and VRML may well end up catalyzing the next phase of online mutation: the construction of a true, straight-out-of-Necromancer cyberspace on the Internet."[59]*

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[58] **Kundalini yoga**- See Terms and Definitions
[59] Davis, Eric (1995) "Technopagans". *Wired,* 3.07, July 1995.

Davis then makes a telling remark about the technopagan sub-culture in general:

*"If you hang around the San Francisco Bay area or the Internet fringe for long, you'll hear loads of loopy talk about computers and conciseness. Because the issues of interface design, network psychology, and virtual reality are so open-ended and novel, the people who hack this conceptual edge often sound as much like science fiction acidheads as the do sober programmers. In this vague realm of gurus and visionaries, technopagan ideas about 'myth' and 'magic' often signify dangerously murky waters."[60]*

Science and technology have always been seen as a vehicle for progress, to a better future. David Nobel presents arguments in his book, *The Religion of Technology*[61], that Christian Scientists attempted, with the use of technology, to regain paradise and to restore perfection. A good corroboration of this thought is found in Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*, in which he describes a perfect world, where all kinds of technological innovations are integrated in society.[62]

Moreover, the complexity of technology -especially computer technology- has inspired many computer programmers to perceive technology as magic. The complexity of computer hardware and software can be domesticated by programming, but what exactly happens is not traceable and controllable anymore. Computer-mediated virtual environments even attract neo-pagans, who consider technology as both magical and spiritual.

Most players of role-playing games do not pursue its more evil aspects and argue that they shouldn't be penalized for indulging in fantasy as opposite to actual evil. Can one dispute that these games involve only imaginary evil?

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[60] Ibid.
[61] Noble, D F (1999) The Religion of Technology. The Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention. London: Penguin Books.
[62] Bacon, F (1626) The New Atlantis.

Christian teachings underscore many objections to RPGs, including the command to ignore evil imaginations and avoid *"everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every though into captivity to the obedience of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5)*

This injunction accepts the fact that creative imagination is an important aspect of spirituality. How else could the creation of the world and the wonders of heaven, from Genesis to the Revelation, be comprehended? In the world of RPGs, no morality can be acquainted to that of the real world. There is no theistic accountability or intrusion of a Christian worldview. Likewise, the motives of games like D&D, characters indicate an exercise in expediency rather than moral perspective. The ancient writer of Proverbs warned, *"For as he thinks in his heart, so is he."* (*Proverbs 23:7*)

The link between Satanism and Occultism occurs when players use symbols and protective inscriptions associated with witchcraft and the occult. The Dungeon Master's Guide includes several pages of instruction on acquiring and casting spells. There are directives for chanting; the use of familiar spirits, speaking with the deceased; use of occultic symbols to protect the spell caster; and definitions of special spells used by shamans and witchdoctors.

Spells are incorporated for healing; exorcism; charming other characters; magical flight; fireballs; divination; and even resurrecting the dead. Necromancy, (a Biblically forbidden practice of communicating with the dead), is sometimes used as a divinational means of deriving information. Such activity occurs in an imagined universe, where the moral quality of the player's character is often dichotomous.

At the very least, anyone familiar with FRP rulebooks has the capability of learning the terminology of witchcraft and Satanism. More likely, a seed is sown, and the gamer is almost imperceptibly drawn into the occult.

Irrespective of whether such a person believes in magic and occultism along with the associated powers or not!

Through occultic RPGs, the gamer can create a realm in which he/she could practice ritual magic and perfect their magic skills. Through one's will and imagination, one can make things happen on the physical realm, which is the manifestation of the power of one's will.

Author Miriam Starhawk, of *The Spiral Dance,* and founder of the "Covenant of the Goddess" taught her followers that: *"To work magic is to weave the unseen forces into form, to soar beyond sight, to explore the uncharted dream realm of the hidden reality... to leap beyond imagination into that space between the worlds where fantasy becomes real; to be at once animal and god...* **Spells** *[and magic]... require the combined faculties of* **relaxation, visualization, concentration***, and [mental]* **projection***... To cast a spell is to* **project energy through a symbol***."*[63]

It is the occultic element that makes the game so very dangerous. Magic and witchcraft are found on nearly every page of an FRP rulebook. The list of characters from which a player chooses, includes magic users; druids; illusionists, and clerics. There are two major types of spells described: magical and clerical. The characters with magical powers are the most powerful players in the game the other characters rely on physical strength and savagery.

Many of the spells; incantations; symbols; and protective measures, are genuine occultic techniques. Several spells, for example, instructing the player to draw a protective circle when communicating with demons, a practice used by real witches. Spells often require human blood or flesh.

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[63] Starhawk, Miriam (1979) The Spiral Dance. New York: Harper & Row, p. 62.

The spell for a Cacodemon, (Conjuration), suggests *"By tribute of fresh human blood and the promise of one or more human sacrifices, the summoner can bargain with the demon for willing service."* Another spell, smacking of Biblical references, gives instructions for changing sticks into snakes and to retort back to sticks again.

The Dungeon Master also has a wide variety of monsters and demons to populate his dungeon. Many of these are drawn from Satanism. In D&D, **demons** are the most widespread race of friends. The demons are chaotic and evil by nature, and are native to the Abyss.[64]

Demons have no true rulers, though powerful demon lords are able to gain sufficient power and influence to gain control over sizable armies of demonic creatures. Refer to Chapter One for a very detailed exposition on the monsters, characters and demons of RPGs.

Of course, the creators of FRPs deny that they are promoting witchcraft. Most proclaim that they don't believe in the existence thereof. Moreover, they insist that the characters in the game are fighting against these demons. Even some Christians have defended the game, based on its realistic depiction of evil.

Cognizant should however be taken that it's not just the monsters who have Satanic powers. The heroes, the purported 'good guys' also use magic and witchcraft and learn genuine spells and occult techniques.

Regardless of the intentions of the creators of FRPs, Dr. Gary North, a

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[64] **Abyss:** Is a chaotic-evil aligned plane of existence that form part of the standard D&D cosmology. One description of the Abyss presents it as a region of intense, extreme, and unforgiving climates, with layers consisting of overwhelmingly fierce desert sandstorms; explosively unstable volcanic activity, boiling lava, and molten rock; blinding, sub-zero Arctic glaciers; bottomless oceans filled with enormous leviathans; nauseatingly putrid environments saturated with disease-causing fungi; and the endless, existential void of infinite space. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abyss_%28Dungeons_%26_Dragons%29).

Christian economist, author of the book *None Dare Call It Witchcraft,* and editor of the Remnant Review's summary is still accurate:

"*Without any doubt in my mind, after years of study in the history of occultism, after having researched a book on the topic, and after having consulted with scholars in the field of historical research, I can say with confidence: these games are the most effective, most magnificently packaged, most profitably marketed, most thoroughly researched introduction to the occult in man's recorded history. Period.*"[65]

According to the dictionary, a catechism is a program of instruction, containing a summary of the principles or an introduction to the fundamentals of a subject. Through the ages Christians have used catechisms to teach the ABC's of the faith to their children. Repetition and recitation of the catechisms enabled them to rehearse Biblical basics in a fun, easy-to-learn fashion.

In an ominously parallel way, FRPG's has become a modern-day catechism. The game contains a summary of the principles and an introduction to the fundamentals of the occult. By repetition and recitation, FRPGs enable children to rehearse occultic basics in a fun, easy-to-learn fashion. Thus, these games really are a catechism for occultism.

Instead of rising a generation, nurtured and admonished by the teachings of God, we're systematically weaning our children on the occult. Surreal thoughts and images that alienate a person from God are in actual fact the spirit of witchcraft, working in his imaginations. Imagination has the potential of making a person walk under the influence witchcraft-oppression, rather than in the Spirit of God.

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[65] North, Gary Dr (1980) Remnant Review. December 5 1980.

## 3.3 The Correlation Between Imaginations and Fantasy Facilitated by RPGs

Role-play occurs in the collective realm of fantasy.

Lately, as Biblical moral and -spiritual boundaries are torn down, mainstream media is preaching tolerance and approval of all kinds of forbidden pleasures. In due course, occult secrets will be emerging from their century-old closets, and claim their domain in mainstream media.   In a 1998 article, titled *Popular Occultism*, Alexis Dolgorukii shows how the world of fantasy complemented the rise of modern and post-modern occultism:

*"During the 1960's, thanks to the works of J.R.R. Tolkien... there began a tremendous public fascination with what is called 'Swords and Sorcery Fantasy' and that fascination has continued and intensified to this day.... A vast number of films and computer games and arcade games echo this same preoccupation....   This 'popular occultism' appeared during 1870-1925...   The primary 'movers and shakers'... were people like Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Eliphas Levi... Rudolph Steiner, Aleister Crowley, A.E. Waite... Alice Bailey, Annie Besant… Whether we speak of 'Theosophy', or The Golden Dawn, or The Orderae Templi Orientalis (O.T.O.)... or any other of the truly enormous number of tiny groups all enraptured by the same glamour, what it is with which we are truly dealing is 'Popular Occultism'; and it is just as much 'Swords and Sorcery Fantasy' as the works of Tolkien...."* [66]

Citing Pesce, the pagan leader in computer innovation:

*"Over the millennia, alchemists, Kabbalists, and esoteric Christians developed a rich storehouse of mental tools.... It's no accident that these 'hermetic' arts are named for Hermes, the Greek trickster god of messages and information....*

*"Using a combination of ceremonial performance, ritual objects, and imagination, Pagans carve out these tightly bounded zones in both physical and psychic space. Pagan rituals vary quite a bit, but the stage is often set by **invoking the four elements** that the ancients believed composed all matter....*

*"...you find more intimate correspondences between computer culture and Paganism's religion of the imagination. One link is science fiction and fantasy fandom, a world whose role playing, nerd humor, and mythic enthusiasm has bred many a Pagan."*

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[66] Popular Occultism. ( http://www.parascience.org/popular.htm).

*"Both cyberspace and magical space are purely manifest in the imagination,"* says Pesce. *"Both spaces are entirely constructed by your thoughts and beliefs."[67]*

The characters, birthed by Tolkien's imagination, fit right in, hence explaining why the first generation of mythmakers and technopagans would masquerade as wizards; hobbits; dwarves and other Middle Earth characters during the pioneering years of computer conventions. The latter explains why the emerging world of *Dungeons & Dragons* adopted Tolkien's orcs; dwarves; trolls and elves. Tolkien's mystical realms set the stage, and create the mould for America's (and the rest of the world's) future game-makers.

The most popular role-playing games incorporate fact and fantasy, myth and history, with a virtual reality that stirs the imagination, and imprints its dark images in the minds of the players.

An example hereof is, **Warhammer Fantasy Role-Play** — akin to the new Tolkien games — that is set in a medieval fantasy world, populated with a vast diversity of orcs; ogres; dwarfs; goblins; wizards; gods and sorcerers.

Followers, who love God, will be repelled by occult myths and pagan fantasies. Moreover, those who love today's popular occultism, will flea from God's unchanging truths and boundaries. A person, filled with His Spirit and who follows in His way, he will -- by His life in us – "**abhor what is evil and cling to what is good***." (Romans 12:9).*

Other Scriptures are even more specific. For example, *2 Timothy 4:2-5* warns to *"**Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables (or myths). But you be watchful in all things...*"**

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[67] Davis, Erik, *"Technopagans"* (http://www.techgnosis.com/technopagans.html).

Humanity is inclined to shy away when they are confronted by these truths. Myths and fantasies are deemed too enticing, explaining why people find all kinds of justifications for their misdirected love.

In an article titled, *"J.R.R. Tolkien: Truth and Myth",* Tolkien's biographer, Joseph Pearce, wrote:

*"... the power of Tolkien lies in the way that he succeeds, through myth, in making the unseen hand of providence felt by the reader.*

*"In his mythical creations, or sub-creations as he would call them, he shows how the unseen hand of God is felt far more forcefully in myth than it is ever felt in fiction. Paradoxically, fiction works with facts, albeit invented facts, whereas myth works with truth, albeit truth dressed in fancy disguises.*

*"Furthermore, since facts are physical and **truth is metaphysical, myth, being metaphysical, is spiritual.***[68]

This statement is an apparent aberration of concepts. If Tolkien's mythical realm of occult magic and multiple gods *"make the unseen hand of providence felt by the reader,"* what message does it actually convey? Is Pearce *really* of the belief that God's all wise providence can be experienced through the man-made gods in the Lord of the Rings? More over, the seductive myth has blinded his eyes and distorted his view of God's reality.

That is just what myths do. It provides counterfeit responses to life's deepest questions, and shuts the door to the only God who can provide eternal, life-giving answers. Not surprising, the UK-based Tolkien Society chose the *uroborus* (a circular serpent swallowing its tail) as a symbol, representing its organization.

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[68] Pearce , Joseph (2011)  "J.R.R. Tolkien: Truth and Myth." *Lay Witness.* September 2001.

One of its pages, contains an acknowledgement of this pagan society, and highlights the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, which is designed to be a school and a repository of knowledge, where students are taught principles of occult science and the various elements of western philosophy and magic.

## 4. MMORPGs And Existentialism: What Online Gaming Educates About Philosophy

### 4.1 Being in the World… Of Warcraft

Zijdenveld, in his Masters thesis for the Department of Theology, entitled *Cyberpilgrims: The Construction of Spiritual Identity in Cyberspace,* cites that that technology and spirituality are not, per se, incompatible.[69] The fascination with technology can create an atmosphere of sacredness, mystery and magic. It has become a mode of existence, a framework for life.

The philosopher Michael Heim[70] argues that technology penetrated to the core of human existence when computers became a cultural phenomenon. This is more prevalent in virtual reality, a reality that is evoked by computer technology.

Heim states that the connection between the meanings of "virtual" and "reality", means that **virtual reality is an event that is experienced as real, but is in fact, the opposite.** Virtual reality is by no means limited to technical interpretation. An illusionary feeling can be evoked when one is immersed in a book or a piece of music.

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[69] Zijderveld Theo (2008) Cyberpilgrims: The construction of Spiritual Identity in Cyberspace. University of Colorado, p.30. (http://www.theozijderveld.com/cyberpilgrims).
[70] Heim, M H (2003) Heidegger and McLuhan and the Essence of Virtual Reality. Philosophy of Technology: The Technological Condition. Oxford, Blackwell: R C D Scharff, p. 542.

In cyberspace, networks of computer technology, construct virtual reality. It is an interface between the human being and the computer.

German Philosopher, Martin Heidegger, explained the act of *"being in the world",* with the word *Dasein*. Dasein is the state of being-in-the-world as a result of a human agent acting within his environment.[71]

What if that environment was actually virtual? What if that virtual environment was experienced via a subject in that virtual world? As a result hereof, the thought might occur of playing games like *World of Warcraft* (*WOW*) as Being-in-the-world and Being-in-the-World-of-Warcraft at the same time. It is the latter that will be discussed here under.

The reason that these games motivate people to succumb to these shifts, unlike any other game, is due to one distinguishing feature that sets them apart from other games, application of human freewill. When playing the game, the player can elect to virtually do whatever they seek-, or don't. A player could, for example, encounter someone in *WOW* who is facing an enemy, but not doing so well. In fact, the gamer has the chance to heal them and save them from death.

If he chooses to heal them, he could save that player a relative amount of time and frustration, but if he has better options at his disposal, he could pass the player in trouble, and go about on his merry way. The fact is, that games like this, place individuals in a virtual world, and with thousands of thinking agents whom are all acting independently.

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[71] Heideggar, Martin (1966) Being and Time. Albany: State University of New York Press.

One of the main characteristics of virtual reality in cyberspace is the interaction with the computer in an artificial environment. The interaction can be experienced as real and the user can even be immersed in this reality. Immersion can occur when the interaction with the computer is so real that daily structures of time and space seem to disappear.[72]

This is especially the case when the virtual reality is three-dimensional. A virtual reality helmet and gloves that allow the user to use his head and body to navigate in a virtual three-dimensional world can enhance the effect. The user can navigate through a virtual world, without physical limitations like the gravitational force. However, this effect can be applied as a parameter of the simulation in order to create the illusion of a real world.

In *Second Life*, a person can walk through virtual cities like Amsterdam. Though flying is possible in *Second Life*, many moderators prefer to turn off this feature, because it takes away the illusion of a 'real' world.

Bolter and Grusin connect virtuality, with transparent immediacy. The three-dimensional world is presented so smoothly, that the medium itself becomes invisible.[73] The technology for such an experience is not common for most computer users nowadays.

Aupers states that many computer programmers, and other technological specialists, who are enchanted by modern technology, perceives cyberspace and virtual worlds as means to free themselves from the iron cage of the body.

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[72] Zijderveld Theo (2008) Cyberpilgrims: The construction of Spiritual Identity in Cyberspace. University of Colorado, p.31.
[73] Botler, J D and Grusin, R (2000) Remidiation: Understanding New Media. Polity: Cambridge, p. 21.

To them, computer technology was seen as an enlargement of the conscience and the escape from an oppressing system. Returning to nature was outdated- spirituality could be found in virtual worlds!

This is a Gnostic idea, based on the liberation of the physical that enables one to unify with the divine spark. Aupers states that cyberspace can be seen as the final realization of the Gnostic dream. The spirit can be free in a higher, spiritual dimension.[74]

This is in strong contrast to Biblical teachings regarding man's creation and human consciousness. Man is uniquely created with a physical body, a soul and an eternal spirit, that is able to love and experience God directly. It is the spirit of man that allows us to communicate with God's Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ, so that mankind can once again, be in fellowship with a Holy God and experience the ultimate relationship in the universe.

Unfortunately to some, Virtual reality is seen not only as liberation, but also as an escape mechanism. When people are immersed in cyberspace, the reference to the physical world disappears. The French philosopher, Jean Baudrillard, argues that society contains progressively more simulations.[75] A hyper reality, that only refers to itself, becomes a source of alienation. This could be truth in virtual worlds, where new fantasy worlds can be created.

This negative outlook on simulations and virtual worlds is not widely shared. People involved in virtual reality and computer technology state that they are absolutely able to distinguish the virtual reality from the physical reality.

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[74] Aupers, S (2004) In de ban van moderniteit: De sacraliseing van het zelf en computertechnologie, msterdam: Aksant.
[75] Baudrillard, J (1981) Simulacres et Simulation. Paris, Galilee.

## 4.2 The Cult of Self-Worship: Desire, Vanity and Power

*There is a long tradition in Christianity, which warns against self-love. What is meant by that term is something fairly close to secular humanism—if not an outright atheism, then at least so close an attachment to one's will that the will of God can have no place in one's life. Self-love in this sense is not love at all but a kind of narcissistic self-worship*

— *James Hitchcock*[76]

Watchman Nee remarks that DESIRE occupies the dominant part of one's emotional life. It joins forces with the individual's will to rebel against God's will. Man's innumerable desires create such confused feelings internally, to such an extend that he/she is unable to abide by the spirit. Desire arouses feelings, and results in many turbulent experiences. [77]

Influential RPGs that depict creatures of darkness, occults and occult magic are for the self, by the self, or after the self. The gamer delights in what he desires and has the expectancy of having his own ideas realized. It is self-delight; self-glory; self-exaltation; self-love, and self-importance issue from man's desire and elevate the self to the center of everything. When a gamer remains carnal, he is ruled vigorously by his desire. All natural or soulish desires and ambitions are linked with *self* life.

Pride springs from desire. Jesus tells us, ***"It is written, the Lord thy God shalt thou worship, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10)***. Self-idolatry, however, exalts man to the point of worship, and directs man's attention exclusively to himself. This is the sin of pride.

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[76] Hitchcock, James (1982)  What is Secular Humanism? RC Books, p. 139.
[77] Nee, Watchman (1998) The Spiritual Man. Volume 2. Living Stream Ministries.

Fr. Adolphe Tanquerey writes, *"The enemy of the love of God, of charity, is the love of self."*[78] He defines pride as *"an inordinate love of self, which causes us to consider ourselves, explicitly or implicitly, as our first beginning and last end. It is a species of idolatry, for we make gods of ourselves…."*[79] Adam and Eve came to a fall after succumbing to this sin of self-deification. Pope John Paul II explains:

*"The blindness of pride deceived our first parents into thinking themselves sovereign and autonomous, and into thinking they could ignore the knowledge which comes from God."*[80] As a result of the original sin, *"man is constantly tempted to turn his gaze away from the living and true God in order to direct it towards idols."*[81]

Many scholars and authors would agree that if there is one thing that most players desire from their game, it is **power.** In the realm of popular RPGs, whether it is *D&D, WOW, Pokemon* or other selections, the gamer becomes the master. As in contemporary witchcraft, he or she wields the power. Their mind or power-symbol becomes the channel for the spiritual forces. The Church may teaches *"Thy will be done,"* but in the role-playing world, this prayer is twisted in *"My will be done!"* God, the Church, pastors and parents no longer fit into the picture fantasized by the gamer.

As an enthusiastic player works through these games for long enough, he can become quite powerful. It is usually the lust for power and strength that drives most RPGs players to become so addicted. When the player becomes an unstoppable force, able to stop anything in his path, it is testimony to his capabilities and re-enforces powerful he has become.

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[78] Tanquerey, Adolphe FR (1930) The Spiritual Life: A treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology, p. 537.
[79] Tanquerey, Adolphe FR (1930) The Spiritual Life: A treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology, p. 393.
[80] Pope John Paul II (1998) Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, September 15, 1998, #22.
[81] Pope John Paul II. (1988) Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, #1.

That very same strive for power is one of Nietzsche's central concepts. He confirms that all human's desire to obtain power, and more importantly, to exercise that power and dominate others.

The games purport to have the ability of capturing the human condition in their own respective worlds. Tapping into the core of the human condition, they provide the user with all that one can lust after: Desire; Purpose; Freedom; and Power. Of all the characters, the Dungeon Master is clearly the most powerful.

*D&D* enthusiasts have no qualms in claiming that the Dungeon Master is "God", however the other characters are equally motivated by lust for power. Power can be exercised by brute force or through magical spells. For some players, this motivation is transferred into real-life relationships.

Fantasy power is a strong attraction to many people who experiences a sense of powerlessness in the real world. To such people, FRPGs become an escape from a monotonous and onerous life. The degree and level of escape varies. Some care capable of leaving the game behind them once a session is over. For others, RPGs replace real life. Players converse only about but their previous experiences. What began as a game becomes a life-dominating obsession.

Another key factor in most of these games is vanity. Usually, players begin their journey as a character with limited appearance options. As they progress up the ladder, they will gain access to a variety of intriguing items and accessories to enhance their sense of fearlessness. In *Eve Online*, players take control of space ships and meander around the universe, moulding their character to their satisfaction.

But, of course, the players certainly don't start out with the largest, toughest ship in the game. Just like in actual life, where celebrities are idolized for their ostentatious possessions, the same is the case in most MMORPGs.

## 4.3 Game Play And The Role Of Purpose

These games succeed in one vital aspect that even reality can't seem to offer. In a world where people are constantly questioning the meaning of life, it could be argued that MMORPGs give the players direction. It is not disputed that, it's not reality, but these games offer a sense of purpose, especially when an individual is engrossed in the story, or lore, of the game. They contribute a sense of personal power and authority through personal identification with godlike creatures and superhero's.

Most Existentialists are in unison about the following statements: A) There is no purpose to life, or B) The purpose of life, is your own doing. When faced with such ideas, it almost becomes evident why so much time is invested in playing these games. One gets the satisfaction of fulfilling a purpose unlike any you would be able to face in reality.

These factors suggest that people turn to the game world to enrich their real lives and fill the void. They enter the game world in order to entertain a sense of completion, complimenting in real life — a sense of adventure; social interaction; a sense of participation or purpose; the feeling of achievement, and the opportunity to explore.

In fact, this is the obvious conclusion to reach when listening to people's descriptions of how much they prefer MMORPG life, to real life.

People seem to be running away from their real problems, right into the virtual forest, possibly because they reach a stage in their real lives at which they're afraid of living, disappointed by life, or genuinely suffering. In MMORPG, they can seat themselves and be content in a counterfeit world to avoid having to deal with reality.

If this is the case, the MMORPGs fulfil the same kind of escapist role that movies, television and music have always fulfilled. However, unlike movies, television and music MMORPGs don't just engross players. They essentially provide the missing aspects of the player's real lives.

People, who are frustrated with their lack of power and status in the real world, can enter the game universe to exert some influence. People who lack mystery; romance; acceptance; lyricism or money in their real lives can satisfy these needs in the virtual world. Disconnected and disconsolate people, who may be painfully shy in real life, can feel socially connected to a network of other players in a nonthreatening environment.

Everyone can experience a sense of accomplishment in a MMORPG. They can be distracted from the severity of reality. But they can also satisfy avarice, accomplish something, redefine their lives, and alter the foul or despairing moods for a limited period of time. Some would argue that most of the forms of fulfilment or satisfaction, not provided by the real world, can be found in the MMORPG world.

Furthermore, that may explain why people are attracted, and sometimes addicted to MMORPGs. However, the satisfaction is only short lived and does not provide the answer in entirety.

## 4.4 Sartre's "Situation" And How It Applies

The "situation" is an idea, conjured up by philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). This idea stems from the misunderstood concept of freedom.

Sartre explains that freedom is simply the constant struggle between our ability to choose, and the obstacles that stand in our way. One is never really completely free in reality. He is of the opinion that there are always obstacles in your path that must be conquered, to facilitate progression. We are confronted with choices, ranging in proportion on a daily, intermitted basis.

The same can be said for MMORPGs, which some scholars and philosophers would agree, serves as a perfect microcosm of "The Situation". The player is given what appears to be the ability to freely choose his path, except at this point "The Situation" is in constant motion. In games like *WOW* and *Final Fantasy XI*, the player is constrained by his level, his class, his location and his alignment.

There are many obstacles a player must pass in order to move forward. Whether he likes it or not, he is not totally free. In fact, most of the restrictions are outlined by the game's designs. The best quality equipment can be strapped on at level one, and you can start dominating the world.

Time must be spent crossing obstacles, like quests to gain experience, creating an income to obtain certain items, and dealing with trigger-happy players who would love nothing more than to track you down and eliminate you. The Bible cautions us on what we occupy our minds with (Proverbs 4:23). The games a person/child plays, the television programs he watches, and the things that he listens to have a powerful mind-shaping influence over that child.

Mental health professionals are finally coming to understand what the Bible has said all along — the images you allow to into you mind, shape your thinking and your thinking directs your actions.

This truth was acted out at the Columbine High school slaughter. The shooters had saturated their minds with violent video games, Gothic death music, and violent reading material. This culminated in twelve students and one teacher being murdered on April 20, 1999.

The Bible says: Ephesians 5:8-17

> *"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.*
>
> *For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is."*
>
> *Ephesians 5:8-17*

## 5. Conclusion

> **And the great dragon, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world.**
>
> **Revelation 12:9**

> **But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Ede by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.**
>
> **2 Corinthians 11:3**

The Bible warns that many will be deceived. When Satan sought to lead the first man and woman into sin, he commenced by attacking the woman's mind. The question arises: Why would Satan want to attack one's mind? Because one's mind is the part of the image of God where God communicates with His creation (man) and reveals His will.

In the renewal of our minds through His Truth[82], one should cast down all evil imaginations.

*"Imaginations speak of things that haven't happened. The encourage you to do things that you shouldn't do, by releasing fear and feelings of insecurity. Imaginations must be cast down."[83]*

> **For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ**
>
> **2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (KJV)**

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[82] John 17:17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth."
[83] Clark, Jonas (1999) Imaginations. Don't live there. Hallandale, Florida: Spirit of Life , p. 1.

If Satan can persuade a person to believe a lie, he can proceed to work in such a person's life to lead him into sin. This is why he attacks the mind of the gamer, and his weapon is lies.[84] Uninformed children and adults find the games exciting and challenging.

They are ignorant of Satan's contention that: **"you will be like God" (Genesis 3: 4),** that leads them to rebellion against God, and seeks to establish their own magical kingdom in a virtual world.

Through any one kind of RPG's or another, the majority of those ignore a Biblical worldview and the existence of Jesus Christ; sin and salvation, and men are defying God and defying themselves. They are playing right in the hand of Satan.

This chapter concludes with the following facts and statements:

**1. There is a danger in becoming over-involved in FPGs, spending a large amount of time, money and interest in it.**

a. Gary Gygax, inventor of the game *D&D*, said, *"the most extensive requirement of the game is time."*[85]

b. Articles in newspapers and magazines, have told of many people who spend many hours a day or week playing, sometimes investing hundreds to thousands of dollars in materials and conventions.

c. Again Gary Gygax has said: *"You have to pursue D&D with your entire soul if you're going to do well at it."*[86]

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[84] John 8:44 "There is no truth in him... for he is a liar and the father of lies."
[85] D&D Basic Manual, p.3.
[86] Rolling Stone, October 1980.

d. People reveal that they talk about nothing else, have no friends who are not participants, experience peer pressure to participate, and rejection of those who do not.

e. *"Computer Role-playing games are not only the most fun and addictive type of computer game, but possible the best learning tool ever designed. They are truly grand adventures with real rewards for dedicated players."*[87]

f. Ephesians 5:15-17 instructs us to make the most of our time, and to watch carefully how we walk.

g. **Philippians 4:8** says: **"...fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable."** Does RPGs measure up to these values?

**2. There is a danger in players becoming too involved with their imaginary characters.**

a. One Children having fits; yelling for fifteen minutes, (to the point where it is almost surreal), because of their character's death in the game, or the suspension of their subscription to the game, can be witnessed on video's recorded and posted on "*YouTube*"[88].

Gary Gygax said: *"when you start playing out a fantasy, it can really eat up time and capture you totally. Most people can handle it, but there are probably exceptions."* A Dr. Douglas Brown said: *"If a person isn't too well put together to begin with, it's not going to be good for him."*[89]

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[87] Barton, Matt (2008) Dungeons and Desktops: The History of Computer Role-playing Games. Wellesley, Massachusetts: AK Peters LTD, p. 3.

[88] Youtube- A very popular video sharing Web site that lets anyone upload short videos for private or public viewing.

[89] D&D handbook from Educational Research Analysts, The Mel Gablers. PO Box 7518, Longview, Texas 75607.

b.  Several experience RPGs as an escape from the real world, and discover it to be more exciting, although a number of gamers have found it hard to separate the real from the imaginary and carry the game into real life.

c.  Matthew 16:24 and the subsequent verses talk about **Christians "taking up a cross"**, not trying to escape from the world, but laying down their lives to follow Jesus and serving Him completely.

d.  References and comments from Christians indicates that the strategy from Satan to distract, confuse and deceive in order to wreck lives is working.

*"D&D teaches teens to stretch their minds, use their imagination. They learn to work as a team, rely on a friend. They spend time in social circles. It is nothing but a good influence in lives. I am a Christian and I have, do, and will play D&D. I like it and I know that there is nothing wrong with it, or me."*[90]

M. Joseph Young, a born-again Christian notes, *"I know of no real case of a Dungeons & Dragons related suicide or killing. It seems unlikely: the game teaches hope and resourcefulness. It encourages people to believe they can defeat the obstacles they face."*[91]

### 3.  RPGs contain a lot of violence.

a.  The entire reasoning behind the game is to do battle with monsters and demons. Characters are equipped with various types of armor, weaponry, potions and spells. It is necessary to kill -not just the monsters but even humans- in order to succeed in the game.

b.  Tragic deaths reported to be related to *D&D*:This offers a spiritual explanation of why the following tragic litany of evil keeps growing around players of *Dungeons and Dragons*.

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[90]    Dungeons    and    Dragons    and    Other    Fantasy    Role    Playing    Games. (http://www.religioustolerance.org/d_a_d.htm).
[91]  Gabler, Mel.    "*Dungeons    and    Dragons    -    Concerns    for    the    Christian,*"    at: (http://www.webzonecom.com/ccn/cults/satn07.txt).

The psychological explanation buttresses this as well, for we now understand the *D&D* can readily be a form of mind-control, which also uses real occult techniques to foster possession by evil spirits.

- The "Freeway Killer," Vernon Butts, who committed suicide in his cell in 1987 while being held as a suspect in a string of murders, was an avid *D&D* player.
- *D&D* player (14 years old) commits suicide by hanging, 1979, *name withheld by parents' request.*
- *D&D* player (17 years old) Michael Dempsey, Lynnwood, WA. suicide by gunshot wound to the head, 5/19/81. Witnesses saw him trying to summon up *D&D* demons just minutes before his death.
- *D&D* player (age not mentioned) Steve Loyacano, Castle Rock, CO., suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning, 10/14/82. Police report satanic writings and a suicide note liked the death to D&D.
- *D&D* player (21 years old) Timothy Grice, Lafayette, CO., suicide by shotgun blast, 1/17/83. Detective reports noted: *D&D* became a reality. He thought he was not constrained to this life, but could leave [it] and return because of the game.
- *D&D* player (18 years old) Harold T. Collins, Marion, OH., suicide by hanging, 4/29/83. Collins was noted to be "possessed" by *D&D* as if he were living the game.
- *D&D* player (16 years old) Daniel Erwin, Lafayette, CO., murder by brother's shotgun blast to head, 11/2/84 (right after Halloween). Death was apparently the result of a death pact as part of the game.
- *D&D* player (12 years old) Steve Erwin (see above) suicide by gunshot, 11/2/84. Detective report: "*No doubt D&D cost them their lives.*"
- *D&D* player (no age given) Joseph Malin, Salt Lake City, UT., pled guilty to first degree murder 3/2/88 and was sentenced to life in prison. He killed a 13-year-old girl while acting out the fantasy-role game.

The girl had been raped, her throat cut, and she had been stabbed twice in the chest. Police said his *"violent urges were fed by 'extreme involvement in the fantasy role-playing game Dungeons and Dragons.*"

- *D&D* player (14 years old) Tom Sullivan, Jr. got into Satanism and ended up stabbing his mother to death, arranging a ritual circle (from *D&D*) in the middle of the living room floor and lit a fire in its midst. Fortunately, his dad and little brother were awakened by a smoke detector; but by then, Tom, Jr. had slashed his wrists and throat with his Boy Scout knife and died in the snow in a neighbor's yard. (1/19/88, Amarillo, TX).

- *D&D* player Danny Remeta went on an eight-state crime spree, including murder. In an interview in the DETROIT FREE PRESS, he asked, *"Have you ever heard of Dungeons and Dragons? That had a lot to do with it … It is not just a board game. It's a lot deeper than a board game. I've got five friends that are locked up for the same thing [murder] right now because of the game."*

- *D&D* player (14 years old) Sean Sellers was convicted of killing his parents and a convenience store clerk in Greeley, Oklahoma (1/11/87). He was the youngest inmate of death row in the country before being executed for his crimes.

  His involvement in hard-core Satanism began with *D&D*, according to his own testimony. Praise the Lord; he became a Born Again Christian some time before his execution![92]

c. Galatians 5:19-26 describes our human nature and the fruit of the Spirit.

## 4. RPGs engrain within the player an entirely different way of looking at life: teaching one to adopt a "magical worldview".

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[92] Straight Talk on Dungeons & Dragons. (http://www.chick.com/articles/dnd.asp).

a. RPGs make use of several effective teaching/learning techniques, including acknowledges the feelings of the participants; role-playing; fantasy, and memorization. The roles (classes, professions) include religious-type roles (although not Christian by any means) such as Cleric, Druid, and Monk. Other roles are that of a fighter; thief; illusionist; assassin, etc. The fantasies include doing battle with devils and demons, using various types of weaponry, spells and potions. In *D&D*, magic-users, elves, and clerics use spells, which must be memorized before a game commences, after consultation with the proper book of spells. The spell must then be spoken or read aloud in order to have any effect.

b. The cosmology in RPGs is fundamentally anti-biblical. Many of the defenders of these games make the common mistake of assuming that due to the inclusion of certain "roles" in the game for "clerics," that it condone the game in entirety. They arrive at this erroneous belief as they equate Roman Catholicism and its robed clerics for Christians. They cannot comprehend that one can be a cleric (Muslim, Buddhist, etc.) and not be a Christian.

c. One of the book's authors stated that, in *D&D* good is given far more attention than evil, but a fourty-hour-per-week player claims that it is better to be evil because you can do evil things and get away with them. An FRP games representative stated in The Milwaukee Journal, 11/5/81, *"these games are teaching the difference between right and wrong."* In *D&D* even lawful good characters kill many other human characters in the name of duty to eradicate evil.

d. Leviticus 19:26 says not to practice any kind of magic. The games treat magic, witchcraft, and Satan as pure fantasy, while the Bible views these as awful realities.

Scripture expressly forbids tampering with magic and witchcraft, divination, human sacrifice, and many of the other common elements of most FRPs (cf. Exodus 22:18; Deuteronomy 19:9-14; Leviticus 18:2 l; 19:26; 31). Saul was severely rebuked for practicing witchcraft (1 Samuel 15; 28).

e.  1 Thessalonians says to avoid every kind of evil ("even the appearance of evil" in some translations).

f.  As opposed to a Magical worldview, a Biblical Worldview that teaches that the universe is in control of a sovereign Person-God.

The Word of God teaches that magic is a deep abominable sin, (Exodus 22:18, Leviticus 19:13, Leviticus 20:6, Deuteronomy 18:10, 1 Samuel 15:23' 2 Kings 21:6, Galatians 5:20, Revelation 21:8, Revelation 22:15). A magical worldview and a Biblical worldview cannot exist in the same moral universe. They cannot, in unison, be labeled as the truth.

g. Witchcraft and divination are attempts at gaining wisdom, favour, and power separate from God's ordained means, and thus involve a thorough rejection of God's authority. Witchcraft is associated in the Scripture with rebellion, idolatry, and adultery.

**5.  RPGs involve the players in the worship/service of other gods.**

a.  Quoting from *Deities and Demigods*: *"Serving a deity is a significant part of D&D, and all player characters should have a patron god. Alignment assumes its full importance when tied to the worship of a deity."*[93]

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[93] Deities and Demigods Manual, p.5.

According to the *Dungeon Masters Guide*: "*Whether or not the character actively professes some deity, he or she will have an alignment and serve one or more deities of his general alignment indirectly and unbeknownst to the character.*"[94] Another *D&D* book says that the Gods and their Cohorts will occasionally assist their devotees with aid, or harm them.

b. In Deities and Demigods, a total of over 200 foreign gods are mentioned.

c. Exodus 23:13 tells us not to even mentions the names of other gods.

d. Deuteronomy 7:25 and Ezekiel 6 refers to the worship of idols and false gods.

e. RPGs present a universe without God in the Biblical sense. RPGs depict a view in which God and His providential power is eclipsed by the metaphysics of magic.

f. Satan's desires worship and service, and Jesus Christ would give him neither! **"*Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory; and he said to Him, "All these things will I give You, if you fall down and worship me.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Begone Satan! For it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only'"* (Matthew 4:8-10).**

g. An avid player begins to treat these realities as fairy tales. It can be emphasized even. Not only are gods, devils, and demons portrayed as fantasy, Jesus Himself is included as one of the deities.

The cognizance of reasoning behind the logic: "*It's just a game. The monsters aren't real. The magical powers aren't real.*

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[94] The Dungeon Master's Guide, p.25.

*The gods aren't real. Jesus is one of the gods."* Christ is reduced to the level of fantasy monsters: halflings; dwarves, and elves. It can only be labeled blasphemy.

## 6. RPGs contain much information and encourage activity that deals with the occult world.

a. Dr. Gary North, a Christian economist and author of the book *None Dare Call It Witchcraft*, and editor of the Remnant Review, said this: *"Without any doubt in my own mind, after years of study of the history of occultism, after having researched historical research, I can say with confidence: These games are the most effective, most magnificently packaged, most profitably marked, most thoroughly researched introduction to the occult in man's recorded history, period. This is NO game."[95]*

b. RPGs use hundreds of traditional Christian terms, not incorporating their traditional meaning. It also deals with the casting of spells; magic; sorcery; witchcraft; voodoo; demon and devil worship; ESP; levitation, etc.

c. The words "demon", "devil" and "hell" appear a total of 225 times in eight pages of Deities and Demigods,[96] and encourages the worship of them as lesser gods.[97]

d. The words "Devil", "devils", and "Satan" also appear in the Bible (over 150 times), but the Bible teaches something entirely different about them.

e. Deuteronomy 18:9 and further, tells man to have nothing to do with people who participate in these areas.

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[95] North, Gary Dr (1980) Remnant Review. December 5 1980.
[96] Deities and Demigods, p. 16-23.
[97] Deities and Demigods, p. 105.

1 Peter 5:8 talks about the devil as a lion, looking for people to devour. John 8-44 calls him a murderer and the father of lies (a deceiver).

f. Ephesians 6-: 11 instructs us to put on the armor of God, to do real battle with wicked spiritual forces, the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark age.

g. Philippians 4:8, again directs us to focus our attention on something better.

RPGs are a dangerous form of amusement. It serves as an introduction to evil, a catechism of occultism and a primer for the ABC's of the New Age. It is a recruiting tool of Satan. It can alter the daily behavior of regular players. It stimulates the seamier side of one's imagination. It is an enormously attractive and effective escape for people frustrated with life.

For many it becomes pure, obsessive fantasy, in its most destructive form. It is no longer a game, an imaginative diversion, but a substitute universe in which the player pretends to be his own God and to make his own rules.

RPGs are not the only concern amongst young people. The statistics on teenage suicide -however misinterpreted in the major media- are indicative of widespread dissatisfaction and disillusionment among our youth. This represents the larger problem that must be adressed. Also RPGs often exacerbates this problem. Games reflect, as well as reinforce, the faith-consensus of a culture.

As such, computer games such as *D&D, WOW, Diablo,* and *Doom* etc. are the perfect games for the New Age, providing the self-indulgent escapism of drugs, without the harmful physical effects.

This thesis is in agreement with French philosopher and phenomenologist, Michael Henry (1922 – 2002), that modern science and technology alienate people from an authentic life.[98]
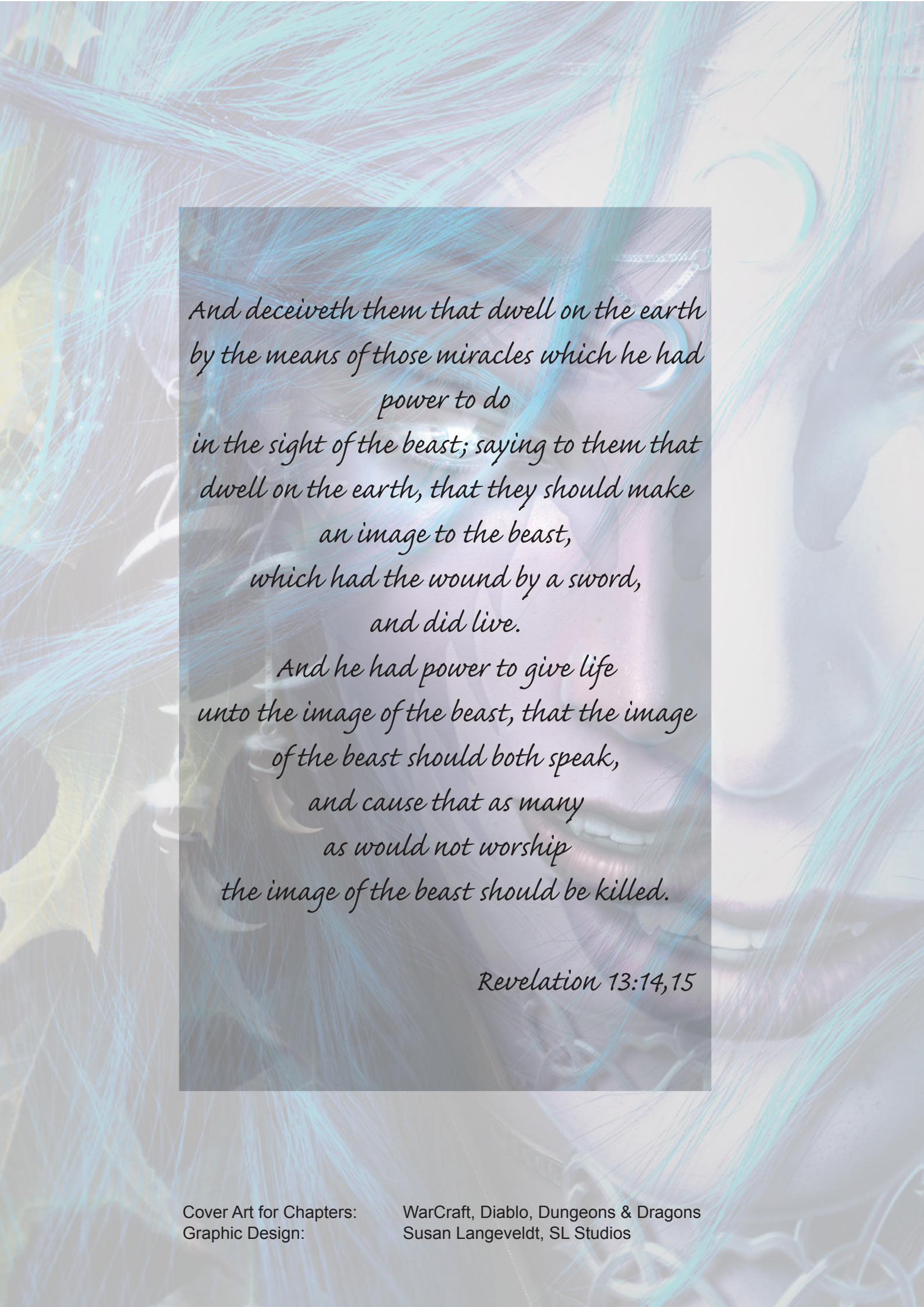
Considering a wider perspective, one might conclude that FRPGs take modernity to its logical conclusion. Since Descartes, modern man has retracted from the bright light of God's creation, into the dark world of his own mind and imagination. Though his world is a dungeon populated by dragons, demons, and monsters, he says in unison with Milton's Satan: *"Better to rule in hell than to serve in heaven"!* We therefore, need to provide our children with wholesome alternatives.

Parents, Educators and Christians, have the responsibility to protect them from the mind-boggling magnetic allure of the dungeon. Through educating them on these truths as revealed in this thesis, the battle for their hearts, minds and souls can be conquered.

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[98] Henry, M (1987) La Barbarie. Editions Grasset & Fasquelle.

# CHAPTER THREE
## PhD
### PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth
by the means of those miracles which he had
power to do
in the sight of the beast; saying to them that
dwell on the earth, that they should make
an image to the beast,
which had the wound by a sword,
and did live.
And he had power to give life
unto the image of the beast, that the image
of the beast should both speak,
and cause that as many
as would not worship
the image of the beast should be killed.

Revelation 13:14,15

# An Eschatological Exposition on Avatars as Fulfilment of Revelation 13:14&15— The Image of the Beast

## 1. Introduction

Modern society is predominantly governed by technology: information technology that emphasizes automation and computerised information services. As such, management of knowledge is crucial in this age of information explosion. While that may be true, a more pressing question arises: What about integrating Avatar technology?

Millions of people worldwide engage in online role-playing with their Avatar, a virtual agent that represents the self. Previous behavioral studies have indicated that many gamers identify more strongly with their Avatar than with their biological self.[1]

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[1] Ganesh, Shanti; van Shie, Hein T; de Lange, Floris P; Thompson, Evan and Wigboldus, Daniel H J (2011) How the Human Brain Goes: Virtual: Distinct Cortical Regions of the Person-Processing Network Are Involved in Self-Identification with Virtual Agents. Oxford University Press.

Through their Avatar, gamers develop social networks and acquire new social-cognitive skills. The cognitive neurosciences have yet to identify the neural processes that underlie self-identification within these virtual agents.[2]

Man has throughout the ages wrestled with his inability to create life, and his powerlessness to prevent its ending. Human beings have been entertaining thoughts about enhancing themselves that would allow them to be better versions of who they are and what they are capable of. Only one man has ever experienced death and overcame it- Jesus Christ the Lord and Saviour.

Even in this century, man strives to extend and push the boundaries beyond limits. With the amazing growth of man's ability to see into the mysteries of time, space and matter, man is still humbled by the task of creating a life form as simple as an ant, or even a bacterium.

This can be seen in a myriad of Hollywood films like *Superman, Spiderman, Avatar* and *X-men* along with Computer Games like, *World of Warcraft, Second Life*, *EverQuest,* and a entire array of other animated "super humans", that can operate beyond their own natural abilities.

Coinciding with the idea of enhancing oneself is man's desire to overcome his physical weakness, inabilities, illness and even death itself. God seems to reserve Himself the exclusive power to create life and to overcome death.

It could be the result of the obvious limitations of human powers that our mythology is replete with the dangers, associated with man's attempts at creating life. In Jewish folklore, the Golem is the creature of man's creation, yielded to the earth to wreak havoc.

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[2] Ganesh, Shanti; van Shie, Hein T; de Lange, Floris P; Thompson, Evan and Wigboldus, Daniel H J (2011) How the Human Brain Goes: Virtual: Distinct Cortical Regions of the Person-Processing Network Are Involved in Self-Identification with Virtual Agents. Oxford University Press.

In the 20th century, Mary Shelly's Frankenstein was the model: *the creature born of technology that turned and destroyed the creator.*

The present debate over the possibility of creating "**virtual man**" is nor devoid of a sense of foreboding and danger. Roger Penrose, professor of mathematics at Oxford University, and author of the best-selling *The Emperor's New Mind*, is one of those raising an alarm.

In reviewing Moravec's book*, Mind Children*, in the *New York Review of Books,* Penrose uses the word, "nightmare" to describe Moravec's proposed "**downloading"** scenario. Moravec responded with: *"As the words 'frightening' and 'nightmare' in your review suggest, intelligent machines are an emotion stirring prospect… Our emotions were forged over eons of evolution, and are triggered by situations, like threats to life or territory, that resemble those that influenced our ancestor's reproductive success. Since there were no intelligent machines in our past, they must resemble something else to incite such panic…"[3]*

God in His Word did warn man about things to come in a time when the seeds of man's rebellion will have come to full height. The book of Revelation states:

> ***Then I saw another beast which rose out of the earth… It works great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in sight of men; and by the signs which it is allowed to work… it deceives those who dwell on earth, bidding them make an image [of] the beast… and it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast should even speak, and to cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.***
>
> ***Revelation 13:11-16***

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[3] "Open letter from Moravec to Penrose," 9 February 1990, posted to sci.nanotech (internet Usenet newsgroup).

Those on earth are deceived into recreating an image of the beast, into an image of a man. The second beast is **"allowed"** human attributes, such as breathing and speaking. A frightening similarity could be drawn between the **"talking image",** as John writes in the book of Revelation and to the **"Cyber-I"** of virtual reality fantasy.

An image of a man, a downloaded imitation of a human mind, given the faculty of speech—that is, given the ability to think and communicate as an independent intelligence. All who will not worship this image are to be eliminated. In a virtual world the idea of improving the human condition to overcome its so-called **"natural constraints"**, is now becoming a reality at a frightening speed.

Ideas such as improved brain capacity; unlimited physical strength, Mind-Body Correspondences, and magical powers are being entertained by a cultural phenomenon called Online Role Playing Games.

This Chapter will aim to give a description of virtual man and its sciences through cyberspace technology, along with the potentials of this technology as a passage to a kind of virtual immortality. In order to create a better understanding of Avatars, their abilities and the forces behind this phenomenon, a closer look must be taken on myths and how mythology reduces the one true God into a pitiful being (or group of beings), with a quasi-human, quasi-Godlike characteristic, motive and abilities.

People's relationships and work will increasingly be Avatar-mediated, in a digital environment. One needs to comprehend how this ubiquitous computing and continuous networking, is going to have the ability of affecting human consciousness. How is man to prepare for it? What are the dangers? What does the Bible teach about this, **"new consciousness"** for a so-called **"better human being"**? How does Avatar-mediated, inter-subjectivity develop into an information community?

An increasing number of people are now discussing, and writing about these new issues that face society, as one can infer when searching for terms such as *cyber-cultures; cyber-communities; cyber-psychology*; Avatar-psychology; e-learning; virtual worlds; immersive worlds; games; *Second Life*, and many more. In view of the latter, it seems evident that a Biblical interpretation is desperately required!

This is illustrated by how the Internet is used, as a spiritual tool, religious identity, a space for personal spiritual pursuits, and a social spiritual support sphere.

## 2. Avatar Technology

*Avatars represent a brand new meeting of human communications. The virtual worlds are worlds where people come to socialize, where people come to build cities, work, and try utopian experiences, to build together and learn together.*

-Bruce Damer[4]

## 2.1 Definition of Avatar

Commensurate with History plus literary sources, the word "Avatar" is from a Sanskrit (Hindu) word meaning, **"incarnation"** of mental spirit, into a physical body. According to Hindu philosophy, every person incarnates many times on earth, in different bodies and different places, in order to acquire knowledge and wisdom through the process of incarnation.[5] This process exists to help humans evolve and become better beings. Further, according to the religion and literature of Hinduism, many spiritual incarnations have occurred and continue to occur.[6]

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[4] Damer, B (1997) Avatars!: Exploring and building virtual worlds on the internet. Berkley, CA: Peachpit Press.

[5] Price, Paula, PhD (2006) The Prophets Dictionary. The Ultimate Guide to Supernatural Wisdom. New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House Publishing, pp.263-294.

[6] Avatars. (http://wapedia.mobi/en/Avatars).

According to the Grand Masters of Indian esoteric thought, Avatar means *"Incarnation of God".* They proclaim that the word "Avatar" can be equated to the Hebrew word "Messiah", or Greek word *"Kristos"* from which the word "Christ", is derived, and which means "The Anointed". Uzorma (PhD) is of the belief that there are many human Avatars on earth at present.[7]

According to Uzorma –in his report- an Avatar is the highest human agent of the "Cosmic Forces", who possesses the biggest concentration of psychic and metaphysical powers. From an esoteric point of view, an Avatar is a Living Perfect Master, a **"Lord"** or **"Godman."**[8] In light hereof, the conclusion can be drawn that ***Ascended Masters*** equals ***Avatar*** equals ***Enlightened One*** equals **"*Savior*"** equals **"*Messiah*"** equals ***Divine Mother*** equals ***Messenger, Guru*** equals ***Living Saint.***

Avatar's have became associated with video games in the 1980s, and eventually became the term associated with a computer user's representation of self.[9] In the mundane world, Damer is the author of the book *Avatars!: Exploring and Building Virtual Worlds on the Internet*, and a founding director of the Contact Consortium, (www.ccon.org), a non-profit, research organization, which supports the development of on-line virtual worlds and the creation of their Avatar populations.

Damer notes that Avatars, or virtual representations of living creatures, and their networked environments, represent the next major wave in on-line communications.[10]

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[7] Uzorma, Ike Nathan PhD (1997) Witches and Wizards and all the powers of Darkness. Lagos, Nigeria: Glorious People Nig. Ltd, p. 89.
[8] Uzorma, Ike Nathan PhD (1997) Witches and Wizards and all the powers of Darkness. Lagos, Nigeria: Glorious People Nig. Ltd, p. 89.
[9] Mason, M (2008) *Avatar technology.*
(http://www.moyak.com/researcher/resume/papers/Avatars.html)
[10] Damer, B (1997) Avatars!: Exploring and building virtual worlds on the internet. Berkley, CA: Peachpit Press.

In view of Damer's explanation of Avatar's, there is little agreement on a simple definition for Avatars. Avatars, in the context of online role-playing games denote an embodiment, or concrete manifestation of an abstract concept. In relation to cyberspace, Chip Morningstar, a software developer who co-developed the early graphical online community *Habitat* for LucasFilm, in 1985, first used the term to describe the visual embodiment of users.[11]

Avatars, Damer states: *Represent the real time embodiment of people in cyberspace and the fundamental avenue to meaningful community and a sense of place and memory, online for the general population and for the business world. Avatars and inhabited cyberspaces are in their early phases in terms of knowledge management, but they are here to stay.*[12]

Simply put, an Avatar is a graphical image of a user, a facsimile image representing someone else on a computer screen. An Avatar could be perceived as as an alter ego, a body double in the virtual world of cyberspace. Importantly, an Avatar can become one's presence in the virtual communities, growing inside two and three-dimensional virtual worlds, online.

In addition, an Avatar can become a representation of an entire company, a liaison of sorts. For example, Genius is an Avatar that greets and guides people in the fourteen *Temps & Co.* employment cafes in the Washington, DC area. Steve Etteridge, the owner of Washington DC-based, *Careers and Company,* wanted to change the way workers and employers found each other, so he ventured into building fourteen, high-tech employment cafes where people could come to work on job skills.

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[11] Ivory, James D (2012) Virtual Lives. Santa Barbara California: ABC-CLIO,LLC, p.140.
[12] Mason, M (2008) *Avatar technology.*
(http://www.moyak.com/researcher/resume/papers/Avatars.html).

After walking into one of the virtual cafes, they are greeted by the Genius, the Avatar that resides on their Intranet. He adds a very personalized touch to an impersonal, often difficult environment.[13]

Another kind of Avatar is sometimes called an agent, a character, or a bot. This is a graphical personification of a computer, or a process that is running on a computer. It can also be a visual representation of other software processes.

Overall, there seems ambiguity with the terminology. Some people are very hesitant about using the term 'Avatar' due to its gaming connections, and prefer, instead, to use *bot* or intelligent agent. Others use these terms interchangeably. No universal agreement on terms exists, although most creators refer to an Avatar as a character driven by a real person, while a *bot* is a character, driven by a program.

For the purpose of this thesis, an Avatar[14] or better known as an *Embodied Persistent Identity,* is a player representation in a virtual world. In these virtual worlds, players have bodies over which they have some creative control, and that are also persistent and evolve over time through play.[15] The terms "Avatar" and "player" can be used interchangeably among gamers.

Although "Avatar" is used to describe happenings to the virtual body of the Avatar itself, it is important to note that there is always a player in command of an Avatar's agency, meaning that Avatars do not make decisions on its own. The digital body of an Avatar is thus used to explore the virtual world.

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[13] Mason, M (2008) *Avatar technology.*
(http://www.moyak.com/researcher/resume/papers/Avatars.html).
[14] See Terms and Definitions for Etymology and Meaning.
[15] Pearce, Celia and Artemesia (2009) Communities of Play: Emergent Cultures in Multiplayer Games and Virtual Worlds. USA: MIT Press, p. 19.

The digital Avatar body is constructed out of information bits. When the owner logs on with the appropriate software interface the Avatar is there waiting on the screen. The conscious material, mental body, moves the Avatar body using appropriate input devices such as a mouse, keyboard, joystick, or other electronic devices, attached to the physical body, and capable of transmitting muscle movements, and of receiving sensations from the muscle movements of another owner with whom they are in "contact", by means of the computer interface and communication networks.

It can be argued that a human being can cloak himself, or **"put on"** the Avatar **"consciousness."** People, at their keyboards and workstations, become absorbed or intensely engrossed in the virtual environment and events. This is accomplished by restricting one's perceptual focus to the visual and motor activity of the digital Avatar. In effect, one becomes the Avatars.[16]

Dr Leon James[17], Professor of Psychology at the University of Hawaii, and author of various books, notes in *Avatar Psychology and Mental Anatomy: "Exploring the mental world of Eternity,* states that Avatar *"refers to a sensorimotor surrogate or 'body' that can function in a new medium, and with which the person or 'owner' identifies, that is, treats 'as-if' it is one's self. As a result, the person's consciousness is enhanced through the Avatar. The person is aware of the things that are accessible to the medium or environment in which the Avatar exists."*[18]

In unison with James's belief, the idea of mind incarnating in body, or **"incarnation,"** is anatomically explained in Avatar psychology, where it is called body-mind correspondence.

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[16] The Imago Effect: Identity in Games by Harvey Smith (http://www.witchboy.net/articles/the-imago-effect/).

[17] The Author of this thesis strongly disagrees with the context, background and beliefs of this book.

[18] James, Leon (2009) Avatar Psychology and Mental Anatomy: Exploring the Mental World of Eternity. (http://www.soc.hawaii.edu/leonj/leonj/leonpsy29/Avatar-psychology-g29.htm).

The purpose or motive, according to James, acquired when our mind are incarnated into an Avatar, is to assume upon ourselves, or to cloak ourselves with, the consciousness of the Avatar's *sensorimotor* system. In a sense we are incarnating or ***"rezzing"*** a body, that is suitable for activity in a specific world or medium of interaction, with others and with objects in that world. A person's mind can now identify, or assume the new identity with a new consciousness, that is produced only in that medium or world, and only through that Avatar body. **That persons mind is anatomically coupled to that body**.

James is of the opinion that the coupling consists of re-attaching the *sensorimotor* system to the Avatar body. The affected circulatory system and cognitive respiratory systems are attached to the Avatar's *sensorimotor* system.

In the virtual world, the same person who is still invisible behind the Avatar at the keyboard in the privacy of his room is one and the same person, as it is the person's emotions and thoughts that direct the activity of his Avatar. The person's emotions and thoughts are now activated in conjunction with a new *sensorimotor* input, and new living environment, in a different medium special and objectified.

He further contents that a human being has access to several Avatar bodies, each suitable for a different modality of consciousness. Hence Avatar bodies serve to enhance human consciousness, or awareness of an environment or world. People *"rez"* an Avatar body by actually utilizing it on demand. They are not required to actually have knowledge of or focus on the source of their consciousness. **The Avatar rezzing is automatic.** An Avatar may not ever be *rezzed* by its owner, but it always exists, regardless of it being used or not.

All human beings can explore and navigate through the so-called seven worlds or modalities of consciousness.[19]

In a study done on multiplayer gamers and virtual worlds, most participants of the study felt that their Avatars were expressions of their **"true"** selves, as much as or even more than their **"real-life-Avatars."** Players, who had met each other in real life, were able to hold multiple conceptions of each other's identities in their minds, encapsulating the personas as expressed in both the "real-life avie" as well as the Avatar in virtual space. This multiplicity of identities, is quite commonplace amongst people living online lifestyles who, in addition to perceiving their own multiple bodies/personas, learn to recognize other members of their play community as also having multiple bodies/personas.[20]

The hypothesis can be formed that the distinction between Avatars and reality is becoming blurred.

As a gamer enters their worlds, these Avatars are entering ours. The virtual worlds of video games and online environments, have opened up opportunities for people to **"try on"** different personalities; clothing; genders; races; ages; and more. As Internet users create new personas in virtual environments, interest in Avatars has expanded beyond the realm of gamers.

Designers; anthropologists; sociologists; psychologists; artists; educators; journalists; corporations and others, have turned their attention to the design and use of Avatars in recent years. Is this interest in incarnation into a different being, a sudden, new interest, or is there an underlying age-old deceptive lie?

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[19] James, Leon (2009) Avatar Psychology and Mental Anatomy: Exploring the Mental World of Eternity. (http://www.soc.hawaii.edu/leonj/leonj/leonpsy29/Avatar-psychology-g29.htm).
[20] Pearce, Celia and Artemesia (2009) Communities of Play: Emergent Cultures in Multiplayer Games and Virtual Worlds. USA: MIT Press.

A growing number of people are using Avatars as portraits of themselves, to take part in social and commercial transactions, and to explore or try on new identities. Avatars are a reflection of ourselves, and have an impact on what, and how, a person relates to the world around him. Although Avatars "live" in virtual worlds, there is nothing virtual about the reality of user's interactions while using their Avatars. The communication and interaction that occurs via Avatars can directly have an influence on people in the real world.

The following section on Ascended Masters, will indicate that, becoming a god, or to incarnate into a higher, better being, is a deception and manipulation that is preached by ***"The father of all lies",*** namely Lucifer, and that has been believed by millions of people throughout the ages.

## 2.2 Ascended Masters

Author Bob Larson, explains that during the early twentieth century, occultist and Theosophists such as Guy and Edna Ballard, developed a system of religious philosophy around the concept of Ascended Masters.

They theorized that similar to a Gnostic believe in "God", (who is impersonal and unknowable), he can only be approached by deified, human intermediaries, called Ascended Masters. These Masters are the messengers whom "God" uses to reveal his truth. They have passed beyond the circles of reincarnation to merge their consciousness with "God".[21]

Larson continues that believers in Ascended Masters claim that, as members of the earth's governing body, these discarnate entities provide necessary instructions on purifying, energizing and harmonizing human thought. Through correct ideas, Ascended Masters' teachings, profess that anyone can obtain perfection, stop all suffering and become divine.

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[21] Larson, Bob (1982) Larson's New Book of Cults. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, p.180.

Encoded with Eastern Mysticism and metaphysics, followers of the Ascended Masters embrace other concepts, such as astral projection, trance channeling and reincarnation.

In Ascended Masters Theology, God is defined as a **"creative force that has a negative and positive polarity, as each atom in creation has its negative and positive poles."** He consists of seven major groupings: will and power; intelligence and wisdom; personal love and feeling; crystallization; unity; integration; healing and balance; trans-union; cleansing and purification; divine love, peace and the rest. The Son is the product of God's duality as Father-Mother.

Followers of the Ascended Masters claim control over their spiritual and worldly destinies. They underestimate the importance of Jesus Christ, and contend that increased consciousness leads the way to a new interplanetary dimension. Their believe that man's fall from grace occurred post the Second Golden Age 2.5 million years ago which is contradictory to Scripture.[22]

As a result thereof, the following question necessitate further investigation: can a correlation be drawn between ascending spiritually in a reincarnated **"Ascended Master,"** (or virtual Avatar), thus a gamer becomes Christ-self, or the Christ-Consciousness in the virtual world, and the reality of the occult/mystical practice of Ascended Masters?

In conjunction with the above-mentioned question, a further examination can be conducted to determine whether playing a RPG, such as *World Of Warcraft* constitutes a religion?

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[22] Larson, Bob (1982) Larson's New Book of Cults. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, pp. 120-122.

Zijderveld, student at the University of Colorado alleges this in his master's Thesis, titled *Cyberpilgrims.*[23] Zijderveld contends that a correlation can be drawn between gaming in a virtual world and seeking enlightenment by using the virtual worlds, (like *Azeroth* in *WOW*), in a spiritual way to ascend in a sense from the physical body.

This Thesis holds that computer technology can become a means for immersion, or flow, in such a way that the user is able to liberate himself from his or her physical limitations, and realize a new identity in cyberspace. From an exegetical perspective, devotees become entwined in a web of occult practices and psychic experiences that create a grave risk of spiritual bondage.

Another example, presented by Tom and Nita Horn, of how near-horizon neurosciences, and human-machine integration may, reconfigure human brains to allow borderline, (or more than borderline), supernatural activity, involves certain video games, prior to retiring, and which are shown to enable people to take control of their dreams, to shape the alternate reality of dream worlds, in a way that reflects spiritual warfare.[24]

According to *LiveScience* senior writer, Jereny Hsu, Jayne Gackenback, a psychologist at Grant MacEwan University in Canada, published studies on the dreams of hard-core gamers. This study unveiled that gamers experience reversed-threat simulation in nightmares, which allowed the dreamer *to become the threatener instead of the threatened.*

In other words, a scary nightmare scenario, transformed into something "fun" for a gamer, enabling the player to assume the role of the aggressor or demon character.

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[23] Zijderveld Theo (2008) Cyberpilgrims: The construction of Spiritual Identity in Cyberspace. University of Colorado, p.30. (http://www.theozijderveld.com/cyberpilgrims).

[24] Horn, Tom and Nita (2011) Forbidden Gates. The Dawn of Techno-Dimensional Spiritual Warfare. Crane, Missouri: Defender Publishing group, p.228.

*"They don't run away; they turn and fight back, they're more aggressive than the norms,"* Gackenbach explained. *"Levels of aggression in gamer dreams also included hyper-violence not unlike that of R-rated movie,"* and when these dreaming gamers become aggressive, *"oh boy, they go off the top."*[25]

From learning to influence one's private dreams via game technology to having one's dreams infiltrated and manipulated by outside forces, disquieting ideas deepen argues Horn.[26]

In the movie *Inception*[27] released in 2010, industrial spies use a dream machine, called *PASIV,* to steal corporate secrets by means of invasion and "extraction" of private information through a victim's dreams. In a second scenario, the film depicts ideas, planted in the person's mind (inception) in such a manner that the individual perceives them as his or her own, thus allowing the victim to be steered toward particular decisions and actions-according to Horn, a modern upgrade of brainwashing.[28]

While the film *Inception* is categorized as fantasy, it is based, in part, on near-future technology. Horn proclaims that Electroencephalogram; functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRIS); and Computed Tomography (CT) scans, are present being used to read, and even influence the brain. Aaron Saenz, at the Singularity Hub, asks the very important question, whether the fundamental science of the film *Inception* could actually be setting the stage for making it a reality? "We're certainly working towards it," Saenz adds, continuing:

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[25] Hsu, Jeremy. "Video Games Can Control Dreams, Study Suggest," *LiveScience.* (http://www.livescience.com/culture/video-games-control-dreams-100525.html).

[26] Horn, Tom and Nita (2011) Forbidden Gates. The Dawn of Techno-Dimensional Spiritual Warfare. Crane, Missouri: Defender Publishing group, p. 229.

[27] **Inception** story line: In a world where technology exists to enter the human mind through dream invasion, a highly skilled thief (played by Leonardo DiCaprio) is given a final chance at redemption which involves executing his toughest job to date: Inception. Writer and Director: Christopher Nolan. *Warner Brothers Pictures.*

[28] Horn, Tom and Nita (2011) Forbidden Gates. The Dawn of Techno-Dimensional Spiritual Warfare. Crane, Missouri: Defender Publishing group, p. 229.

*"In the next few decades we could have the means to understand, perhaps in rather detailed terms, what a person is thinking. Once the barrier is passed, we may develop the means to influence what someone thinks by directly stimulating their brain. [So] while the mind is still a very mysterious place, it may not remain that way forever."[29]*

This inclination toward technological mind invasion and mind control, is, or should evoke a frightening response from most people, especially those who value the concept of free will. The reason for this, is that most secular neuroscientists, view free will as an outdated religious notation, related to **"a fictional omnipotent divinity"** (God), that chooses not to interfere with the choices of individuals, thus leaving them morally accountable for their actions and judgment.

Horn further notes that there is even a concerted effort on the part of some neuroscientists to locate evidence against free will, to illustrate that man is little more than an automaton, whose decisions are predetermined by a complex mixture of chemical reactions; past events; and even nature- which, in unison determine the cause of action.[30]

Christians, including Church Theologians and Philosophers, should find the concept of applying technology; to read minds, and manipulate the thoughts of individuals indefensible, as the vanguard of free will is fundamental to our religious and philosophical ethics. To humans, autonomy of thought, is the most basic doctrine, in which man is unrestrained by causality or preordained by mystical powers. These issues (neurosciences, brain-machine interfacing, cybernetics, mind control, or even free will), could actually be perceived as a prophetic influence on events, that have the propensity to evolve in the near future, to an ultimate showdown over the liberty of man be an unavoidable and beasty aspect of end-times prophecy.

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[29] Saenz, Aaron. "Is the movie 'Inception' getting closer to reality? (http://singularityhub.com/2010/07/15/is-the-movie-inception-getting-closer-to-reality-video/.)

[30] Horn, Tom and Nita (2011) Forbidden Gates. The Dawn of Techno-Dimensional Spiritual Warfare. Crane, Missouri: Defender Publishing group, p.229.

Transhumanist Ray Kurzweil states *"Immortality is in our grasp."*[31] It is his projection that, by 2045, supercomputers will be advanced to the extend that the majority of the human race, will be able to upload themselves into a planet-wide supercomputer and attain immortality in virtual reality. Kurzweil calls this "*singularity".*[32]

One could argue that virtual game-worlds are facilitating the process of seeking divinity and experimentation with different beliefs. The process of seeking knowledge, (Gnosticism), is not new, but cyberspace however, now offers new unlimited possibilities for occult practices; supernatural abilities; spirituality and construction of identity.

## 3. Identity in Games: A Second Self

## 3.1 Avatars as a Self Portrait

Mark Meadows, author of *"I, Avatar,"* states that every time someone creating an Avatar they are creating a portrait, though it may have bearance to your actual identity in the real world.[33] The use of humanoid/anthropomorphic Avatars, provide new means of interaction among people. As described in the former section, an Avatar is a virtual representation of oneself that other users can see or interact with, in a virtual environment. Similar to the self-portraits painted on canvas by artist's centuries ago, Avatars provide the individuals they represent with social rank, immortality, and the potential to have an influence that extends beyond your actual location- albeit to the computer screen.

In 2007, Robbie Cooper and Julian Dibbell, explored Avatars as portraits of their users through their work, "*Alter Ego."*

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[31] Kurzwell, Ray; Grossman, Terry MD (2005) Fantastic Voyage: Live Long Enough to Live Forever. Plume, p. 1.

[32] Ascension. Scientific ascension in the future. (http://kylepounds.org/aliens/ascention.html).

[33] Meadows, M S (2008) I, Avatar. Berkley, CA: New Riders Press.

They observed that the majority of Avatars seemed to resemble their users in some way. The more users could control and customize their Avatars within an environment, the more these self-images seemed to reflect that of their creators. In certain instances, with some Avatars, the resemblance related more to personality than appearance in comparison to their real-world counterparts.[34]

The creators of some of the first video games were also the designers of early Avatars, for example, the Avatar known as "*Link*," is the main protagonist in "*The Legend of Zelda*" game series, created by Nintendo[35]. *Link* was a two dimensional, elf-looking creature with a storyline provided by game developers. Players in this game, were able to direct *Link* across the screen, control his interaction with other characters (talk to them or kill them), and have *Link* pick up various tools during his journey to rescue Princess Zelda. The player could change Link's appearance; his story; his movement; or his emotional reaction to events within the game.

Twenty years after the creation of *The Legend of Zelda*, the Avatar-rich virtual world known as *Second Life* can be visited. Within this environment, users can customize the overall appearance of their Avatars. They can select from an endless array of facial dimensions; hairstyles; fashions; and body types. Users can create places and objects for their Avatars. There are no narrative or objective established by Second Life's creators. It is the users prerogative, to create their appearance and narratives based on their interactions with other users.

According to Meadows *"the control we have over what the Avatar does, the degree of customization available in creating and modifying the Avatar, and what we do with the Avatar all affect the story and how we play with it.*

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[34] Cooper, R & Dibbell, J (2007) Alter ego: Avatars and their creators. London: Chris Boot Books.
[35] **Nintendo:** A Japanese video game hardware manufacturer and software publisher. Nintendo started by making playing cards, but was later dominant in video games throughout the 1980s and early 1990s worldwide. They make lots of games consoles including the Gameboy, Gameboy Advance SP, DS, DS Lite and the Wii. (Nintendo home (http://nintendo.com/).

*Your Avatar allows you to become an interactive character in which you can affect, choose, or change the plot of the story."[36]*   It is the personal narrative that is created, and the development of the character, (the users themselves), that lures people to return to these systems.

## 3.2 Exploring New Identities through Avatars

This thesis has already revealed in Chapter One, that God created Adam -and humanity- to perfection in accordance with His image and likeness (what man looks like and how man acts), but the fall of sin has corrupted that image.

> **Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth"**
>
> **Genesis 1:26**

According to Scripture, God is the eternal One and there are none like Him: **"that the Lord Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other"** (Deuteronomy 4:39).

He is the One, **"Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done"** (Isaiah 46:10). God stated **"I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God"** (Isaiah 44:6). God also declares: **"I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host"** (Isaiah 45:12). God exists in and of Himself, was never created, and is immortal. There are none like Him in the heavens above, on the earth, or below the earth.

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[36] Meadows, M S (2008) I, Avatar.  Berkley, CA:  New Riders Press.

The first man, (Adam), was created approximately six thousand years ago,[37] and every human being on the planet, is a descendant of Adam- hence all of mankind are created beings. Man will never have the capability of becoming a god, as it is impossible, despite all efforts to attain godhood. Man cannot evolve to a higher order or existence. Man will never be a god, nor equal the Almighty! The Bible is clear that man has lost his initial status of creation at the fall. Man is created in the image and likeness of God, but when sin and death entered into the world, the image of God in man was corrupted.

It is of Interest that the proscription against having **"other gods",** is directly tied to the prohibition against the creation of images. In Exodus 20:4, the commandment elaborates: ***"You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth."***

Despite the latter an argument can be made that the subject of idolatry seems foreign to the modern mind. One does not, after all sacrifice to bronze statues, or consult the kitchen god on this day and age. It is astounding that actually calculate the number of times believers are admonished, in the pages of the old and New Testament to guard themselves against idolatry. The first of the Ten Commandments is: ***You shall have no other gods before me"*** *(Exodus 20:3).*

*Webster's Dictionary,* defines worship as *"reverence offered a divine being or supernatural power; extravagant respect or admiration for or adoration to an object of esteem."*[38] Author John Moore, noted that worship involves priorities- that to which man ascribes the highest importance or worth.[39] That explains why greed is a form of idolatry; it involves replacing God with something else, money.

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[37] See (http://www.douglashamp.bom/books/the-first-six-days).
[38] Worship. (http://www.webster-dictionary.net/definition/Worship).
[39] Brooke, Tal (1997) Virtual Gods. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, p. 153.

To Jaron Lanier, (who first coined the term "virtual reality"), and other cyberspace seers, the final destination of cyberspace, is a world without limits, a place of infinite creative possibilities. Gone are the restraints of material bodies, of the material world, even of language. The idealized virtual reality of the future is a seamless interface between one's deepest, most inexpressible wishes and desires, and the effectors in the virtual world. *"Your wish is my command",* becomes the operative experience to all mankind, as the genie of magic technology does all over bidding.

The fulfillment of every technological dream begins with a single step. The Avatar can be whatever it purports to be, albeit man; women; child; dragon; demon and god, whatever. This is a plane where superhuman abilities of the computer, is combined with the creative power of the human mind.

It is a place where man can be **what** he wants to be, **where** he wants to be, **when** he wants to be. Arising from this possibilities-milieu, is, **THE AVATAR, THE PERSON ONE ALWAYS IMAGINED ONE COULD BE.**

Worshipping of the Avatar, allows man to idolized of both himself and his creation, in one fell swoop. A glimpse is offered of the new god, the god that will finally displace that so called angry, patriarchal god from the ancestor's imagination. The god that will, eventually lead mankind into the promised land of techno-security and multicultural homogeny.

Cyberspace is a world of images. There is nothing in cyberspace that has not been borrowed or captured from the real world of living, God-created things. A place where the roaring of the seas can be heard, the rivers clap their hands, the mountains sing in unison, out of joy before the Lord (Psalm 98). Cyberspace, on the other hand, is a world of lifeless images, created by an apprentice who has not been afforded the secret of life. There is nothing applauding the Creator's praise, only a dim, sad echo, a paean to the dabblers, a created creation.

## 3.3 Self Expression and Extension

A vital part of growing up, is development of the identity. Everybody have some vague sense of self. Identity might relate to a job title, a relationship (such as wife or a daughter), or Elvis fan? Maybe it is a description of your body, personality or favorite hobby. This self- perception determines actions and feelings, (and the way people act and feel towards a person), in every situation. However, many labels and roles people play is misleading and none can fully describe the multifaceted reality of what constitutes a human being, cannot be comprehended.

Offline, a person is tied to bodies, and other inherited circumstances that set strong parameters on what and who one can be. Online, a person has far more (though not limitless), freedom from these circumstances.

While some use Avatars to explore new identities, others use them as an expression and extension of their own personality. From web pages, to *blogs* to Avatars, people are finding ways to represent themselves in virtual environments and to others in the world. Avatar-use continues to increase, as the technology to create them, become more real and more customizable.[40]

More research is needed by those in the fields of psychology, sociology, and education to further explore the potential of Avatars. It is important to examine the implications of Avatars on psychology; society; and culture, especially as their impact extends into the real world. Questions such as the following evoke careful consideration: How do the identities adopted online, relate to one's offline identities and to an **"authentic"** sense of self? How can online identities be harmful or beneficial to ourselves, to acquaintances, or to the larger communities we are part of?

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[40] Meadows, M S (2008) I, Avatar. Berkley, CA: New Riders Press.

Users may experience a sense of power in designing their Avatar, or through guiding it within virtual environments, but as the research of Bailenson[41] and others reveal, Avatars have an effect beyond the virtual.[42] Ultimately, the relationship between Avatars and users are reciprocal:  As people influence Avatars, they influence them.

Games enable a person to express him/herself either intentionally or through customization. Players love self-expression, and game Avatars facilitate this self-expression. Whether a person represent him, or herself, in virtual worlds with a "*goth* girl," furry (animal character), or preppy Avatar, he is expressing something about himself, his lifestyle and values, evident through his selection.

## 3.4 Avatars Impacting Real Financial Markets

The most common use for computers today, is for interpersonal interactions, with email being the most common computer activity (though online chat rooms and instant messaging are increasing in popularity).

The Pew Internet and American Life Project, reported that, in 2004, 91 percent of computer users with Internet access, had sent emails and 39 percent had used an instant messaging program.[43] Although many of these interactions are text only, it is becoming increasingly popular for users to select an Avatar to represent them. E-commerce is also leading to increased usage of Avatars to convey messages and to interact with potential consumers.

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[41] **Jeremy Bailenson,** a professor who studies Avatars at Stanford University's Virtual Human Interaction Lab. The Virtual Human Interaction Lab has a program that creates very real looking Avatars.  Bailenson's studies demonstrate some of the psychological impact of Avatars, how digital representations of self can be used to convince, persuade, and keep the attention of people.

[42] Bailenson, J N (2008) *Why digital Avatars make the best teachers.* The Chronicle of Higher Education. (http://vhil.stanford.edu/news/2008/che-Avatar-teachers.pdf).

[43] Madden, M (2004) *America's Online Pursuits: The Changing Picture of Who's Online and What They Do*. Pew Internet and American Life Project Report.

There are a variety of estimations about how many Avatars are in existence. Conservatively, it is safe to deduce that there are approximately two hundred million people using Avatars around the world, with approximately ten percent, spending more than ten hours a day as their Avatar.[44] These Avatars are representative of a new pool of consumers.

Entrepreneurs, and the corporate world in general are beginning to acknowledge the opportunities that exist and means to profit from people's online personas. Australian programmer Nathan Keir for example, created a game for Avatars within *Second Life* called *Tringo*. It became so popular that he's sold the rights to the game to a publisher, who will be releasing it as a stand-alone video game for computers and cell phones.[45]

Real estate agents have realized the potential for profiting from the creation of Avatars in virtual worlds. The realization that more than eighty percent of new home buyers used the internet to assist them in their search and purchase, Coldwell Banker created a three-dimensional version of a real brick-and-mortar home within *Second Life* in 2007. The virtual home allows potential buyers to tour the prospective home that are up for sale, even if they are thousands of miles away.

*Second Life* Avatars can meet with Caldwell Banker's Avatar to tour the house, make a bid, and negotiate a deal on the real world home that exists in Seattle.[46] As large companies are seeking new avenues to reach the masses, many are entering the virtual worlds of Avatars. IBM, Sony, and Nike all have virtual shops with Avatar hosts within *Second Life*. IBM's chief executive, Sam Palmisano, even held a virtual company meeting within *Second Life* for employees who have their own Avatars.

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[44] Meadows, M S (2008) I, Avatar. Berkley, CA: New Riders Press.
[45] Hof, R (2006) *My virtual life.* Business Week website:
(http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/06_18/b3982001.htm).
[46] Phillips, A (2007) *Coldwell banker puts real house on second life block.* ABC News website:
(http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/story?id=3437446).

Company executives reported that interaction with employees during discussions, held in *Second Life* were far more productive than in standard telephonic conferences.[47]

The question is asked how it is possible that Avatars in virtual worlds have the potential to make it easier for employees to hold discussions, as opposed to more traditional means of technology, such as phones or videoconferences? Boeing, another company that makes use of Avatars for business meetings, noted that it was difficult to share files when holding videoconferences or net meetings. Employee's complaints included that meetings held over the phone or via video conference calls, were inadequate for business communication.

Avatars within virtual environments, on the other hand, are able to express emotions through body language and facial expressions. Avatars can point at artifacts and files being discussed. As described by Mason, employees could *"bring their stuff, like files, to an Avatar meeting"* in a way that was not feasible via phone or videoconference.[48]

## 3.5 Avatars Impacting Real Perceptions and Attitudes

Avatars, or computer generated visual representations of people, are increasingly being used in e-commerce, social virtual environments, and even for geographically separated workplace meetings,[49] and are incorporated into a variety of popular consumer interfaces.

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[47] Mesure in Davos, S (2007) *Get a second life: The age of the Avatar has arrived.* The Independent website: (http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/get-a-second-life-the-age-of-the-Avatar-has-arrived-433751.html).
[48] Mason, M (2008) *Avatar technology.*
(http://www.moyak.com/researcher/resume/papers/Avatars.html).
[49] Schroeder, R (2002) Social interaction in virtual environments: Key issues, common themes, and a framework for research. In R. Schroeder (Ed.), *The Social Life of Avatars; Presence and Interaction in Shared Virtual Environments.* London: Springer-Verlag.

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All major instant messaging systems, online forum systems, and massive multi-user role-playing games,[50] are examples of where Avatars are a included feature.

The inclusion of Avatars in interfaces designed to facilitate interactions, have increased without much information about the influence of such images on person's perceptions. Representing people or bots, computer processes that interact in a virtual environment with Avatars, alter the range and nature of possible experiences, and this is likely to have implications for interpersonal relationships.[51] [52]

An example is the possibilities that the presence of an Avatar acts as a strong social cue that is capable of influencing people's perceptions, resulting in the caption that interfaces are more "social."[53] Similarly, people's caption of Avatars may influence both the self-perception and perception of others, using a particular Avatar as well as message perception and retention.

Thus, understanding the influence of Avatars is of theoretical relevance to researchers. It is also of practical importance to users and designers of systems using Avatars. Acknowledging that the Avatar may be seen as the source of the message, understanding of how people perceive them has important implications for the design of interfaces utilizing them, as well as for the selection of the applicable Avatars to use for different applications. This field of research is recommended for future studies.

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[50] Persson, P (2003) Exms: An animated and Avatar-based messaging system for expressive peer communication. *Proceedings of GROUP '03*. ACM Press.

[51] Biocca, F (1997) The cyborg's dilemma: Progressive embodiment in virtual environments. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 3*(2).
(http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol3/issue2/biocca2.html).

[52] Biocca, F & Nowak, K (2002) Plugging your body into the telecommunication system: Mediated embodiment, media interfaces, and social virtual environments. In D. Atkin & C. Lin (Eds.), *Communication Technology and Society: Audience Adoption and Uses* Cresskill. NJ: Hampton Press, pp. 407-447.

[53] Nass, C; Steuer, J; Tauber, E. & Reeder, H (1993, April 24-29). *Anthropomorphism, Agency, & Ethopoea: Computers as Social Actors*. Paper presented at the InterChi '93. Amsterdam, Netherlands.

In an exposé, written by Nowak and Ruth, their study focused on perceptions of static Avatars, or Avatars that are neither moving nor representing a person in real time, they examined how three characteristics of the user (biological sex, computer use, and computer efficacy), the gender and social cognition category of the Avatar (human male, human female, animal, or object), and three visual characteristics (head or head and torso, children, and rendering quality) affect perceptions of basic classifications of Avatars: *Anthropomorphism*, or the extent to which an image resembles humans, and *androgyny*, a rating of the Avatar's (lack of) masculinity or *feminity*. They further examined how these classifications influence perceptions of the static Avatar's interactional characteristics in terms of credibility, *homophily*, and attraction.[54]

They argue that, when people interact through computer-mediated channels, physical information about the other person may be unavailable. Evidence suggests that people in mediated interactions use Avatars, or whatever information the interface provides, in the persons perceptive process, and that different types of Avatars have different effects on persons perceptions.[55]

In essence, the Avatar may be used to provide means of identifying, recognizing, and evaluating others in the mediated world of geographically distant communication.[56] Due to the fact that Avatars are a visible representation of a person in an interface, evaluations based on the physical appearance of the Avatar may be transferred to them.[57]

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[54] Nowak, K L., and Rauh, C (2005) "The influence of the Avatar on online perceptions of anthropomorphism, androgyny, credibility, homophily, and attraction." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 11*(1), article 8. (http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol11/issue1/nowak.html)

[55] Nowak, K L & Biocca, F (2003) The effect of the agency and anthropomorphism on users' sense of telepresence, copresence, and social presence in virtual environments. *Presence: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments, 12*(5), pp. 481-494.

[56] Benford, S; Greenhalgh, C., Rodden, T., & Pycock, J (2001) To what extent is cyberspace really a space? Collaborative virtual environments. *Communications of the ACM, 4*(7), pp. 79-85. (http://portal.acm.org/citation.cfm?doid=379300.379322).

[57] Novak & Ruth cited the work of Rauh, C.; Polonsky, M & Buck, R (2004) Cooperation at first move: Trust, emotional expressiveness and Avatars in the prisoner's dilemma game. Poster presented at *ISRE 2004—Conference of the International Society for the Research on Emotions.* New York, NY.

In other words, people use information related to the virtual image, in a process analogous to the one they are familiar with to reduce uncertainty during their experience in natural, unmediated environments. Contrary to a face-to-face encounter, however, where the first physical impression is more permanently tied to its owner, in a mediated environment the characteristics of the Avatar can be tailored to elicit any number of impressions and reactions. An Avatar may represent a message on a website, or even a **"bot"** or computer program, and not necessarily a person at all.[58]

Research has consistently found that Avatars influence the perception process. The results have not been consistent about the precise types of images and their representative effects, however some authors have argued that anthropomorphism, is a key component in this process. This approach is consistent with social cognition theory, which argues that one of the basic functions of social cognition is to categorize the environment based on an entity's level of anthropomorphism in order to differentiate among inanimate objects, animals, and humans that could pose a threat or an opportunity for cooperation.[59] The concept of anthropomorphism and its application to Avatars, will not be discussed but is recommended for a further field of study.

## 3.6 Avatars Impacting Body, Soul and Spirit

It is evident that mankind is living in a very spiritual age. Browsing through a local secular bookstore, especially in the section labeled **"New Age,"** a wide variety of books can be found promoting **"spiritual exercises."** Many authors offer their supposed **"secrets"** of spirituality. They promote a variety of practices such as yoga; astrology; Transcendental Meditation; creative visualization; supernatural healing; psychic phenomena and magical arts. Further concepts are explained, such as mantras, chakras and karma.

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[58] Oravec, J (1996) Virtual Individuals, Virtual Groups; Human Dimensions of Groupware and Computer Networking. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[59] Kunda, Z (1999) *Social Cognition: Making Sense of People*. MIT Press: Cambridge, MA.

New sources of spiritual power are identified, such as inner spirit guides, pyramids and crystals. In light of all this, man is not just **"physical"** beings, but man has a spiritual dimension to his life.

The immenent question is: Can a person's actions in the spiritual realm, have an effect on the natural world? One example hereof is whether one use an item from the material world, like a Voodoo doll and use the doll to invoke the spirits from the unseen world to act in a desired way towards the person one targets? Can practicing the supernatural, such as Voodoo magic, (where a doll is used to manipulate others by seeking revenge, love, invoke wealth or hurting someone), manifest itself in the real life by the targete person?

Typically, a Voodoo doll is used in an attemp to change the natural world through supernatural means. They are used for healing, protection, love spells and spiritual guidance and acts as messengers to the spirit world. To accomplish this, these dolls are sometimes nailed to a tree in a graveyard with a message to the underworld.

Akin to any form of Magic, the assumption is always that symbolic actions performed with intent, can have an effect in wider or spiritual realms and cause changes beyond the simple act itself. Thus, the doll is not just a doll. A voodoo doll is used to represent the spirit of a specific person. The doll, can be dressed and requested to change in attitude, influencing the person to act in according with one own's desires.

They are intended to have an empowerment potential that is activated when a piece of cloth; hair; rope; tack, etcetera is attached to it, which can have an effect on people or events.

Voodoo is an occult religion rooted in Satanism. Known to anthropologists as *Vodum,* Voodoo is a belief, focusing on a distant god known as the Grand Master, who manifests throug variuos rituals.

People practice voodoo to appease their gods and bring good fortune on themselves. Some practice voodoo to instill serious negative psychological effects on others.[60]

Despite what a person may believe to be the truth, the Bible irrefutably states, that irrespective whether Magic, idol worship, demon worship or witchcraft is performed with or without intent it will have an effect on the individual and spiritual realms, as well as the potential to cause changes beyond the simple act itself. These occult practices are operations of the devil, which not only manipulates the minds of people, but can wreak havoc physically, emotionally and spiritually too.

Computer role-playing games have a similar operation as Voodoo dolls, where none of the characters or identities from the online game is real. However, playing a game where one is encouraged to cast spells, use magic powers, call on demons or gods, just to name a few, the gamer opens him/herself to occultic suggestion and the influence of demons.

The danger lies in identifying with the image played. Whose image does one identify with when playing these roles? Not to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy spirit, but to another "God".

The Bible is very clear on this:

> ***And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people. Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God***
>
> ***Leviticus 20:6-7***

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[60] Larson, Bob (1989) Larson's New Book of Cults. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale Publishers, pp. 459- 463.

> **Prove all things; hold fast that which is good". "Abstain from all appearance of evil.**
>
> **I Thessalonians 5:21-22**
>
> **...Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.**
>
> **Romans 12:9**

As a result, identifying and playing the role of a Wizzard, Necromancer, Druid or any demonic power featured in the game, the player places himself under the spiritual authority of the character he is playing with, and engages in their occult practices. When a player identifies with any of these satanic characters in the game world, thoughts, feelings, intentions and experiences are created, which are projected into them. This is unquestionably not for the player's edification but for his/her destruction.

Envisage number of people playing a computer game. All people choose sides and control their characters in the game. A person becomes so involved that he/she forgets their true identities and their actions thus become their identity in the game. People experience only what their identity in the game might experience, from that identity's viewpoint, and according to the game's rules and programming. To all intents and purposes, one is that character.

In the beginning, the gamer identifies with an **"immortal spirit",** and firmly believes that he/she can control when and to what degree, they can become involved in the game and with the occult spirits. However, as they progress, they are lured deeper into the mysteries of the spirit world by clever adversaries, their God-given defenses are challenged repetitively. The demons free access and control increases.

Before long they will exercise their capricious whims upon the unwitting victim, creating an enslaved victim, driving their victim ever deeper into the mire of sin and slavery. They will force their victim down every path that will open up ever increasing spiritual depravity.

As meddling curiosity drops defenses, occult spirits can, and will, enter and establish themselves. These are the spirits, who travel to the third and fourth generations, through the parents "inheritance", because consorting with them breaks the first commandment by contacting another god. A curse from God is the outcome. (Deuteronomy 18:9-12 and Exodus 20:3-5)

## 4. The Digital Body or Avatar for Exploring the Virtual World

The issue of a person's identity in relation to a person's Avatar body has been discussed often. This is evident from Steve Wheeler's *blog*, posted February 2, 2009 and entitled *The Embodied Self:*

*(Quoting Miller and Arnold) "Our own research has shown that the psychology of identity and self presentation on the Web is best understood in terms of how people draw on those same signifiers of who and what we are as are used elsewhere: use of photos, claims made of achievements, hobbies, geographical origins, etc.*

*We argue that when people enter into cyberspace they bring with them expectations, challenges, and vulnerabilities from every day life experience and the experience of managing an identity in various circumstances, and here was just another mode (or exciting new theatre) to explore and to play out being oneself."[61]*

Miller and Arnold are alleging that the projection of oneself into cyberspace, has all the components of real life self, except that there is the potential for fantastic or even outlandish new representations of that self, within the affordances of the virtual environment. This could imply that the resulted effect of people's Avatars, (the gender bending, species swapping, age reassignment, fantasy representations and so on) lay inert within the person's conscious awareness, and is enlivened (or made possible) within a game such as, *Second Life,* as the environment provides them with a licence and utility.[62]

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[61] The Embodies Self. (http://steve-wheeler.blogspot.com/search?q=Avatar ).
[62] Wheeler, Steve (2008) Connecting Minds, Emerging Cultures: Cybercultures in Online Learning (Perspectives in Instructional Technology & Distance Education). Information Age Publishing, p. 58.

Anthropologist Tom Boellstorff[63] writes:

*"Without wishing to engage in hyperbole, we may be on the verge of another massive transformation linked to technology, the creation of societies on the Internet: "for the first time, humanity has not one but many worlds in which to live" (Catronova 2005:70). This could involve new forms of culture and selfhood, ones shaped in unpredictable ways by actual world sociality: "We do not really understand how to live in cyberspace yet" (Sterling 1992:xiii). (…)*

*I will develop a theory of this virtual worldview as techne, and of the person who engages in techne not just as homo faber ("man the maker") or homo ludens ("man the player"), but above all as homo cyber. The human online. The virtual human."[64]*

The **equals** referred to is the digital Avatar body. When identifying with his virtual Avatar body, other Avatars can be perceived as real. When active and living "*inworld*" there is a consciousness that the person, who operates the keyboard through the physical Avatar's body, and the owner of the Avatar being interacted with at the other computer, does not at all resemble the digital Avatar being looking at. This knowledge becomes evident when comparing your our own digital Avatar body, with the appearance of your physical body.

Yet the *imago* effect of identifying with our Avatar body and its camera perceptions is so powerful or insistent to our sensorimotor system, that it is difficult for the person to resist the impression that one is actually interacting with the Avatar whom one sees on the screen.

A case can be made that, when a person "puts on" the digital Avatar body, that person is coupled almost physically to the technology.

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[63] Tom Boellstorff conducted more than two years of fieldwork in Second Life, living among and observing its residents in exactly the same way anthropologists traditionally have done to learn about cultures and social groups in the so-called real world. He conducted his research as the Avatar "Tom Bukowski," and applied the rigorous methods of anthropology to study many facets of this new frontier of human life, including issues of gender, race, sex, money, conflict and antisocial behavior, the construction of place and time, and the interplay of self and group.

[64] Boellstroff, Tom (2008) Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtual Human. USA: Princeton University Press, p. 25.

There is a so-called synergistic fusion, between human and machine. Through our digital Avatar body, we have social interactions in the virtual world. These include meeting other Avatars at a prearranged place and time "*inworld*", walking together, shopping together and riding vehicles, dancing or hiking.

Nevertheless, in *Second Live* specifically, the realism is so powerful that the majority of virtual Avatars appear gorgeous and handsome. The importance of Avatar appearance is so valued, that the production, and sale of Avatar body shapes and clothes constitute a growing multi-million dollar industry in *Second Life*.

Therefore, Cyberspace, one is often told, is a *disembodied* medium. Testimonies to this is everywhere: from William Gibson's fictional representation of the *"bodiless exultation of cyberspace"*[65], to John Parry Barlow's description of his Virtual Reality (VR) experience as *"my everything has been amputated."*[66] Some authors would argue that these indications are accurate. Professor in English at UCLA, N. Katherine Hayles, asserts: *"In a sense one can argue that these testimonies are correct. The body remains in front of the screen rather than within it. In another sense, however, they are deeply misleading, for they obscure the crucial role that the body plays in constructing cyberspace. In fact we are never disembodied."*[67]

For a gamer creating the illusion of freeing the spirit or soul from the body (disembodiment), it is necessary for him/her to draw a sharp boundary between the body and the image that appears on screen, ignoring the technical and sensory interfaces connecting with one another.

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[65] Gibson, William (1984) Neuromancer. New York: ACE Books.
[66] Moser, Mary Anne; MacLeod, Douglas (1996) Immersed in Technology: Art and Virtual Environments. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p.30.
[67] Hayles, N Katherine, "Embodied Virtuality" in Moser, Anne & MacLeod, Douglas (1996) Immersed in Technology: Art and Virtual Environments. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p.1.

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The screen image (which can be made to appear three-dimensional by exploiting certain characteristics of human visual and aural processing) is reified, constituting a world opening up behind a screen, an alternative universe that our subjectivities can inhabit.

The final step is to erase awareness of the perceptual processes that brought this "world" into being. The euphemism that makes the illusion compelling is now on the foreground: one wants this alternate world to exist so that the body can be left behind, and one knows the body can be left behind because this world exists.

The question arises: Why does anyone want to leave the body behind? No one has described this desire more clearly than Hans Marovec, head of Carnegie-Mellon Mobile Robot Laboratory. In *Mind Children,* Moravec argues that the age of the protein-based life forms is drawing to a close, to be replaced by silicon-based life forms.[68]

According to him, humans need not to despair however, as they can have their consciousness downloaded on a computer. In the preposterous scenario in which he imagines this operation, Moravec has a robot surgeon dissect away a human brain in a kind of cranial liposuction, until all the information the brain contained is inside the computer and the skull empty of brain tissue.

Moravec reasons that once human consciousness is safely encoded inside a computer, it is effectively immortal. If the computer wears out, consciousness can simply be transferred to a new machine.

From this scenario, it is apparent that Moravac equates subjectivity to the mind.

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[68] Moravec, Hans (1990) Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

The body is treated as a flawed and unwieldy medium, necessary in the early stages of human evolution, but now becoming more trouble than it is worth. In the new age of virtuality, as Moravac sees it, the mind will continue unchanged in its incarnation as electronically coded information, and the body will fade away as a superfluous accessory.

Traditionally, the idealistic aspiration of transcending the body to achieve immortality has been expressed through certain kinds of spiritualties and is desired by Transhumanist thinkers. Dust to dust, but the soul ascends to heaven— Moravac's vision represents a remapping of that dream onto cyberspace, with a significant difference: reversing a long-standing opposition between science and religion, enlisting techno-science as the ally of out-of-body transcendence.

To achieve this so-called apotheosis, spiritual discipline is not needed, only a good robot-surgeon. Such a vision is nurtured by a cultural tradition that has long dreamed of a mind, separated from the body.

## 5. An Examination Of Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games As A Facilitator For Internet Addiction

Addiction is widely associated with alcohol[69] and drug abuse,[70] but post-modern times has started to include dependencies not linked with traditional substance abuse, such as gambling,[71] internet use[72] and video-game addiction.[73]

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[69] Jellinek, E M (1960) The Disease Concept of Alcoholism. New Jersey, USA: Hillhouse Press.

[70] World Health Organisation (2004) *Neuroscience of psychoactive substance user and dependence*. Switzerland: World Health Organization.

[71] Griffiths, M (1995) "Technological Addictions". *Clinical Psychology Forum.* 76, pp. 14- 19.

[72] Charlton, J P (2002) "A factor-analytic investigation of computer 'addiction' and engagement". *British Journal of Psychology.* 93, pp. 329-324.

[73] Yee, N (2006) "The Demographics, Motivations and derived Experiences of Users of Massively Multiplayer-User Online Graphical Environments". *PRESENCE: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments.* 15, pp. 309-329.

With the growth of online games, such as *World of Warcraft,* the media's attention has turned to video-game addiction. The term video-game addiction encompasses all genres of games, but it is often associated with MMORPGs, as several high profile deaths of MMORPG addicts have been heavily publicized. An example of one such addict, is a South Korean who fatally collapsed after playing an online game for 86 hours uninterrupted without eating or sleeping.[74]

Addiction of online games has been specifically highlighted after the above incident, by the Thai government, imposing a curfew on online games[75], and Europe's first video-game addiction clinic has opened in Amsterdam.[76] The question arises: what causes these addictive relationships to form in the first place?

An in-depth research, done by J M Parsons, on Internet addiction in the context of Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs), indicates that Internet addiction is a widespread problem, impacting the lives of an estimate 4-10 percent of all Internet users. Researchers have moreover indicated that Internet addiction has a social component, with Internet addicts using the Internet to build and maintain new social relationships, at a much higher rate than non-addicts.[77]

Richard J J Tyrer, in his study on addiction and Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games, highlights three main themes throughout his thesis:

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[74] Miller II, S (2002) *Death of a game addict.* Wisconsin, USA: JSOnline. (http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=31536).

[75] CNETAsia (2003) *Thai govt bans online games at night.* (http://news.zdnet.co.uk/internet/0,1000000097,2137269,00.htm).

[76] Altizer, R (2006) *Europe' s first clinic for videogames addicts opens in Amsterdam.* (http://playstation.about.com/b/2006/06/09/europes-      first-clinic-for-videogame-addicts-opens-in-amsterdam.htm).

[77] Parsons, Jeffrey Michael (2005) "An examination of massively multiplayer online role-playing games as a facilitator of internet addiction." Masters Dissertation, University of Iowa, pp. 149-155.

1.  Addiction is a subjective loss of control, which invariably leads to a physical and Psychological addictive behaviour;
2.  Throughout the evolution of the MMORPG genre, community has been the deciding factor, and that without it; there would be no game;
3.  All the motivational factors associated with creating the desire to play MMORPGs can lead to addiction.[78]

It was predicted that the online community of players would reach the 100 million mark by 2010.[79] Assumptions can be made that the addiction associated with MMORPGs is only going to rise. An investigation into the relationship between addiction and massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs), is of immense concern, whilst also providing a deeper Theological understanding of addiction in online games.

The aim and scope of this hypothesis will be to discuss, in the context of a brief investigation, the reasons addiction occurs, and to compare them to the reasons people play online games. The goal will be to highlighting key motivational factors, linked to the formation of addictive behaviors, with reference to the function of the brain in relation to addiction.

## 5.1. Addiction and Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs): An Exposition of the Key Aspects

Scripture teaches that Satan had the means, during the time that Israel was kept in captivity in Egypt, to perform miracles mimicking the miracles done by God through Moses (Exodus 7 & 8). In view of this, one could inquire whether it is possible for Satan to manipulate people through changing their normal God-given brain functions.

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[78] Tyrer, J J (2008) Addiction And Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (Mmorpgs): An In-Depth Study Of Key Aspects. Negotiated Theory: Visual Cultures. Bsc Computer & Video Games. University of Salford.
[79] Kelly 2, R V (2004) Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games. North Carolina, USA: McFarland & Company, Inc.

Consequently, one can dispute that Satan was able to manipulate normal genetic DNA in the times of Genesis, through sexual relations of fallen angels, with normal human beings, and create giant offspring.(Genesis 6)  According to this view, is it too farfetched to conclude that he can also manipulate thousands of people scientifically through causing addictions?

Satan is here to tempt and deceive mankind, and through his crafty methods, he can deceive millions on a small and big scale, with astronomical consequences. The ultimate consequence of yielding to Satan's temptations, however always leads to pain; shame; guilt; suffering; captivity and ultimately death.

Playing an online computer game using a virtual Avatar is a spiritual and physical matter.  It is physical, not so much relating to the hours spent in front of a computer screen, but also to the complexity of the wiring of the brain.

The process of seeking an escape through an alternate identity created by one's imagination dishonors the image of God in an individual, by **"embodying the Avatar"**- by becoming the symbol. Thus enabling players to become, essentially whatever they want to be. Of course: restrictions apply: when transferred to the virtual realm, the creator (man) must assume the form of his virtual creation, in order to interact with it; one must therefore become the Avatar.

Researchers believe that by continuous use, a person, being addicted to that image, can eventually be possessed by it. It is to loose one's soul to this entity, and being filled by another entity, apart from the infilling of the Holy Spirit.[80]

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[80] Personal Interview: Prof Dr Connie MJ Brand. Râdâh Academy. March 2012.

Virtual worlds, such as *AplhaWorld*, and various other Avatar-base worlds that exist in cyberspace, make millions from other's compulsions. These virtual *"Dungeons and Dragons"* represent the latest wave in man-machine interface. These worlds, also known as **"habitats,"** allow a kind of social interaction to develop between the occupants. The roots of these worlds go back to the **"MUD"** (multi-user dungeon), which is the on-line version of multiplayer fantasy/role-playing adventure games, such as *World of Warcraft* and *Dungeons and Dragons*.

In another game *AlphaWolrd*, for example, each Avatar can stake out a plot in the *AlphaWorld* landscape and choose from an assortment of prefabricated building materials, to construct the virtual mansion of their dreams.

With reference to this specific game, John Moore, in the book *Virtual Gods,* noted that the dream of building one's own ideal future world, is fuelled by the notion that the imagination is the magic wand that will save you from your circumstances, the so called force, that will free us from the decaying forms of the past, and from the constraints of material, non-eternal existence.[81]

It also yields to man's desire for seeking bigger, better, more! It fuels the flame of greed and discontent and makes the popular saying: *"The grass is not greener on the other side"* a very distinct possibility.

It is an idea that is becoming mainstream to anyone who comes into contact with the mass media, which increasingly means the entire world. It seems that everyone from John Lennon to Barney (the purple dinosaur) has one message for mankind: **"just imagine."**

Ultimately, the Utopia is offered by cyber space. It is desensitization on a global scale, in the comfort of everyone's home, through everyday movies on television and Internet screens.

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[81] Brooke, Tal (1997) Virtual Gods. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, p. 152.

Virtual games, such as *AlphaWorld,* have captured the imagination of millions and are infiltrating humanity in an undetected appearance into one's media and cyberspace and prepared our culture to be widely addicted as the Internet has evaporated resistance.

Man's flesh desires what it doesn't have, and wants satisfaction as soon as possible. The flesh easily yields to the desire to covet and idolize. Therefore, lust is a progressive process. The best definition of lust is, *"I want it now!",* which is made possible through virtual games such as *AlphaWolrd.* Scripture is clear: **Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. (Colossians 3:5).**

Internet addiction is changing the world in a fundamental way. It is not just a blind curiosity or endless hunger for knowledge and experience that evolves a momentary rush of excitement, but has the effect of damaging the hearts and souls to the very core. Cyberspace is a **"beast"**, with unique promises. It portends to be an instrument that can amuse, educate and expand the boundaries of knowledge.

Yet, the very instrument that has the power to invade the mind sufficiently to bring a cornucopia of sensate delights could enter the hidden recesses of the mind and its most private thoughts. It could, in addition, have the power to corrupt; deceive; control; police and perhaps even enslave certain people. It is not a device to be taken lightly. It is a drug that has devastating social, mental and spiritual consequences.

A compulsion is an irresistible persistent impulse that a person engages in as a way of dealing with excessive anxiety or fear.[82]

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[82] Compulsion- (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/compulsion).

Often associated with obsessions and diagnosed as obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), compulsions are ritualistic behaviors engaged in as a result of obsessing or thinking about something to the point of creating psychological and physical anxiety that needs to be resolved.[83]

Some people do not have obsessive thoughts and a blind curiosity to push him/herself towards new realms of consciousness and human potential, but when the thought strikes, they act on it.  These men do not have a compulsive problem, but a problem with *impulse control*.  Other impulse disorders, such as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), have at their root, an inability to inhibit acting out in response to sudden urges or emotions.

In this instance, a person may exhibit more problems than just playing a game for hours on end or watching pornography. He may gamble, spend excessively and spontaneously engage in risky behavior. Those with impulse control problems do not consider the consequences of their actions.  It is not that they are immune to the consequences.

They simply act before they think.  Many men are unable to control their thoughts (compulsivity), fail to inhibit their sexual arousal (impulsivity), soothe their feelings of inadequacy (depression) or use pornography as stress reducer.[84]

Men and women detect stimuli, process information and respond to emotions differently.  For example, men seem to be more sensitive to visual cues to invoke sexual arousal. Cybersex can be used as an example in men, due to the argument that there is indeed a correlation between cybersex and excessive gaming (both been psychological addictions).

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[83] Struthers, W M (2009) Wired for Intimacy.  How pornography hijacks the male brain.  USA: Intervarsity Press.
[84] Struthers, W M (2009) Wired for Intimacy.  How pornography hijacks the male brain.  USA: Intervarsity Press.

These men fall deeper into the mental habit of fixating on sexual images- the exposure to them creates neural pathways. It becomes the automatic pathway through which interactions with women is routed.  The neural circuitry anchors this process solidly in the brain.  This incorporates women they have not seen naked yet, or engaging in sexual acts as well.  All women become potential porn stars in the minds of these men.

In modern day Science, the term addiction is a conundrum, a riddle that has yet to be solved. The conceptualization of addiction, using models based on theories and hearsay, has been taking place since the 19th Century, when Magnus Huss, a Swedish Physician, first published his findings on the adverse effects of alcohol, *Alcoholismus Chronicus,* in 1849.[85] Since then, many neuroscientists; psychiatrists; pharmacologists and biologists have put forth various models of addiction, but none have yet totally solved the mystery of the exact nature of addiction. Within this Chapter, several key models of addiction will be discussed, in order to give a greater understanding of what addiction encompasses.

As a result, addiction is no longer a term linked only to drugs and alcohol.  It also encompasses a gamut of substance addiction and recently the term has been used to describe the bondage that chains its victims to behaviors that can become compulsive – such as gambling, shopping, sex, exercise, gaming and work. Brand defines addiction *as a life-controlling process that leads its victims on a downward spiral toward destruction and death.*[86]

Addiction as defined in the Concise Oxford Dictionary: "*the fact or process of being addicted, especially the condition of taking a drug habitually and being unable to give it up without occurring adverse effects.*"[87]

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[85] Sournia, JC  et al (1990) A History of Alcoholism. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, p. 43.
[86] Brand, Prof Dr Connie MJ. "Addiction". Self-published class notes. Pretoria, South Africa: Râdâh Academy.
[87] Allen, R E  et al (eds) (1991) The Concise Oxford Dictionary. 8th Edition, London,UK: BCA,p. 14.

This simple, yet informative, description explains in "layman's" terms what addiction is on the surface, but there is no definitive definition. This is due to the fact that addiction is still a relatively unknown disease in today's modern science. There are hundreds of definitions that attempt, and detail, what addiction is, with each one concentrating on an acute symptom or substance relating to particular research, but none of them totally encompass entirely, the whole meaning of the term, for example the World Health Organization (WHO) defines it as: addiction, drug or alcohol.

*Repeated use of a psychoactive substance or substances, to the extent that the user is periodically or chronically intoxicated, shows a compulsion to take the preferred substance, has great difficulty in voluntarily ceasing or modifying substance use, and exhibits determination to obtain psychoactive substances by almost any means.*[88]

Once again the above definition specifically refers to the use of a psychoactive substance, (e.g. narcotics), that periodically or chronically intoxicates the user.

This form of addiction is in direct correlation with the disease model of addiction,[89] but does not take into account the **"behavioral"** aspect of addiction,[90] which doesn't necessarily involve the ingestion of psychoactive substance or intoxicate the user e.g. gambling.[91]

One definition that does take into account the "behavioral" side of addiction is Robert West's definition, a Professor of Health Psychology at the University of London, who suggests that: *Addiction is a social construct, not an object that can be uniquely defined.*

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[88] World Health Organisation (1994) Lexicon of alcohol and drug terms published by theWorld Health Organisation. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organisation.( http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/terminology/who_lexicon/en/)

[89] World Health Organisation (2004) *Neuroscience of psychoactive substance user and dependence.* Switzerland: World Health Organisation.

[90] Alexander, B.K (1985) "Drug use, dependence, and addiction at a British Columbia university: Good news and bad news". *Canadian Journal of Higher Education.* 15, pp. 77-91.

[91] Griffiths, M (1995) "Technological Addictions". *Clinical Psychology Forum.* 76, pp. 14-19.

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*According to the proposed theory, addiction can be usefully viewed as a chronic condition to the 'motivational system' in which reward-seeking behavior has become 'out of control'.*[92]

The above definition refers directly to abnormalities within a person's **"motivational system"** which is related to specific personality traits that may exist before addiction takes place such as a tendency to become anxious or depressed. This, more than any other factors in addiction causes it to be a source of shame, not only to those around the addict, but to the addict himself.

It also involves a habitual process that incorporates the user's social and physical surroundings, but again this definition does not explain every aspect of addiction. Due to the complexities and intricacies of addiction, it is understandable to deduce that no definition will be absolute, but the above-mentioned definitions, combined, present more insight into the world of addiction.

## 5.2 Scientific Research Indicates How Internet Dependency Alters Human Brain

One of the hypotheses of this thesis is that if Internet pornography addiction can be seen as an obsession[93], what could the relevance correlation be between the Internet use and gaming? It could argue that, similar to internet pornography that can be seen as a highly addicted **"drug"** that radically alters the brain of its user[94], the same will apply to an unhealthy obsession and compulsion to online games, specifically MMORPGs.

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[92] West, R (2006) Theory of Addiction. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, p. 174.
[93] Kastleman, Mark B (2007) The Drug of the New Millennium. The Brain Science Behind Internet Pornography Use. USA: Power Think Publishing, p. 2.
[94] Kastleman, Mark B (2007) The Drug of the New Millennium. The Brain Science Behind Internet Pornography Use. USA: Power Think Publishing, p.2.

A careful analysis will indicate that an Internet dependency could destroy the mental and spiritual capacity of its victim. In recent years, several prominent thinkers and writers have become concerned that heavy Internet use is eroding their concentration, memory and capacity for deep thought. And as they have become aware of the findings of neuroscience, they are increasingly alarmed about what this is doing to their brain:

*"Over the past few years I've had an uncomfortable sense that someone, or something, has been tinkering with my brain, remapping the neural circuitry, reprogramming the memory. My mind isn't going-so far as I can tell-but it's changing. I'm not thinking the way I used to think. I can feel it most strongly when I'm reading. Immersing myself in a book or a lengthy article used to be easy.*
*My mind would get caught up in the narrative or the turns of the argument, and I'd spend hours strolling through long stretches of prose.*

*That's rarely the case anymore. Now my concentration often starts to drift after two or three pages. I get fidgety, lose the thread, begin looking for something else to do. I feel as if I'm always dragging my wayward brain back to the text. The deep reading that used to come naturally has become a struggle.*

*I think I know what's going on. For more than a decade now, I've been spending a lot of time online, searching and surfing and sometimes adding to the great databases of the Internet."*[95]

Nicolas Carr's contention is that making a connection between mental activity and the structure of one's brain could be argued with. The phenomenon of neuroplasticity[96] means that when a person learns a new skill, or changes his pattern of thought; he is rewiring his brain, with new connections forming between neurons:

*"For a long time, it was believed that as we aged, the connections in the brain became fixed. Research has shown that in fact the brain never stops changing through learning. Plasticity IS the capacity of the brain to change with learning.*

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[95] Carr, Nicholas (2008) "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" *The Atlantic Magazine.* July/August 2008.
[96] "The Brain: How The Brain Rewires Itself" *Time Magazine.* January, 19 2007. (http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1580438,00.html)/ Date Retrieved 25 March 2012.

*Changes associated with learning occur mostly at the level of the connections between neurons. New connections can form and the internal structure of the existing synapses can change."*[97]

Jeremy Laurence, in an article in *The Independent, UK*[98]*,* writes that Scientists has for the first time linked Internet Addiction with changes in the brain similar to alcohol, cocaine and cannabis. In a groundbreaking study, researchers used MRI scanners to reveal abnormalities in the brains of adolescents, who spent many hours on the Internet- to the detriment of their social and personal lives.

The finding could highlight on other behavioural problems and lead to the development of new approaches to treatment, researchers said. According to Laurence, an estimated 5 to 10 percent of Internet users are thought to be addicted – meaning they are unable to control their use. The majority are games players, who become so absorbed in the activity, they abstain from food or drink for long periods, and their education, work and relationships suffer.

Dr. Henrietta Bowden-Jones, medical doctor and neuroscience researcher working as Consultant psychiatrist at Imperial College, London, who heads Britain's only National Problem Gambling Clinic for internet addicts and problem gamblers, said:

*"The majority of people we see with serious internet addiction are gamers – people who spend long hours in roles in various games that cause them to disregard their obligations. I have seen people who stopped attending university lectures, failed their degrees or their marriages broke down because they were unable to emotionally connect with anything outside the game."*

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[97] Paschale, Michelon (2008) Brain Plasticity: How Learning Changes Your Brain. (http://www.sharpbrains.com/blog/2008/02/26/brain-plasticity-how-learning-changes-your-brain/).

[98] Laurence, Jeremy (2012) "Addicted! Scientists Show How Internet Dependency Alters The Human Brain." *The Independent.* 12 January 2012. (http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/addicted-scientists-show-how-internet-dependency-alters-the-human-brain-6288344.html).

She adds that *"This type of research exploring the differences between normal brains and brains of people who suffer from Internet addictions is groundbreaking as it makes clear neuro-imaging links between internet addiction and other addictions such as alcohol, cocaine and cannabis amongst others,"*[99]

Although most of the population was spending longer periods of time online, that was not indictive of addiction, according to her. In quoting Bowden-Jones, *"It is different. We are doing it because modern life requires us to link up over the net in regard to jobs, professional and social connections – but not in an obsessive way. When someone comes to you and says they did not sleep last night because they spent 14 hours playing games, and it was the same the previous night, and they tried to stop but they couldn't – you know they have a problem. It does tend to be the gaming that catches people out."*[100]

A study has indicated that Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) is currently becoming a serious mental health issue around the globe. Researchers in China scanned the brains of seventeen adolescents diagnosed with **"internet addiction disorder"** that had been referred to the Shanghai Mental Health Centre, and compared the results with scans from sixteen of their peers.

The results showed impairment of white matter fibres in the brain, connecting regions involved in emotional processing, attention, decision-making and cognitive control. Similar changes to the white matter have been observed in other forms of addiction, to substances such as alcohol and cocaine.[101]

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[99] Science Media Centre. (http://www.sciencemediacentre.org/pages/press_releases/12-01-11_internet_addiction_disorder.htm).

[100] Laurence, Jeremy (2012) "Addicted! Scientists Show How Internet Dependency Alters The Human Brain." *The Independent.* 12 January 2012. (http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/addicted-scientists-show-how-internet-dependency-alters-the-human-brain-6288344.html).

[101] Lin, Fuchun; Zhou, Yan; Du, Yasong; Qin, Lindi; Zhao, Zhimin; Xu, Jiarong, Xu; Lei, Hao (2012) Abnormal White Matter Integrity in Adolescents with Internet Addiction Disorder: A Tract-Based Spatial Statistics Study. PLoS ONE 7(1): e30253. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0030253. (http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0030253).

*"The findings suggest that white matter integrity may serve as a potential new treatment target in Internet addiction disorder,"* according to the online journal Public Library of Science One.

The authors acknowledge that they are unable to say with conviction, whether the brain changes are the cause, or the consequence of the Internet addiction. It could be that young people with the brain changes observed are more prone to becoming addicted.[102]

Laurence further quoted Professor Michael Farrell, director of the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Australia:
*"The limitations [of this study] are that it is not controlled, and it's possible that illicit drugs, alcohol or other caffeine-based stimulants might account for the changes. The specificity of 'internet addiction disorder' is also questionable."*[103]

According to Matt Richtel, in *Attached to Technology and Paying a Price*, technology is changing the way people think, and the Internet has become as much a part of our lives as food and sex. He believes that the negative effect of technology is addiction.[104]

The following case studies are indicative of the Internet Addiction:

## 5.3 Case studies: Internet Addiction

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[102] Lin, Fuchun; Zhou, Yan; Du, Yasong; Qin, Lindi; Zhao, Zhimin; Xu, Jiarong, Xu; Lei, Hao (2012) Abnormal White Matter Integrity in Adolescents with Internet Addiction Disorder: A Tract-Based Spatial Statistics Study. PLoS ONE 7(1): e30253. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0030253. (http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0030253).

[103] Laurence, Jeremy (2012) "Addicted! Scientists Show How Internet Dependency Alters The Human Brain." *The Independent.* 12 January 2012. (http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/addicted-scientists-show-how-internet-dependency-alters-the-human-brain-6288344.html).

[104] Richtel, Matt (2010) "Attached to Technology and Paying the Price." *The New York Times.* June 6, 2010.
(http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/07/technology/07brain.html?ref=yourbrainoncomputers).

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### 5.3.1 Xbox addict killed by blood clot after twelve-hour sessions

Chris Staniforth, 20, died of a blood clot, after spending up to 12 hours at a time playing on his Xbox. Despite having no history of ill health, he developed deep vein thrombosis – commonly associated with long-haul flight passengers. Mr Staniforth, from Sheffield, has been offered a position to study game design at the University of Leicester, but he collapsed while informing a friend he's been experiencing pain in his chest.[105]

### 5.3.2 Toddler starved to death while mother played online

A mother was jailed for 25 years, after her daughter starved to death while she played an online game for hours at a time. Rebecca Colleen Christie, 28, from New Mexico in the US, played the fantasy game *World of Warcraft,* while her three-year-old daughter, Brandi, starved. The toddler weighed just 23lbs when she was finally rushed to hospital after her mother found her limp and unconscious.[106]

### 5.3.3 Woman jailed after gamble fails to pay off

A woman, who stole £76,000 from a company to fund her Internet gambling addiction, was jailed. Lucienne Mainey, aged 41, from Cambridgeshire, was sentenced to 16 months in prison at Ipswich Crown Court after admitting fraud. The court heard that she secretly paid herself by changing old invoices. Mainey turned to Internet bingo following the breakdown of her marriage.[107]

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[105] Twomey, Rebecca (2011) "Xbox addict, 20, killed by blood clot after 12-hour gaming sessions." *Daily Mail*. 30 June 2011(http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2020462/Xbox-addict-20-killed-blood-clot-12-hour-gaming-sessions.html#ixzz1qDaoyXp3).

[106] Thompsen, Paul (2011) "'Sorry' mother jailed for 25 years for allowing her daughter to STARVE to death while she played an online video game" *Daily Mail.* (http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1394903/Rebecca-Colleen-Christie-jailed-25-years-allowing-daughter-Brandi-Wulf-STARVE-death-played-World-Warcraft.html#ixzz1qDcMvOVU).

[107] Allen, Emily (2012) "Mother stole £76,000 from her company to fund online bingo addiction." *Daily Mail.* ( http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2085083/Mother-Lucienne-Mainey-stole-76k-company-fund-online-bingo-addiction.html#ixzz1qDctgqEf).

## 5.4 Spiritual consequences of Addiction- The Pineal gland, Melatonin, Serotonin and Dopamine
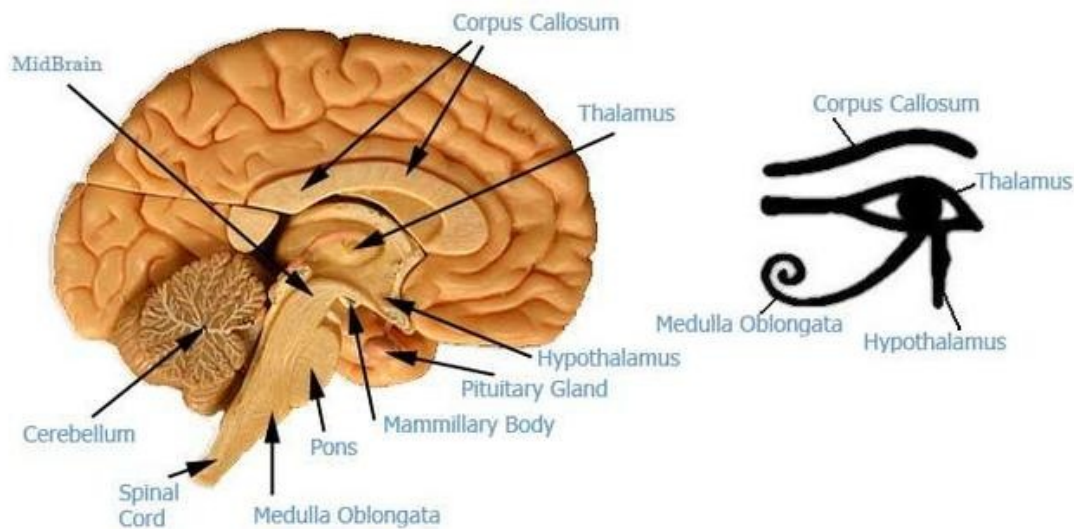


Figure 1: Pineal Gland: The Mind's Eye[108]

The precise function of the pineal gland (Figure 2) is not known in great detail. Evolutionarily, the pineal gland is derived from cells seen in lower animals that directly respond to light (so-called photoreceptors).

In man (and other mammals) this direct connection has been lost, however there is an indirect connection. The pineal gland alters its activity in response to the state of light, as detected through this pathway. During darkness (i.e. night) it has an increased activity, where the hormones it produces are produced at an accelerated rate. Conversely during light (i.e. day) its activity is suppressed. (This daily rhythm is known as a circadian rhythm).

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[108] The Pineal Gland. (http://www.abovetopsecret.com/forum/thread824440/pg1).

It therefore appears that the gland has a major role in maintaining the circadian rhythm of the body.[109] Colour sensitive photoreceptor cells, of a retinal nature, have been found in the tip of the pineal gland. The pineal gland can be found near the upper end of the spinal cord.[110]

The pineal gland produces a variety of hormones, including Noradrenalin; Serotonin; Histamine; Dopamine; Octopamine; Luteinizing Hormone Releasing Hormone (LHRH); Thyrotrophin Releasing Hormone (TRH); Somatostatin and Asotocin. The main hormone, produced and released by the pineal is melatonin.[111]

Western occult and New Age, also mentions that the third eye is the pineal gland. The pineal gland is about 8-mm x 5-mm, or about the size of a grain of rice, and is located deep in the center of the brain, aligned between our eyes. Its discovery was late in time, due to its size. Scientist do not understand exactly what its function may be, but do agree that it is affected by light through secreting a chemical called melatonin.

Apparently, the internal secretions of the pineal gland inhibit the development of the reproductive glands, because in cases where it is severely damaged in children, the result is accelerated development of the sexual organs and the skeleton.

Research into a link between the pineal gland and the hypothalamus,[112] indicated that melatonin is able to inhibit dopamine secretion from the hypothalamic cells of the rat. Melatonin, the hormone produced by the pineal gland at night, influences circadian and seasonal rhythms, most notable in the sleep-wake cycle, and seasonal reproduction.

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[109]    Neuroanatomy: What does the pineal gland do? (http://www.quora.com/Neuroanatomy/What-does-the-pineal-gland-do).
[110]  McClay, Russ.    1976, March 19.    The Pineal Gland, LSD and Serotonin. (http://www.serendipity.li/mcclay/pineal.html).
[111]    Neuroanatomy: What does the pineal gland do? (http://www.quora.com/Neuroanatomy/What-does-the-pineal-gland-do).
[112] Zisapel, Nava (1988) Melatonin Revised. Department of Biochemistry, Tel Aviv University. Tel Aviv, Israel.

The neurochemical basis of these activities is not understood yet. Inhibition of dopamine release by melatonin has been demonstrated in specific areas of the mammalian central nervous system (hypothalamus, hippocampus, medulla-pons, and retina).

According to Dr Becker MD, in Hindu traditions, the pineal gland is associated with one's extra-sensory third "eye", (Figure 2) through which perception of the world is not limited to the physical senses. Through activation of so-called crystals in one's pineal gland, there is advancement towards multi-dimensional aware-ness and telepathic abilities. Becker falsely believes that it is the next step to man's evolution.[113]

According to Dr Joye Jeffries Pugh, the correct vibration stimulation of the pineal gland, whether attained through chanting, placing the body in a meditative position (Yoga), or through the use of drugs, will result in the opening of the pineal gland, and tuning it to the station owned and operated by Satan. Once the body is placed in that venerable state, Satan enters and takes over the mind. The person experiences a surge of peaceful white energy that is perceived as a spiritual awakening.

This manifestation induces a false sense within that person that he now has received a divine spark that will enable him god-like power.[114]

The parietal eye is visible as an opalescent gray spot on the top of some lizard's heads, also referred to as **"pineal eye"** or **"third eye."** (Figure 3) Humans have one, too, but ours has no outlet at the top of our skull.[115]

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[113] Becker, Robert O MD. The Human Body is literarily a gigantic liquid crystal. (http://www.resistance2010.com/profiles/blogs/the-awakening-telepathy-amp).

[114] Pugh, Joye Jeffries, Dr (2006) Eden. The knowledge of good and evil. Tate Publishing, LLC, p. 481.

[115] Pineal Gland. (http://www.anapsid.org/parietal.html).
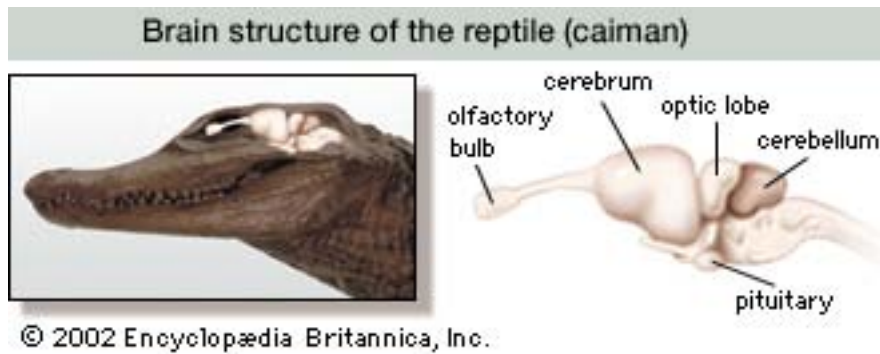
Figure 2: Pineal Gland Of the Reptile[116]

It is interesting to note that melatonin is only produced during the night and that melatonin is destroyed in sunlight. Long-term light will shrink the pineal gland and reduce its hormone production. Secret cults are aware that the **"Third eye"** develops and grows more in the dark. The esoteric understanding regarding the function of the pineal gland, is the primary reason why cultic ceremonies are performed in the dark.[117]

Everything, from Transcendental Meditation, Astral Flight and **"unleashing the god within"**, revolves around secrets of the activity of the pineal gland. It is through these rituals, involving the manipulation of the pineal gland that cults reach their illumination.

There are many ways to induce the opening of the human pineal gland.[118] The bovine pineal gland also possesses D1 dopamine receptors.[119] Serotonin is the precursor for melatonin.

The question arises: Is it possible that the pineal gland can be opened by pornography; nicotine; drug abuse; alcohol abuse; illicit sexual activity and specifically addiction to Online Role-Playing Games?

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[116] Brain Structure of the Reptile. Encyclopedia Britanica.
[117] Pugh, Joye Jeffries, Dr (2006) Eden. The knowledge of good and evil. Tate Publishing, LLC, p. 481.
[118] Pugh, Joye Jeffries, Dr (2006) Eden. The knowledge of good and evil. Tate Publishing, LLC, p. 481.
[119] Pineal Gland. (http://jpet.aspetjournals.org/content/253/1/214).

## 5.5 Opening The Third Eye

The Jedi prodigy Anakin Skywalker learns that he has the entire universe inside of him. As with Luke Skywalker -his future son- of *Star Wars* fame, Anakin has to connect with and trust **"the force"**.[120] The characters in the Lucas epic are **"living myths"**, living within man, according to director George Lucas. Lucas' epics are to inspire the unleashing of these inner realities. Author Tal Brooke affirms that they have a spiritual aspect.[121]

Joseph Campbell, the spiritual teacher of George Lucas, has said that myths are representations of inner realities and truths. New York Times best-seller Joseph Campbell spelled this out in his compelling and ingenious book, *The Hero of a Thousand Faces.* The book stated that one carries the sum total experience and knowledge of the race. The challenge was consciousness expansion, through confronting inner and outer worlds, escalating to ever-higher levels of energy and consciousness. *[122]*

Many contemporaries. accept as truth the belief of replacing nature worship with human deification, a concept held by ancient Egyptians.[123] This achievement of becoming human replicas or embodiment of their faith's deities is believed in the reality of cosmic consciousness, or super-consciousness, or enlightenment.

Brooke states *"it was already plain to see that the elevator shaft of consciousness went from the lower floors of the animal world to the incredible levels of man's greatest achievements. If this shaft continued to the vast levels of angels, higher beings and beyond, then by speculative extension the mystics were right and human potential did not stop until it arrived right at the seat of godhood.*

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[120] Star Wars Film Series I-VI by George Lucas. 20th Century Fox.
[121] Brooke, Tal (2000) One World: Special Mellennial Edition of When the World will be as one. Berkele, CA: En Time Run, p. 31.
[122] Campbell, Joseph (1972) The Hero of a Thousand Faces. UK: Princeton University Press.
[123] Price, Paula, PhD (2006) The Prophets Dictionary. The Ultimate Guide to Supernatural Wisdom. New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House Publishing, p. 263.

*We were in continuum that implied we could ride the elevator to the top floor. Lower rungs of consciousness could be used as an argument for extension."[124]*

Explained by Brooke, the inspiration and teacher to Joseph Campbell, Carl Jung, (especially his writings on **"depth psychology"),** are the source of almost every major insight that Campbell ever had. He paid homage to Jung repeatedly.[125] Jung talked about consciousness and had revolutionary ideas about the mysteries of the self.

He believed that man contained the universe within: the entirety of racial knowledge was welded within every cell. Within the mind lay the vast collective unconscious containing every type of character in every Shakespearean play, every mythological figure and more. These were the inner archetypes.

Jung stated that the supreme voyage (and Jung was a mystic, having written the introduction to the Evans-Wentz Oxford translation of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead),* was to boldly encounter and absorb every archetype within, to come to terms with the forbidden, the inner shadow, and ultimately to discover the higher self. To Jung, when this huge collective unconscious, this microcosm within, was completely searched out and no longer a mystery, then one was **"individuated."** This was a form of enlightenment.

Other analogies exist. Alan Watts, an orientalist from Harvard, was the author of *The Supreme Identity.* The supreme identity was the divine inner nature that Watts had learned from studying Zen Buddhism, which he then melted with modern Psychological theories.

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[124] Brooke, Tal (2000) One World: Special Mellennial Edition of When the World will be as one. Berkele, CA: En Time Run, p. 32.
[125] Brooke, Tal (2000) One World: Special Mellennial Edition of When the World will be as one. Berkele, CA: En Time Run, p. 33.

For opposites such as good and evil, light and darkness, male and female to be resolved and to merge, they had to be encountered. [126]

One could turn to Taoism to explain the interplay of opposites. The masculine and the feminine are but one aspect of the cosmic dance. The goal, according to this belief, is individualisation of all opposites within. Evil, for instance is now relegated to areas within the individual that is projecting out, it is the other half of good.

Therefore, according to this conviction, no absolute evil exist. It is merely one more opposite out of which the universe is composed of. As Taoism states, all life is interplay between these opposites, until they finally merge into one.[127] This is called "liberation."

An example of the Hindu belief, in a spiritual **"Third Eye"**, is the Eye of Horus.[128] New Age practitioners, along with a variety of meditation techniques and even science fiction stories from time to time, have also adopted this symbol and idea.

Quayle notes that another symbol that refers to the Eye of Horus is the **serpent swallowing its own tail**, a symbol of Satan in an eternal ring, with the opening it encompasses, creating an invisible eye shape.[129] (Figure 4). This symbol can be seen on the logo of this thesis.

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[126] Watts, Alan W (1972 ) The Supreme Identity. An Essay on Oriental Metaphysic and the Christian Religion. Vintage.

[127] Partridge, Christopher (2005) The World's Religions. The New Lion Handbook. England: Lion Hudson plc, pp. 399-403.

[128] Eye of Horus- See Terms and Definitions.

[129] Quayle, Steve (2003) Aliens and Fallen Angels: Offspring of the Gods. The Sexual corruprion of the human race. Bozeman, MT: End Time Thunder Publisher, p. 141

Figure 3: The Ouroboros: Snake Swallowing it's own tail[130]

Perhaps the most blatant example of a business, adopting this sign is *Lucent Technologies, which* has a red ring as its logo. Amongst this company's products is the "Inferno"[131] computer network operating system, which operates under the "Styx"[132] system- Styx being the river of the dead in Egyptian Mythology.

Satan undoubtedly creates symbolism,[133] and this is his one of his carefully laid out weapons, utilized in his attempt to corrupt and manipulate mankind. While it is obvious that God will prevail over any assault and traps that Satan might lay, that does not make the Devil less dangerous to individuals, because Satan is not fighting to win, but rather to obliterate. At this precise moment, Satan is poised to launce his last campaign of destruction, dragging down as much of humanity as possible.

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[130] Eire, Carlos M N (21 October 2009). *A very brief history of eternity*. Princeton University Press. p. 29.

[131] "Orga, Cirrus Logic, and Global Converging Technologies select Inferno(tm) Network Operating System,: News Release, Lucent Technologies, August 20, 1997.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Quayle, Steve (2003) Aliens and Fallen Angels: Offspring of the Gods. The Sexual corruprion of the human race. Bozeman, MT: End Time Thunder Publisher, p.143

Unfortunately, the groundwork has been laid in the past to deceive many of humanity into falling for his devices, becoming captured and destroyed in the process. Because of a lack of knowledge the abovementioned is possible.

## 6. Mysteries of the Unseen and Seen worlds

This thesis deems it of utmost importance to open up the facts and knowledge pertaining to the Bible bringing insight and Godly understanding pertaining to the realty of both seen and unseen worlds.

Several famous Biophysicist, Geneticist and Scientists contend that Quantum Mysteries and Sublime Energy do indeed exist.  In Chapter Ten of her book, *"The Rainbow and the Worm: The Physics of Organism,"* Mae-wan Ho links the relationship between light and matter, and even describes a method to photograph biophotons. Her mathematics, using Quantum Physics, as applied to organisms shows the simultaneous existence (or consciousness) in two dimensions, in what she called quantum coherence or the *"unity of intentionality."*[134]

Nobel Prize Winner Albert Szent-Gyorgi pictured a *force*, which causes living things to reach *"higher and higher levels of organization, order and dynamic harmony."*[135] Einstein's famous equation of $E = mc^2$ relates all masses to energy.

Genesis 1:3 attributes all creative energy to light, (not natural light, formed in Genesis 1:14.) All energy is derived from God (John 1:1-5).

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[134] Ho, Mae-Wo (1993) The Rainbow and the Worm: The Physics of Organism. World Scientific.
[135] Szent-Gyorgyi, Albert (1977) "Drive in Living Matter to Perfect Itself," *Synthesis 1,* Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 14-26.

Paul's understanding of this creative spiritual energy, (Greek word *"energeo")*[136] relates it to the Holy Spirit and the main energy that emits the gifts and works of God through us (1 Corinthians 12:11; Galatians 2:8).

Author Peter Tan claims: *"It is not possible to describe the glory and various areas of the Spiritual World in human language without bringing by the use of earth language a percentage of inaccuracy. Neither can anyone who has an encounter or visions of the Spiritual World claim to have visited every aspect of that glorious world."*[137]

It seems evident, in this day of the revival of **"Spiritism,"** when so many are longing to communicate with the dead and are resorting to forbidden means to that end, a day in which Science is attempting to discover whether there is another world than this, and whether man lives after death and if so, if they can communicate with the living, it be timely to show what the Bible reveals of the "World of Spirits."

The Scripture is full of the **"Supernatural."** There are a variety of creations of God in various dimensions and universes that would take eternity to explore. Rev Clarence Larkin reveals, *"The only cure for the 'materialism' of the present day is to discover what the Scriptures reveal as the 'Spirit World'".*[138]

Mankind will in future be living in this Spiritual world, when a person departs from this earth through physical death of his body, therefore there is but a step from the "Natural" World to the "Spirit" World. The dividing veil is the fleshly body.

The Bible reads that there was a time when God sent a particular Angel to the Prophet Daniel, and the way of the Holy Angel was, ***"blocked for twenty one days"***, by a highly concentrated **"Energy Essence"**, of great demons, operating as the "Prince of Persia."

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[136] Thayer and Smith (1999) "New Testament Greek Lexicon entry for Energeo." The New Testament Greek Lexicon. (http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/energeo.html).
[137] Tan, Peter (2007) The Spiritual World. Australia: Peter Tan Evangelism, p. 5.
[138] Larkin, Clarence Rev (1921) The Spirit World. USA: Rev Clarence Larkin Estate, p.1.

But another, greater Angel, operating in the higher category of spiritual power, came and banished the "Prince of Persia" and thus rescued the other Angel. The Angel who was rescued, informed Daniel:

> ***And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.***
>
> ***Daniel 10:11-13***

A thorough understanding of the above, will lead to the recognition that the Holy Angels of heaven, including the Archangels; the Cherubims, and Seaphims; the twenty-four elders; and the four living creatures, to mention but a few, all are in different categories of spiritual powers (Table 10). In a similar fashion, the children of God on earth are in different levels of the anointing of the "Holy Spirit Power" .
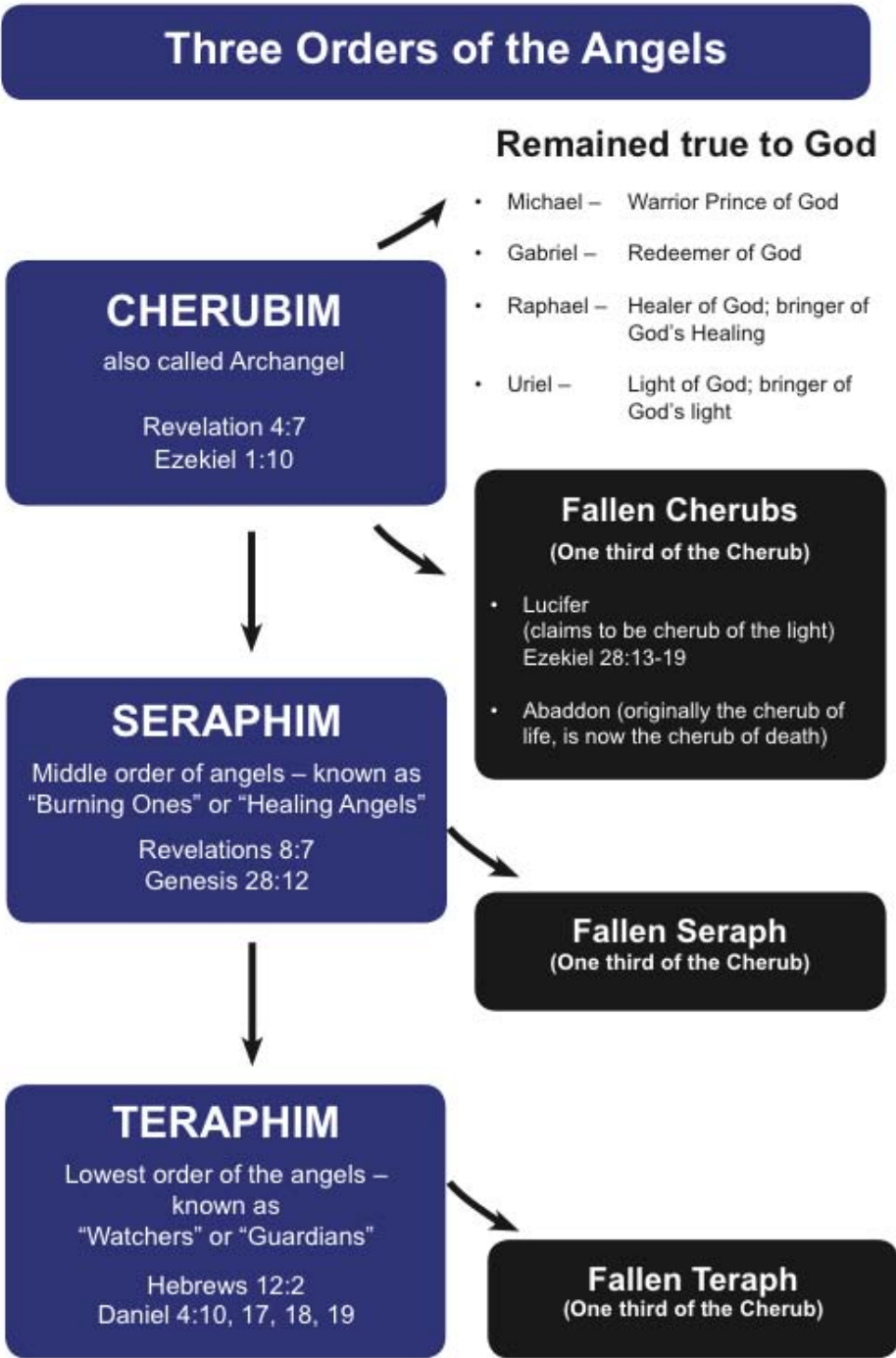
Table 1: The Order of the Angels[139]

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[139] Graphic Representation: The Order of the Angels. Artist: Susan Langeveld. SL Studios, Pretoria South Africa.

There are levels in the spirit world that are not visible to the human eye. The Bible refers to the **"Heavenlies".** The word "heavenlies" are used five times in the Book of Ephesians.[140] These **"Spirit Beings"** are divided into two classes- good and evil. All these categories of spiritual power, whether they are that of demons or human agents of the forces of darkness, or of the Holy Angels, are limited in one way or the other. The Angels are *"innumerable in number",* (Hebrew 12:22), and are *"might in power"* (2 Thessalonians 1:7) but not almighty.

Darkness is the result of men turning away from the Truth and the Light of God. Consequently, if one submits to the kingdoms of darkness, and worship demons, one is deceived by Satan, through the *"blinding"* of one's eyes.

> *"If our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that 'are lost'; in whom the "God of this World' (Satan) hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is in the image of God, should shine unto them."*
>
> *2 Corinthians 4:3,4*

Satan is a King and has a Kingdom. Scripture reveals in Matthew 12:24-26 **But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."**

**Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?"**

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[140] · Ephesians 1:3 all spiritual blessings IN THE HEAVENLIES
· Ephesians 1:2023 God made Christ to sit at His right hand IN THE HEAVENLIES
· Ephesians 2:6 Christ raised us up to sit with him IN THE HEAVENLIES
· Ephesians 3:10 God's wisdom made known through the church to the rulers and authorities IN THE HEAVENLIES
· Ephesians 6:1012 Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness. against the spiritual forces of wickedness IN THE HEAVENLIES.

***Ephesians 6:12*** also read: ***For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.***

It can hence be concluded that his Kingdom consists of ***"principalities*****,"** ***"powers," "Age Rulers of Darkness*****"** and ***"wicked spirits in the heavenlies"*** (Ephesians 6:12), **"Thrones," "Spirits in Prison,"** (1 Peter 3: 18-20), **"Demons," Seducing Spirits."** (1 Timothy 4:1)

According to Dr Iyke Nathan Uzorma[141], there are seven Cosmic Kingdoms of psychic entities in the universe, which are the occult kingdoms of Satan and the fallen angels. The totality of these kingdoms are known only to a few Grand Masters and Avatars of esoteric mysteries.

In Esoteric Metaphysics and Mystical Sciences, these cosmic kingdoms are never known as, or called, the **"kingdom of Satan".** In the mystical parlance, they are called such names as **"The Universes of God"** or **"Cosmic Manifestations"** or **"Macrocosm"** or **"Heaven-Worlds"** etc. Further to this, the spiritual entities ruling such kingdoms and the realsm, planes, sones etc within them, are never known or considered as demons. Such entities are called **"manifestations and expansions of the Godhead".**[142]

There are many more mysteries of the Spiritual World, such as time, space and dimensions from the spirit realm perspective; how to move by transformation rather than by distance; how physical time represents only a small subset of visible stage changes from the spiritual realm, and many others. This subject could be recommended for further studies.

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[141] Author of various books, Dr Iyke Nathan Uzorma, a well known Guru and perfect master of occult Mysteries, a Doctor of philosophy in esoteric metaphysics, who was a living grandmaster of the order of astral and terrestrial hierarchy. He has been humbled and convicted by the Holy Spirit to acknowledge and accept the sovereignty of the true Christ over his life.

[142] Uzorma, Iyke Nathan Dr (2005) Occult Grandmaster now in Christ. Book One. Nigeria: Glorious People NIG.LTD, p. 42.

In perfect time when this world becomes more "spiritualized", or rather more in union with the love of God, God will allow a greater understanding of the harmonies of the Spiritual World to the physical world. It will be, and is the ultimate Will of God for this planet.

## 6.1 The Present Evil World

> ***He gave himself for our sins in order to rescue us from this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father.***
>
> ### Galatians 1:4 (International Standard Version)

The Evil in this **"Age"** is evident from the character of its civilization. The spirit of lawlessness is in the air, and it can be argued that it is, strangely, becoming unmanageable and perverse, and determined to break away from all authority and law.

How can this be accounted for? Has God lost His control over the world, or is He permitting another agency to have its way? The answer to the above question, is that thare are **"TWO OPPOSING SPIRITS"** at work in this world.

## 6.2 Stumbling Block of the Enemy

The word **"manipulation"**, refers to the process of using witchcrafts, occultic, psychical, or esoteric power to influence, dominate, manage or control the life of another person, for a detrimental purpose, whether directly or indirectly.[143] Both the direct, and indirect, manipulations of demonic powers, produce the same result of bondage in the final analysis. Consequently, direct manipulations is a **"psychic attack"**, projected against a specific person or persons with a specific evil plan, whils indirect manipulation is like a deadly trap, set against people with no particular person in mind.

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[143] Uzorma, Iyke Nathan Dr (2005) Occult Grandmaster now in Christ. Book One. Nigeria: Glorious People NIG.LTD, p. 13.

This operates through the occult law of "metaphysical homogeity", thus one who is under the power of sinful-life, can fall into the trap and become a victim.

According to Uzorma, in the psychic noetic sciences of **"Esoteric Physiognomy"**, also called the **"Psychology of the Higher Self",** the human mind is said to contain four fundamental faculties through which the human-spirit transmits conciousness, (the awareness of being) to the gross material body. The fact that the ultimate nature of man, transcends the paraphernalia of the earth, is an absolute fact in the universe.

Taking this into account, the Holy Scriptures revealed that man is a tripartite being with a ***"Spirit and Soul and Body",*** (1 Thessalonian 5:23). Man is a Trinity, as he was made to ***"The image of God"*** (Genesis 1:26). Therefore, like God, he is a threefold being.

The soul in this connection, is also called "mind" in the mystical parlance. The awareness of man in this world, by which he thinks, speaks and acts, in so many ways, originated in his spirit, and is transmitted to the physical body through the four fundamental faculties of the mind. When these four faculties are working in their intended state, your life will manifest righteousness, peace and joy.

This will attract the Holy Spirit to come and protect one's body, soul and spirit from the manipulations of psychic entities. Through the constant radiation of the Holy Spirit in one's life, the so called **"magnetic field"**, of one's spirit, (aura), will be able to expel any external attack of the subtle entities, which is know to man (according to Scripture) as demons.

Nevertheless, whenever there is a dichtomy of the four fundamental faculties of the mind, the fifth abnormal faculty of the mind comes into existence.

This is the **"medium of destruction"**, that attracts evil spirits to come and manipulate a person. It is through this abnormal faculty that one enters into, what is called **"maya"** in Sanskrit, which means "**zero point"** or **"illusion".** The zero point is entered through any of the five perversions or propensities of the fifth abnormal faculty of the mind. Uzorma explains that these propensities include:

1.Lust

2. Anger

3. Greed

4. Vanity

5. Attachment to mundane things[144]

When the **"zero point"** is spoken of, one is speaking of the state of illusory phantasmagoria in which the life of a person is subjected to the lowest degree of the spiritual scale of being. In this repugnant state, an individual can be controlled, managed, dominated or manipulated by the forces of darkness even beyond his or her awareness. In other words, no one on earth can be manipulated by demons, except through the fifth abnormal faculty of the mind.

In the occultic or witchcraft manipulations of principalities and powers of darkness against people, via the aforementioned propensities, the power of lust constitutes fifty percent, anger tweny percent, while greed, vanity and attachment to mundane things, are interwoven, and each constitute ten percent. Also, all the thoughts, words and deeds proclaimed to be sin, directly or indirectly eminate from these five perversions of the mind. It follows therefore that sin is the major stumbling block of the enemy in the life of man. It is the highest power that submits one to the authority of the entity called Satan, which is the devil. Scripture says *"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning".*

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[144] Uzorma, Iyke Nathan Dr (2005) Occult Grandmaster now in Christ. Book One. Nigeria: Glorious People NIG.LTD, p. 42.

## 7. Theophobia: **The Fear of God**

According to an online encyclopedia, *Theophopbia* is defined as the fear of God.[145] However, author Brooks Alexander, explains that Theophobia is more than just a fear of God. It is man's constant quest to **hide from God,** to escape an infinite God one cannot control and manipulate. Alexander remarks that Christian cynicism in particular, knows that fallen human beings shrink from the presence of God.

That evasive impulse was the first of the new characteristics Adam and Eve exhibited after their fall, (Genesis 3:8).[146] Just like Adam and Eve, all of mankind is still running and hiding from God, because of their sin and guilt before Him.[147]

When Adam heard the voice of God, he was forced to remember who God was and again realized his own identity. He had to face the consequences and accountability to God. Adam's consequences were ridden with guilt and shame over his sins.

Utter fear absorbed him at the realization that God was a Holy God, that he was accountable to God, that God would punish sin unto death, and that there was absolutely no manner in which to escape the judgment of God.

In modern society, man's strategies for concealment, are more complex than the fig leaves of Adam and Eve, however man still hides from God, for the same reasons Adam and Eve did—namely, that sin separates man from the presence of God and all man's sins will be exposed on the Day of Judgment.

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[145] Theophobia. (http://www.probertencyclopaedia.com/brow).
[146] Brooke, Tal (1997) Virtual Gods. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, pp. 159, 160.
[147] Morey, Robert Dr (1999) Fearing God: The Key to the Treasure of Heaven. Yorba Linda CA: Learn Foundation. Kindle Edition.

The punishment for sin is death. The concept of physical death resulted from the very day Adam and Eve sinned. They spiritually died on that day, because they were alienated from God (Isaiah 59:2).

The reality of sin and rebellion against God, means that man finds himself in conflict with a power he cannot even resist, much less overcome. Man's so-called "contest" with God is a gross mismatch. Alexander makes the comparison of this "contest", akin to a thatched hut, as opposed to the force of a hydrogen bomb.[148]

Above all, sin functions at the same level as man's relationship with God. Being the destroyer of community, sin gives birth to alienation from God. Romans 5:10a states that, sin leads mankind to live as enemies of God. The result of that imbalance, when encountering the living God, leads to a feeling of not only confronted, but also overpowered. In clinical terms, **"spiritual discomfort"** of an urgent and threatening intensity, is experienced.

Rather than enjoying the presence of God, man flees. Man has, in probability, found a supreme haven in his recent creation, cyberspace. Man can now temporarily recreate the very outward reality with which he has been at enmity since time immemorial. In cyberspace, the human creator can create the laws of his domain. He can finally become the god of his own creation.

Alexander has drawn attention to the actuality of man seeking cover in a space beyond a computer screen: *"One of the things we do in our spiritual flight is to seek spiritual 'cover'—that is, to preemptively engage the part of us that God wants to be connected with. We tune God out most effectively by making sure that the spiritual part of our nature is fully occupied with something else. Thus, we hide from God in substitute spiritual relations—with spirits, totems, gremlins, gods, ghosts, devas, demons, angels, ancestors, fairies, leprechauns, UFOs, or whatever.*

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[148] Brooke, Tal (1997) Virtual Gods. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, p. 160.

*The void created by our estrangement from God does not stay empty for long. As G. K. Chesterton' famously remarked, 'When a man ceases to believe in God, he doesn't believe in nothing, he believes in anything.'"[149]*

Presently, man's compulsion to flee from God is sending them into strange new hiding places, opened up by technology. Despite a belief in the God of the Bible, people seek preemptive spiritual connections in the labyrinths of their own computer networks. They believe in a kind of cyber-supernaturalism that includes almost everything else.

Some cyber-enthusiasts speak of the Internet as a **"global mind",**—created and operated by human beings, but animated by a higher, collective consciousness. Others claim that virtual reality opens a, **"portal to transcendence,"** creating a new, non-spatial world of infinite freedom that exists in, and through our interactions in cyberspace—a kind of "**collective hallucination"**, given **"virtual flesh"** in the patterns of digital bits and bytes that pulse through the World Wide Web.[150] Thus man becomes the god who inhabits of his own creation.

According to Alexander, such profound levels of idolatry require a self-importance that has more in common with Gnosticism and self-deification than it does with idol worship in the normal sense of the term. Self-deification is the ultimate hiding place from God, and ancient Gnosticism turned the pursuit of "the god within", into a spiritual system.[151]

In the almost two thousand years since Gnosticism's first advent, its so-called **"Gnosis"**, has proved to be a highly effective means of hiding from God.

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[149] Brooke, Tal (1997) Virtual Gods. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, pp. 159- 160.
[150] Ibid, p. 162.
[151] Ibid, p.161.

Presently, resurgent (neo) Gnosticism is having a field day in popular culture.[152] One reason for the appeal of Gnosticism today is that our inherent tendency to Gnostic thinking has been reinforced by our technology.

The process of construction has been streamlined, thanks to computer technology. Original Gnosticism required dedication and hard work to condition the mind for enlightenment. Computers, however, promise to render that kind of mental discipline obsolete. Certain scientists believe that with the aid of computers and neurophysiology, enlightenment can be produced without any effort—or even any intent—on the part of the enlightened.

David Porush, a professor at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, indicates how the concepts of cybernetics and Artificial Intelligence (AI)[153], have sparked our present revolution in computer and information technology, having become the source for images and techniques in our post-modern era. Porush envisions cyberspace as a kind of electronic designer drug:

*"Neurophysiologists suspect that lurking somewhere in the brain—most likely in a formation at the base of the brain stem called the dorsal raphe nucleus -lies a facility that makes us feel, under the right conditions, like we're in communication with gods or that we have voyaged out to meet some Higher Presence. Certain configurations of data delivered to the brain by electronic stimulation could flood this region of the brain with serotonin, a neurotransmitter involved in many functions, including hallucination. In this way, the right software might evoke that oceanic, world-embracing feeling known so well to mystics and psycho-tropical beachcombers."[154]*

## 7.1 Cyberspace as Catalyst for Occult Practitioners and Practices

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[152] Elmer-Dewitt, Philip (1995) "Welcome to Cyberspace," *Time,* Special Issue, Spring 1995.

[153] **Artificial Intelligence**- John McCarthy, who coined the term in 1956 defines it **as "the science and engineering of making intelligent machines."** (McCarthy, John (2007) What is Artificial Intelligence? Computer Science Department. Stanford University.

[154] Porush, Davis (1993) "Cyberspace: Portal to Transcendence?" *Omni,* April 1993.

One of the real surprises of the 1980s, was the emergence of a strong relationship between the magical worldview and the cybernetic mentality.[155] The connection came to light in 1985 with the publication of *Drawing Down the Moon,* by Margot Adler, (National Public Radio commentator, daughter of philosopher Mortimer Adler, and a self-identified witch).

Adler's groundbreaking book was a survey of the social and spiritual history of Neo-paganism and modern witchcraft, with particular emphasis on current developments in North America.

As a component of her research, she surveyed the pagan community and discovered that: *"an 'amazingly high' percentage of folks drew their paychecks from technical fields and from the computer industry. Respondents gave many reasons for this curious affinity—everything from "computers are elementals in disguise" to the simple fact that the computer industry provided jobs for the kind of smart, iconoclastic and experimental folk that paganism attracts. . . . But if you dig deep enough, you find more intimate correspondences between computer culture and paganism's religion of the imagination."*[156]

However unusual this may seem, it comes as no surprise to anyone who understands what a Biblical Worldview means. The Bible depicts occultism in general and self-deifying occultism in particular as the ultimate rejection of God (see Genesis 3:5, Isaiah 47, and Revelation 17:1-5).

Biblically speaking, occultism is the last refuge of the *Theophobe*, magic, sorcery and necromancy, and a last obstacle bestowed upon the "sensed" approach of the presence of God. Occultism always manifests itself as a terminal form of self-will, culturally as well as personally.

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[155] Brooke, Tal (1997) Virtual Gods. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, p. 164.
[156] Davis, Eric (1995) "Technopagans." *Wired*, July 1995.

Computer technology, as with all other forms of technology does, amplifies human will and purpose, altering the nature, physical and spiritual make-up of humanity. It does so, however, at a staggering rate, and with universal application, sometimes with no hope of reversal. Whereas earlier machines only amplified manpower for *specific* purposes, (for example, steam locomotives gave us power to haul loads on rails), the cyber-machine amplifies our power for literally *anything* one wants to do, from creating superior humans via improving genetics to visualizing weather systems.

The knowledge of Computers therefore empowers every aspect of human nature without exception, resulting in a continual increase in human power. Given what the knowledge about fallen human nature, that is a sobering viewpoint.

In view of the fact that Theophobia has become an inherent part of human nature since the fall, it can unerringly be predicted that the computer revolution will drastically increase the number, and power of available means to flee from the presence of God—with particular emphasis on the more radical ways, such as techno-magic and digital spiritism.

## 8. Astral Travel

This thesis is not a detailed study of the astral body and the phenomena associated with it, per se. However, this section hypothesises on the following two points:

1. In role-playing games the gamer possesses the ability of projecting his consciousness into the character he is playing. The player sees through the eyes of the character he is playing- manipulating with their hands, moving with their feet and listening with their ears. It is a vehicle of learning to enable the gamer to reach higher consciousness, to acquire the skills and manifestation perceiving to astral travel.

2. Akin to any craft, functioning in the astral planes become easier with practice. Many assisted meditations, exist to enable people to access alternate planes of reality. In a role-playing game, the gamer constructs virtual worlds, including anything they want, in whatever size, in however much detail they desire. The gamer creates his/her own portable temple in the virtual world that makes them a part of the astral world, to which they can transfer to a certain location and thus develops a pathway of astral travel capabilities.

The fundamental concepts must firstly be illuminated, by providing clear definitions.

- **Astral,** as an adjective, is used in occultism to describe that which exists around and throughout the physical world, yet lies beyond the reach of the senses.[157] Paula Price, PhD adds, *"That which pertains to the heavens or the sky and its celestial bodies.[158]*

- **Astral travel,** also known as astral projection, or Out-of-Body experience (OBE), has been most commonly reported as occurring spontaneously during sleep, under anesthetic, or in periods of severe illness, particularly in coma or near death. Accounts of such experiences typically refer to a feeling of separating from one's physical body, frequently being able to look down upon it from above. Out-of-Body experience can involve travel, both in time and space.

  People, from several different cultures and beliefs throughout the world, interpret this phenomenon as a separation of the soul, or mind, from the body, experiencing a feeling of travelling on another, i.e. **Astral Plane**.

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[157] Geddes & Grosset (2005) Witchcraft: A fascinating account of the history of witchcraft and those who were accused of its practice. Poland: Polskabook, p.200.
[158] Price, Paula, PhD (2006) The Prophets Dictionary. The Ultimate Guide to Supernatural Wisdom. New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House Publishing, p. 68.

Some people claim that an out of body experience can be entered into, and controlled, through meditation, or self-induced trance.[159]

- **Astral Body**- The spiritual manifestation of the physical body, separable from the physical body in sleep, unconscious states and out-of-body experience.[160]

- **Astral Deities-** The planets, stars and the heavens worshipped as gods. Price noted that Beelzebub would be one example. (Matthew 10:25 and 12:24; Luke 11:19)[161]

- **Astral plane** is an invisible, all-pervading level of reality, which is believed to be reachable through altered states of consciousness or out-of-body experiences. This occurs in the spiritual realm.[162]

The term "astral", is derived from the Greek word meaning, *"related to a star,"* and was originally used in describing the heavens of the Greeks - the abodes of their gods.[163] From this sense and usage, the term extended in application, until it was employed to indicate, what might be called, the **"ghostland"** of the Ancient people.

This ghostland was believed to be inhabited by beings of an etheral[164] nature, not only disembodied spirits, but also "angelic" beings of a higher order. The ancient occultists of Greece, and other Western lands, thus naturally fell into the custom of using the familiar term to indicate that, which people today know, as the Astral Plane in modern occultism.

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[159] Geddes & Grosset (2005) Witchcraft: A fascinating account of the history of witchcraft and those who were accused of its practice. Poland: Polskabook, p. 278.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Price, Paula, PhD (2006) The Prophets Dictionary. The Ultimate Guide to Supernatural Wisdom. New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House Publishing, p. 68.
[162] Geddes & Grosset (2005) Witchcraft: A fascinating account of the history of witchcraft and those who were accused of its practice. Poland: Polskabook, p. 200.
[163] Panchadadasi, Swami. The Astral World., p.4. (www.modcam.com/.../astral/astralworld.pdf).
[164] **Ethera**l means unrelated to practical things and the real world. (English Collins Dictionary).

However, the Oriental occultists had their own terms for this plane of manifestation, which terms were derived from old Sanskrit roots, and which were much older than the Greek terms. Nevertheless, as the use of Sanskrit terms had a tendency to confuse Western students, the best Oriental teachers, today, in teaching Western students, almost always use the old Greek occult terms.[165]

Mead adds that the astral plane, also called the astral world, is a plane of existence postulated by classical (particularly neo-Platonic), mediaeval, oriental and esoteric philosophies and mystery religions.[166]

It is the world of the planetary spheres, crossed by the soul in its astral body, on the way to being born and after death, is said to be populated by angels, spirits or other immaterial beings. In the late 19th and early 20th century, the term was popularized by *Theosophy* and *neo-Rosicrucian's*.[167]

Example of the above is, the "*Barzakh*" or inter-world in Islam[168], the *"World of Yetzirah"* in Kabbalah[169], the *"Spirit World"* in Spiritualism[170] and are all related concepts in cosmology. The planes of *Dungeons & Dragons, the role-playing* game constitutes the **"multiverse"** in which the game takes place.[171] In the context of role-playing games, parallel universes are also called, **"parallel dimensions", "parallel worlds", "alternative realities"**, amongst others, but the most common description, is virtual reality or virtual world.

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[165] Panchadadasi, Swami. The Astral World., p.4. (www.modcam.com/.../astral/astralworld.pdf*).*
[166] Mead, G R S (1919) The Doctrine of the Subtle Body in Western Tradition. Watkins, p. 84.
[167] Plato (1978) (trans. Desmond Lee). The Republic Second edition. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
[168] Barzahh. (http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/barzakh,+al-).
[169] Leet, Leonora (1999) The secret doctrine of the Kabbalah: Recovering the key to Hebraic sacred science. Rochester,Vermont: Inner Traditions International, p. 267.
[170] Hull, J Arthur (1918) Spiritism- Its History, Phenomena And Doctrine. London, New York, Toronto and Melbourne: Cassell and Company, ltd, p.211.
[171] Grubb, Jeff (1987) Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Manual of the Planes. TSR Publishing.

Plato and Aristotle taught that the stars were composed of a type of matter different from the four earthly elements - a fifth, ethereal element, or quintessence. In his commentaries on Plato's *Timaeus*, Proclus wrote:

*"Man is a little world (mikro cosmos). For, just like the Whole, he possesses both mind and reason, both a divine and a mortal body. He is also divided up according to the universe. It is for this reason, you know, that some are accustomed to say that his consciousness corresponds with the nature of the fixed stars, his reason in its contemplative aspect with Saturn and in its social aspect with Jupiter, (and) as to his irrational part, the passionate nature with Mars, the eloquent with Mercury, the appetitive with Venus, the sensitive with the Sun and the vegetative with the Moon."*[172]

In the **"astral mysticism"**[173] of the classical world, the human psyche was composed of the same material, thus accounting for the influence of the stars upon human affairs. Astronomical knowledge was developed over time in the ancient Near East, eventually allowing prediction of phenomena such as the location of the planets, the phases of the moon, and eclipses.

This knowledge was used as the basis of a religious system, which was integrated into Greek and Roman Paganism. This involved worship of the planets and stars, and a belief that, after death (if virtuous), one ascends to the heavens.[174]

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[172] Mead, G R S (1919) The Doctrine of the Subtle Body in Western Tradition. Watkins, p. 84. (Slightly adapted).

[173] **Astral Mysticism**: conceived a blissful state of mind where man, even on earth, freed himself of all that was earthly, emancipated himself from the needs of the body, as from bonds, and from the impulses born of it, to devote himself to the contemplation of nature and of the starry sky, which imparted to him direct knowledge of divine activity.

[174] Cumont, Franz (2009) Astrology and Religion among the Greek and Romans. Evinity Publishing Inc, p. 85.

Figure 4. Dante's heavens and hells, symbolizes the astral spheres and their associated virtues and vices.

Throughout the renaissance, philosophers, Paracelsians, Rosicrucians and alchemists, continued to discuss the nature of the astral world intermediate between earth and the divine. According to Dante, God lived in the space beyond the stars.

He fixes our eyes on heaven, the place he located so confidently, beyond the stars, the place of encounter with God, with a human self which is no longer wandering blindly though a dark wood, but which can gaze upon the face of God. By the fourteenth century, **Dante** was describing his own imaginary journey through the astral spheres of *Paradise*[175] (Figure 5).

Once Science had discovered (through the invention of the telescope) that space is infinite and that it has no boundaries, cosmologists were left with a dilemma. They struggled with the question: Where does God fit if there is no room for heaven? How can we say that God dwells in a named place if, until that stage, there could have been no such a thing as heaven?

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[175] Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (1964) An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines. University of New York Press, passim. Idries Shah, The Sufis, Octagon Press, 1st Ed. 1964.

For Christians, heaven is much more than a place to spend eternity, and a home for God's people.[176] It is also the place where God and Jesus Christ, the Lamb lives. It is the dwelling place of God.[177] Heaven is a real place that cannot be seen with human eyes. It can only be seen through the eyes of faith.

God describes heaven to His children in His Word and through faith; the Christian believed what God said about this place, even though it has never been seen. Heaven is more than just a PLACE. It involves a PERSON. Heaven would not be heaven, without Christ. Heaven is where Christ is, and God's children shall, someday, see Him and be with Him forevermore!

## 8.1 The Astral Plane And Astral Experience

Commensurate with Uzorma, planes of existence are different realities with interwoven connections. Each plane is effectively its own universe, with its own natural laws.
This realm of spirits, exist in different places of the created worlds of matter; space; energy and time. The psychic games and metaphysical manipulations, present in each and every plane of the kingdom of darkness to the detriment of human beings, are multidimensional in all aspects of spiritual warfare.

Uzorma emphasizes that there are different kinds of spiritual beings, such as the Invisible Servants; Ascended Masters; Space Masters; Demigods; Guardians of the Mystery Schools; Temples of Golden Wisdom; Spiritual Guides; Controlling Deities; Planetary Spirits and the Elementals- to mention but a few.[178]

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[176] See Revelation 4-5; Luke 16:22,25; Hebrew 12:23.
[177] See Deuteronomy 26:15; Matthew 6:9.
[178] Uzorma, Ike Nathan PhD (1997) Witches and Wizards and all the powers of Darkness. Lagos, Nigeria: Glorious People Nig. Ltd, pp.82, 83.

According to occult teachings, the astral plane can be visited consciously through astral projection, meditation and mantra; near death experience; lucid dreaming, and various other means. Individuals, trained in the use of the astral vehicle, can separate their consciousness in the astral vehicle from the physical body, at will.[179]

People have claimed that there is Biblical justification for the occultic practice of *Astral Projection*, sometimes also called *Soul Travel*. Astral travel is a demonic action that involves the soul, or the spirit of a person leaving their physical body, and being able to travel invisibly.

The occultist travels consciously, and with a purpose, and is always wide-awake on such journeys. He is as content on the Astral Plane as on the physical one. Can the Biblical texts that promulgate this viewpoint *really* confirm the teaching of this practice?

> *I know a man in Christ fourteen years before--whether in the body, I do not know, or out of the body, I do not know, God knows--such a one was caught up to the third Heaven. And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know; God knows--that he was caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable words which a man is not permitted to speak.*
>
> *2 Corinthians 12:2-4*

> *And at once I became in spirit. And, behold, a throne was set in Heaven, and One sitting on the throne.*
>
> *Revelation 4:2*

> *And he carried me in spirit onto a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, holy Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God*
>
> *Revelation 21:10*

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[179] Brennan, J H (1996) Astral Doorways. Thoth Publications.

One of the main differences between the above Biblical texts, and occultic astral projection, is that when God's people were caught up in the Spirit, it was God who prompted it, whereas in occultic astral travel, it is often the practitioner who is **"seeking"** after the experience. This can be illustrated after the vast amount of literature, and "how to-" books on the subject are considered. People in the Bible, who has experienced being, **"brought out in the spirit"**[180] which some interpret as being astral travel, was not seeking the experience. Those who practice astral travel do just that – "practice" it, seek after it, and are taught it from a book or a course. It is a demonic induced, paranormal activity, that is controlled through demonic spirits, that are not of God.

In comparison to the Biblical Angels who have the ability to fly, one might ask: By what entity or power do astral travellers **"fly"**?

Due to the nature of the Bible, being a book about God and mankind, angels are generally mentioned only in passing, as a story element rather than the main characters. Not surprisingly then, the canonical books only mentioned three angels by name: Satan, Michael and Gabriel. All three mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments.

The Archangel Michael's Hebrew name, *Miykael,* means, *"who [is] like God."*[181] As can be expected, Michael is the defender of Israel.[182] And as such, no mention is made of how he actually struggled with one of the fallen angels, in order to assist the Israelites in the Bible. While the story is mentioned **"in passing,"** it nonetheless reveals much about the struggle that is ongoing, without people being conscious of it.

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[180] **Ezekiel 37:1-14**: The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he **brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord** and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, you know." Then he said to me, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ...

[181] Strong, James. Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. NY: Abingdon Press, p. 4317.

[182] Quayle, Stephen (2003) Aliens and Fallen Angels. Offspring Of The Gods: The Sexual Corruption of the human race. Bozeman, MT: End Time Thunder Publishers, p. 97.

The prophet Daniel recounts how he spent three full weeks in prayer and partial fasting, waiting for God to disclose the answer to a troubling vision that had been revealed to him. When an angel finally came to answer his prayer, he brought not only the solution to Daniel's puzzle, but a story of how good and evil were battling on a level shrouded from man's eyes.[183]

There are a number of interesting points in this passage, however this section will only focus on Daniel 9:21, where Daniel saw Gabriel, whose name means **"mighty one of God,"**[184] who has the ability to fly. Although he is never described as having wings, one could speculate that either Daniel assumed that readers would realize that he must have wings to fly, or that he somehow flew without wings. Unfortunately, the precise details have been lost to history. It is interesting to note, however, that when Jesus Christ departed from the earth, He rose into Heaven- without wings![185] This suggests that angels, as spiritual beings don't require wings to fly.

The question arises: Do other angels have wings? On a number of occasions, angels are said to fly: (Daniel 9:21, Revelation 14:6).

The flight of angels does not necessitate wings. Even current fictional superheroes fly without the aid of wings.

Satan, who is know according to Scripture as **"the god of this world,"**[186] "**the prince of the power of the air"**[187] and the **"Father of lies"**[188] has, along with the fallen angels and demons a spiritual system of false doctrines which they employ to mentally snare men and women. Probably the oldest of these (and continuously being advocated by various religions including the New Age movement) are that a person will eventually become a god.

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[183] See Daniel 10:5-14.
[184] Strong, James. Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. NY: Abingdon Press, pp. 1894, 1970,1403.
[185] See Matthew 28; Luke 24; Acts 1
[186] See 2 Corinthians 4:4.
[187] See Ephesians 2:2.
[188] See John 8:44.

This lie was presented to Eve in Eden[189], and is continuously to be seen in the teachings of eternal destiny; free love; reincarnation; human-sacrifice and even astral travel used as one of the multiple ways to reach godhood.

Thus, the world of man is full of diverse elements of darkness, inherent in the primordial esoteric energy of witchcraft spirits. This primordial esoteric, occultic, or metaphysical power of the entity Satan, ***"The god of this world"*** operates within this realm, the forces of darkness and their human agents, upholding the art of witchcraft.

In light of the fact that Satan is the ***"Father of lies,"*** it isn't surprising that his doctrines are based on lies and false logic, presented as fact. It could be contended that the rage of interactive role-playing games, among the youth especially, has been made possible through the Internet, being an intoxicating cyber-world. At present, millions of net-surfers are speeding down the largest superhighway on the Internet, to participate in this newly arrived imaginary realm, constructed from virtual reality and various interactive games.

Fifteen years ago, *Dungeons and Dragons*, the game that initiated this rage, took the nation by storm. It contained complex rules and long-term strategies seen in war-game theory used by the Pentagon.
Instead of modern weapons being used, however, the players had magical powers and cast spells. Experience-hungry youth, looking for an escape, have become increasingly addicted to the alternate realms of these games.

Now, with the advent of such games on the Internet—forming a kind of electronic astral plane—the population there will most likely soar. The question should be posed as to the direction the countless travellers, choosing to live on the Internet, will be taken, as these realms become increasingly more exotic and powerful.

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[189] See Genesis 3:5.

## 8.2 Case Study: An Interview with an Occult Grandmaster: Dr Iyke Nathan Uzorma.[190]

**Interviewer:** You spoke of inter-planetary travel. Does it mean that a person can spiritually travel out of his body with esoteric power to other planets of the spirit-world?

**Dr Uzorma:** Yes! That is accomplished via the utilization of some subtle extraterrestrial energy of the "Cosmic Forces". Inter-planetary travel is relatively the same as soul travel or astral projection, only that there is a little technical difference. For instance, astral projection is a conscious out-of-body experience or journey to the Astral Plane, while soul travel is an out-of-body projection to higher planes and regions of the spiritual realm, beyond the world of astral deities. However, both soul travel and astral projection can be called inter-planetary journeys.

All forms of inter-planetary projection, as evident in the teachings off different cults both here and beyond, are based on the inner psychic manipulations of the occult. In the past, I was a master in this art of inter-planetary journey.

I even invented various advanced applied "super-power" techniques of inter-planetary projection, which I taught secretly via numerous monographs and libbers.

In other words, using the subtle etheric vibrations of the human spirit, entities in the spiritual realm, can elevate the consciousness of man to such psychic planes, transcending the propensities of the physical system of reality via soul travel. However, this art is an abomination before the Lord, for through it, the earthman is projected into the world of spirits that are banished from the presence of the supreme Lord.

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[190] Uzorma, Ike Nathan PhD (1997) *Witches and Wizards and all the powers of Darkness.* Lagos, Nigeria: Glorious People Nig. Ltd, pp. 84, 85.

## 9. Avatar- The Movie

The movie AVATAR is a triumph of moviemaking. As cinematography, it rates a ten on the scale of ten. It is in the first rank of Science Fiction films such as The Matrix, 2001: A Space Odyssey, Star Wars: A New Hope, The Day the Earth Stood Still, The Time Machine, Metropolis, Alien, Bladerunner, The War of the Worlds, Le Voyage Dans la Lune and King Kong. All of these films represented great advancements in the science of filmmaking, and the extension of our vision, and the expansion of our minds.



Figure 5. Avatar, The Movie[191]

### 9.1 The hidden meaning of James Cameron's *AVATAR*

The title of the film, "Avatar" is a Hindu word that means *"god incarnated"* or god in the flesh. "God" is not capitalised in the previous definition since in the Hindu pantheon any number of creatures can be termed god.

The film's Avatars are blue, genetically modified creatures that are feline / simian / satyrs. They also stand about 10 feet tall and the best way to describe them is-- ***not human***.

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[191] Avatar. The Movie. (http://famousmonstersoffilmland.com/2011/09/20/avatar-sequels-may-get-a-higher-frame-rate-also-a-theme-park/).

According to Paula Price (PhD) a **Satyr** is an ancient god-like creature of mythological origin that symbolized male lust and pleasure-seeking live. This image signified a lecherous person. It represents the spirits and agents of the old gods of Rome, Greece- the mythological gods Pan, Bacchus, Dionysus and Silvanus. These spirits were worshipped as the force of intoxication, lust, rape and orgies. Incest and child molestation were also required by or performed for them. The satyrs were the molesters of nymphs whose supposed purity was defiled by them.[192] (Daniel 8:5,8,21)

The whole movie is a highly technological advanced film, to condition the masses to accept that Pagan "nature worship" or pantheism is good. "Pandora" where the movie is situated is a moon of a giant Saturn like gaseous planet. The name "Pandora" itself is a reference to a mythical story of all the evils that have befallen mankind by the opening of Pandora's Box.

According to Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology the Greek myth goes as long as Cronus had reigned, gods and men had lived on terms of mutual understanding. They shared everything equally, ate together and men and the immortal gods sat down together.

Everything changed with the coming of the Olympians. Over men Zeus asserted his divine supremacy. A meeting of gods and men were held at Sicyon to determine which portion of victims offered in sacrifice is owned to the gods. Prometheus, who was in charge of the partition, laid out an enormous ox which he had cut up in his own way. He arranged the flesh, the entrails and the most succulent morsels in the skin and placed them on one side; on the other side he perfidiously laid the fleshless bones which he had covered with a rich layer of fat.

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[192] Price, Paula A Dr (1999) The Prophet's Dictionary: The Ultimate Guide to Supernatural Wisdom. New Kensington: Whitaker House, p. 487.

Zeus, who was invited to take first choice, chose the bones; but when he had removed the white, gleaming fat and discovered nothing but the animal's bones, he fell into a rage. In his anger he withheld fire from the unfortunate race that lived on earth.

But the astute Prometheus went to the Island of Lemnos, where Hephaestus kept his forges. There he stole a brand of holy fire which he enclosed in a hollow stalk and carried back to men. Another version of the story claims that he lighted his torch at the wheel of the sun.

Outraged by the theft, Zeus sent a fresh calamity to men. He ordered Hephaestus to fashion clay and water into a body, to give it vital force and human voice and to make there from a virgin whose dazzling beauty would equal that of the immortal goddesses.

All the divinities heaped their especial gifts on this new creature, who received the name of **Pandora**. Hermes, however, put perfidy into Pandora's heart and lies into her mouth. After which Zeus sent her as a gift to Epimetheus. Although his brother Prometheus had warned him against accepting any gift from the ruler Olympus, the imprudent Epimetheus was enchanted by Pandora's beauty, welcomed her, and made a place for her among men. Unhappy imprudence!

For Pandora brought in her arms a great vase- which is incorrectly called "Pandora's Box." She raised its lid, and the terrible afflictions with which the vase had been filled escaped and spread over the earth. Hope alone did not fly away. Thus, with the arrival of the first woman, misery made its appearance on earth.[193]

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[193] Hamley, Paul (1959) Larousse Encyclopedia Of Mythology. London: Paul Hamley, Ltd, p. 99.

And this move opens a veritable Pandora's Box by indoctrinating the (mostly) unsuspecting audience that all things are god, that all created beings are all one big family, be it a murderous hyena, a serpentine dragon or a banana tree, all things have the same spirit in them.

The message is that living in harmony with "nature" (the Greek god Pan) is our salvation; that using our God-given intelligence to create machines and technology to make life more comfortable is evil. The movie conditions people to believe that ugliness is beautiful, that lies are truth, that creation is God and not the Creator.

The ceremonies in the movie where the tribe gathers together to worship are very reminiscent of African / Haitian / Native ceremonies where music and natural hallucinogenics are used to induce an altered hypnotic state in which the worshiper does not reach out and touch the Most High God but rather the most low animal spirit within and becomes a beast.

There is no doubt that all things in nature have life in them, but what needs to be understood is that the life comes from the Creator and points you to consider the Creator not the created thing.

Appreciating and valuing life in nature leads one to belief and worship one's Creator, He from whom all life originates. Without appreciating and valuing the Life Giver, one can never truly appreciate or value life.

If a person agrees with this belief as pictured by James Cameron and you have chosen to bear the image of the creation rather than the Creator ***you have changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. (Romans 1:25).***

At the end of Avatar, the hero becomes one of the indigenous people: not just an honorary member of the tribe. **The Avatar becomes his reality.**

**9.2 Correlation to RPG's**

AVATAR is a movie of multiple meanings, some can be taken as good, or bad, but the fact remains how disconnected from reality we have truly become.

Some people have gone to the point where they actually believe that the fake world can become real to them if they try hard enough. And this isn't just true for children; this is true for most of the modern population. And example of such is the game "World of Warcraft" which has accumulated over 6 million players world wide

The kids of today are playing video games 100 hours a week or more. If they had a choice, would they choose to live in the *Call of Duty world?* Where they could be strong, lethal and immortal? Where they could be heroes?

**9.3 Finding the Sacred in the Ordinary**

What the movie advocates is that Heaven is not separated from Earth and that *The Divine* or *The Self* is not miles apart from man's ordinary state. To them Heaven is everywhere. They do not need to go anywhere –especially not up- to open that hidden portal; rather they must be willing to be fully present *in* and *as* his body.

They must also be prepared to acknowledge and demonstrate, through compassionate action, that they share their somatic reality with countless other beings with whom they are interconnected and interdependent.

They found a deep recognition in the unity of life- a unity that is celebrated in the act of love. This act of love recognizes no barriers; however it is the organic impulse towards wholeness. That wholeness is the holy, the sacred. To them, thinking of the sacred is not something apart from them.

They sense and respond to the sacred within and around themselves. The world according to this belief is full of divinity.

*"Erotic power is the power of our primal interrelatedness. Erotic power, as it creates and connects hearts, involves the whole person in relationships of self-awareness, vulnerability, openness and caring."*[194] Erotic Power is not about overwhelming or dominating the other person. It is rather, about empowering and the sharing of life-energy. The unifying symbol of erotic power is the very centre of the universe.[195]

## 10. Conclusion

Cyberspace is the new frontier of the **imagination**. Horn quotes Rod Sterling, *"There is a fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. In the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man's fears and the summit of his knowledge. This is **the dimension of imagination.** It is an area which we call The Twilight Zone."*[196]

The comment of Sterling could be taken as representative of those holding the belief that Avatars are our first stumbling steps into the new world, this so-called **"Twilight Zone"**— the first attempt at inhibiting this land of the mind and machine.[197] Avatars, nonetheless, are not just alter egos in a new technological atmosphere; they are also idols that exist on a virtual plane. Not formed of wood or stone — though grounded in silicon — they occupy a borderless digital plane. They are images of ourselves, of what a person would like to be.

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[194] Brock, R N (1988) Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic power. New York: Cross Road, p.26.
[195] Feuerstein, George, PhD (1992) Secret Sexuality: The Erotic Spirit in the World's Great Religions. Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions, pp.202-213.
[196] Horn, Tom and Nita (2011) Forbidden Gates. The Dawn of Techno-Dimensional Spiritual Warfare. Crane, Missouri: Defender Publishing group, p.33.
[197] Brooke, Tal 1997) Virtual Gods. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, p. 146.

As the technology of virtual reality improves, these Avatars will increasingly become the images of we aspire, dream to become: the Supermen and – women, the Avatars of the will, of the virtual world.

**"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27).** Man was made in the image of God.  The image of God is a person: Jesus Christ.

> **He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation**
> > **Colossians 1:15**

> **In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God**
> > **2 Corinthians 4:4**

Man's purpose is to be conformed to the image of Christ in how you live, breathe, think, act, worship and glorify God.[198]  This tremendous explosion of virtual worlds, and Avatar images that come with it, is leading to a direct confrontation with the Creator God. God created man in His likeness and image, hence a representative figure. It is evident from the Bible that God does not have a flesh-and-blood body, but the way man was created, makes him in the likeness of God.

Through technology, man is now the "creator." The Avatar is the object, representing the embodiment of the user. Scientists are now wondering if the creation of artificial intelligence in a computer, is a form of life, similar to biological life. These Scientist are actually grappling with the concept that they are creating a new form of life.

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[198] Struthers, William M (2009) Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography hijacks the mail brain. Illinois: IVP Books.

Dr John P McTernan notes that many of the Scientists involved with Singularity[199], are obsessed with their achievements, and the direction of Science.[200]

The God of the Bible is going to be rejected as Creator by vast numbers of people. In the mind of these people, there is no longer a need for God. This is a sin of pride! Man now possesses the power to direct his own evolution and mortality.

Sin is distorting the image of God, and this falls within the realm of Satan's planning for millennia: the redesign of humanity! Satan's desire for man is to direct his own destiny, to completely reject the image of God, to be fearless of God and refrain from submission to His Word.

Satan has worked to destroy mankind, fuelled by his hatred of God and his jealousy toward mankind, which was created in God's image. Author Steve Quayle attests to the fact, that the anger of Satan is powerful and that his anger is directed to destroy and pervert mankind in totality, both on a spiritual, as well as the physical level.[201] Mankind's adversary has been tearing up the image of God since the Devil's rebellion in Heaven.

A type of attack, Satan launched against mankind in his rage-driven assault, is the weapon of obsessive- and/or compulsive behavior, which can lead to an addiction. It is proven that an addiction to excessive Internet use, especially amongst gamers, is a drug that radically alters the brain of its user. It is a highly addictive drug.

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[199] **Singularity**: The meaning of man's biological thinking and existence with technology to the point that there is no distinction between human and machine.
[200] Horn, N; Stearman, Gary; et al (2011) Pandemonium's Engine: How the End of the Church Age, the rise of the transhumanism, and the coming of the Unermensch (Overman Herald. Satan's Immanent and Final Assault on the Creation of God. Crane, Missouri: Defender Publishing, p.287
[201] Quayle, Steve (2003) Genetic Armageddon: Today's Technology Tomorrows Monsters. Bozeman, MT: End Time Thunder, p. 275.

The sin of pride is the true essence of addiction. Nevertheless, the devastating neuro-chemical web of Internet addiction causes the addicted to lose all control of their ability to resist this sin. Addiction is the very definition of selfishness, the ultimate contracture of perspective. As the pleasure centers are abused and damaged, normal pleasures become less recognizable by the brain as being desirable.

The perspective of a person acting, out an addiction, is progressively constricted, until nothing exists but obsession. When craving commences, reasoning ends.[202]

Addiction is literally a "collision", with the adversary producing, not only a spiritual wound, but also causing physical damage to the brain.

> **Whosoever looketh on a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart**
>
> **Matthew 5:28**

> **An evil man is held captive by his own sins, they are ropes that catch and hold him**
>
> **Proverbs 5:22**

Due to the brain being the most tangible representative of the soul, the merging of the body and the spirit, Internet addiction that results in damage to the brain, literally damages the soul. The chemical chains of addiction thus become the spiritual chains of sin.

> **To be carnally minded is death (spiritual death)**
>
> **Romans 8:6**

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[202] Brand, Prof Dr Connie MJ (2012) Brain Function changes and Addiction. Self-published class notes. Râdâh Academy. Pretoria, South Africa.

To have a self-image, rooted in unworthiness, dishonors the image of God, intrinsic in each individual.  God does not call man to a life of shame, but to a life of freedom, as we progress from an awareness of sinfulness to confession and repentance, from redemption and healing, to ministry and sanctification.[203]

Evident from any addiction, the real problem identified is lust, and as lust disappears, by the grace and mercy of God's healing and forgiveness, many will find that even their dreams, become peaceful and pure.

> **Many are called, but few are chosen,…because they set their hearts upon the things of this world**
>
> **Matthew 20:16**

What is man's calling and what is he chosen for? To *"glory and virtue"*, whereby he may receive *"exceedingly great and precious promises",* and thus be a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world, **through lust**.[204]

However, author Dave Hunt notes that the distinction between right and wrong has lost it's meaning. According to modern psychology, no person can be held responsible for any of his actions. A person is portrayed as a victim, driven to his actions by the trauma he suffered as a child, trauma, that triggered unconscious, motives and urges buried in the subconscious, and is thus unknown to man, and beyond their control.

Many of today's parents, convinced of such lies, will not discipline their children, for fear of damaging their psyches. They are convinced that a game is but a game, something one does for recreation and fun.

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[203] Struthers, William M (2009) Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography hijacks the mail brain. Illinois: IVP Books.

[204] Hilton, Donald L  (MD) (2009)  He restoreth my soul.  Understanding and Breaking chemical and Spiritual Chains of Pornography Addiction through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. San Antonio: Forward Press Publishing, LCC, p.349.

As Gross points out: Before Freud, no educated adult could find a plausible reason to avoid responsibility for his actions. It was left to psychoanalysis and psychodynamic psychology to create a blameless man. It is not achieve by covering up his faults, but by tracing them back to his childhood, when he was morally innocent...

*"Freud once explained this blamelessness to a patient ashamed of his cowardliness. 'I pointed out to him that he ought logically to consider himself as in no way responsible for any of these traits in his character... these reprehensible impulses... were only derivatives of his infantile character surviving in his unconscious; and ... moral responsibility could not be applied to children.'"[205]*

Scripture teaches that a lack of discipline leads to rebellion:

> **Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. For he wounds, but he also binds up; he injures, but his hands also heal.**
>
> **Job 5:17-18**

> **You rebuke and discipline men for their sin. (Psalm 39:11) Blows and wounds cleanse away evil, and beatings purge the inmost being.**
>
> **Proverbs 20:30**

> **The LORD has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death. (Psalm 118:18) Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law.**
>
> **Psalm 94:12**

Man's attempts at eternal life, through an Avatar, bionic man or android are disgraceful and pathetic. God freely offers eternal life with Him. This offer comes through faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior. Man was created in God's image, but sinned causing separation from His Creator resulting in death. Through the death of Jesus Christ and the blood He shed for sin, God reversed the consequences of man's actions.

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[205] Hunt, Dave (1998) Occult Invasion. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, p. 324.

By resorting to faith in Jesus Christ, God will provide a new body that is not fashioned like an Avatar, but is like the resurrected body of Jesus Christ. God promises to mankind, and offers to all believers, the assurance of eternal life with Him.

> **For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**
>
> *John 3:16*

The future for those, trusting in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord is eternity, with the Creator, in a body that never grows old and is not subjected to disease or death:

> **It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.**
>
> *1 Corinthians 15:44*

Modern man denies the existence of sin and that man has a sinful nature. Man has a tendency towards sin and evil, and only through being born again spiritually through faith in Jesus Christ, can this evil, sinful nature be eradicated.

Mankind is racing toward Singularity and the confrontation with the true Creator. Now is the time to trust God and to turn to Jesus Christ, as our Savior and Lord. In the near future, people will be forced or coerced to worship *The Image,* as stated in Revelation 13:14 &15, under the threat of death.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## PhD

### PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

*You meant evil. . . but God meant it for good.*

*Genesis 50:20*

Cover Art for Chapters:       WarCraft, Diablo, Dungeons & Dragons
Graphic Design:       Susan Langeveldt, SL Studios

## *The Value And Methodology Pertaining To Role-Playing Games And the Hidden And Dangerous Essence There-Of*

## 1. Introduction

This Chapter analyses the social phenomena of FRPG from a Biblical perspective. The research method utilized, is the case study approach, together with relevant statistical data. The case study method allows the researcher to investigate a contemporary phenomenon, within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.[1]

Case studies provide a special way of collecting, organizing, and analyzing data to gather comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth information about each case of interest.

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[1]Kuo, Chun-Ho; Dunn, Kimberly D. &Randhawa, Sabah U  (1999) "A case study assessment of performance measurement in distribution centers." Industrial Management & Data Systems, Vol.

The case study method allows people being interviewed, to describe experiences in their own language, rather than the researcher's. The case study method is the most appropriate method for this research, as it is capable of handling both qualitative and quantitative data.[2]

The case study approach is used to motivate and encourage critical thinking. Feagin, Origin & Sjoberg, states that case studies are multi-perspectival analysis, and that cast studies are known as a triangulated research. Triangulation therefore can concur with data, investigators, theories and methodologies.[3]

The need for triangulation arises from the ethical need to confirm the validity of the process. In the case studies in the following section, triangulation is reached through alternative explanations and protocols that are used to ensure accuracy.

## 2. Case Description

The focus of the case study is to investigate whether fantasy, magic, demonic, medieval; science fiction; horror; or historical, role-playing games promote an anti-god worldview.

The objective of the case studies is to point out the deceitful nature, demonic content and immersive escapist aspect of MMORPG, that can lure a player into it's web of addiction, mind-control, trickery and spiritual death. The quintessential characteristic of the case studies, is to strive towards a Biblical understanding of a person's involvement in Role-playing games, together with a exegetical perspective concerning an individual's participation with magic, occultism, idolatry, and paganism just no name a few.

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[2]Yin, R K (1989) *Case study research: Design and methods.* Applied Social Research Series, Vol. 5. London: Sage.

[3]Feagin, J; Orum, A &Sjoberg, G (1991) A case for case study. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press.

## 3. Case Study Protocol

The case study protocol for the multiple-case studies used in this thesis presents a major component in ascertaining the reliability of the case study research. The following sections are included in the case study protocol:

- An overview, as explained in the following Theoretical Propositions of the study, includes the objectives, issues and research questions being investigated.

- Field procedures involve data collection, which is properly designed. See point 5: Sources of Evidence in Case Study

- Case study questions. See Addendum One.

## 4. Theoretical Propositions of the Case Study

The goal of this case study includes an examination of the influence of MMORPG on a) Spiritual level, b) Physical level and c) on the level of the soul.

The objectives, deriving from the goals, are:

1. An assessment of role-playing games that saturate the player in an anti-god, worldview.

2. An evaluation of the occultic content of the games, to indicate whether this games promotes and glorifies witchcraft.

3. To establish a basis of understanding towards a resolution whether a person can be spirit-filled, and still play MMORPG.

The research questions arising from the above objectives are as follows:

- Is the Christian view that MMORPG's is a platform to promote Satanic worship, magic ritual acts and mind control, inaccurate?

- Is the occultic content and nature of role-playing games (among other such claims), founded in ignorance? Is it a misconception, or at worse a lie?

- Can the gamer be described as kneeling and reciting an incarnation?

- Is the gamer involved in evil, spiritual forces? Do they participate in evil sorcery, recite incantations, curse other people and summons demons?

- Can this result in an anti-god worldview?

## 5. Sources Of Evidence In Case Study

### 5.1 Documents

Documents that are germane to the investigation include newspaper articles, Internet news reports, news reports broadcasted by television, journals and research papers.

### 5.2 Archival Documents

Archival documents that are being carefully evaluated for the purpose of these multiple-case studies include lists of names, survey data and historical quantitative data.

**5.3 Interview**

The structured interview is the most important source of information. The key-respondents were asked to comment on their view RPG, the perceived effects it had on them, (if any in their opinion), to propose solutions and to provide insight into the phenomenon of MMORPG. It was an open-ended interview format. Respondents were asked to answer a set of questions.

**5.4 Direct observation**

The researcher conducted visits during the case study, where the researcher observed groups of people, and the participants, playing a MMORPG. This technique was very helpful for providing additional information about the games being studied.

**5.5 Participant Observation**

Due to the demonic content of the game, the researcher elected not to partake or to play, any of the MMORPG, under investigation.

# 6. Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is very selective, focusing on the issues that are fundamental to understanding MMORPG that is being examined. The case study is a multi-perspectival analysis.

For the purpose of this thesis the researcher considers not just the perspectives of the active participant, but also the immediate family members, spouse and close friends.

## 7. Analysing Case Study Evidence

The researcher will rely on theoretical propositions of the study and then analyse the evidence based on these propositions, to reach a conclusion. A high priority will be given on direct interpretation of events and respondents.

## 8. Case Study One: Anders Behring Breivik

### 8.1 Profile: Anders Behring Breivik

The following profie was compiled from various articles and news reports from BBC[4], The Daily Mail UK, The Independent, CNN,[5] The New York TImes

*"The savage, blood-soaked massacre in Norway might seem like the act of a deranged madman. But the perpetrator, Anders Behring Breivik, was nothing of the sort."*[6]

The sight of Anders Behring Breivik – tall, clean-cut and dressed in a police uniform – must have at first seemed a reassuring presence to the young members of Norway's governing Labour Party, when they encountered him at their summer camp on the island of Utoya.Until the moment he opened fire. Now the 32-year-old, who reportedly shot and killed at least 85 victims in cold blood, and killed another seven with the Oslo bomb, has emerged as a Right-wing extremist, bitterly opposed to Norway's tradition of open-minded liberalism.

His internet postings reveal a hatred of multi-culturalism, and include offensive references to, *"Somali immigrants with full Norwegian passports"* living off state benefits, and sending money home to their Muslim relatives.

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[4] BBC. (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14259989).
[5]Sudder, John D (2012) "Norway Mass-Shooting Trail Reopens Debate On Violent Video Games." CNN. April 20, 2012. 1622GMT.
[6] Wilson, David (2012) "The Changes he saw all around him fed his warped sense of injustice." *The Daily Mail, UK.* (http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2017962/Anders-Behring-Breivik-Right-wing-extremist-hated-immigrants-multi-culturalism.html#ixzz1t8HmoSHi)

Breivik was born on 13 February 1979 in London, where his father, a diplomat, was stationed at the time. Jens Breivik - long estranged from his son - has expressed shock at the crime. *"I view this atrocity with absolute horror,"* he was quoted as saying by London's Daily Telegraph newspaper from his home in southwest France.

Little is known about his early life, however, and there are no obvious clues providing an explanation of how and why, he resorted to such terrible acts of violence.

Breivik is thought to have grown up in comfortable circumstances and until recently lived with his mother Wenche in an affluent Oslo suburb. His parents divorced when he was one year old, and his relationship with his father broke down irretrievably when he was a teenager. The father and son have not spoken since then.

He studied at the city's School of Management, which offers degrees and postgraduate courses, but it is not clear what qualification, if any, he obtained.

His former landlady in the Skoyen district of the city, said last night: *"I cannot believe he was capable of doing such a thing."*

A man living in the same block of flats said: *"He did not appear to be interested in speaking to people and would just walk past neighbours. I got the impression he was a mummy's boy who did not want to leave home because he had it so good."*

Breivik had no military background, beyond the national service all young Norwegians are obliged to undertake, nor did he have a criminal record. Police reported that they knew nothing of him until his arrest on Friday.

He was the registered holder of two weapons – a Glock pistol and an automatic rifle – both of which, are thought to have been used in the massacre at Utoya.

Breivik moved out of Oslo two years ago and bought a farm in the town of Ostre Asta, where he set up an agricultural enterprise dealing in vegetables, melons, roots and tubers. The farm consists of a scattering of outbuildings on a grassy slope, leading down to a forest-fringed lake.

It was in this tranquil setting, police believe, that Breivik planned his devastating attacks. Using the farm business as cover, he placed an order for six tons of fertiliser with a local supplier two months ago. Oddny Estenstad, a spokeswoman for the supply firm, said he seemed like any other customer.

*"He contacted us in the normal manner, ordered fertiliser and had it delivered,"* he said. The Norwegian police and security services, are investigating possible links between Breivik and European far-Right groups, including the English Defence League.

He is thought to have posted messages on a Norwegian website expressing admiration for the EDL and an extremist group called Stop Islamification of Europe.

It is Breivik's online profile that has provided the authorities with the most information about him thus far.

On his Facebook page attributed to him, which was blocked soon after the killings, he described himself as a Christian, and a conservative. He listed his interests as bodybuilding, conservative politics and freemasonry. He also had a liking for violent video games and American TV drama series Dexter, about a forensic blood spatter pattern expert with the Miami police, who hunts down and kills criminals in his spare time.

He appears to have created entries on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, though the accounts were set up on 17 July, only five days prior to the attacks in Oslo and on the island of Utoeya, where a summer youth camp of the governing Labour Party was taking place.

He hijacked a quotation by the 19th Century British libertarian and philosopher John Stuart Mill.

Mill said: *"One person with a belief is equal to a force of 99 who have only interests."* Breivik changed this to: *"One person with a belief is equal to a force of 100,000 who have only interests."*

In another message, he expressed concern about the effects of immigration on Norwegian society. *"There are political forces in Oslo who want mass-subsidised and low-cost 'Islam-blocks' in Oslo West for 'better integration',"* he wrote.

Further, with reference to his contacts with the English Defence League, he wrote: *"I have on some occasions discussed with . . . the EDL and recommended them to use conscious strategies. The tactics of the EDL is to 'entice' an overreaction from Jihad Youth/Extreme Marxists – something they have succeeded several times [with] already."*

In another posting, dated December 2009, Breivik claimed there was no country where Muslims lived peacefully alongside non-Muslims.While Breivik openly expressed his views online, there was little to indicate that the young man - described by friends as quiet, friendly and ordinary - would go on to kill dozens of people, many in cold blood.

According to friends, Breivik began to advocate extremist views in his late 20s. He was also a member of the second largest party in the Norwegian parliament, from 1999 to 2004. Other members of the centre-right Progress Party, described him as *"a modest person who seldom engaged in political discussions".*

However, Breivik appears to have become disillusioned with mainstream politics. He wrote in one internet message that, *"the vast majority of new faces in the Progress Party are now politically-correct career politicians and not in any way idealists who are willing to take risks and work for idealistic goals".*

The night before this information became public, the authorities were still attempting to establish a motive for the killings.

As Breivik was charged with multiple counts of murder, police said his internet postings suggested he had, *"some political traits directed towards the right and anti-Muslim views"*.

*"But whether that was a motivation for the actual act remains to be seen,"* they added.

## 8.2 Burning with hatred... The right-wing extremist who hated immigrants and multi-culturalism

It is perhaps Breivik's diary - part of his dense, wordy manifesto - that provides the most insight into his thought processes. In it, he describes how in early May 2011, he had prepared and stored his equipment for the attack. He talks of his paranoia at the number of police vehicles he sees near his home, wondering where he would hide, were they to pay him a visit.

*"It's one of the scariest documents I've ever read,"* forensic clinical psychologist, Ian Stephen, told the BBC.

*"It's written by a man who is absolutely meticulous in his development of his philosophy and he has researched everything, obviously shut away for a long period of time reading, researching, digging into the internet, reading books,"* said the psychologist. *"[He] formulated this absolute policy of hatred of anything that is non-Nordic in a sense, and looking at planning how to take over the world [in a] rather insane, over-complicated deluded manner."*

A 12-minute anti-Muslim video called Knights Templar 2083, in which images of Breivik appear, was also discovered online. Breivik was also a member of a Swedish, neo-Nazi, Internet forum, called Nordisk, according to Expo, a Swedish group monitoring far-right activity.

**8.3 The Relation to Online Computer Games**

The effects of violent video games on users have once again come under the spotlight, after Norwegian mass-murderer Anders Behring Breivik, commented during his trial, that he used the popular video game, *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2,* to train prior to the shootings of July last year. Breivik used a holograph sight, similar to those used in *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2.*

In the game, players are able to equip their weapon with a holographic sight, something which Breivik used when he went on a killing spree last year. According to him, he played the computer game *Modern Warfare* for 16 months starting in January 2010 -primarily to get a feel for how to use rifle sights as well as to work out the police response and his best escape strategy. In 2006 he devoted a full year to playing *World of Warcraft*, for 16 hours a day.[7]

*"You develop target acquisition. If you are familiar with a holographic sight, it's built up in such a way that you could have given it to your grandmother and she would have been a super marksman. It's designed to be used by anyone.*

*In reality it requires very little training to use it in an optimal way. But of course it does help if you've practised using a simulator,"*[8] Breivik said about the holographic sight. In court, he mentioned that *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2,* can help a person train for real attack scenarios. *"It consists of many hundreds of different tasks and some of these tasks can be compared with an attack, for real. That's why it's used by many armies throughout the world. It's very good for acquiring experience related to sights systems."*[9]

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[7] "Norway Killer Sharpened Aim With Video Games" April 2012. (http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/norway-killer-sharpened-aim-with-video-games-20120420-1xas3.html#ixzz1t8NfYA74).

[8] "Mass-Murderer Used Video Games As Training." April 20, 2012. (http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/norway-killer-sharpened-aim-with-video-games-20120420-1xas3.html#ixzz1t8Nc4AuM).

[9] Ibid.

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It's not the first time that he has mentioned the title. In a 1 500-page manifesto written before his rampage, he said that *Modern Warfare 2,* was *"part of my training-simulation".*[10]

According to the *New York Times*, Breivik devoted more time to play another game during a "sabbatical" in 2006 and 2007. He told the courts that he played a strategy game titled *World of Warcraft* (WoW), for up to sixteen hours a day, but that the game had no influence on what he did.[11]

*"Some people like to play golf, some like to sail, I played WoW. It had nothing to do with 22 July. It's not a world you are engulfed by. It's simply a hobby. WoW is only a fantasy game, which is not violent at all. It's just fantasy. It's a strategy game. You co-operate with a lot of others to overcome challenges. That's why you do it. It's a very social game. Half of the time you are connected in communication with others. It would be wrong to consider it an antisocial game,"* he added.[12]

Informing his friends and family that he would be playing video games for an extended period of time, served as a good cover up for him.

In his manifesto, he mentions that protracted bouts of video gaming "justify isolation", and "avoid suspicion from relatives and friends".

For people who have long suspected a link between violent video games and real-world violence, the statement offered frightening new evidence, justifying why the video-game industry should be more strictly regulated.

An obsession with games such as *World of Warcraft,* might seem like a plausible explanation, as to why the apparently unremarkable 33-year-old, was able to execute the shooting spree and bomb attack last July, but to many it is a dangerous simplification driven by man's need of understanding.

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[10] Ibid.
[11] Lewis, Mark (2012) "Norwegian Defends Shooting and Regrets Death Toll Wasn't Higher." *The New York Times.*April 19, 2012.
[12] Ibid.

*"People want an answer for why these thing happen. That's completely understandable,"* said Seena Fazel, a consultant forensic psychiatrist at Britain's University of Oxford. *"That's also why mental illness is often an attractive avenue, because it does seem to provide some sort of answer."*[13]

The motive, in part, is to understand what distinguishes a mass killer from the rest of us, according to experts. Breivik's game-playing, however, doesn't achieve that.

Tore Sinding Bekkedal, who escaped unharmed from the island of Utoeya while Breivik carried out the shooting, told Reuters he found it *"baffling"* to link computer games to the attack.

*"I've played the same violent video games, and I don't go around shooting kids. Half the people on Utoeya played that same game ... It's an established part of youth culture,"* he said.[14]

ALTERNATIVE REALITY

Breivik smiled during court proceedings, as the prosecutor, Mr Svein Holden displayed an image of his *Wolrd oif Warcraft* character, *"Justicar Andersnordic".*[15]

Breivik has said he played the game non-stop, using the "smokescreen" of *World of Warcraft* addiction to mislead his mother while he planned the deadly attack.

In Blizzard's massively multiplayer online role-playing game,*World of Warcraft*, players create and control a character in an online world, fighting battles and completing quests for rewards. Since its launch in 2004, it has earned a reputation as one of the world's most addictive computer games and has already been linked to criminal acts.

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[13]Kelland, Kate (2012) London, Friday April 20, 2012 8:06am EDT.
[14]Kelland, Kate (2012) London, Friday April 20, 2012 8:06am EDT.
[15] Orange, Richard (2012) Anders Behring Breivik spent a year playing World of Warcraft role-playing game online. *The Telegraph,* Friday, April 21, 2012.

However, says Henrietta Bowden-Jones, consultant psychiatrist in addictions at Imperial College London, while *World of Warcraft* is notorious as highly addictive and as a game that features in the lives of some patients with compulsive Internet use, it cannot be blamed for Breivik's killing spree.

*"World of Warcraft is not necessarily creating but attracting people who may be finding it difficult to fit in with their peer groups,"* she told Reuters.[16]Obsessive game playing for such people can therefore be a symptom of their discomfort with reality.



Figure 13. Justicar Andersnordic[17]

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[16] Reuters (2012) "Analysis: Don't Pin Breivik's Massacre On Video Games". *Reuters Edition, US.*(http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/20/us-breivik-gaming-idUSBRE83J0MH20120420).

[17]Portrait of a Killer.*Kotaku Australia.* (http://kotaku.com/5903501/the-life-of-a-mass-murderer-in-world-of-warcraft?tag=andersbehringbreivik).

Andersnordic, pictured above, was one of Breivik's first *World of Warcraft* characters. He was a level 77 mage with the Justicar title[18], an accomplishment that takes quite a lot of time, (and quite a lot of player-killing), to acquire.[19]

According to the site, *WarcraftRealms.com*, Breivik used Andersnordic from 2006-2007 on the European Nordrassil server. He joined and eventually led several guilds, named Virtue, Unit, and later, Nevermore. All three guilds were "hardcore"—that is to say, focused on being the first in their respective servers to take down the game's massive raid bosses.

At some point thereafter, Breivik and many of his guildmates migrated to the European Silvermoon server, where he played on two characters, a human female mage named Conservatism and a tauren female druid named Conservative, —names that perhaps signalled how integrated Breivik's political ideology was to his sense of identity.

During May 2011, Breivik took to the *World of Warcraft* forums to make several posts, some of which are still active. At times he had kind words to offer his fellow players and guildmates. He would congratulate and share strategies to other people on his server.Other times, Breivik showed flashes of the radicalism that would eventually lead him to his act of terror.

> The game was brought up by the Prosecution, in an attempt to characterize Brehvik as an anti-social, troubled man, struggling with a series of failures in his life.Some useful reflections have came from Thomas Hylland Eriksen, professor of social anthropology at the University of Oslo, who said Breivik's testimony indicates how much he needed to build *"an alternative reality"* for himself, something he extended to the real world when he donned a homemade uniform and went on the rampage.

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[18]**Justicar**is a title awarded for completing the player vs player achievement.
[19]World of Warcraft Cataclysm. (http://eu.battle.net/wow/en/forum/topic/2504841533).

*"He likes order, he doesn't like impurity and chaos and he's obsessed with boundaries,"* Eriksen said.

*"When he puts on his uniform, he's no longer the lone, slightly unsuccessful young man from the west end of Oslo who never completed an education, never did really well in real life; he becomes a knight, a defender of civilization, of Europe against the invading Muslims."*[20]

*World of Warcraft* was a "hobby," but it also amounted to Breivik's virtual life. His alter ego. It affected more than just his victims, and the remnants hereof can be noticed all over the web.

## 8.4 The Trail of Anders Behring Breivik

Between 2006 and 2007, the 33-year-old Norwegian mass killer spent his days and nights immersed in a world of fantasy monsters, wizards, and knights performing violent "missions". During the time, Breivik, who has admitted killing 77 people last July, lived at his mother's Oslo flat, the court heard, supporting himself from his savings.

*World of Warcraft,* a virtual world where 10.3 million players attempt to achieve the position of "*Justicar*", has been criticised for its addictiveness. Prosecutor Svein Holden described the game as "violent".

The details of his role-playing past were part, of an opening presentation, that portrayed Breivik's life in the decade before his attack as a drab succession of failures and isolation, starting with his early job in telephone sales, and followed by the setting up of three business start-ups, each of which was wound up without yielding any profit.

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[20]Eriksen, Thomas Hylland (2012) "Breivik Lived in Video Game Fantasy" Says expert Witness.*NTD Television.* April 19, 2112 00:13 EST.

*"The business idea was the sale of telephone services, but it didn't generate much income, and it was very quickly closed down,"* Prosecutor Svein Holden said of Behring Marketing, the first company Breivik registered.[21]

It was only when Breivik set up an online operation, selling fake diplomas in around 2003, Mr Holden said, that he had managed to "stockpile considerable amounts of money", which he laundered through banks in the Baltic states.

The cash allowed him to move out of the communal flat he had been living in, and into his own flat in Oslo. But in 2006, around the time Breivik became absorbed in the *World of Warcraft* game that changed.

*"The summer of 2006 represented a new change at several levels,"* Mr Holden said. *"There was the sale of the false diploma company. He's also abandoned the ideal of being a financial supporter [of the anti-Islamic movement], he then moved into his mother's apartment in Oslo."*

Mr Holden portrayed Breivik's progress from this point, almost as an extension of his role-playing, starting in 2009, when he bought 36 separate items from eight countries to make his "Knights Templar" uniform, including an arm-patch brought from a UK supplier, (sporting the words *"Marxist hunter England"),* which Breivik altered to read, *"Marxist hunter Norway"*.

It was only after Breivik had acquired the uniform that he began to stockpile the weapons and bomb-making materials that he used to carry out his massacre. Mr Holden indicates that would refer to *"JusticarAndersnordic"* again during the trial, suggesting he may see a connection between the Justicar level in the game, and the position of *"Knight Justiciar"*, Breivik claims to hold in real life in the Knights Templar, a secret anti-Islamic organisation.

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[21] Orange, Richard (2012) "Anders Behring Breivik spent a year playing World of Warcraft role-playing game online." *The Telegraph,* Friday, April 21, 2012.

Police have found no evidence; either of the other cells Breivik claims existed of his order, or of the inaugural meeting he claims to have attended.

*"There is one subject, in particular that stands out,"* Mr Holden said as he launched his presentation. *"Mainly that Breivik claims he became a member of the Knights Templar in London at a meeting in April 2002."*

*"His membership in this network is of great importance to how he led his life,"* Holden said. *"One of its main aims is to deport Islam out of Europe. In our opinion no such network exists."*

The turning point seems to have come in his late 20s, when his paranoia grew about the *"Islamisation of western Europe"*.

After his arrest, he made no apology for the attacks, which he has described as *"atrocious, but necessary"* to defeat immigration.

There has been much speculation as to whether he was insane at the time of the killings. Two psychiatric analyses reached contradicting conclusions. An initial court-ordered assessment, concluded he was a paranoid schizophrenic, but a second report in early April ruled that he was not psychotic.

The issue will be at the centre of his trial, due to start on 16 April, and will determine whether he should be sent to a psychiatric ward or jail. According to *news.scotsman.com* Breivik claimed that the psychiatric report that declared him insane, was based on *"evil fabrications"* meant to portray him as irrational and unintelligent.

The right-wing extremist, who has admitted killing 77 people in a bomb and shooting rampage last July, told the Oslo trial: *"It is not me who is described in that report."*

A second psychiatric examination found Breivik was sane. The five-judge panel trying him on terror charges for the attacks will consider both reports.[22]

Breivik's mental state is the key issue that remains unresolved in the trial, since he has admitted guilt to a bombing in Oslo's government district that killed eight people and the subsequent shooting massacre at a Labour Party youth camp, that left 69 people dead, most of them teenagers.

He claims the attacks were "necessary" and that the victims had betrayed Norway by embracing immigration.

If found guilty and sane, Breivik would face 21 years in prison, although he can be held longer if deemed a danger to society. If declared insane, he would be committed to compulsory psychiatric care.

*"To a political activist, the worst thing that can happen is to end up in a mental hospital,"* Breivik said. *"That would delegitimise everything you stand for."*

Breivik showed no remorse yesterday as he listened to evidence describing the horrific injuries of the bombing victims, declaring instead that if anyone should apologise it was the governing Labour Party.

He said he had hoped it would change Norway's policy on immigration after his attacks. *"But instead they continue in the same direction, so the grounds for struggle are unfortunately even more relevant now than before 22 July,"* Breivik said.

Sounding irritated, the 33-year-old Norwegian accused the two psychiatrists who declared him psychotic of deciding on the diagnosis prematurely, saying their judgment was clouded by their emotional response to the attacks. *"They lack expertise in evaluating violent political activists,"* he said.

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[22] "Anders Behring Breivik trail: Diagnosing me as insane is an evil fabrication, says killer." *News.scotsman.com.* Thursday, 26 April 2012.

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He also disagreed with the second report on his mental health, by two other psychiatrists who found him "narcissistic" and "dissocial" but not criminally insane.

Breivik claims to belong to an anti-Muslim militant group inspired by crusaders and working with two other cells in Norway. Investigators do not believe the group exists.

*"It is a real network,"* Breivik insisted, saying police cannot conclude that the group does not exist simply because they have not found it.

*"If you use that logic, then I didn't exist either before 22 July,"* Breivik said. *"I wouldn't want to be the police spokesman when the next attack happens in Norway. Because it will happen."*

### 8.5 The Discoveries as the Trail Unveils

On the opening day of the trial, a focus of the prosecution was the revelation that Anders Breivik played *World of Warcraft*, (an online immersive virtual reality game), apparently, almost full-time for a year. He further claimed that he honed his targeting and shooting skills by playing *Call of Duty*

In a revelation relating to the crux of the arguments to be presented during the trail, the prosecution described these games as violent.

Yet, this description has already been met with resistance from gamers, resenting the implication that fantasy games such as *World of Warcraft,* can be held responsible for real world violence, particularly of the kind alleged to have been meted out by Anders Breivik.

> According to Dr Rau Persaud[23], perhaps of most interest to forensic specialists observing this case, is that how someone playing or represent themselves in these virtual alternative realities, could reveal valuable clues to psychiatrists attempting to understand the perpetrator of an unsual of crime, which makes no sense to the vast majority. The latest thinking in psychology is that the way people represent themselves in a virtual world reveals more of their inner psyche, than might be realised. For someone trying to guard against psychiatric examination, the fact that they played such games, could be a way into the inner recesses of their minds.

However, none of the psychological research on these kinds of popular on-line games, find any evidence that the vast majority of players suffer any kind of psychological abnormality.[24]

Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs) have been in the court room before. Larry and Lars Daniel, authors of the book *Digital Forensics for Legal Professionals*,[25] argue that these games could become an increasing source of important forensic evidence when players end up in trouble with the law in the real world.

They list newspaper reports of where individuals met each other through the game and later went on to commit crimes, such as under-age sexual encounters in the real world, therefore potentially implicating their computer records during game play in court proceedings.

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[23]Dr Raj Persaud is a Consultant Psychiatrist based in London, and Emeritus Visiting Gresham Professor for Public Understanding of Psychiatry. Dr Ramón Spaaij is a specialist in the area of lone wolf terrorism and author of Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism: Global Patterns, Motivations and Prevention published by Springer. He is based at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia.

[24]Persaud, Raj Dr and Spaaij, Ramon (2012) *Does the Secret to the Norwegian Massacre Lie in an Online Computer Game?* (http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/dr-raj-persaud/norwegian-massacre-computer-games_b_1430831.html?ref=uk).

[25] Daniel, Larry and Lars (2011) Digital Forensics For Legal Professionals: Understanding Digital Evidence From The Warrant To the Courtroom. Syngress.

This is not to argue that playing such games in itself represents an indicator of any kind of criminal or aggressive bent. Given the fact that combined number of players of *World of Warcraft* and *Second Life*[26]*,* now amount to over 25 million, from all across the globe, statistically, just through random chance, some will get accused of real world crimes.

However, things may get forensically interesting, where the timeline of their digital activity could become material evidence - such as whether they were on line at the time of an alleged real world offence.

There is a distinct possibility that data, recorded by playing *World of Warcraft,* may become a crucial aspect of the Breivik case, even if the game itself is not implicated in evidence, providing insight into the cause of the murderous spree.The research evidence, that video games such as *World of Warcraft* causes or influences violence, is mixed and controversial.

These games have become ever more popular in recent times, and some researchers have argued that real world violence in the young adult populations most likely to be absorbed by such games, has statistically been declining over the last few years. Some well respected authors argues that one would expect the opposite trend if the games were a significant contributor to aggression in the real world.

Larry and Lars Daniel, point out that contrary to the popular stereotype, in fact people from all walks of life play these games, from successful business types and professionals to housewives and the retired. Recent surveys quoted in their book, find the average age of such game players as being 34 years old, with 60 percent being male, and 40 percent female. This contradicts the stereotyped image of such players, as being unemployable, light deprived adolescents, skulking in their parents' basements.

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[26] **Second Life:** Millions of people around the world today spend portions of their lives in online virtual worlds. Second Life is one of the largest of these virtual worlds. The residents of Second Life create communities, buy property and build homes, go to concerts, meet in bars, attend weddings and religious services, buy and sell virtual goods and services, find friendship, fall in love--the possibilities are endless, and all encountered through a computer screen.

In these virtual worlds, authentic friendships develop. Many meet online via these games, get acquainted, then cross countries to live together and start serious romances, even ending in marriage. Larry and Lars Daniel point out that in one survey of 30,000 participants in such games, 5.1 percent of men and 15.7 percent of women had physically dated someone who they first met in an MMORPG.

The question that remains is if forensic investigation of Breivik's on-line game playing activities will provide to be useful evidence as to his mental state?

Books such as the Daniels' *Digital Forensics for Legal Professionals,* highlight the increased use of such data by forensic scientists investigating crimes, from servers retained by hosting game playing companies, and also from the game players' own computer.[27]

In the mid-2000s, Dr Cheryl Olsen directed a 1.5 million dollors, United States government-funded Harvard research project, on violent video games and teens. She gave dozens of media interviews about her findings. Subsequently, whenever video games were linked to a crime or problem, more reporters were interested, irrespective whether there indeed existed a link between violent crimes and compter games. After several, widely covered shooting incidents at United States schools in the 1990s, a "mental frame" has been developed, alleging that certain crimes, especially mass shootings by young men, are likely to be linked to violent video game play.[28]

Another inference as to why data from Breivik's online playing might be particularly crucial, is confirmatory evidence that such *"lone wolf killers",* take their inspiration from extremist advocates who include obfuscation and dissembling as part of the ongoing strategy following capture. This may explain why the clinicians examining the Norwegian suspect, have found it difficult to come to a consensus as to his sanity and motivation.

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[27] Daniel, Larry and Lars (2011) Digital Forensics For Legal Professionals: Understanding Digital Evidence From The Warrant To the Courtroom. Syngress.
[28] Olson, Cheryl Dr (2012) "Does Breivick's Claims Of Honing Skills On Call Of Duty Mean We Should Worry About Video Games?" *The Independent.* Wednesday, 25 April 2012.

In the late 1990s, the influential United States White supremacists Tom Metzger and Alex Curtis, first coined the term *"lone wolf",* exhorting those they encouraged to perform the kind of spree killings which Breivik stands accused of and to then *"... Never truly admit to anything..."*[29]

If a suspect is unreliable, (for various reasons), under examination, then evidence that can be gleaned from their computer or from a gaming server as to their activities in role-playing games such as *World of Warcraft,* could provide vital clues in relation to their mental state.

A spate of new research reveals intriguing parallels between the kind of personality your avatar exhibits in such virtual worlds and games, and your own real life character.An example hereof is, a study of fourty players of the game, resently published in the academic journal *Computers in Human Behaviour*, that found that the personality of the avatar you create and pilot in *World of Warcraft,* is linked in a crucial manner to your own real life persona.

The study, led by Michael McCreery and Randy Boone[30], of a team based primarily at the Universities of Arkansas and Nevada, in the United States, might be particularly relevant to Breivik's case, if it could be confirmed he did indeed immerse himself in Wor*ld of Warcraft* for a year, as per the prosecutions allegation.

The reason for this is that their study found the strongest link in personality between the character of the avatar representing a player in *World of Warcraft*, and that player's own personality, in the realm of "agreeableness" or its converse "disagreeableness", which is the aspect of personality linked most to warmth or a lack of it towards others, interpersonal attitudes, self-interest, concern for others, and social harmony.

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[29]Persaud, Raj Dr and Spaaij, Ramon (2012) *Does the Secret to the Norwegian Massacre Lie in an Online Computer Game?* (http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/dr-raj-persaud/norwegian-massacre-computer-games_b_1430831.html?ref=uk).
[30]McCreery, Michael P; Krach, S Kathleen; Schrander, P G; Boone, Randy (2012) "Defining the Virtual Self: Personality, behavior, and the Psychology of Embodiment." *Journal Computers in Human Behavior. Volume 28, Issue 3, May 2012.* Amsterdam: Elsevier Science Publishers B V.

The authors of the study, entitled, *Defining the virtual self: Personality, behaviour, and the psychology of embodiment*, point out that the main purpose of interaction within *World of Warcraft,* is character advancement, and as much of this progress centres on group ventures.

For example forming partnerships or collaborations, most of the observed behaviours in the game tell us something about a person's character in the domain of attitudes towards others.[31]

The challenges of game play, tests your personality, particularly in relation to cooperation or antagonism, and this might provide vital clues as to Breivik's character, when he might be possibly cought off-guard.

It's not just the manner in which a perpetrator who is on trial played the game which might provide evidence as to his mental state, but when precisely they played, according to another recently published study. The research, just like the study above, focused specifically on *World of Warcraft* players, (in this case a big sample of 646), and was conducted by a team, lead by Sakari Lemola and Alexander Grob based mainly at the Universities of Basel and Zurich in Switzerland.

The title of the paper, *Habitual Computer Game playing at Night is Related to Depressive Symptoms[32]* reveals the key finding which is that habitual computer game playing of World of Warcraft between 10pm and 6am, was linked to an increased risk of depression. Adolescents, (aged 13-17 years), were most vulnerable when habitually playing during early night, (i.e., 10-12 pm), while young adults (aged 18-22 years) showed more vulnerability to depression, when habitually playing late at night or early morning (i.e., after 2am).

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Lemola, Sakari; Brand, Serge; Vogler, Nicole; Perkinson-Gloor, Nadine; Allemand , Mathias; Grob, Alexander (2011) "Habitual Computer Game Playing At Night Is Related To Depressive Symptoms." *Personality and Individual Differences.Volume 51, Issue 2.*Elsevier, pp. 117-122.

The authors of the study are at pains to point out they found no evidence that players of *World of Warcraft* were in any way more maladjusted than the general population.

Rather, they contend, it was the sleep disturbance engendered by playing through the night, which had probably upset circadian rhythms, and produced the high scores on depression scales.

The authors appear to have celected to specifically study *World of Warcraft,* because they suggest it's the computer game with the potentially highest addiction risk, and this is linked to the Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing concept.

The authors explain that MMORPGs, (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games), involve role-playing in cooperative groups who gather for online-playing appointments, and as the success of the entire group depends on the collaboration of all group members, individual players are pressured to join the gatherings, which may explain the addictive potential.

A very recent publication, in the journal Personality and Individual Differences, the authors of this study contend that the game itself doesn't cause depression but more likely the disturbed sleep cycles, caused by staying up late to play, identifying the latter as the key culprit.[33]

A further study may be deployed by those involved in the Breivik case, as they have also found that a person can make predictions about aspects of a player's personality, depending on which side of the game they chose to play, in *World of Warcraft*.

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[33] Ibid.

The intriguing paper, just published in the academic journal *Computers in Human Behaviour*, is entitled *"Trait and symptom differences between factions in online gaming: The vulnerable side of evil".*[34]

A team of researchers, led by Emily and Robert Orr from the Department of Psychology, University of Windsor in Ontario Canada, explores differences in psychological traits and symptoms of gamers who are aligned to one of the two character factions of *World of Warcraft* - the Horde and the Alliance. One of the more surprising findings of the study, was that the members of the Horde recorded higher scores on 'dependent' personality style.

This type of person, reports on symptoms, including more frequent worries about losing someone close to them, feelings of loneliness, hypersensitivity to signs of rejection, and persistent worries about possible sabotage of their relationships. The authors deduce that it may not be surprising that these types take part in a game that promotes cohesion among faction members.[35]

In the lore of the game, the "Horde" arose from several forms of evil: the betrayal of an extra-planar being; powerful black magic; and demonic energy. More recent versions have abandoned labelling the Alliance as the '"good side'", with the Horde as the "dark side,'" with the Horde evolving into a more peaceful faction. Nonetheless, the origins of this faction was violence.

Traces of its dark roots remain in names, evoking images of violence, (e.g., blood elves), and death, (eg the undead).This spate of recently published research suggests that Breivik may inadvertently reveal more of himself via various activities, including playing *World of Warcraft*, than he may have eluded to.

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[34] Orr, Emily S; Ross, Craig; Orr, Robert R (2012) "Trait and Symptom Differences Between Factions and Online Gaming: The Vulnerable Side of Evil." *Computers in Human Behavior, Volume 28, Issue 2, March 2012.* Amsterdam: Elsevier Science Publishers.
[35] Orr, Emily S; Ross, Craig; Orr, Robert R (2012) "Trait and Symptom Differences Between Factions and Online Gaming: The Vulnerable Side of Evil." *Computers in Human Behavior, Volume 28, Issue 2, March 2012.* Amsterdam: Elsevier Science Publishers.

These may present small clues, could be potentially beneficial to the understanding of the the psychology and motivation, which lies behind such tragic events is eof the utmost importantance.

These fragments of evidence contribute enormously to the evidentiary value of research, in the light of past uncooperativeness of perpetrators of similar crimes, and Breivik may be the first to inadvertently leave an extensive on-line trail through his activities in the virtual gaming environment, where he may have felt relatively safe, and he have been unaware that recent advances in psychological research could uncover links to his real world mental state and motivations.

Any assistsance in identifying potential candidates for such acts at an early stage, might lead to possible preventative strategies.

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**8.6 Analysing Case Study Evidence**

Breivik reports that his father abandoned him when he was still a child, who left him desperately lonely, lost and unprotected. His mother was the only person there for protection and dependence. In the course of maturing, he began to search for that which is dependable- something that he could trust and that made him feel better.

Trust and dependency, are the issues that determine personal strength and confidence or a vulnerability to enslaving into the prison of rejection. His lonely search for something, or someone, to depend on (which has already excluded parents) he founds something which always comforts, which always makes him feel good, which is always there, and which always does what it promises. Breivik found the answer in submersion into a virtual reality, through Online Computer Games. The games didn't cost him much and no one could regulate it.

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> These choices, stem from the rejected core beliefs that "no one will love me as I am." He believes that everyone will abandon him and has a constant fear of being dependent on others. In healthy families, children have a deep sense that their parents care for them as opposed to abandoning him.

As a result he created the image of being in charge of life and in no need of help. He appeared unaffected by any problem, and therefore did extreme and indulgent things for making up for his feelings of rejection and hurt. Extreme anger and hurt accumulated in reaction to his abandonment. Breivik, however did not offer any explanation.

The exploration of virtual reality, and an alternate identity, in the form of an Avatar called *JusticarAndersnordic,* went beyond self-comforting, because of his lack of human care- there was the potential for addiction. The game becomes the surrogate for comforting and nurturing.

Consequently, Breivik's relationships with his mother and friends were replaced with an addictive relationship with online computer games. Addiction became his relationship- a pathological relationship in which the obsessions with advancements in the game replaced people. Gaming became his most important need.

The incorrect beliefs, that were part and parcel of Breivik's upbringing, became central to his world as an adult. Each erroneous belief, contributed to the disconnection between the interior world he experienced, with its pain and shame, and the exterior image he protected, to keep his secret world safe.

Being addicted to RPG's, Breivik lived in constant "personal jeopardy," dreading the moment when his secret world will be unmasked. He became more isolated as his secret live grew.

The belief, "I am basically a bad, unworthy person" construes the emotional foundation of the addict's world. He concludes from his family experiences that he is not a worthy person.

Feelings of inadequacy and failure predominate. It could be argued that Breivik interpreted humiliation and degradation, as justified and deserved.

The addiction to RPG's, guided all of Breivik's behaviours and decisions. He created a front of "normality" to mask his sense of inadequacy.

He even appeared grandiose, and full of exaggerated self-importance. The front was in direct contrast to his actions that appeared degrading and self-defeating.

His friends and family are angry and frustrated with his egocentric quality, especially because of his complete insensitivity and lack of remorse to others. They are troubled at his destructive behaviour that does not fit the image he so desperately tried to protect. His family and friends that still had contact with him, feels angry, hurt and rejected in response to his contradictory behaviour.

Breivik was completely isolated from normal contact with family and friends. The only contact he had to the outside world was through his Avatar playing *World of Warcraft* for month's non-stop.

Breivik created the perception of being in charge of everything that happened during the bombing and shooting. He appeared unaffected by any problems and the days; following the murders he indulged completely in the MMORPG *World of Warcraft* to put him in the "right" frame of mind to commit these horrifying and unthinkable acts. He is not expressing any sincere guild and remorse, as that would require honesty about his behaviour.

"My needs are never going to be met if I depend upon others", is the belief that provides Breivik with his driving power. The survival needs of his childhood are transformed into the desperation of his internal world. He basically feels unloved and unlovable, which means his needs are unmet.

The resulting rage becomes internalized, as feelings of depression, resentment, self-pity, bitterness and hatred sets in.

> Due to his lack of confidence that others will love him, he became calculated, manipulative and ruthless in strategizing the brutal killing of hundreds of people.

Due to his extreme racist opinions of Muslim-immigrants he formed the belief that rules and laws were designed for people who were needed and loved, those who were unwanted had to survive in other ways or did not deserve to live at all.

His rage about his unmet needs in the past, presents with the possibility of expressing his needs now, as he anticipated rejection. Consequently, because of his total addiction to RPG's, where he is accepted in a virtual reality, he appears not to want or need anything on a human level. In cyberspace he made extensive efforts by playing *World of Wacraft* non-stop, just to prove how respectable, brave and powerful he was.

As the consequences of his addiction became visible worldwide after a mass-massacre of 77 innocent victims, those who were close, only now sees the double life, the Jekyll and Hyde, in his world. His possessed behaviour, remains beyond comprehension to a lot of people.

Breivik wanted to control all situations in an effort to guarantee that his obsessions are being heard. He made the maximum effort to ensure that all the possible opportunities were utilized and even today, feels that not enough people have died. All levels of his addictive behaviour directly reflect his need to control.

## 8.7 Game-Violence Seen In Perspective

> "[Video Games are] like books, films, the Internet, or any other medium. All can be used to depict sex and violence, or to educate and inform. Indeed the inclusion of violent and sexual content in games is arguably a sign of the maturity of the medium, as games become more like films"
>
> -"Chasing the Dream"
> THE ECONOMIST

There is a huge hype surrounding the launch of every new game system - Game Cube, XBox, and Sony Playstation 2, being just few of the latest.

Affecting children, aged 4, all the way to 45 year-old adults, these video games have called for concern in our society, regarding issues such as addiction, depression, and even aggression related to the playing of video games. A recent study of children in their early teens found that almost a third played video games daily, and that seven percent played for at least thirty hours a week.[36]

Of more importance is that some of these games being played, like *Mortal Combat*, *Marvel Vs. Capcom*, and *Doom,* are very interactive in the violence of slaughtering the opponent. The video game industries even put signs like *"Real-life violence"* and *"Violence level - not recommended for children under age of 12"* on their box covers, arcade fronts, and even on the game CDs themselves.

In games where characters get shot, a large spray of blood covers the walls and floor in the proximity of the character, and on the occasions when explosives are used, the characters burst into small, but recognizable body parts. In spite of the violence, the violent video games are also the more popular games on the market.[37]

When video games first came out, indeed they were addictive... however, there seems to be a strong correlation now between the violent nature of games these days and the aggressive tendencies in game players.

Gamers, such as Breivik, who have committed a horrofying crime has once again shed the light on  the corrolation between violence and computer games.

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[36] BBC. *Video Games: Cause for Concern.* (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/1036088.stm).
[37] Shin, Grace. (2003) Video Games: A cause for violence and aggression. (http://serendip.brynmawr.edu/exchange/node/1723).

In a study, by Karen E. Dill, Ph.D. & Craig A. Anderson, Ph.D., violent video games were considered to be more harmful in increasing aggression than violent movies or television shows due to their interactive and engrossing nature.[38]

The studies indicated that aggressive young men were especially vulnerable to violent games and that even brief exposure to violent games could temporarily increase aggressive behavior in all types of participants.

The first study was conducted with 227 college students with aggressive behaviored records in the past, and who completed a measure of trait aggressiveness. They were also reported to bein the habits of playing video games. It was found that students, who reported playing more violent video games in junior and high school, engaged in more aggressive behavior.

In addition, the time spent playing video games in the past were associated with lower academic grades in college, which is a source of frustration for many students- a potential cause for anger and aggression as discussed in the previous paragraph.

In the second study, 210 college students were allowed to play *Wolfenstein 3D*, an extremely violent game, or *Myst*, a nonviolent game. After a short time, it was found that the students who played the violent game punished an opponent for a longer period of time compared to the students who played the non violent game. Dr. Anderson concluded by saying, *"Violent video games provide a forum for learning and practicing aggressive solutions to conflict situations. It the short run, playing a violent video game appears to affect aggression by priming aggressive thoughts."*

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[38] Dill, Karen E PhD; Craig, A Anderson PhD () Violent Video Games: How can the Create violence in me? (http://www.selfhelpmagazine.com/article/video-game).

Despite the fact that this study was aimed at short term effect, longer term effects are likely to be possible as the player learn and practice new aggression-related scripts that can become more and more accessible for the real-life conflict that may arise.[39]

In the examination of violence associated with video game play, there seems to appear a different effect depending on the type of video game. Some games are more violent than others, and some games reward violence while others discourage it. All this has an impact in terms of real-world behavior and attitudes. Some games have positive effects.

Gang councellors, for instance, are troubled about the various crimes that are glamourized in games such as *Grand Theft Auto.* They feel that the game not only celebrates the gang lifestyle, at a time when gang membership is rising worldwide, but makes a mockery of a tragedy that's very real.[40] Gaming's role in putting its stamp of approval on abnormal behaviour has long been a controversial topic. But for those on the front lines, there are no argument.

*"I don't care what any criminologist or psychologist says, but repeated exposure to any level of violence does alter the psyche of a person,"* said police detective in Greensboro, N.C.[41]

In view of Breivik's recent mass-murder, the main concern amongst many, continues to be the violence found in numerous computer games. The shooter-games not only familiarized him with combat tactics, weapons, and warfare startegy, but also helped to desensitize him to blood, gore, death and killing.

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[39]Shin, Grace. (2003) Video Games: A cause for violence and aggression. (http://serendip.brynmawr.edu/exchange/node/1723).
[40]Loftus, Tom *"Game Mocks Real Tragedy, Gang Expert Says"* (http://msnbc.msn.com/id/6409148/.)
[41]Loftus, Tom *"Game Mocks Real Tragedy, Gang Expert Says"* (http://msnbc.msn.com/id/6409148/.)

In addition, it hightend his markmanship, increased his hand-eye coordination, sharpen his reflexes, and helped to train him in making decisions, based on enemy-engagement scenarios, police response time and existing strategy-scenarios, he played out in the virtual environment.

Akin to adults, children and teens who play violent video games do, to some degree, become *"desensitized to violence, have increased levels of aggressive thoughts and behaviour, and act hostile toward others."*[42]

One the other hand; one type of game (one of the most popular types, in fact) hasn't been studied nearly as much as the traditional arcade-style game: massively multiplayer online role-playing games, or MMORPGs. One of the studies of this type of game, seemed to find that players weren't more aggressive because the games foster cooperation between players.

However, MMORPGs like *World of Warcraft,* (the game that was played by Breivick hours before he killed) can be more engaging and distracting than other games, absorbing away hours and hours in seemingly endless online quests. Many psychologists are of the opinion that these games don't promote violent behavior, hence the question could be raised if it is possible that they have other detrimental effects?

Joshua Smyth[43] recruited 100 college students to play one of four randomly-assigned video games free for a month. They played the games on their own time, in a campus "game laboratory", or in an arcade for the arcade group. The only requirement was playing the game for at least an hour a week.

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[42]Cook, Donald E (2000) *Testimony of the American Academy of Pediatrics on Media Violence Before The US Senate Commerce Committee,* presented September, 13 2000, p.5; AP, *"Parents Search for Family-Friendly Videos Amid A Sea of Mature Games,"* Citizen-Times, January 14, 2005. (http://orig.citizen-times.com/cache/article/family/73748.shtml).
[43]Smyth, J.M. (2007). Beyond Self-Selection in Video Game Play: An Experimental Examination of the Consequences of Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game Play. *CyberPsychology & Behavior, 10*(5), pp. 717-721. DOI: 10.1089/cpb.2007.9963

The arcade group could play any of the games in the arcade: one group played *Gauntlet: Dark Legacy* on a PlayStation 2; one group played *Diablo II* on a computer, and the final group played the MMORPG *Dark Age of Camelot*.

The following resluts, indicate how the type of game had an impact on the frequency games were played.


Table 2: Time a specific game were played
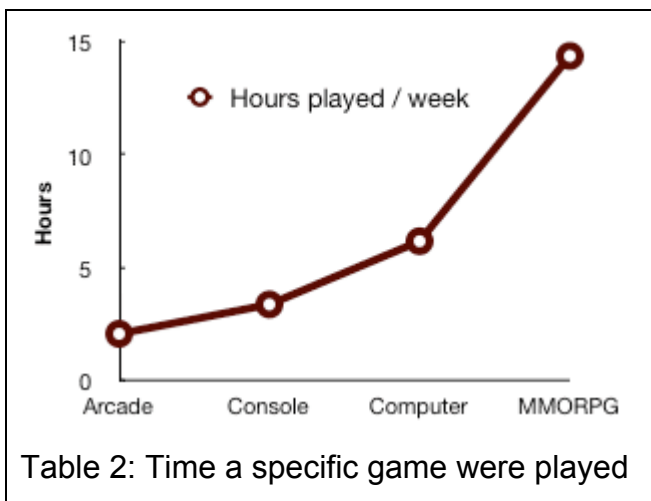
The MMORPG group spent significantly more time playing *Dark Age of Camelot* in the final week of play than any of the other groups spent playing their games -- an average of 14.4 hours. (Table 1). Cognizance should be taken of the fact that these groups were randomly assigned, and there was no difference in game-playing time amongst groups at the commencement of the study. The assumption can be made from these findings, that even if the students spent more time with the MMORPG, it doesn't necesseraly mean they're addicted to it.

However, Table 2 indicates that other aspects of their lives were affected by this increase in game-playing.

Table 3: Assessment of the effects of the games
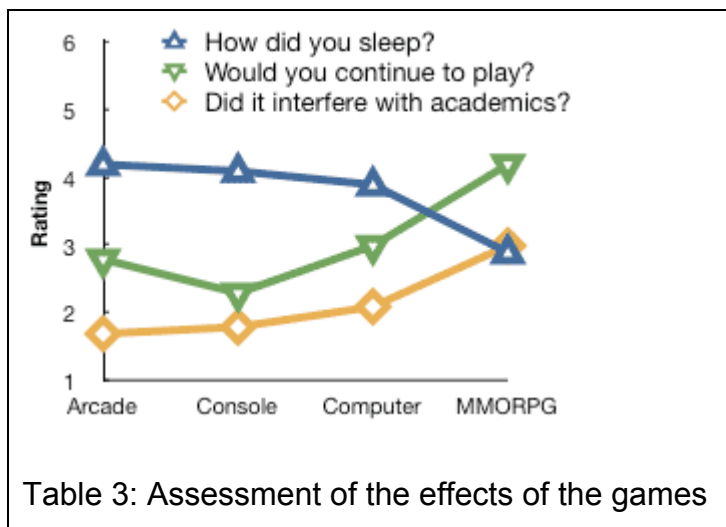
Sleep quality was significantly worse in the MMORPG group than the other groups, and the participants said the game interfered with their academics (although their actual academic performance didn't suffer compared to the other groups). Yet the MMORPG group was significantly more likely than the other groups, to say they planned to continue playing the game after the study was complete.

The following question arises: Is this behavior addictive? Smyth doesn't offer an assessment, but the fact that the MMORPG appears to be negatively impacting on several areas of these students' lives -- and that they continue to playing despite this -- suggest it might be.

Smyth notes that care must be taken when generalizing results such as this. In this specific study, just one MMORPG was tested, therefore one cannot conclude that these results will apply to other games. The results further indicates that the students were getting some benefits from the game, building an online social network that was valuable to them.

Despite these caveats, Smyth concludes that is is surprising that such dramatic results occurred, even when groups were randomly assigned to the games. It indicates that even over a very short period of time one could easily get addicted.

### 9. Case Study Two: A closer look at *"EverQuest"*

> *Dennis was neglecting his career and job, his marriage was in trouble, and he wasn't being much of a father to his 1-year-old son. But he had progressed to a very high level, with the name "Soul Destroyer", a Necromancer- his character in the online role-playing game "EverQuest," and that was all that mattered at the time.*

Dennis, whose family life and career have recovered nicely since he stopped playing the game about a year ago, considers himself a recovered *"EverQuest"* addict, now able to control his desire to immerse himself in the game's rich fantasy world.

*"The game almost ruined my life,"* said the network engineer. *"It was my life. I ceased being me; I became 'Soul Destroyer', the Great Necromancer. Thinking of it now, I almost cringe; it's so sad."*

Having been a longstanding subject of half-serious jokes among devotees of computer and video games, game addiction is receiving serious attention lately as fantasy games such as *"EverQuest"* --nicknamed *"EverCrack"* by many players--proliferate.

With reference to above-mentioned case studies, and statistics, mental-health professionals comment that the fantasy worlds offered by computer and video games can become the substance of very real, addictions that destroy marriages and careers.

*"It's a huge and growing problem with older teenage males and young adult males,"* said Dr. Timothy Miller PhD, a Stockton, Californian clinical psychologist. *"I've seen a number of cases with 17- or 18-year-old males where they have a broadband (Internet) connection and they basically haven't left the house for years. I had one young man who was trying to get on Social Security disability for agoraphobia."*

*"He didn't have a mental disorder; he just didn't want to leave 'EverQuest' or instant messaging"* he said. [44]

Some suggested that warning labels be placed on *"EverQuest,"* which has more than 400,000 paying subscribers. Scott McDaniel, vice president of marketing for *"EverQuest"* publisher Sony Online Entertainment, said the company relies on players to employ good judgment. [45]

*"I guess our standpoint is the same as all kinds of products--you have to be responsible in using it,"* he said. *"You don't see disclaimers when you get in a car saying 'Don't run over people.' People have to exhibit their own good sense, and if they have kids, they need to pay attention to what they're doing."*

Author of various books, Richard Abanes agrees that video games cannot be isolated from other forms of artistic expression that are widely accepted and respected, futhermore, games requires caution and knowledge about the nature of the contents it features.  All games use mature themes, including murder, adultery, fornication, suicide, and nudity. It is not necessarily the themes or schemes that determine whether or not a video game is good or bad, but rather how such themes are depicted, and what overall message is being delivered through them. He asks the following question:  *What is the context of the game mature aspects?*[46]

Taking into regard the addictive nature of the game *EverQuest,* Miller cites two defining characteristics of addiction: One, the person regularly engages in activity for much longer than originally planned and secondly, continues doing it, in spite of adverse consequences. By those standards, most of the players described in online support groups such as Yahoo's *"EverQuest Widows"* qualify as addicts. [47]

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[44] When games stop being fun. (http://news.cnet.com/2100-1040-881673.html).
[45] When games stop being fun. (http://news.cnet.com/2100-1040-881673.html).
[46] Abanes, Richard (2006) What ever parent needs to know about video games. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, pp. 87,88.
[47] Ibid.

Most online games include copious amounts of chats, allowing players to interact with each other under the guise of the characters they represent. Dr. Maressa Hecht Orzack[48], director of Computer Addiction Services at Harvard University-affiliated McLean Hospital, said the social aspect is a primary factor in many game addictions.

*"Many of these people are lonely, have never felt like they belonged,"* she said. *"People get a sense of belonging in the game. In some cases, it provides the only friends they interact with."*[49]

Such games also lure players with complex systems of goals and achievements. *"EverQuest"* players engage in activities to develop their characters from one level to the next, and compete to find valuable in-game elements such as armour and weapons. Players can find themselves wrapped up in the game for hours, as they struggle to gain an additional skill or weapon.

*"I'd say the most addictive part for me was definitely the gain of power and status,"* said Bennett. "*The way in which as you progressively gain power you become more (of) an object of awe (to) the other players...each new skill isn't enough."*[50]

In futherance of the above, the national obsession with games in South Korea, where statistincs indicates that more than seventeen million people in South Korea play video games.[51]

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[48] Dr. Maressa Orzack's research has included various forms of computer addiction, including Internet addiction and computer game addiction. Recently, her research has focused on the addictive nature of MMORPG games.

[49] Computer Addiction Services. Maressa Hecht Orzack, Ph.D.
(http://www.computeraddiction.com/index.htm).

[50] Computer Addiction Services. Maressa Hecht Orzack, Ph.D.
(http://www.computeraddiction.com/index.htm).

[51] The author has tried to use relevant information sources as she could find and to compare the numbers found from multiple sources such as the Internet articles and other web pages in order to get realistic data. However, more accurate sources exist (marketing agencies, for example), but they offer results of their surveys as a commercial service, so we were not able to use them. Although numbers are not completely accurate they are used so readers can get general feeling of the actual situation.

At any moment in time there are more than four million players playing online multi-player games.[52] This means that more than 35 percent of the total population of South Korea, plays video games actively which is much more than in other countries in the world.[53]

In the excess of 26,000 Net cafes and game rooms are found all over the nation where people can come to pay and play games in a room full of fast computers and fast connections. These cafes accounts for an estimate six billion U.S. dollars a year from visiting gamers.[54]

According to *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*[55] Scientists, researchers and doctors are still debating whether or not video game "addiction", is similar to other addictive behaviors such as compulsive gambling, compulsive sexual disorders, compulsive eating, etc. Currently, the experts are deciding if pathological video game play should be classified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) as a mental health disorder.[56]

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[52] CHO, Kevin (2006) "Samsung, SK Telecom, Shinhan Sponsor South Korean Alien Killers" in *Bloomberg News.* January 15, 2006.
[53] South Korea: World's Fastest Internet, PC Gaming Capital. (http://www.cleancutmedia.com/internet/south-korea-worlds-fastest-internet-pc-gaming-capital).
[54] South Korea: World's Fastest Internet, PC Gaming Capital. (http://www.cleancutmedia.com/internet/south-korea-worlds-fastest-internet-pc-gaming-capital).
[55] ***Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*** is the essential, peer-reviewed journal for understanding the social and psychological impact of today's social networking practices. Highly regarded as the go-to source in the field, the Journal has followed the trend of social networking and virtual reality for the past 15 years. It is known for its rapid communication articles and in-depth studies surrounding the effects of interactive technologies on behavior and society, both positive and negative.
[56] Wiederhold, Brenda K PhD, MBA, BCIA (2011) Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking. Thomas Reuters. (http://www.liebertpub.com/cyber).

## 9.1 Acknowledging The Problem

With most addictions, the toughest part of recovering from game addiction, is often getting the addict to acknowledge there's a problem--a task made all the more difficult by the seemingly innocuous nature of games.

For players who do admit they have a problem, the most common response is a guilt-and-purge cycle, common to many addictions. While Bennett was able to kill his character and delete the "*EverQuest*" software with no regrets, many game addicts aren't as successful.

For most players, true recovery involves looking at the issues underlying the game habit, Orzack said. She uses a cognitive-therapy approach in which players examine the emotional motives that prompt them to play a game excessively, and look for alternate ways to satisfy those needs.

*"Therapy takes the issue that there are a lot of other things going on,"* she said. *"The goal is to get people to realize there is something going on and they need to be in charge of changing it."* Excessive game playing often reflects problems in the home environment, Orzack added. *"There's definitely an alienation in some fashion that's going on within the family structure or work structure,"* she said.[57]

Nicolas Yee conducted extensive player research on *"EverQuest"* while earning a psychology degree from Hanford College. He found a direct correlation between the amount of time hardcore players spend in the game and a tendency toward neuroticism—*"basically how easily a person gets depressed or goes into mood swings,"* he said.

Yee said that, while he doesn't doubt games like "EverQuest" can become an addiction, they can also be a productive outlet in dealing with emotional and behavioural issues.

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[57] Computer Addiction Services. Maressa Hecht Orzack, Ph.D.
(http://www.computeraddiction.com/index.htm).

*"Environments like 'EverQuest' can help a person if they're shy or have trouble forming social relationships,"* he said. *"They have this environment where they can safely try new things out. They can experiment with being more vocal, or they can try out a leadership role, which may not be an opportunity they have in real life. Especially for teenagers, it lets them try out different roles and identities at a time when they may be really struggling with those kinds of issues."*[58]

Undoubtedly, in view of the above statements, the growing interests in games as well as the influence and appeal of the electronic gaming will only increases. Video and computer games are seen as more and more important forms of art and entertainment. The sheer money factor is enough to ensure the future of electronic games.

Conversely, there is a pressing regarding the psychological status of the gamer. The following case study signifies how people with greater impulsivity, high hostility, and lower social competence are more likely to become computer game addicts that those without such characteristic.

## 10. Case Study Three: Game-Addiction Due To A Low Self-Esteem And Escaping Circumstances

> *I've always been withdrawn around people that I do not know very well, I never had a great social life and online gaming pretty much become the outlet for that.*
>
> *I've basically spent every waking hour online playing games so I could basically make up for my poor self-esteem in the games by levelling my characters so I'd be better than most and socializing a lot so I'd become a liked person.*
>
> *I recently tried to quit WOW, but after some time I was too bored with normal life again so I got pulled right back into it.*
>
> *I don't think I am addicted, although I think about WOW a lot. It makes me feel a little more powerful than I am in real life.*

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[58] The Daedalus Gateway. The Psychology of MMORPG. Addiction.
(http://www.nickyee.com/daedalus/gateway_addiction.html).

> *It lets me feel like I'm actually accomplishing something amazing with my friends and I'm actually doing something useful and be a part of something that I'm really good at.*

As Dr. Dodes[59] mentions in his book, an addictive behaviour functions by empowering the individual and thereby easing the sense of helplessness that they may be experiencing. In essence, he presents a radical approach to understanding and harnessing the emotional forces that drive addictions. Motivating factors include real life pressures or problems that can use Attraction factors as outlets. MMORPGs are surprisingly good outlets for a variety of common real life issues that people struggle with.[60]

Through years of private practice and work in substance-abuse clinics, Dodes has noticed a pattern behind addiction--a pattern of anger, helplessness, and shame, coupled with a desire for immediate escape from these feelings.

In presenting multiple composite cases, he shows repeatedly that addiction is more than an uncontrollable desire for the substances; (in this case in point game-addiction), it is a behaviour pattern with deeply emotional roots. Furthermore, the emotional underpinnings of addictive behaviours, Dodes reveals that they are preceded by feelings of vulnerability or powerlessness.

Individuals who have low self-esteem issues in real life can temporarily overcome these issues in virtual worlds. In an MMORPG, they may be able to feel strong and competent, in ways that they are unable to in real life.

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[59] Lance Dodes, M.D. is a Training and Supervising Analyst with the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute and assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. He has been the Director of the substance abuse treatment unit of Harvard's McLean Hospital, Director of the Alcoholism Treatment Unit at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital (now part of Massachusetts General Hospital) and Director of the Boston Centre for Problem Gambling.

[60] Dodes, Lance MD (2002) The Heart of Addiction: A New Approach to Understanding and Managing Alcoholism and Other Addictive Behaviors. HarperCollins.

In this way, an MMORPG empowers the player and reduces their sense of weakness and vulnerability.

**10.1 Survey data provides support that a player's self-esteem is correlated with the likelihood that they are addicted to an MMORPG.**[61]



Table 4. Self-esteem in correlation to Addiction 1



Table 5. Self-esteem in correlation to Addiction 2

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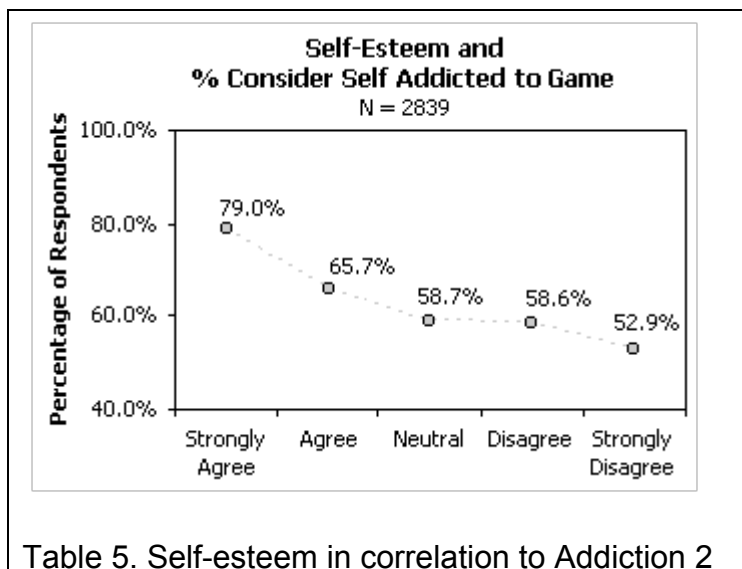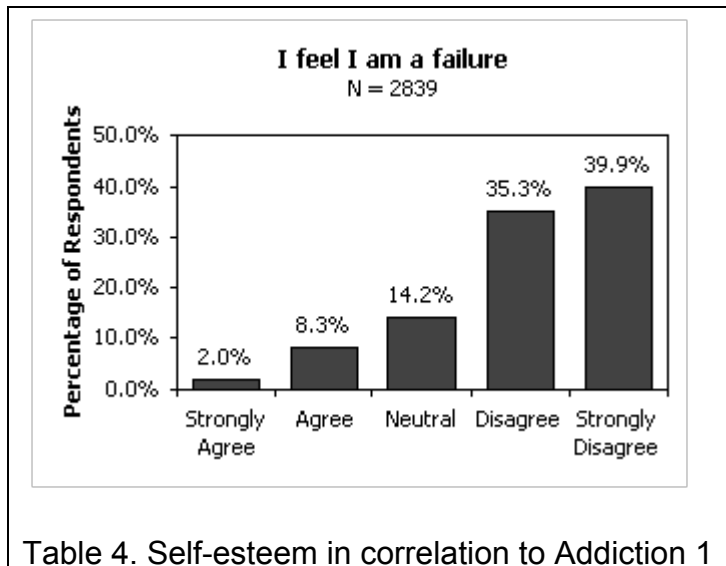
[61] The Daedalus Gateway. The Psychology of MMORPG. Addiction.
(http://www.nickyee.com/daedalus/gateway_addiction.html).

Nicholas Yee explains that while it makes more sense to think that it is a pre-existing sense of low-esteem that causes some players to become drawn into MMORPGs, some may argue that it is playing the game that causes the low-esteem. However, the data shows that not all players have low-esteem, and if it is playing too much that leads to low self-esteem, it still doesn't explain why some players choose to play too much to begin with.

Therefore, it makes more sense to think that he is a difference between players, low self-esteem in this case, that is causing the different degrees of addiction, instead of thinking that the game causes low self-esteem.

A close variant of low self-esteem is poor self-image. Individuals who do not like the way they look in real life, can throw away their flesh and bone bodies for a few hours, and live in the mask of their attractively-shaped avatars. The attention that a shapely female avatar receives may, be intoxicating to an individual who suffers from self-image problems.

With reference to the case study of Paul, one could argue that due to a low self-esteem he gains a tangible sense of power in these environments.

Because he felt undervalued and had no control over his circumstances *WOW* made him feel strong and competent in things that he was not capable of in the real world.  It is in fact the ability of MMORPGs to empower users through its mechanisms that drive problematic usage. In this way, *WOW* empowered him and reduced his sense of weakness and vulnerability.

Another common problem that many individuals face is a sense of feeling trapped in their circumstances, or a sense that they have no control over their own lives. What an MMORPG offers them is a place where they can make a difference by granting them super-human powers, or a sense that they have control over the choices of their characters.

An individual who isn't in the position to make decisions in real life may in an MMORPG cast the life-saving heal or be asked for assistance in a group battle. An individual who is ordered around in his everyday life may be able to lead a group and be admired for his abilities.

In this way, a MMORPG empowers the player by giving them control and the sense that they can make a difference.[62]

Excessive game playing as a means to escape from problems and bad feelings, resulted in Paul dropping out of University, struggling to connect socially with anybody, anxiety and various negative detrimental effects, such as increased aggression, avoidance behaviour and severe depression. Having behavioural problems to begin with, excessive gaming appeared to cause additional mental woes.

**10.2 Survey data provides support that a player's sense of control of their own life is correlated with whether they are addicted to the game.[63]**
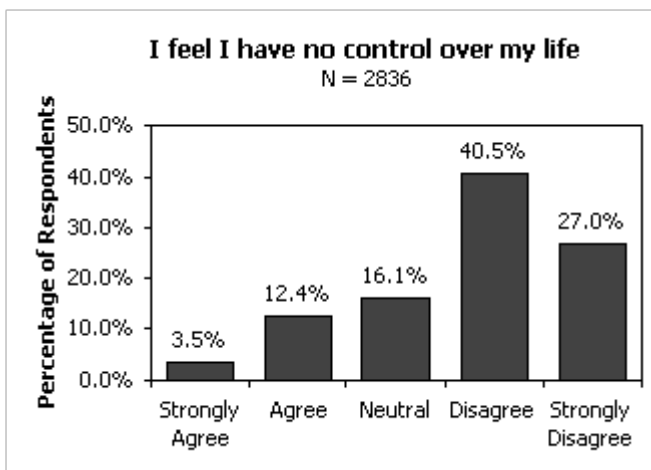


Table 6. Correlation between a Player's Sense of Control and Addiction 1

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[62] The Daedalus Gateway. The Psychology of MMORPG. Addiction.
(http://www.nickyee.com/hub/addiction/motivation.html).
[63] The Daedalus Gateway. The Psychology of MMORPG. Addiction.
(http://www.nickyee.com/hub/addiction/motivation.html).

**Sense of Control and
% Consider Self Addicted to Game**

N = 2839

*(figure: scatter plot showing percentage of respondents against sense of control categories; data points: Strongly Agree 70.7%, Agree 64.0%, Neutral 61.2%, Disagree 57.4%, Strongly Disagree 50.0%; y-axis "Percentage of Respondents" from 40.0% to 100.0%)*
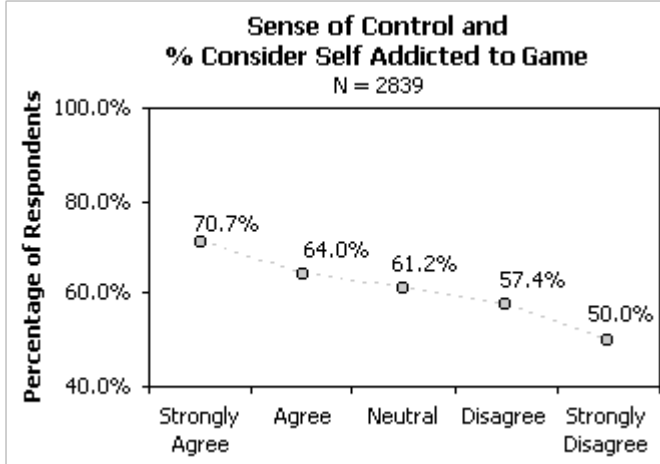
Table 7. Correlation between a Player's Sense of Control and Addiction 2

Some people may have difficulty forming and sustaining relationships in real life. They may have problems with platonic or romantic relationships or both.

An MMORPG effectively simplifies the channel of communication, and relieves the pressure of having to deal with real-time face-to-face conversation. Some individuals who are shy or have low self-esteem may be able to form relationships in the virtual world, which they aren't able to in the real world.

Paul felt undervalued and unable to be useful in real life. *WOW* provided an environment where players needed to depend on each other, and where every character class fills a vital role in a group. For Paul, the game allowed him to feel useful and needed. And finally, Paul accumulated a lot of stress and frustration in his daily life. In addition he was dealing with a sudden landslide of stressful events and personal crises in his real live. The fantasy world *WOW,* provided the perfect escape from these problems. Due to the fact that Paul found it extremely difficult to cope with his problems, he simply avoided them by immersing himself in a make-believe world.

**10.3 Survey data provides support that the amount of stress in a player's life is correlated with whether they are addicted to the game.[64]**
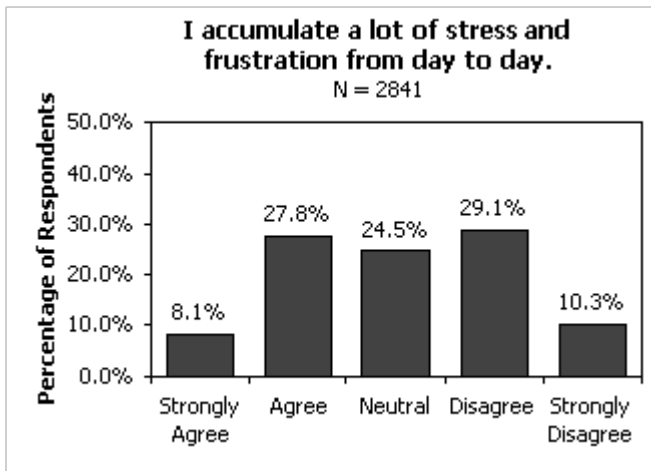
Table 8.   Correlation between the Amount of Stress in a Players Life and Addiction 1
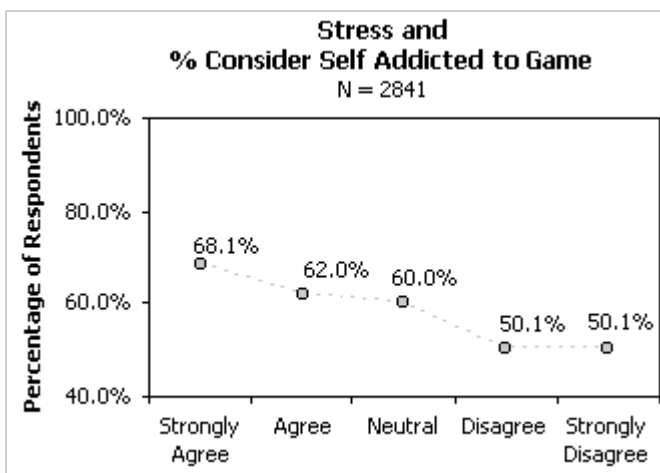
Table 9. Correlation between the Amount of Stress in a Players Life and Addiction 2

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[64] The Daedalus Gateway. The Psychology of MMORPG. Addiction.
(http://www.nickyee.com/hub/addiction/motivation.html).

The following is a summary of the Motivation factors a player may be facing in real life, that an MMORPG can provide an outlet for. The associated Attraction factors are also provided.[65]

| Motivational Factor | MMORPG Outlet | Attraction Factor |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Low Self-Esteem | Being Competent and Powerful | Achievement |
| Poor Self-Image | Being Beautiful and Attractive | Immersion |
| Lack of control over their own lives | Being In Control | Achievement |
| Trapped by Circumstances | Making a Difference | Relationship + Achievement |
| Undervalued | Valued and Needed | Relationship |
| Making and Sustaining Relationships | Simplifies Communication | Relationship |
| Stress and RL Problems | Evasion and Avoidance | Immersion |

Table 10. Motivation Factors Providing An Outlet For MMORPG

He became addicted to games, his depression, anxiety, and escapism into another reality got worse and he became completely isolated from family and friends. Because his approach was "just entertainment", or "just a game", he did not realise that entertainment could still affect a person in a ruthless manner.

The game had a severely negative effect on Paul, that gradually began to consume his life. Paul dedicated most of his time to the MMORPG, often abandoning other interests, such as a social life outside of the game, intimate time with his wife and son, quitting all extracurricular activities and unemployment.

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[65] The Daedalus Gateway. The Psychology of MMORPG. Addiction. (http://www.nickyee.com/hub/addiction/motivation.html).

The main cause of Paul's negative attitude lies in misconceptions on life or certain aspects of it. He perceives life through his beliefs, and because it is negative, he sees his life as unhappy and downright pointless. *World of Warcraft* acts as a portal to temporarily escape his social stresses and negative emotions of the real world.

Moodiness, pouting, being aggressive, being over sensitive, depression, stubbourness were all manifestations of Paul's frame of mind, especially when his game-time was interrupted.

RPG encourages self-centeredness and reclusive behaviour. Paul became extremely egocentric and concerned mainly with himself and his advantage to the exclusion of other. Sadly, self-serving, self-exalting and self-love became so deeply ingrained in Paul's live, that till this day he is struggling to outgrow it.

His passivity had various causes: lack of willpower, lack of hope, and lack of encouragement from other people, negativity, laziness, lack of necessary means. Paul often finds himself wanting to do something, but never had the courage or the energy to do just that. He felt too tired and weak to do even the most basic things.

Resembling Paul, the passive person will not take his rightful place in God. He will always "cop out", and not exert authority and strength. Many Christians with great potential have yielded their flesh to passivity. Rather than aggressively claiming and possessing the promises of the Kingdom, they choose the comfort zone of passivity, expecting nothing and possessing nothing that God has for them.

**10.4 Signs of Computer Game Addiction**

Evident from Paul's game-play, MMORPGs like *World of Warcraft* can be more engaging and distracting than other games, sucking away hours and hours in seemingly endless online quests. Therefore, this game requires players to dedicate large periods of time to the game to achieve certain rewards or to build their characters to a point where they can compete with other participants. This means that players must frequently return to the game and tend to engage in long playing sessions that consume their waking hours. Paul reached the highest level of advanvement in *WOW*.

The main negative consequince of computer game play may be the most important. This is, as illustrated in the case study of Paul computer games can affect one's social life, studies, career and destiny in negative ways. Although this list is not exclusive, it is a beginning point for evaluating possible computer game addiction or pathological computer gaming problems:

1. Gaming leads to conflict with others, work, obligations, or self.
2. Computer game play dominates life and becomes the most important activity in the day.
3. Computer game play provides feelings of euphoria or a 'high' and relieves unpleasant emotions.
4. Development of tolerance for computer game play begins (the gamer needs to play more to achieve the same "high").
5. Withdrawal symptoms are present when computer game play is decreased, unavailable or removed (restlessness, irritability, or other negative feelings).
6. Computer gamers relapse and reinstate play and cannot abstain from computer games.
7. Excessive game play may lead to increased aggression.
8. A person who is addicted to computer games may begin to display decreased pro-social tendencies.

9. Physical symptoms from excessive play manifest such as pain in the wrist or peripheral neuropathy (nerve pain, loss of sensation, or inability to control muscles)

10. Normal social and occupational or educational functioning becomes impaired during computer game addiction.[66]

**10.5 The Biblical Perspective On The Genre Of *"God Games"***

Some of the most fascinating video games fall into the *god games*[67] category. These are usually multiple-genre hybrids that include features associated with role-playing, action and adventure.

These games allow a person to create a world and to directly influence this world, to have supernatural/divine powers and -gifts, to defeat enemies and to decide over life and death.

Such games (for example, *World of Warcraft, Dungeon Keeper*[68], *Populous*[69], and to some extend *The Sims*[70] series of games) enable a player to take on the role of controlling the world being observed (or played in).

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[66] Video Game Addiction: Top 10 signs and symptoms of pathological gaming. (http://internet.addictionblog.org/video-game-addiction-top-10-signs-and-symptoms-of-pathological-gaming/).

[67] A **God Game** is an artificial life game that casts the player in the position of controlling the game on a large scale, as an entity with divine/supernatural powers. As a great leader, or with no specified character, and places them in charge of a game setting containing autonomous characters to guard and influence.

[68]**Dungeon Keeper-** is a strategy video game developed by Bullfrog Productions and released in July 1997 for the PC in which the player attempts to build and manage a dungeon or lair while protecting it from (computer-controlled) "hero" characters intent on stealing the users accumulated treasures and killing various monsters.

[69] **Populous-** The player adopts the role of a deity and assumes the responsibility to shepherd the people by direction, manipulation, and divine intervention. The player has the ability to shape the landscape and grow their civilization with the overall aim of having it conquer an enemy force, which is led by an opposite deity.

[70] **The Simms-** Is a strategic life-simulation computer game that simulates the daily activities of one or more virtual persons ("Sims") in a suburban household near SimCity. The game lets you create, direct, and manage the lives of the SimCity's residents. The general rule is to satisfy the Sim's needs.

A consequence of role-playing games is that God, Christ, salvation from sin, the Gospel, Heaven and Hell are either mocked by these games or twisted and warped beyond Scriptural recognition. The players are fed ideas, attitudes and philosophies about religious and Spiritual truths from a very pagan perspective.

One of the most dangerous effects of role-playing games, not their sinful content (though that is dangerous), but the temptation the player faces to meditate on the game, imagine future scenarios for the game, and calculate how to game various real-world situations. In other words, these games have great ability to keep one's mind continually distracted from Spiritual truths and reality when one isn't wasting time playing them. This is also occurring during dreamtime, while a person is sleeping. Paul never stopped thinking of new strategies and game scenarios', which captured his dreams- literally and physically.

In consideration of Paul's testimony one needs to examine what the Word of God says regarding witchcraft, occultism, sin and rebellion. In the New Testament, God warns that those who habitually practice witchcraft are not born-again, no matter what they claim, and will spend eternity in Hell.

***"Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:20-21).***

Scripture remarks, in I Samuel 15:23, as God looks for something sufficiently deplorable to compare to the sin of rebellion, He settles on witchcraft. ***"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry…"***

God commanded Israel three times in the Old Testament to put magic users to death (Exodus 22:18, Leviticus 20:27, Deuteronomy 18:10-22).

According to Psalm 10:4, one of the behaviours of the wicked is his refusal to constantly consider God. ***"The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts."***

The root of all such occupations and pursuits is Satan. God's children are to refrain from it. The worst king in Judah, Manasseh, was condemned for witchcraft, ***"And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger" (2 Chronicles 33:6).***

**10.6 The Horrifying Truth About *WOW***

On 23 November 2004, *Blizzard Entertainment* released the most attractive, addictive and dangerous online game of all time: *World Of Warcraft*.

Now Swedish therapists are admitting that the massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) is more addictive than crack cocaine.[71]The *WOW* addiction has the ability to possess minds.

Not only is *WOW* a highly addictive game, but also the game is full of spiritism[72], demonic content, Satanism, witchcraft[73] and violence. All opposed to the real God.

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[71]The Inquirer. (http://www.theinquirer.net/inquirer/news/199/1051199/danger-warcrack-confirmed)

[72]**Spiritism, Spiritualism, Spiritist:** A) A medium of a familiar spirit. B) One who invites and allows themselves to be conduits of demonic spirits for the purposes of allowing their manifestation in the world. Deuteronomy 18:9-14 shares God's view on their practices.

[73] **Witchcraft:** A) The occupation of the Devil's agent's exercising his dark powers for the production of his will. B) An institution of satanic priests and priestesses of darkness. C) Female lust, and the practice of spiritism and necromancy. Spiritually, the practice of abusing creation for

One cannot be a self-professing Christian and perceive *WOW* as only a game, or I am not a wizard, I am killing demons[74] and dragons… so I am fighting with them.

Why is the game so popular? Why does the game have such a magnetic attraction? Why is the gamer willing to sacrifice everything: friends, family, money, jobs and sometimes their own lives, to reach the next level of the game?

One could mention the violence in the game, one can mention the games explicit sexual appeal, one can even mention that the game is designed for character progression requiring more and more of the players time to progress to the next level.

However, there is a more sinister reason, a mystical component that makes the game so popular and dangerously addictive: and that is the occult[75] content of the game. The fact is that the foundation of the game, is based upon Satanism and all that is occultic in nature.

In examining the following occult principles and content of the game it will deems as proof that the game is rooted in Satanism and witchcraft. It is so interwoven into the very framework of the game, inseparable from the game in entirly.[76]

On the first page of the character attributes of the game one can find the first piece of occult content. There is an entire attribute section devoted to casting spells. Spell-casting is an integral part of the game and enhances the players ability to increase damage, increasing healing, hit their opponent and increase their life force. The use of spells affords the gamer an edge on the competition and increases one's ability to advance in the game.

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one's own purposes by the imposition of demonic desires upon the will and lives of others by magic, sorcery and other occult means. 1 Samuel 15:23; 2 Chronicles 33:6.

**74 Demon:** An unclean spirit with divine and inferior godlike status able to influence humanity and their affairs by bestowing fortunes on people or inflicting suffering upon them. Often became worshipped as a god or a goddess in ancient civilizations.

[75]**Occult:** A) Hidden, concealed and secretive. B) Mysterious arts and practices. C) Unlawful access to, and appropriation of, the powers and forces of the supernatural of godless purposes.

[76] All the fact comes from the World of Warcraft propitiatory website.

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The fact is that the casting of spells is a foundational principle of the game and without this attribute the game cannot rightly be called W*orld of Warcraft*.

Spells are relative to the occult in the sense that the word pertains to using enchantments, incantations and sorcery or magic to bind, manipulate, help, or harm another. Imprecations and incantations are often used in addition. Spell casting is resorting to magical arts, divination, or sorcery to inflict a spell, it is also the act of employing the forces of evil to achieve demonic results in the natural world.[77]

The Merriam-Webster dictionary, defines a spell as *"a spoken word or form of words held to have magic power; a state of enchantment."*[78]Therefore one can concludes that spells are based on that which is satanic, magical and occultic.

However, spell casting is not the only element of Satanism that can be found in the game. The entire game is built on the foundational principle of magic and outright Satanism. The Druid is a key player, or character in the game. In the real world the Druid uses occult magic, or occult spirituality. The character is no different in the game.

The character of the Druid in the game of *WOW,* is the keeper of the world and walk in the path of nature, following the wisdom of the Ancients and Cenarius, healing and nurturing the world. They can shape-shift, draw their powers from wild energy, use it to change their shapes and command the forces of nature. Traditionally, druids chose the path of a specific animal totem[79], including encouraging the study of magic from all totems.[80] It is clear that the druid masters the use of the occult supernaturally to do warfare.

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[77] Price, Paula, PhD (2006) The Prophets Dictionary. The Ultimate Guide to Supernatural Wisdom. New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House Publishing, p. 527.

[78] Spell. (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/spell?show=1&t=1335993298)

[79]**Totem:** An object or creature that identifies a family or clan spiritually and religiously. These objects were usually polled and depicted ravens and other divinatory symbols, as well as deceased relatives. Totems also displayed an image of what is to be a family line god. They were thought to provide spirit-driven guidance and rescue that enabled the family and its descendants to survive.

[80] Druid. (http://www.wowwiki.com/Druid).

Druids in the real world, can find these exact same principles in the world today. Price explains that the Druid is an ancient caste of Celtic priests popular in Britain, Ireland and France, existing from a similar priestly caste from around the third century BC. The Druids comprised an upper class of ancient religionists, who worshipped a pantheon of nature gods and goddesses. Known for their intelligence, these priests were the chief educators of their communities.

They believed in soul migration[81], reincarnation[82] rejected the idea of eternal judgment and chose nature as their worship sanctuary. Aside from magic and divination, the Druids practiced human and animal sacrifices. Druidism is closely tied to Wicca and witchcraft. Historical studies show this group of self-proclaimed neo-pagans bears a strong resemblance to the ancient Persian Magi.[83]

Other characters include the Shaman, who specializes in offensive spell casting, melee damage dealing, or healing. As such, the class is considered one of the most adaptable and versatile in the game. Shamans can also provide support to a group in the form of stationary totems, when placed on the ground by the shaman, either provides various benefits to party members, or bestow damage to enemies, of which the totem determines the range placed.

Warlocks are masters of shadow, flame and demonic power. They are a robed class that excels at plaguing their enemies with disease or curses, hurling bolts of fire or shadow energy across the battlefield, and summonsing demons to aid them in contact.

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[81]**Soul Migration:** Akin to the idea of reincarnation, this term refers to a change of a soul's residence from one body or creature to another. It is based on the belief that the human soul, upon death passes from one body to another presumably at will.

[82]**Reincarnation**: A New Age thought springing from a combination of ancient Eastern mysticism and necromancy. It is the takeover of the soul of a new body after death.

[83]Price, Paula, PhD (2006) The Prophets Dictionary. The Ultimate Guide to Supernatural Wisdom. New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House Publishing, p. 186.

Warlocks are renowned for their damage over time (DoT) spells and sinister Shadow magic, as well for summoning demonic minions and their ability to wreak havoc with destructive Fire spells. Warlocks can specialize in any of these areas: Affliction warlocks are the masters of damage over time, draining their targets' health with an array of powerful debuffs; Demonology warlocks summon improved Demons to do their bidding, drawing power from their minions and even transforming into Demons themselves; while Destruction warlocks call down a rain of fire upon their enemies, specializing in potent burst damage and Fire spells. Warlocks are often maligned and mistrusted due to the nature of their powers.

It is not just the characters that are satanic, but also the world in which they interact and perform their magic. *Black Temple* for example, is explained as follows: *"Long ago on Draenor, the Temple of Karabor was the center of draenei worship. But the devout priests who prayed there are long dead, slaughtered by marauding, demonically corrupted orcs. In the massacre's aftermath the warlocks of the Shadow Council seized the structure and bestowed upon it a new name: the Black Temple."*[84]

Therefore, the inference can be drawn that the game of *warcraft* is deeply spiritual. Spiritual implies the occult.

The game includes magic; spells; shape-shifting; the use of curses; characters like wizards; warlocks; druids; shamans, the use of demonic power and even demonic possession by dark spirits.

It is thus established, that the game is of the occult, consequently, important questions need to be considered through deliberation: *Why does this matter to the gamer? How does this affect the gamer personally? If a person is just "acting" these parts, why will there be any harm?*

The fact is that all these occult powers, magic and characters exist and are very real in the physical world. This will be proven in the chapters to follow. By playing *WOW,* the gamer is wielding to these occultic and demonic powers.

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[84]Black Temple. (http://us.battle.net/wow/en/zone/black-temple/).

The use of these powers will have an actual effect[85], depending on how well one uses these powers, because the satanic power is of real use to the characters in the game. It further has a very real effect one one's soul and personal life. It affects the gamer's job, relationships, eating-patterns, sleeping-patterns and can even be deadly in extreme cases.

Conclusion can be reached that none are in greater danger from the influences of evil spirits than those who, notwithstanding the direct and ample testimony of the Scriptures, deny the existence and agency of the devils and his angels.

As long as we persist in ignorance of their wiles, they have almost inconceivable advantages; many give heed to their suggestions while they believe to be following the dictations of their own wisdom.

This explains why, in our approach to the end of time, when Satan works with great power and diligence to deceive and destroy, he spreads widely the belief that he does not exist.

Satan is the one who presents a person with alternatives: an alternative lifestyle, alternative reality, alternative name and alternative identity.

Whilst believing in your own immortality, you are denouncing, that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world, so that everybody who professes the Name of Jesus, will inherit the Kingdom of God. By not believing in a life after death, the misconception forms that no repentance or salvation is required.

To be a self-god is a lie brought to mankind by Lucifer. If a person could reign as *god* that person does not need to be *born-again* in a new life with Christ. The difference to be born again and self-exaltation is that the one is undeserving and the other one is relentless effort. It is almost like going up an escalator that is coming down. No matter how hard the effort is, one will never reach the top.

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[85]See Chapter Two- An Investigation into role-playing in alteration of identity and Chapter Three- An exegetical exposition on Avatars as fulfilment of Revelation 13:14&15- The Image of the Beast.

This is a New Age philosophy: to be self-made gods, or "little gods". It is a self-love, a rebellion against everything in Scripture that will never submit to the Truth.

The Bible Exhorts to Walk in the Spirit and not walk after the flesh. ***Galatians 5:16; 26*** presents the deeds of the flesh in strong contrast to the fruit of the spirit:

> ***Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envying, murders, drunkenness, revelling, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.***

> ***Galatians 5:16; 26***

## 11. Computer-Games Industry Statistics

The thing about video games that makes them so special is that we're given free reign to explore worlds, to interact with magnificant creatures of fantasy, to travel through spaces that could only live in the imagination.

-Brady Fiechter, executive editor, *Play*[86]

Hollywood, radio, and even MTV are all being pushed aside, being replaced by moving video- and computer games, perhaps the most influential force in the twentyfirst century. A host of other worlds, different dimensions of time, and alternate realities to explore exist, literally at your fingertips. And the number continues to increase at a staggeringly rapid rate. Steve Schnur, worldwide music executive for EA Games, has suggested that video games *"are what MTV used to be: being hip, being current, ushering in trends, and sigle-handedly created 'cool.'"*[87]

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[86]Fiechter, Bradly (2005) "The Art of The Game." *Play.* October 2005, p. 28.
[87]Klepek, Patrick (2005) "Frag to the music." *Computer Gaming World.*April 2005, p.33.

Computer games can no longer be thought of as little more than meangless distractions designed to fill playtime for children, teens and adults. According to Benjamin Porcari' founder and president of IBC Digital, (the company in charge of creating content for MTV2's *Video Mods* programme) – *"More sophisticated games and exciting content have pushed games out into the mainstream of entertainment."*[88]

There are studies, discrediting the myth that there is a link between computer and video games and violence. According to these particular studies, blaming video games for violence in the real world, is no more productive than blaming the news media for bringing violent crimes into our homes night after night.

They are of the opinion that having someone or something to blame, is convenient, and wrong, especially after an incident of terrible and unexplainable violence.

Ferguson, Christopher J. and John Kimburn:

*"This analysis does not find support for either a causal or correlational link between violent media and subsequent aggression in viewers. Why the belief of media violence effects persists despite inherent weaknesses of research is somewhat of an open question."*[89]

Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, majority opinion in Brown v. EMA/ESA:

*"Psychological studies purporting to show a connection between exposure to violent video games and harmful effects on children do not prove that such exposure causes minors to act aggressively."*[90]

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[88]Porcari, Benjamin (2005) Quoted in "Rock Stars in Excess" interview. *Play,* October 2005, p. 115.

[89] Ferguson, Christopher J. And Kimburn, John (2009) "The Public Health Risks Of Media Violence: A Meta-Analytic Review." *Journal Of Pediatrics* 154, pp. 759-763.

[90] Supreme Court of the United States, Brown, Governor Of California, Et Al. *V.* Entertainment Merchants Association Et Al. Certiorari To The United States Court Of Appeals For The Ninth Circui.( http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/10pdf/08-1448.pdf).

Grimes, Thomas, James A. Anderson and Lori Bergen:

*"In nearly 80 percent of the studies investigated here, the measures of aggression were paper-and-pencil reports —often simple check marks on a scale… There are a few studies that investigate whether the predicted [aggressive] behavior actually occurs (and those few studies indicate that it does not)."[91]*

The conclusion can therefore be derived that computer and video games evolved since the days of *Pac-Man* and *Frogger*, akin to those who play them. Players of all ages and backgrounds enjoy modern video games, and parents are increasingly involved in ensuring that the ones their children partake in, are age-appropriate. Below is a list of some key statistics[92] related to the video game industry:

**11.1 Sales & Genre Data**

According to data released by The National Purchase Diary (NPD) Group, a global market research company, the video game industry posted strong sales in 2010, generating more than 25 billion U.S. dollar in revenue. Sales of game software and content, including games made for consoles, portable gaming devices and Portable Computers, as well as digital full game downloads, downloadable content and social games, accounted for approximately 15.9 billion U.S dollar of that total.

The most popular game genre in 2010 was "Action," which accounted for nearly 22 percent of all games sold. In addition, of the games sold in 2010, approximately 56 percent were rated "Everyone (E)" or "Everyone 10+ (E10+)."[93]

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[91] Grimes, Thomas; Anderson , James A. and Bergen, Lori (2008) *Media violence and aggression: Science and Ideology*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc Print.
[92] Entertainment Software Rating Board. (www.esrb.org/about/video-game-industry-statistics.jsp).
[93] Sales & Genre Data. (http://www.theesa.com/facts/gameplayer.asp).

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## 11.2. Game Player Data

Video games are now a mass medium, widely enjoyed on a variety of platforms by a diverse audience. The Entertainment Software Association's (ESA) 2011 Essential Facts About the Computer and Video Game Industry[94] show that 72 percent of American households play computer and video games. The research also reveals other interesting demographic facts about today's gamers and the games they play, including:

- The average gamer is 37 years old and has been playing for 12 years. Eighty-two percent of gamers are 18 years of age or older.
- Forty-two percent of all players are women and women over 18 years of age are one of the industry's fastest growing demographics.
- Today, adult women represent a greater portion of the game-playing population (37 percent) than boys age 17 or younger (13 percent).
- Twenty-nine percent of game players are over the age of 50, an increase from nine percent in 1999. This figure is sure to rise in coming years with nursing homes and senior centers across the nation now incorporating video games into their activities.
- Sixty-five percent of gamers play games with other gamers in person.
- Fifty-five percent of gamers play games on their phones or handheld device.
- Ninety-one percent of the time parents are present at the time games are purchased or rented. Ninety-eight percent of parents are confident in the accuracy of the Entertainment Software Rating Board ratings. Seventy-five percent of parents believe that the parental controls available in all new video game consoles are useful.
- Parents also see several benefits of entertainment software. Sixty-eight percent of parents believe that game play provides mental stimulation or education, 57 percent believe games encourage their family to spend to time together, and 54 percent believe that game play helps their children connect with their friends.

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[94] Game Player Data. (http://www.theesa.com/facts/gameplayer.asp).

## 11.3 MMORPG Demographic

- It is easy to dismiss video games as pointless activities that only teenagers indulge in. The truth is that the average age of MMORPG players is around 26. In fact, only 25 percent of MMORPG players are teenagers. About 50 percent of MMORPG players work full-time. About 36 percent of players are married, and 22 percent have children.

  So the MMORPG demographic is fairly diverse, including high-school students, college students, early professionals, middle-aged home-makers, as well as retirees. In other words, MMORPGs do not only appeal to a youth subculture.

- The wide appeal of MMORPGs is all the more striking because of usage data that shows how strong that appeal seems to be. On average, MMORPG players spend 22 hours a week in these environments and usage is not correlated with age. In other words, older players spend the same amount of time playing these games as younger players. Also, the strength of this appeal is further highlighted by the finding that 60 percent of players report having played an MMORPG for at least 10 hours continuously.

- Another caricature of video gamers is that they are solitary hermits, but the data on MMORPG players show that 80 percent of MMORPG players play with someone they know in RL (a romantic partner, family member, or friend)on a regular basis. Thus, MMORPGs are in fact highly social environments where new relationships are forged and existing relationships are reinforced.[95]

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[95] MMORPG Demographic. (http://www.nickyee.com/daedalus/gateway_demographics.html).

## 11.4 Ratings And Parental Control

**Ratings and parental controls help parents make appropriate entertainment choices for their families:[96]**

Just as with other types of entertainment, there is a wide variety of content available in computer and video games to suit the wide variety of individuals who play games. The industry has also voluntarily established numerous tools and policies to help parents make educated choices and ensure that retailers only sell games to those whose age is appropriate for the game in question.

- Computer and video games are rated by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), whose system includes age recommendations and content descriptors. The Federal Trade Commission credited the video game industry with "outpacing" other entertainment industries in curtailing the marketing of mature-rated products to children. In addition, a June 2011 study conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates found:
    - 85 percent of parents with children who play video games are aware of the ESRB ratings;
    - 65 percent of parents regularly check a game's rating before making a purchase; and
    - 98 percent of parents feel the ESRB rating system is either "very helpful" or "somewhat helpful."
- All new video game consoles include parental controls that limit a child's access to games based on their ESRB ratings. According to a 2011 study, 75 percent of parents believe parental controls are useful.
- Parents impose time usage limits on video games more than any other form of entertainment:
    - 80 percent of parents place time limits on video game playing
    - 74 percent of parents place time limits on Internet usage

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[96] Ratings and Parental Control.
(http://www.theesa.com/facts/pdfs/ESA_EF_About_Games_and_Violence.pdf)

- o  70 percent of parents place time limits on television viewing
- o  65 percent of parents place time limits on movie viewing

These happenings are attributed to a generation that grew up on video games, assuming its rightful place in society. However, with the emergence of today's young adults, some important questions about computer- and video games are surfacing:

- Is there a way of determining whether computer games have a severely negative influence on the life of the gamer? If so, how?
- How should good and evil be portrayed in the game?
- What is the line between valid artistic expression through games, and a deliberate mocking of Biblical truths in relation to God as the Creator of everything

These are just some of the issues this thesis attempts to explore. The intention of this thesis is to portray an exegetical view concerning computer role-playing games, and to provide a significant contribution to parents, teachers, pastors, and counsellors to free and relieve those who are captured physically, mentally and spiritually under the influences of MMORPG.

CHAPTER FIVE

PhD

PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

And this is the testimony:
God has given us eternal life,
and this life is in his Son.
The one who has the Son
has this eternal life;
the one who does not have the Son of God
does not have this eternal life.

John 5:11-12

*Spiritual Transition Into Christ to Restore Man's Image*

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**There is none righteous, not even one;**
**there is none who understands,**
**there is none who seeks for god;**
**all have turned aside, together they have become useless;**
**there is none who does good,**
**there is not even one.**

**Romans 3:11-12**

## 1. Introduction

How influential is computer technology in the world? The question hardly needs asking. Society is in a tumultuous state. Today's Western society is characterized by disillusionment, doubt, irony, fragmentation and plurality.

With the failure of Modernism and the rise to prominence of Nihilism, Post-Humanism, Post-Structuralism and Individualism, society has entered a thoroughly Post-Modern era.

Over the past couple of decades humanity has increasingly turned to Information Technology as the great enabler. Through the capabilities what Information Technology offers, undreamed heights of scientific and technological progress have been reached in an amazingly short span of time.

However, rather than uplifting and emancipating society, the wholesale implementation of Information Technology has brought with it a host of unintended and unforeseen consequences. As with the promises of Modernism, Information Technology has not brought society the Utopia that it imagined. Information Technology has rather acted to create a universe characterized by virtuality, constant change, indeterminacy and an information orientated perspective on the world. Technological progress has not been accompanied by social progress.

Through a comprehensive literature review and an examination of both Post-Modernism and Information Technology, Nel & Kroeze proposed that the influences of Information Technology have acted and continued to act to promote Post-Modernism.[1] These influences amongst others include its displacement of space and time, its promotion of the Information Society, its ability to create digital hyper-realities, its destructive influence on tradition and culture, and most of all its catastrophic/ revolutionary impact on the identity.

It is self-evident that man lives in a technological society; and as Christians one needs to take this fact seriously. The first step is to develop a Christian perspective on technology and the consequent impact on mankind.

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[1] Nel, D F & Kroeze J H Prof (2008) Information Technology As An Agent of Post-Modernism. University of Pretoria. Philosophy Of Science.

It is of no use accusing it of being *"the hand tool of the devil"* as, according to the Times Educational Supplement,[2] 1400 members of the Plymouth Brethren did when writing to the National Curriculum Council asking that their children be removed from lessons involving computers.

Neither is it a Christian option to accept technology uncritically as, for example, Wilhelm E. Fudpucker S.J. does: *"For Christianity, at least, there is no opposition to modern technology. Far from being opposed, the two are intimately even mystically, intertwined ... Technology not only comes forth from Christianity, it takes us into Christianity in a new and fuller sense."*[3] Therefore, one needs to develop a third way by examining what people means by technology.

With development of technology comes the escalation of potential destruction becasue there is also a dark sinister side to technology. Technological development means that destruction is all the more advanced. Technology is the means whereby people shape the world, as is evidenced by the terms Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age thus a new technological discovery shaping the culture. Technology also begins to shape mankind; so much so that by discovering an ancient tool the skilled archaeologist can extrapolate much about the culture and the ways of the people that used it.[4]

Technology has two sides: for every Ark there is a Tower of Babel.[5] It not only frees us but also enslaves us. In agreement, author Swearengen deals with a very similar topic, mostly overlooked by the Christian community: the fact that technology is shaping our culture and controlling our lives--for better or for worse.

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[2] Times Educational Supplement. 6 October 1989

[3] Mitcham, Carl & Groote, Jim (1984) *In Theology and Technology, Essays in Christian Analysis and Exegesis*. University Press of America.

[4] Roques, Mark (1989) Curriculum Unmasked: towards a Christian understanding of education. Monarch/CIE,p. 35.

[5] Monsma, Stephen V (1989) Responsible Technology. Grand Rapids: Eerdemans Publisher.

Men and women are all becoming aware of critical issues generated by human activity, such as increased energy demand, dwindling supplies, need for clean fresh water, congestion, environmental overload, surveillance and loss of privacy, etc. The inevitable question that emerges is whether technology can provide solutions for all these problems when technology itself is the cause of these problems.

After doing extensive reading, dialoguing and thinking, Swearengen makes a credible case that it is secular values that are driving innovation and thus creating an idolatrous worship of Science and technology.[6] He challenges Christians to counteract this trend by helping to shape technology (or even limiting it, when warranted) by using Biblical guidelines.

In view of this, one can hypothesise that technology now has a potential not only for the good but also for evil, it can form and deform the creation— and It has also become idolized.

Technology not only forms idols (Isaiah 44:12) it also has become an idol.[7] By saying that technology has become an idol, one does not signify that people have fashioned technological artefacts, placed them on their mantelpieces and bow down to them daily. Contemporary idolatry is more subtle. An idol is not necessarily a graven image, or even an image at all, it is an aspect of creation that is given a place of honour that God did not intend it to have. Idolatry is putting trust in an aspect of creation rather than in the Creator. The latest technology becomes the source of security, and then it becomes a "saviour". The way our society is described as "technological" is a direct consequence of man's idolatry of technology-what man worships he becomes like.

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[6] Swearengen, Jack Clayton (2007) Beyond Paradise: Technology and the Kingdom of God. Wipf & Stock Publishers.

[7] Shallis, Michael Shallis (1989) The Silicon Idol: The Micro Revolution and Its Social Implications. Oxford University Press.

No one can escape his need for God or, at the deepest core of his being, the desire for God. The need for God cannot be ignored, but too many people prefer God on their own terms, not His. Even the great French existentialist and atheist Jean-Paul Sartre had to concede that he could never fully escape. He often contemplated God, even as a devout atheist, *"For want of being able to think otherwise."*[8] Moreover such citations could be multiplied repeatedly by those who claim they are not religious and have no interest in God.[9]

Regrettably, the basic problem of mankind is one of moral failing (sin), or missing the mark of God's holiness. Although God loves man and desires to be in personal fellowship with him, sin is a barrier to such fellowship. Just as unfaithfulness may bring alienation and separation between man and woman in marriage, sin, by its very nature, alienates man from the one true God, who is infinitely Holy and prevents God and man from having fellowship together.

God offers salvation that does not need to be earned by our personal righteousness and good deeds. Rather, quite miraculously, it is an entirely free gift. Although undertaken at incalculable cost to God Himself, salvation is offered to all people by grace- only to be received and enjoyed. Once received through personal faith in Jesus Christ and His death on the cross for sin, the result is a gift of absolute, irrevocable forgiveness of all sin- past, present and future- and the gift of eternal life, beginning immediately and extended into all eternity.

## 2. Digital Deities in Cyberspace

Many interpretations have been offered to demonstrate that the Internet is not only affecting the individual but a broader society as a whole.

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[8] De Beauvoir, Simone (1984) *"A Conversation About Death and God."* Harpers Magazine, February 1984, p.39.
[9] For further reading, *Fast Facts on Defending Your Faith.* Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2002, pp.15-21.

On a sociological level alone, the Neo-pagan movement is highly networked in cyberspace, as pagans communicate with one another through a number of occult-oriented chat rooms on the Internet. One author speaks pointedly of the Internet as *"the clearinghouse of contemporary heresy."*[10]

Spiritual explorers are increasingly looking to cyberspace to meet the needs of the soul. Many Neo-pagans, occultists, and New Agers deem the technologies of cyberspace as fitting media for their magical experiments and rituals and view the Internet as a mystical plane of being.[11] Much of the Neo-pagan movement's growth and a lot of its evolving practices are generated through interaction on the Net. Computer-literate pagans also incorporate both computer hardware and software directly into their magical operations. Individual variations on that theme are as numerous as the individuals involved.

For some in this movement, which has roots in the counterculture of the sixties, both hallucinogenic drugs[12] and computers help to demonstrate that reality is strictly a matter of our own perception and therefore can be manipulated and even created. However, this enthusiasm for the mystical potential of human technology is misplaced, illogical, and spiritually dangerous. It vainly attempts to build a spiritual reality on the faulty foundation of silicon, instead of on Jesus Christ.

As explained in Chapter One, Cyberspace is the contemporary term for computer-mediated communication, the burgeoning new world of e-mail, databases, virtual reality, word-processing, computer games and a myriad of culture-shaping, digital technologies.

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[10] Gilder, George (1994) "Scoping Out of the Data Highway", interviewed by Mary Eisenhart, *Microtimes,* 25 July 1994.

[11] Groothuis, Douglas PhD. Technoshamanism: Digital Deities in Cyberspace. CA: CRI, p. 1.

[12] **Hallucinogenic Drugs:** Drugs, whether synthesized or natural, that alter brain chemistry to induce abnormal states of consciousness. Called psychedelic by those claiming the drugs reveal new realities.

The backbone of cyberspace is the Internet, an international computer system linking individual computers through phone lines.

As pointed out in Chapter Two, man is made in God's image; therefore man possesses an immortal, invisible spirit that is united to man's soul. Regrettably, many people are attempting to use cyberspace to feed and stretch the soul instead of seeking the Spirit of Truth namely the Holy Spirit to fill one's spirit.

A new movement is forming that views cyberspace as a sacred realm for the expansion of consciousness. Working from Neo-pagan, occult and New Age assumptions, *Technoshamans*[13] claim they are the wired wizards of the digital world. As this strange phenomenon unfolds, Christians need to address it Theologically and Biblically if one is to reach today's technological culture effectively with the message of Jesus Christ.

Whether or not this "extraordinary confluence of consciousness" in cyberspace is identified with the noosphere,[14] a raft of technopagans are tapping into cyberspace as a realm for mystical discovery, magical powers, and evolutionary advancement.[15] *Foundation For the Law of Time*[16] is of opinion that the Internet is the third-dimensional reflection of the noosphere, a form of proto-telepathy.

When the noosphere is fully activated, then the human species will experience telepathy as a collective norm. The use of cyberspace for these ends is often called technoshamanism.

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[13] Technoshamanism- A term used to describe various methods of integrating modern technology into shamanic practice.

[14] **Noosphere-** literally, "mind-sphere" is the planetary sphere of mind or thinking layer of planet earth. See Terms and Definitions for Theory and History of Noosphere.

[15] Groothuis, Douglas PhD. Technoshamanism: Digital Deities in Cyberspace. CA: CRI, p.3.

[16] Foundation for the Law of Time (http://www.lawoftime.org/noosphere.html).

Technoshamanism, in all its permutations, is more than the latest fashion from San Francisco — although a high concentration of such activity is located there. While not an organized movement, it represents a growing cultural trend to deify cyberspace.

The shamanic worldview of ancient, pagan religions was a mediator between the spiritual and material worlds, who experienced mystical ecstasies and initiated others into the same communion with higher powers.[17] Shamanism involves a belief in supernatural forces that can be accessed to cause alterations in "*external reality*"

The techno-shamanic worldview is an extension of this where one can easily see a mapping between computer networks and the spirit world, and between computers and the powerful entities the traditional shaman interacts with. Technoshamanism eliminates the middleman — although it is not without visionaries, philosophers, and programmers — and offers mystical connections in cyberspace possible to everyone with a modem. This view holds that anyone can be a (techno)shaman.

A pagan practitioner may summarize the essence of technoshamanism in this statement: *"May the astral plane be reborn in cyberspace."*[18] In an extensive article on technopagans, Erik Davis sees parallels between the notion of magic as *"the science of the imagination, the art of engineering consciousness and discovering the virtual forces that connect the mind-body with the physical world,"* and *"our dizzyingly digital environment"* of cyberspace technologies involving on-line fantasy role-playing games and other new, mind-expanding devices.[19]

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[17] Groothuis, Douglas (1956) Unmasking The New Age. IVP Books, p. 137.
[18] Davis, Erik, *"Technopagans"* p. 176 (http://www.techgnosis.com/technopagans.html).
[19] Ibid, p. 128.

Technopagans believe these technologies can serve as occultic sacraments in the digital age, because technopagans *"honor technology as part of the circle of human life, a life that for Pagans is already divine."*[20]

Mark Pesce, a self-confessed technopagan, claims that both *"cyberspace and magical space are purely manifest in the imagination. Both spaces are entirely constructed by your thoughts and beliefs."*[21] The pantheism–animism–polytheism mix is expressed when Pesce explains, *"I think computers can be as sacred as we are, because they can embody our communication with each other and with the entities — the divine parts of ourselves — that we invoke in that space."*[22] In his mind, cyberspace is pictured as *"the computer equivalent of holography, in which every part of a fragment represents the greater whole."*[23]

Pesce later concluded that the Internet's ability to form a myriad of electronic connections corresponds with the Eastern idea of the net of the Indian goddess Indra, in which each jewel reflects every other jewel.[24] The analogy, however, is flawed, since every point in cyberspace does not connect with, let alone reflect, every other point.

Technopagans are also attracted to the idea of cybersex (simulated on-line sex) and gender morphing (assuming alternative sexual identities on-line). A woman named Legba, a witch, enjoys cybersex and morphing because *"they can be intensely magical. It's a very, very easy way of shape-changing."*

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[20] Davis, Erik, *"Technopagans"* p. 176  (http://www.techgnosis.com/technopagans.html).
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Groothuis, Douglas (1956) Unmasking The New Age. IVP Books, pp. 98-109.

Legba associates this to the traditional shamans, who she says are *"between genders, or doubly gendered."* Moreover, *"morphing and net.sex can have an intensity and unsettling effect on the psyche, one that enables the ecstatic state from which Pagan magic is done."*[25]

Another pagan, Tyagi Nagasiva, has *"cobbled together his own mythic structures, divination systems, and rituals — an eclectic spirituality well suited to the Net's culture of complex interaction."*[26] Nagasiva engages in *"chaos magic,"* in which participants do not rigidly follow the occult tradition, but create their own rules or ignore them altogether, *"spontaneously enacting rituals that break through fixed mental categories and evoke unknown — and often terrifying — entities and experiences."*[27] He claims that most pagans get on-line to coordinate rituals they then practice in real life, whereas chaos magicians say, *"Let's do the ritual [itself] online."*[28] Nagasiva inhabits this ritual space from four to six hours a day.

## 3. Exposing The Motives Why Digital Deities Is Problematic And Anti-Biblical

Technoshamanism attempts to sacralize computer technology, to find mystery in the works that man's hands have made. Because of the influence of extraordinary and sometimes brilliant computer technologies, those not availing themselves of God's own revelation in Christ and the Scriptures will seek revelations elsewhere.[29]

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[25] Davis, Eric (1995) "Technopagans". *Wired,* 3.07, July 1995, p. 180.
[26] Davis, Eric (1995) "Technopagans". *Wired,* 3.07, July 1995, p. 178.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Groothuis, Douglas (1994) Christianity that counts: Being a Christian in a Non-Christian World. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, pp. 102-105.

Groothuis notes apart from God, where better to seek revelations than cyberspace? It's as close as the keyboard and as esoteric as the Internet. It can be as engrossing as any technology in existence. Its mysteries beckon exploration and its potentials are not fully known. Through its massive connectivity it offers a kind of *visio dei* — a God's-eye vision of endless data through the dimensions of cyberspace.[30]

Heim rightly comments, *"Our love affair with computers, computer graphics, and computer networks runs deeper than aesthetic fascination and deeper than the play of the senses. We are searching for a home for the mind and heart....The world rendered as pure information not only fascinates our eyes and minds, but also captures our hearts. We feel augmented and empowered. Our hearts beat in the machines*."[31]

Unquestionably, the same description can be given for any form of idolatry. As the Jewish philosopher Abraham Heschel commented, the existence of idols bears a perverse testimony to our need for the divine. If we will not accept the divine on its own terms, we will create fascinating and mystifying surrogates that take on a life of their own, becoming an entrancing mystery we cannot easily resist.[32]

In some ways, even the sacred grove seems tame compared with the technological wizardry of cyberspace environments. When we turn on the computer and log on the Internet, we feel linked to a larger reality that transcends the finitude and frailty of our off-line lives.

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[30] Groothuis, Douglas PhD. Technoshamanism: Digital Deities in Cyberspace. CA: CRI.

[31] Heim, Michael (1994) The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality. New York: Oxford Univeristy Press, p.85.

[32] Heschel, Abraham (1951) Man Is Not Alone: A Philosophy Of Religion. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, pp. 33-34.

Yet this reality is only virtual, it is the work of human minds and hands — however much it may absorb its practitioners into itself. It is a projection or extension of humanity, a medium for a myriad of messages. As such, it cannot grant final satisfaction to the soul.

## 4. Computers as Magical Implements: The Dangers of Magic and The Occult

According to author Margaret Kim Peterson *"Witchcraft is also attractive in an age the worships the self. While Witchcraft sees evil as a dangerous reality, it locates evil outside of the self."*[33] Magic, unlike revealed religion, has always sought initiation into a higher state of consciousness in order to manipulate reality through the acquisition of arcane powers.[34] The logic of magic is really one coping mechanism of fallen beings who perceive their insufficiency in a cursed world, yet who refuse to submit to either God's personal rule or fate's impersonal dominance.

Magicians covet the power to create their own reality through spiritual technologies of all kinds — whether incantations, visualizations, rituals, or on-line environments. The goal is the attaining of power over an otherwise resistant reality that dooms us to degeneration, disease, and ultimately death.

Magic attempts to undo the effects of the Fall apart from grace by attempting to conquer the effects of sin apart from the Savior. It seeks power from below instead of grace from above.[35]

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[33] Peterson, Margaret Kim (1999) Weird sisters." *Books and Culture: A Christian Review.* March/April 1999, p. 24.

[34] Groothuis, Douglas PhD. Technoshamanism: Digital Deities in Cyberspace. CA: CRI, p. 4.

[35] Rushdoomy, Rousas John (1974) "Power from Below." *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction 1,2.* Winter 1974, pp. 7-10.

Such occult power mongering, either on-line or off-line, is nothing less than rebellion against the Creator and an invitation to the dark powers that masquerade as light, whether or not the magicians believe in Satan and demons. God's prohibition of magic and the occult flows from a jealous love for His creatures.[36]

Since the eternal and uncreated God is the source of all value, meaning, and excellence, any defection from His divine counsel results in alienation from His benefits. Into this void rushes the counterfeit of a deified creation, pressed into a spiritual service it cannot discharge — the salvation of the soul. Given the spiritual impotence of the creation to save itself, the demonic world finds its opportunity to pose as divine, offering a "counterfeit infinity" in place of the true God.[37] Paul warned that ***"Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light"*** (2 Corinthians 11:14), and Jesus admonished us to remember that the devil ***"is a liar and the father of lies"*** (John 8:44).

Although cyberspace technologies in themselves need not be demonic, they easily become conduits of deception and distortion when appropriated by the pagan practitioner, since their simulations are so seductive and their magnetism is so compelling.

Because such technologies facilitate the construction of artificial environments, they can be a particularly powerful tool in the hands of cybermagicians who long to "create their own reality" one way or another.

Earlier quotes by technopagans referred to unspecified "entities" contacted through cyberrituals. This does not describe human participants, but spiritual beings.

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[36] See Deuteronomy 18:10-12.
[37] *"The Counterfeit Infinity"* is a chapter title from Guinness, Os (1994) The Dust of Death: The Sixties Counterculture and How It Changed America Forever. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, pp. 235-74.

Through the centuries occultists have used visualization, drugs, and meditation to contact creatures otherwise aloof and invisible. In light of the imaginative occult environs frequented by technopagans in cyberspace, it would be no surprise if this medium should attract less than angelic agents, who, like opportunistic infections, will exploit any opening they can find.[38]

Rushkoff speaks of a technopagan named Green Fire who worries that his cyberspiritual adventures *"could lead me to a place that I wouldn't want to be. It's like a puzzle or a maze and I could get lost."* Green Fire warns, *"Magic is a dangerous thing. There is a new age belief that you can never get hurt; that's not true. You can get hurt very bad."*[39] This echoes the testimonies of many who have been burned by the occult. It is neither tame nor good.[40]

Magic and technology are two versions of the same impul*se—the impulse to self-will*—and it is inevitable that they reconverge. It is no accident that our feats of computer technology are rising to the level of virtual magic at the same time that people are embracing computers as instruments of actual magic.

The result of that partnership will be a new and improved refuge from God, a uniquely enthralling and widespread delusion not seen before in the history of the world. Computers have empowered our God-avoidance reflex along with everything else.

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[38] Groothuis, Douglas (1989) *Confronting the New Age: How To Resist a Growing Religious Movement.* InterVarsity Press.

[39] Rushkoff, Douglas (1994) *Cyberia: Life in the Trenches of Hyperspace.* New York: HarperCollins, pp. 148-149.

[40] Voice of the Light- Ana Mendez Farrell- Her Testimony PT01. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5csbh7n7Gcs)

In cyberspace one is constructing not just a spiritual hiding place, but a spiritual bomb-shelter. In the end, of course, our shelter will prove completely useless. In His own timing, God blows through our most well-prepared defenses as though they are not even there.

The lure of the occult is everywhere and people should expect the theophobic delusions that flourish in cyberspace to intensify. Although at one time occultism and magic existed on the fringe of society, today it is mainstream: in television, the Internet, bookstores and movies. Given that computers will increasingly dominate human life one could argue that tech-gnostic delusion will increasingly dominate the computer elite. This snare beckons everyone with the bait of curiosity, secret knowledge, fulfillment and power.

No matter how strong the power of collective consent may be in human terms, however, in God's terms it remains a closed circle of denial and self-deceit. De Tocqueville[41] says it comes from taking some *"incomplete joy of this world"* and building your entire life on it. That is the definition of idolatry.

The *reality* of online role-playing games remains *virtual* – and therefore impotent in the face of *actual* reality. Men and Women should not forget that through His sovereignty over nature, God has some serious options available for upsetting our theophobic order.

We may be the ghost in our own machine, but our machine is more fragile than we imagine. What happens to the "collective hallucination" when the power-grid goes down? Does its "virtual flesh" moulder in a virtual grave, awaiting virtual resurrection?

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[41] Alexis-Charles Henri de Tocqueville (1805-1859) was a French political thinker and historian best known for his *Democracy in America* (appearing in two volumes: 1835 and 1840) and *The Old Regime and the Revolution* (1856).

Science fiction writer Philip K. Dick said, *"Reality is that which doesn't go away when you stop believing in it"[42]*—Truth regardless of experience or when Jesus told Thomas of the Bible **"blessed are those who have <u>believed without seeing.</u>"[43]**

In the face of God's actual reality, theophobia – even computer-enhanced, virtually realized theophobia – has all the prospects of the proverbial snowball in hell. The fallen delusions that haunt cyberspace may be impenetrable to us, but they are utterly transparent to God.

Brooke states in the absence of redemption, cynicism is simply despair.[44] In the light of redemption, however, cynicism is truly the ground of hope, as the universal failings of our fallen race are met and overcome through the death of man's Redeemer: Jesus Christ.[45]

The Gospel asserts both sides of that redemptive paradox. Christ converts the works of evil to the purposes of God, yet He still affirms the wickedness of sin. Christ does not excuse the wrongness of the evil He confronts, but neither is He content to merely punish it in retaliatory judgment.

Instead, through His crucifixion, He achieves a much deeper and more absolute victory. In His sacrifice, Christ turns evil inside out by reversing its meaning: from bad to good, from wrong to right, from defeat to victory – and above all, from death to life.[46] He purges wrong of its wrongness by making it serve His love: **"You meant evil… but God meant it for good"** (**Genesis 50:20).**

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[42] Wakely, Michael (2002) Can it be True? A Personal Pilgrimage Through Faith and Doubt. Grand Rapids MI: InterVarsity Press, p.47.
[43] See John 20:29.
[44] Brooke, Tal (1997) Virtual Gods. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, p.187.
[45] See 1 John 1:7,9
[46] See 1 John 2:2

God's modus operandi reverses evil from within, as the works of evil are turned (in the end) to the service of God, Brooks continues. God's ability to weave the artifacts of evil into the pattern of His goodness is the heart of the Good News and the meaning of the Incarnation. It is also the delightful irony of the Gospel: Christ (The Innocent One) submits to His death, and to the "triumph of injustice" that it represents, and His submission gives rise to the Resurrection, which overthrows injustice as well as death.[47]

That ironic paradox of the Gospel means that "sanctified cynicism" is more than an oxymoron. It means that Christians can have a realistic, clear-eyed view of the fallen world without succumbing to the bleak despair that normally accompanies such knowledge.

The Gospel Jesus proclaimed was a call to discipleship, a call to follow Him in submissive obedience, not just a decision or pray a prayer. Jesus' message liberated people from the bondage of their sin while it confronted and condemned hypocrisy. It was an offer to eternal life and forgiveness for repentant sinners, but at the same time it was a rebuke to outwardly religious people whose lives were devoid of true righteousness. It pouts sinners on notice that they must turn from sin and embrace God's righteousness.

## 5. An Investigation Into The Creation of icons

"Humans are such easy prey"

- Slogan for an H P Lovecraft-inspired horror film

An **icon** (from Greek εἰκών *eikōn* "image")[48] is a religious work of art, most commonly a painting, from Eastern Christianity and in certain Eastern Catholic Churches.

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[47] Brooke, Tal (1997) Virtual Gods. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, p.187.
[48] Image. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icon).

They are supposed sacred paintings of Jesus, Mary and the saints. These icons are believed to be literal "windows to heaven." It is believed that the icon of Jesus brings the presence of Jesus into a room.

More broadly the term is used in a wide number of contexts for an image, picture, or representation; it is a sign or likeness that stands for an object by signifying or representing it either concretely or by analogy, as in semiotics; by extension, *icon* is also used, particularly in modern culture, in the general sense of symbol — i.e. a name, face, picture, edifice or even a person readily recognized as having some well-known significance or embodying certain qualities: one thing, an image or depiction, that represents something else of greater significance through literal or figurative meaning, usually associated with religious, cultural, political, or economic standing.

Icons may also be cast in metal, carved in stone, embroidered on cloth, painted on wood, done in mosaic or fresco work, printed on paper or metal, etc. In relation to the virtual world of games icons are created for the fictional worlds of play. However, these icons represent images of pagan religions, dark spiritual forces and symbols of the occult.

In the world of the occult, the magician working in conjunction with the demonic spirit world imbues many symbols with power. The Wiccan leader Starhawk, founder of the Covenant of the Goddess, knows that well. *"To cast a spell is to project energy through a symbol"* she wrote in *The Spiral Dance*, her popular manual for witchcraft.[49]

According to a ninety degree Freemason, a member of the Illuminati, a Satanic Priest, a Catholic Priest and many more, and nowadays born-again Christian Bill Schnoebelen, testifies that an icon is a doorway into a heavenly reality.

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[49] Starhawk, Merriam (1999) The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Goddess. US: HarperOne Publishers, p. 137.

He made icons that would represent doorways into alternative universes, and others, which portrayed sacred beings from magick and then would project astrally into those paintings/icons/images and attempt to explore other universes. In this altered universe is where magick, science fiction and fantasy begin to blend together.

Schnoebelen continues that one goal of these visits to other dimensions of time and space was to contact the entities, the so-called "supreme beings" which ruled there. These were the "Dread Lords" or "Great Old Ones" of the outer spaces- the space that existed beyond space. [50] This sounds appallingly familiar to virtual reality.

To conclude, it seems worthwhile to take note of the dangers of overindulgence, which can lead man to idolatry, as icons can certainly be made into idols. In part, it may have been some of the abuses and perversions related to iconography in the Middle Ages that inspired Emperor Leo III the Isaurian to launch the Byzantine iconoclast controversy in the first place. For example, there are accounts, which indicate that icons may have served as godparents at baptisms on multiple occasions.[51]

Such abuses and perversions are, as stated, idolatrous; their possibility does not, however, preclude the display and veneration of icons altogether, as some iconoclasts would aver. On the contrary, iconoclasts are just as capable of falling into idolatry as are iconodules (that is, those who venerate the Holy Icons).

Ana Mendes Ferrell testifies how the Enemy works through images, even the image of the so-called Saints and Mary.

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[50] Schnoebelen, William and Sharon (1993) Lucifer Dethroned: A True Story. Chino,CA: Chick Publications,pp. 203-206.
[51] Alexander, Avenarius (2005) The Byzantine Struggle over the Icon: on the Problem of Eastern European Symbolism. Bratislava: Academic Electronic, pp. 32.

She gives account on how an image or icon can be used by the Devil to captivate people and keep them in bondage.[52] One can argue that it may be somewhat easier for a gamer to fall into idolatry as he is much more susceptible to the danger of making a false image of God, most likely created in his own image.

Of all the sense, sight is perhaps the one most used. ***Matthew 6:22-23*** notes ***"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"***

Scripture attest to the fact that the eye is the window in which either light or darkness can enter our body. It seems apparent that the sin of idolatry and covetousness originates with the eyes of the gamer. He blinds himself from the Light of God through the games he plays and in return opens his spirit and soul to input from sources that are not of God.

> ***He went on: "What comes out of a person is what defiles them. 21 For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.***
>
> ***Mark 7:20-23***

Matthew Henry explains that firstly t*he eye,* that is, ***the heart*** must be single, free and bountiful (2 Corinthians 8: 2, 11, 13; James 1:5, and we read of a *bountiful eye,* Proverbs 22:9). If the heart be liberally affected and stand inclined to goodness and charity, it will direct the man to Christian actions.

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[52] Voice of the Light- Ana Mendez Farrell- Her Testimony PT01.
(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5csbh7n7Gcs)

The whole conversation will be full of light, full of evidences and instances of true Christianity, that *pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father* (James 1:27), *full of light*, of good works, which are our *light shining before men*; but if *the heart be evil*, covetous, and hard, and envious, griping and grudging, *the body will be full of darkness,* the whole conversation will be heathenish and unchristian.

*If the light that is in us,* those affections which should guide us to that which is good, *be darkness,* if these be corrupt and worldly, if there be not so much as good nature in a man, not so much as a kind disposition, *how great is* the corruption of a man, and the *darkness* in which he sits!

Secondly, *The eye,* that is, *the understanding*; the practical judgment, the conscience, which is to the other faculties of the soul, as *the eye* is to the *body,* to guide and direct their motions. Now *if this eye be single,* if it make a true and right judgment, and discern things that differ, especially in the great concern of *laying up the treasure* so as to choose aright in that, it will rightly guide the affections and actions, which will all be *full of the light* of grace and comfort. *But if this be evil* and corrupt, and instead of leading the inferior powers, is led, and bribed, and biased by them, if this be erroneous and misinformed, the heart and life must needs be *full of darkness,* and the whole conversation corrupt. They that *will not understand* are said to *walk on in darkness,* (Psalms 82:5). [53]

In view of the Lord's words about man's eye, worldliness is one of the greatest dangers that beset man's soul. It seems so harmless to seek one's happiness in this world, so long as we keep clear of open sins! Yet here is a rock on which many make shipwreck to all eternity. They **"lay up treasure on earth,"** and forget to **"lay up treasure in heaven."**

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[53] Matthew Henry Bible Commentary on the Whole Bible. (http://www.studylight.org/com/mhc-com/view.cgi?book=mt&chapter=006).

In asking the gamer: *Where is your heart?* Or *what do you love best? Are our main affections on things on earth, or things in heaven?* Life or death depends on the answer every person can give to these questions. If our treasure is earthly, our hearts will be earthly also. **"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be."**

J C Ryle states singleness of purpose is one great secret of spiritual prosperity.[54] If one's eyes do not see distinctly, one cannot walk without stumbling and falling. If the gamer attempts to love two different masters, he is sure to give satisfaction to neither. It is just the same with respect to our souls. One cannot serve Christ and the world at the same time: it is vain to attempt it. The thing cannot be done: the ark and Dagon will never stand together. God must be king over our hearts: His law, His will, His precepts, must receive our first attention; then and not till then, everything in our inward man will fall into its right place. Unless our hearts are so ordered, everything will be in confusion. "**Thy whole body shall be full of darkness."**

## 5.1 Occultic Symbolism in Computer Games

Throughout this thesis Satan's devices to lure people closer to a Christ-less eternity has been exposed. While some Christians agree that a few of Satan's methods are rock music, movies and television, one if the one's that can often be forgotten are computer games.

Satan knows he's already been judges by the Lord Jesus and is going to Hell for eternity, therefore he will attempt to get as many people as he can to fall into the pits of Hell with him. (Revelation 12:12).

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[54] Ryle, J C. "Expository thoughts on Matthew- Matthew 6:16-24."
(http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=2080).

Satanic, Illuminati and Occultic imagery extends to computer games to desensitize man to his bidding. Through tolerating the material, then accepting it and finally imitating it, Satan uses the media of computer games to corrupt the very heart and soul of mankind.

Therefore it should come to no surprise if one accepts that all media is saturated with satanic imagery including baphomet[55], pentagram[56], all-seeing eye[57] and pyramid[58].

The following is a list of selected examples as it is found in RPGs:

- **Doom**, by Id Software, is considered by many to be the greatest game of all time. In the first episode *"Knee Deep in the Dead",* some pentagrams can be found. At the last level of the first episode, *Phobos Anomaly*, the hero of the game, a stranded space marine, must step onto a platform with the symbol of a goat behind a pentagram in order to exit the level. In the first level of the second episode *"The Shores Of Hell"*, an inverted cross can be found right near the beginning. In the third episode, called "*Inferno",* more pentagrams can be found on the ground in one of the levels. Teleporters, which move the player to different areas of the level, have pentagrams on them. Some are different than others, for example, one of them has a 6 on it, but they are still very present in the game. (Figure 6)

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[55] Baphomet- See Terms and Definitions.
[56] Pentagram- See Terms and Definitions.
[57] All-seeing eye- See Terms and Definitions.
[58] Pyramid- See Terms and Definitions.
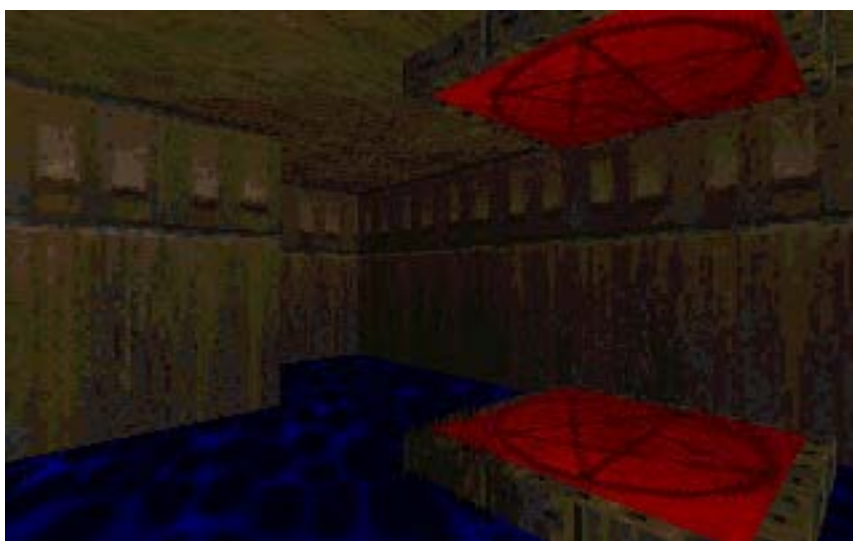
Figure 6. Pentagram as portrayed in the game *Doom*[59]

- *Afterlife*, by Lucasarts, is another one of Satan's highest masterpieces of subtlety in the area of computer games. In the game, which is reminiscent of *Simcity* 2000, players develop a Heaven and Hell that is far from the Heaven and Hell of the Bible. The plotline is that you are a local deity that must take care of Heaven and Hell. Intended to be humorous, the object of the game is to zone areas for the seven virtues and sins for souls of an alien race to inhabit without going bankrupt (If you do get bankrupt, *"The four Surfers of the Apocalypso"* come and destroy Heaven and Hell).

  The different religions in the game each consist of four letter acronyms. Depending on what the souls believe will determine where they go -- if they believe in one of the religions that involves reincarnation, like RALF (Reincarnation always loops fate), they will go back to earth to return at a later time. If they only believe in Heaven (*OCRA, Only Cloud Realms Await*) or Hell (*OPRA, Only Pit Realms Await*), they will go there.

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[59] Pentagram. (http://www.jesus-is-lord.com/games.htm).

Some can even believe that they go from Heaven to Hell continually (*SUMA, souls undergo multiple afterlifes*). This all makes me think of the "More than one way to Heaven" tactic the ecumenical movement is using right this second. One of the religions is HOHO (*Heaven or Hell only*). *HOHOists*, depending on the good vs. evil balance in a soul, determines where the soul goes.

- **Quake**, one of Id Software's more recent offerings, is much like *Doom*, but much more technologically advanced, with polygons instead of sprites. One of the "power-ups" in Quake is called *"The pentagram of protection"*, a red rotating pentagram. It makes your character invincible for a brief period of time. While the power-up is in affect, your characters armor rating turns to "666" and the portrait of your character turns to a more demonic look. (Figure 7)



Figure 7. Satanic 666 as portrayed in the game *Quake*[60]

- From the game **Gabriel Knight 3: Blood of the Damned** for PC. Notice (satanic) child sacrifice inside of a pentagram and the all-seeing eye in a pyramid along the wall. (Figure 8)

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[60] Pentagram. (http://www.jesus-is-lord.com/games.htm).

Figure 8. Screenshot from *Gabriel Knight 3.*[61]

- From **Bioshock 2** the graffiti *"Fallen Fallen is Babylon"* is a reference to the book of Revelations. *Revelations 18:2 "And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying **Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen,** and is become the habituation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."* (Figure 9)

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[61] Proofsofconspiracy. (http://proofsofaconspiracy.wordpress.com/2011/06/26/satanicilluminatioccult-imagery-extends-to-video-games/).

Figure 9. Screenshot from *Bioshock 2*.[62]

- From **Oblivion**: A Minotaur, but also a Baphomet. Oblivion is chock full of occult imagery, including all-seeing eyes, pyramids, the "hidden hand" and even more subtle things like lizard and cat races and a Dark Brotherhood organization. An interesting thing about the Elder Scrolls games, of which Oblivion is the fourth, is that most of the wealthy people in the game such as owners of large estates and the elites in the cities, often have chambers for human torture and sacrifice in their homes. The game skims over the how and why, but any person who has thieved around in the game will know the truth of this. (Figure 10)

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[62] Proofsofconspiracy.
(http://proofsofconspiracy.wordpress.com/2011/06/26/satanicilluminatioccult-imagery-extends-to-video-games/).

Figure 10. Screenshot from *Oblivion.*[63]

- From the game called **Shadows of the Damned** the slogan on the wall reads: *"everybody knows that goats are a source of light"* The Bible refers to goats as not being God's children. (1 Peter 5:1-4). When the Son of Man comes he will separate the sheep from the goats. Sheep to the right, goats to the left. (Figure 11)

> ***When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 33 and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.***
>
> ***Matthew 25:31,32***

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[63] Proofsofconspiracy.
(http://proofsofaconspiracy.wordpress.com/2011/06/26/satanicilluminatioccult-imagery-extends-to-video-games/).

Figure 11. Screenshot from *Shadows of the Damned.*[64]

- Again from **Shadows of the Damned**, some kind of spirit coming through a portal, with baphomet visible at the door. (Figure 12)

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[64] Proofsofconspiracy.
(http://proofsofaconspiracy.wordpress.com/2011/06/26/satanicilluminatiocult-imagery-extends-to-video-games/).

Figure 12. Screenshot from *Shadows of the Damned.*[65]

In some games, there is an "invincibility mode", which makes the player invulnerable to enemy attacks, so the player will not die. However in recent years, it seems the industry is changing the term "Invincibility mode" to "God mode". This is just another reason way Satan wants people to think that they are gods, when they are really not (Genesis 3:5). But there is only one God (Mark 12:32).

Nowadays, more people are worshipping money, sex, images, false gods just to name but a few possibilities, besides that are calling themselves gods and goddesses and turning their attention on the Antichrist.

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[65] Proofsofconspiracy.
(http://proofsofconspiracy.wordpress.com/2011/06/26/satanicilluminatioccult-imagery-extends-to-video-games/).

This section is only scratching the surface. Unfortunately, each year more and more games come out, and satanic influences in computer games are gradually becoming more and more visible. This can be seen among others in the game: *The Call for Cthuluh.*

## 5.2 Cthuluh- The Cry to the "Great Old One"

Howard Phillips Lovecraft is well known among horror, science fiction and fantasy novel enthusiasts, especially as subgenre known as weird fiction.[66] He lived about a half-century ago and wrote books which were disturbing and decades ahead of their time. Stories such as *The Dunwich Horror, The Dweller on the Threshold* and *The Color out of Space* were horror blended with science fiction in ways which were oddly discrete and Victorian, yet quite terrifying.

What is not well known about Lovecraft is that through his grandfather he had a generational/ bloodline connection and had access to very rare occult books and secrets. Lovecraft's grandfather was into Egyptian Freemasonry[67]. Thus, a great deal of what Lovecraft wrote, as fiction, is based upon actual occult practice- extremely advanced and dangerous occult practice. Kenneth Grant (O.T.O leader[68]), LaVey[69] and other writers document this.[70]

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[66] Joshi, S T (2003) The Weird Tale. Wildeside Press, p. 2,4,6.

[67] **Egyptian Freemasonry**- *Freemasonry of the Ancient Egyptians* as set forth in the teachings of the State Mysteries. Among the practices are Egyptian magic, the Osirian cycle, the secret doctrine of Egypt, and the initiation of Plato. Includes ancient Egyptian mysteries, and the initiation ceremonies which took place in the old Egyptian temples. "*That the gods of Egypt were elements of a profound magical system and possessed a significance far different from that advanced by modern Egyptologists is certain. The various deities of the Nile valley were elements of an elaborate metaphysical system, a kind of ceremonial Cabbala.*" [Hall, Manly P (1999) Freemasonry of the Ancient Egyptians. Philosophical Research Society.]

[68] **O.T.O. - Ordo Templi Orientis** (*Order of the Temple of the East,* or the *Order of Oriental Templars*).

[69] **Anton *Szandor* LaVey** (1930—1997) was the founder of the Church of Satan.

[70] Schnoebelen, William and Sharon (1993) Lucifer Dethroned: A True Story. Chino,CA: Chick Publications,p. 207.

Lovecraft may have experienced with these forms of Transyoggothian magick and terrified himself. Long before gaming became popular Lovecraft lived life as a virtual recluse and was an extremely fearful man. He never married, and was afraid to go near the sea, or underground.[71]

Lovecraft's bizarre pantheon of supposedly fictitious gods was oddly parallel to the beings, which real-life Satanist Crowley sought to bring forth with his rituals. Edward Alexander Crowley styled himself the great beast and called the wickedest man in the world. He changed his name to Aleister so that it would add up in English, Hebrew, and Greek cabbala as 666. He could play eight simultaneous chess games blindfolded. He was accomplished poet, mountaineer, and painter. A list of all his Masonic degrees and titles would fill five pages.

According to Crowley, immortality is believed to be achieved through the practice of transyuggothian magick. This broad genre of magick is magick that goes into trans-plutonian space. They believe that Pluto is beyond the pale of the sun and therefore beyond the pale of Judeo-Christian God. They believe that there are gods beyond Pluto that are far more powerful than either God or the devil.[72]

According to solar and lunar magicians who practice these rites believe that a whole new kind of "space" and magical realm take over. Many would see computers as fulfilling the goal of "magick" as defined by Crowley: *"The art and science of causing change to occur in conformity with our will."*[73]

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[71] Schnoebelen, William and Sharon (1993) Lucifer Dethroned: A True Story. Chino,CA: Chick Publications,p. 207.

[72] Schnoebelen, William. An Interview with a ex-vampire and a study into Alternative Religion including Wicca & Spiritism, Masonry, Satanism, Mormonism. (http://www.scribd.com/doc/45883755/An-Interview-With-an-Ex-Vampire-Bill-Schnoebelen-a-Study-in-Alternative-Religion).

[73] Leary, Timothy and Gullicsen, Eric "*High-Tech Paganism-Digital Polytheism*" (n.d.), Timothy Leary home page.

These Dread Lords or "Great Old Ones" as they were called, was Azathoth, the blind, idiot god babbling at the very core of the galaxy. Cthulhu, a dream-master and water god entombed in the submerged Pacific city of R'lyeh. Nyatlathotep, the oddly Egyptian, Setian-appearing deity whose real appearance would drive human being instantly insane. And the worst of them all, Yog Sothoth. Yet, supposedly these beings did not which to be worshipped. They simply wished to have one's energy. This was especially true for Cthulhu.[74]

The relevance to portray some of this thoughts and actions in this thesis deems to the fact that thousands of people consider participation in Lovecraft's books, games and methods as but just a game, although he blended horror and science fiction in frightening outcomes. Enthusiast and "adventurers" and those lured to the hidden occultic dark side will wrongly think that they have power over the occult realm.

However, it is a devious lie because man has no power without Jesus.[75] C.S. Lewis said *"the occult awakens within you a spiritual kind of lust that is very akin to physical lust."* Once a person is exposed to the realms of magic and the occult, it creates a desire for more and more, and it is very hard to get rid of that need once a person acquire it.

This curiosity to "see" the hidden and mysterious forces is also present in the gamer. Once the gamer experience the thrill of the scary, unknown cyberspace they became entice by seeking deeper and deeper contact. Once it is obvious that participants in occultic online games have opened up their mind to these strange realms they became bound by these unseen powers. They have opened doorways into unseen dimension.

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[74] Schnoebelen, William and Sharon (1993) Lucifer Dethroned: A True Story. Chino,CA: Chick Publications,pp. 208-210.
[75] John 19:11 ***"Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above."***

They have deluded themselves or have been deluded into thinking that the characters, gods, spell and magic is a myth and only a game.

A smaller percentage of gamers and players will fall into this trap. As with Lovecraft there seems to be a deeper link to people who falls prey to this snare of horror. These are vulnerable human beings who were or are being twisted and maimed by Satan. These people are not the enemy. They are victims!

### 5.2.1 *Call of Cthulhu* The Role-Playing Game

*Call of Cthulhu* is a game inspired by the "Cthulhu Mythos" stories of the author H. P. Lovecraft. It is a Chaosium's classic role-playing game of Lovecraftian horror in which ordinary people are confronted by the terrifying and alien forces of the Cthulhu Mythos. *Call of Cthulhu* is a game that lets one explores fear, bringing monsters and terrors out into the daylight, and fighting against them for the sake of soul and sanity.

Over 225,000 copies of *Call of Cthulhu* have been sold since its release in 1981 and more than 90 supplements have been printed for a total of more than 400,000 books sold over the last 23 years. *Call of Cthulhu* has won over 40 gaming awards including Best RPG of all time by readers of the Arcane magazine. In 1996, *Call of Cthulhu* was the second RPG to be inducted into the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts and Design Hall of Fame.

*Call of Cthulhu* is recognized as a true classic. This game continues to delight players after 23 years in a field where many games disappear within three to five years after their initial release. Chaosium Inc. is one of the original publishers of paper role- playing games and has been in business for well over 25 years also the publishes of *Call of Cthulhu*.

Chaosium is famous for the excellence of its game designs, and has won many Adventure Gaming Industry awards.[76]

However, *Call of Cthulhu* is different from most other RPGs. In *Call of Cthulhu*, the players portray ordinary people cast into extraordinary circumstances. One has no magic weapons with which to assault the dark things of the world. One cannot count on the local king sending armies of minions to the player's aid. The player simply has his intelligence, his courage and his skill to fight the horrors of the Cthulhu Mythos. In its simplest form, *Call of Cthulhu* is a game about heroes. The heroes who realize that the world is crawling with alien terrors bent on the destruction of humanity, and who take that fight back to the abyss itself.[77]

## 5.2.2 The Spirit of Chtulhu

The best answer to the question: Who is Cthulhu, is found in Lovecraft's tale *"The Call of Cthulhu"* written by him in the nineteen twenties.[78] Cthulhu is a monstrous entity who lies "dead but dreaming" in the city of R'lyeh, a place of non-Euclidean madness presently (and mercifully) sunken below the depths of the Pacific Ocean.

To even look upon his form may cost you your sanity. He has lain beneath the waters for eons, and will continue to do so until the stars align, whereupon he will awaken and reclaim dominion over the Earth. Lovecraft created Cthulhu as part of a larger mythology involving extraterrestrial creatures whose very existence is outside the realm of human understanding.

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[76] Monroe, Ben & Petersen, Sandy (2004) Quick Start Cthulhu. Quick start Rules for the Call od Cthulhu Role-playing gane. Includes the popular Adventure "The Haunting!" Chaisium Inc, pp. 4-5.

[77] Monroe, Ben & Petersen, Sandy (2004) Quick Start Cthulhu. Quick start Rules for the Call od Cthulhu Role-playing gane. Includes the popular Adventure "The Haunting!" Chaisium Inc, p.5.

[78] Guran, Paula (2011) New Cthulhu. The Recent Weird. Prime Books. Kindle Edition.

Although no living character in the story ever sets eyes on the actual creature. The characters one meets in the story see Cthulhu either in dreams or in artwork. The narrator of the story says that a statue of Cthulhu resembled, in part, an octopus, a dragon and a human-like or **anthropomorphic** creature. From this description, artists and sculptors have created artwork depicting the monster with a head that looks like an octopus (complete with tentacles) and a massive pair of wings attached to his back.[79]

Cthulhu appears in various monstrous and demonic forms in early myths of the human race. Racial memory preserves him as humanity's most basic nightmare. Cthulhu is the high priest of the Great Old Ones, unnatural alien beings who ruled the Earth before humanity formed, worshipped as gods by some misguided people.[80]

Throughout the years, people have insisted Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos is fiction, and simply a product of his astounding imagination. However, many believers, who have studied the origins of Lovecraft's writing in great deal is of opinion that they will return, causing worldwide insanity and mindless violence before finally displacing humanity forever. During his reign mankind will cast aside concepts of civilization and inhibition. Chaos will ensue, and men will revel in their most base instincts.[81]

As illustrated, due to compromise, syncretism, confusion and the intentional deceit of humanity by fallen ethereal beings, mythological Pagan designs were assimilated into the lives of every person in Earth. Unwittingly, humanity has embraced pagan sources of popular customs rooted in evil. The customs were re-invented by computer technology as to have different meanings, yet behind them remain the cunning ruses of an ancient spatial being, who seeks to be worshipped by means of trickery, perpetrated upon everyone alive.

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[79] Pearsall, Anthony B (2005) The Lovecraft Lexicon. A Readers Guide to persons, places and things in the tales of H.P. Lovecraft. Tempe, Arizona, USA: New Falcon Publications.
[80] Grey, Rachel (2010) What to do when you meet Cthulhu. A guide to surviving the Cthulhu Mythos. MI: Elder Signs Press, p.14.
[81] Grey, Rachel (2010) What to do when you meet Cthulhu. A guide to surviving the Cthulhu Mythos. MI: Elder Signs Press, p.14.

There as so much Paganism active in cultures today, there can be no doubt that it was deceitfully placed into our traditions, then through fraud and disguise, obscured with new meanings.[82] This camouflaged Paganism pollutes and rots the spiritual condition of all mankind, yet a little flock has always held on to the true faith delivered to those set apart.

## 6. True Discipleship

Jesus specifically defines the word disciple as it relates to those whose desire is to imitate Him. Author of various books: Emerson Ferrell noted that over the centuries the definition has remained, but the purposes have changed. Most Churches have been more interested in perpetuating their doctrines and forms, than relying on the Holy Spirit.[83]

True discipleship is a life spent seeking Christ-likeness as Jesus Himself modeled it. It is the gateway to the spiritual realm and is the only physical action required by those willing to enter.

Believing that machines may be conduits to deeper spirituality or that a new sacred world of the "Divine" can be found in Virtual Reality is a deviuos lie, told by the Father of all lies: Lucifer. There is no meaning and love to be found in the computer or cyberspace, doesn't matter how brilliant, popular and prevalent phenomenon many make it out to be. Satan duplicates everything in God's Word in corruption, filthiness and deception. God's weapon is truth; Satan's weapon is the Lie, which he embellishes with any deception that will best seduce the individual or culture at any given time.

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[82] White, Lew. *Fossilized Customs: The Pagan Sources of Popular Customs. Are you ready to go to the next level?* Paulshof, Southern Africa: Qodesh Publishers, p. 2.
[83] Ferrell, L Emerson (2009) *Immersed in Him*. Florida, USA: Voice of the Light, p. 102.

Theologian and high-tech consultant Jennifer Cobb questions whether one can find spiritual life in cyberspace and argues that the world of the spirits and that of the computer can be united.[84]

Cobb writes, *"Nature has spawned us. We have spawned machines. Any line between these realms quickly becomes arbitrary."* She encourages man to reject the sort of dualism between mind and body that has driven so much of Western thought, philosophy, and theology. *"Real life,"* she states, *"is never that tidy. As our days unfold, the contents of our boxes--mind, body, God-- continually spill into one another, creating both personal confusion and a philosophical morass."*[85]

Unfortunately many believe this cunning disinformation told by so-called Theologians that God-like nature could be gained in cyberspace. They deconstruct the Biblical teachings on man; made as a tripartite being in God's image and faithlessly replicate it with mind/body dualism.

Therefore, one of the goals of this chapter is to equip people with a revelation from Jesus Christ, piercing these illusions and enabling them to see and hear instructions from the Spirit of God. Those preoccupied with virtual reality, satisfied with their lives will not be interested in making the steps to transition into Christ. Indeed, to them the Bible will not make any sense nor be taken serious.

The Bible is a codebook written to those who have been drawn into like-mindedness with Christ. The Kingdom of heaven is Christ! Through the authority of Jesus Christ, those who are hidden in Him will experience the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.

This is not an event that comprise cyberspace, which are to some an aspect of a larger force of the divine to facilitate manifestations in the physical world.

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[84] Cobb, Jennifer J (1998) CyberGrace: The Search for God in the Digital World. Crown Publishers.
[85] Cobb, Jennifer J (1998) CyberGrace: The Search for God in the Digital World. Crown Publishers.

One cannot assign thoughts, feelings, souls or live to any man-made machine! God's supernatural live, which all of these techno-pagans so desperately seeks can only be found in Jesus Christ.

> ***When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you." But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, "'they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven'"!***
>
> ***Mark 4:10-12***
>
> ***He said, "Go and tell this people: "'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.' Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, <u>and turn and be healed</u>."***
>
> ***Isaiah 6:9,10 (Emphasis Added)***

Jesus said in essence, only My disciples are given the understanding to the secrets of My kingdom. Jesus is speaking about wisdom beyond practical understanding or philosophical interpretation. He is talking about a kingdom not visible or attainable by the senses.

Man's senses are not adequate to see and hear the kingdom. Furthermore, Emerson Ferrell adds that man's mind is dull, although it was created to understand a different dimension.[86]

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[86] Ferrell, L Emerson (2009) Immersed in Him. Florida, USA: Voice of the Light, p. 105.

God created Adam in absolute perfection, in His image and likeness. He made him from earth, of physical matter, but breathed His Spirit into him so Adam could be a living soul. In the beginning of creation, the spirit of man was joined to God; his soul was in a state of innocence and subject to the leading of the Spirit. As a result of this, the body lives eternally (something gamers of MMORPG so desperately desires).

When man entered into a state of sin, this order was altered. "*The soul took over the lordship from the spirit, the mind crowned itself as sovereign, sustained by human knowledge instead of God's and the body suffered the consequences with a gradual deterioration culminating in death.*"[87] This thought is in concurrence with Barbaria who maintains "*Then both Adam and Eve sinning against God, God could no longer look at them, because God cannot look upon sin.*"[88]

What literally happened was man exchanged God's knowledge, fellowship and power of eternity, for human, natural knowledge, Man accepted the devil's insinuation to become like God and he died spiritually losing access to his Creator. From this point on, his soul, full of this inferior knowledge, would tell him what was good and what was not. Through Adam, death entered the entire human race along with sickness, curse, pain, tragedy, anonymity and sin.

## 6.1. Turn and Heal according to the Book of Isaiah

Isaiah stated **"Turn and Heal."** One of the definitions of heal is to restore purity or integrity.[89]

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[87] Ferrell, Ana Mendez Dr (2011) Pharmakeia: A Hidden Assassin. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, p. 34.
[88] Barbria, Robert (2003) Reveiling the Bible's Truth. Santa Carla, CA: Enlighten Noah Publishing, p. 187.
[89] Heal. (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heal).

God is waiting for man to change his ideas, thoughts and images: images of reality, his image of God, his image of the reality of Heaven and Hell so He can restore man to purity and integrity.

Jesus, through His sacrifice, healed man completely in his spirit, soul and body. That is the salvation for all men. However, unless man are converted through repentance, that is changing one's idea of righteousness and self-righteousness, one's spiritual eyes will remain blind to the finished work.

> ***And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. The one who has the Son has this eternal life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have this eternal life.***
>
> ***John 5:11-12***

Scripture clearly states ***"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Corinthians 4:4).*** Unbelief, especially in gamers that are involved in occultic MMORPG is subject to insidious spiritual interference that keeps them blinded to truth that would set them free.

Every human has spiritual eyes. God gave them to man so that one could apprehend the spiritual realities of life. Sadly, those who trust the god of this age (Satan) are completely blind to the spiritual truths of the Holy Spirit. Blind spiritual eyes such as believing that MMORPG is just a game for entertainment, for recreation and pleasure is a deception and will take a person away from the truth.

The question arises: How can a blind person see? Sadly, one can't unless they are healed. Spiritually, it is no different. A person cannot expect to see and discern spiritual things unless he has the Holy Spirit within him. A person who does not have the Spirit of God cannot accept the things of the Spirit.

It is foolishness to him or her. But not to the one who has His Spirit. It is the power of God!

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: ***"For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ."(1 Corinthians 2:14-16.)***

God is Spirit[90], making it difficult to locate Him with one's senses. The five senses commonly used to determine reality are inadequate. Scripture is clear: ***Life is spiritual. Your physical existence doesn't contribute to that life. The words that I have spoken to you are spiritual. They are life.***[91]

Spiritual transition into Christ is called being *born again* or entering the kingdom of heaven. To be *born into Christ* one must be baptised by water and by the fire of the Holy Spirit into the Godhead to complete the transition designed and modelled by Jesus Christ. The book of I John clearly states ***"And the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is true."[92]*** The transformation is real and one's life will change if one allows the Spirit to renew one's soul.

> ***This is he who came by water and by blood, Jesus Christ; not by water only but by water and by blood.***
>
> ***1 John 5:6 BBE***

Jesus only taught one message. REPENT, for the Kingdom of God is now. *"Change the way you think"* is one of the definitions of repent.[93]

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[90] See John 4:24.
[91] See John 6:63 GW
[92] See 1 John 5:7 BBE
[93] Ferrell, L Emerson (2009) Immersed in Him. Florida, USA: Voice of the Light, p. 8.

No one can enter the kingdom of God without the mind's radical restructure. As Kevin J Connor proposes; *"It is God's purpose that man's whole being be redeemed. Redemptive power will perfect man's spirit, cleanse and purify his mind, will and emotions and ultimately redeem his body."*[94]

More specifically, God's goal from the dawn of history has been to have a Church, a Bride, who would say yes to His love, who would fully receive His love, embody His love and beautifully reflect this Triune love back to Himself.[95] In the words of H D McDonald, *"The world is built for [God's] love. God is the great Cosmic Lover… He is the ultimate Agape… He loves and wants to be loved by us."*[96]

The power of the Blood of Christ has not left this world or His Church nor has it been depleted over time. His power, designated for every human being, is far above the circumstances causing you pain or keeping you captive. Nowadays one can destroy the works of the enemy in one's life and take back everything that one has lost. The revelations in this Chapter are designed to restore shattered destinies and to empower one with Godly knowledge.

> **We know that all creation has been groaning with the pains of childbirth up to the present time.**
>
> **However, not only creation groans. We, who have the Spirit as the first of God's gifts, also groan inwardly. We groan as we eagerly see, it's not really hope. Who hopes for what can be seen?**
>
> **But if we hope for what we don't see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.**
>
> **Romans 8:22-25 GW**

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94 Connor, K J (1980) The Foundations of Christian Doctrine. Portland, Oregon: Bible Temple Publishing, p. 129.

95 Brand, Prof Dr Connie MJ (2007) Spiritual Warfare Three: The Sin War. Self-Published. Râdâh Academy, Pretoria, South Africa.

96 McDonald H D (1986) The God Who Responds. Minneapolis: Bethany House, p. 26.

The birth Paul is speaking about is the true *Born Again* experience, which has become more of a religious saying than a transformation. Every person needs to choose to live a life in obedience to God and to His Word. Every one is created to walk in righteousness, peace and joy of the Holy Ghost; one just needs to receive it! It is the delight of one's Heavenly Father to give to everyone His Kingdom.

Unfortunately the whole design of role-playing games forces the players to depend on something/somebody else other than the Holy Spirit.

> ***Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.***
>
> ***John 8:31-32 NASB***

Jesus is the Word, which means abiding IN HIM. If anyone desires to know the truth they must first know the Word, not just Scripture. The Devil uses memories, ideas and beliefs to stop one's mind and thoughts to become converted.

The gamer mind, thoughts, imaginations and beliefs must become converted; free from a virtual reality and into the reality of Christ. Until the gamer's realty of Christ is changed and one is *born again* one will not change.

God created man's mind to access and operate within the spiritual dimension and it requires more than the five senses. **"Chris consciousness is 'knowing' without learning."[97]**

In other words, those whose minds have entered Christ are no longer subject to the laws and regulations of traditions and manipulations from Satan.

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[97] Ferrell, L Emerson (2009) Immersed in Him. Florida, USA: Voice of the Light, p. 106.

The realm of the supernatural is the norm, not the exception. In obedience to the Word of God and the unction of the Holy Spirit one can get oneself out of the virtual reality and into God's reality after one receives the Christ consciousness- the knowing without learning free from one's past; the gamers reality of Christ, the Church, the Truth, the Bible becomes real!

**And be made new in the spirit of your mind**

**Ephesians 4:23**

To the gamer, the alternate realm, or a supernatural realm is the norm. To become immersed and saturated with spiritual entities in an unknown world is part of their gaming routine. Subsequently, the good news of being previously captive/captured by Virtual Reality and/or Cyberspace, once he is made new one's mind will not be subjected to the norm and by the laws and regulations of traditional learning.

It is precisely the substance, faith, which enables a person's mind to grasp the power of the authority Jesus offers to those who become a disciple. One becomes joint heirs with the King.

The definition of a disciple is defined by Jesus and in principle says, **"we must be unaffected by the illusions of this world."** (Paraphrasing) Those who form attachments with the visible world, the same as those who forms attachments to the virtual world are the one's most easily deceived.

> **Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.**
>
> **Luke 14:26,27,33**

No one can be transformed or receive kingship if they have attachments to the physical world. One could argue that because gamers have already lay down their attachments to the physical world, such as family, friends, time and social connections it might be easier to them to lay down the physical world. However, laying down their virtual world, their self-created character and online status must in addition be laid down to be truly converted. The truth requires dying to all one's perceptions of reality and all ties to virtual realty. **One must either trust Him of blame someone else for one's failures the rest of one's lives.**

The question comes to mind: Why can only disciples have the ability to hear and see the spirit realm? The answer is that Jesus paid the price of dying on the cross in order for the Father to send His Spirit so that every person can live in Him and He in every one. If one lives in the Truth one sees the truth and have fellowship with the father. Psalm 139:7 clearly states, "***Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?"***

God does not expect a person, as a Christian to live a godly life in his own power. He has given man the gift of the Holy Spirit. ***"Walk in the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh." (Galatians 5:16)***

## 6.2. Discipleship begins at the Cross

"*Disciples have converted their minds from Adam to enter Christ. The journey into the mind of Christ begins at the cross. The cross is the symbol and the reminder of submission. He paid a price we would never pay.*"[98]

The questions arise, firstly: How does one become a disciple? And secondly: How does a person who was immersed in Virtual Reality, addicted to RPG's become a disciple of Jesus Christ?

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[98]  Ferrell, L Emerson (2009) Immersed in Him. Florida, USA: Voice of the Light, p. 108.

The answer lies in the Cross. The cross is one's admonition of His strength through submission. Jesus paid a price no man would ever pay. The cross is one's power of fear in the darkest hour. The cross is the light in a world that loves darkness and prefers lies. For the person addicted to gaming or suffers under it's consequences, the cross is one's resource to break every illusion the Devil presents.

One must therefore run to the cross and remove every spiritual encounter due to gaming and virtual reality, every illusion, image and curse that has formed as a result of MMORPGs. Once at the cross, nail the desires and images, addiction, oppression, blame shifting and ignorance to it until the reality of life "in Christ" surges though one's body and mind.

Faith will replace the spirit of confusion and will flood one's soul. Death is no longer your worst fear. To live forever in Cyberspace, to become immortal due to a fear of death will no longer have a hold on one's life, except it will becomes one's greatest device for facing the Devil's strongest threats and illusions.

One needs to willingly be transformed out of Adam, the sinful nature of Adam to Jesus Christ. Be transformed from the unreal reality, the virtual and the self-created image into the image of Jesus Christ.

E Ferrell states that Religion views the crucifixion from the eyes of the spectator. The results may be emotional and leads to a greater desire to understand the love that led to such horrible death. However, unless one assumes one's responsibility in that death, break the dimensional walls (the invisible barrier[99]) between man and God in the spiritual realm one's mind will never change.[100]

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[99] See Isaiah 59:1-2.
[100] Ferrell, L Emerson (2009) Immersed in Him. Florida, USA: Voice of the Light, p. 109.

A disciple is one who looks forward, who looks up to Jesus. Not like Lot's wife who looked back behind her and she became a pillar of salt.[101] Jesus said to His disciples "***Remember Lot's wife,***"[102] it was a warning not to look back. However, Lot's wife's sin causing God's judgement wasn't just about one last look. It was a lingering, a desire to go back and to stay there.

Once a person becomes a disciple of Christ, leaving Virtual reality behind and come into the reality of Jesus Christ the Devil will entice and deceive one to go back to that world. The Devil will remind a person of a few good times because he knows that the first step to going back is looking back. Jesus warned, ***"'No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God'" (Luke 9:62).***

A true disciple follows Christ and look forward. There is no pride, no self-justifications and no self-righteousness in the mind of God's disciples. The mind of Adam is not divine, but vain and attempts to justify its actions as the murderer of The Christ. Religion is standing at the foot of the cross today making an effort to understand the supernatural with the mind of Adam. A mind that has been deceived and confused since the beginning of time will never be an overcomer.

Genesis 2:25 describes that Adam and Eve before the fall were naked but not ashamed. This means there were no shame, no disappointment and no confusion.[103] Their bodies were sanctified by the Spirit, which animated them.

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[101] See Genesis 19:26.
[102] See Luke 17:32
[103] Malan, Christina MJ Dr (2010) The Perversion of Mankind Through Sexual Brokenness And Deviation with Special Reference to Homosexuality, Destroying God's Purpose for Godly Bloodlines. PhD in Divinity. Calvary University, UK, p. 26.

Shame entered first with sin, which destroyed their normal relation of the spirit of the body, exciting tendencies and lusts which warred against the soul and turning the sacred ordinance of God into sensual impulses and the lust of the flesh.[104]

Those who played with images from the dark world of Satan will have a corrupted mind. Scripture explains that before regeneration *"the god of this world (had) blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God"* [105]

Their minds will be confused and controlled. One needs to break free from this virtual captivity and surrender one's minds to Christ. Lay down the double-mindedness and receive the mind of Christ. 1 Peter 5:6 clearly states *"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."*

The mind of man is his origin of thought.[106] The way the Lord speaks through one's thoughts is to direct them.[107] Thoughts that go through one's minds are subjective experiences. Because of wrong actions on behalf of the gamer, being submerged in an occultic spiritual world where the self is exalted to a god and constant stimulation to corrupted visual sights, the mind of the gamer will be impure and so will be his thoughts. The change of one's carnal mind into the mind of Christ is a step-by-step process. The more a person feeds his thoughts on Him; the sooner one will be transformed.

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[104]Bible Commentary (http://207.44.232.114/-bible/comment/ot/k&d/gen33.html(1of2))

[105] See 2 Corinthians 4:4.

[106] Nee, Watchman. The Spiritual Man. Vol III Part 8 Chapter 1. (http://www.worldinvisible.com/library/nee/sprtmnv3/part8chapter1.htm).

[107] *Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is like a stream of water directed by the LORD; he turns it wherever he pleases. (NLT)*

> **Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts will be established.**
>
> **Proverbs 16:3  NKJV**

Finally, a disciple follows Jesus into the waters of baptism, not as a ritual or symbol, but to complete the kingdom transition.

> **Baptize all in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.**
>
> **Matthew 28:19**

## 6.3 Real Conversion

**Real conversion occurs when The Holy Spirit awakens man's spirit to the consciousness of the Fatherhood of God through Jesus Christ. The conscious union with God requires the removal of everything preventing the knowledge and love of God. [108]**

Sin veils the soul and conceals one spirit from God the Father. Real consciousness occurs when in the spiritual realm upon that recognition. Jesus destroyed any hold sin could legally have on the consciousness of man. The choice man makes to serve the soul or spirit determines his/her life after death.

If a person sees God as his Father, love will flood his spirit and brings him in union with God. That encounter brings heaven and a consciousness that transcends philosophies and religion. Love floods our souls with the reality of absolute vulnerability without Jesus.

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[108] Ferrell, L Emerson (2007) Superspiritual Believing Christ Consciousness. Florida, USA: Voice of the Light Ministries, p. 134.

**This is the beginning of salvation that will commence when the soul and mind of man are redeemed from its own self into the Spirit of God. The result of that experience is the awakening into the Kingdom of God.**

*Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of our souls.*

*1 Peter 1:9*

Our souls will never truly be saved until we are redeemed from ourselves.[109] The ego and the pride of man is a mask constructed by sin and worn to hide shame. The picture of Adam and Eve covered with fig leaves is a good analogy.

## 6.4 The Reformation through Baptism

God uses order to establish principles, which produce heavenly results. The experience of *born again* followed with baptism is form with substance and produce spiritual authority. The experience of baptism is the fruit to become His disciple.  Those who are "born into Christ" must be baptised into the Godhead to complete the transition designed and modeled by Jesus Christ.

The consciousness of Christ was formed in the early Church largely because of baptism. The Church has lost its voice in the earth because of following the traditions of men instead of the principles of heaven. During the first three centuries, Roman citizens who were baptised became outcasts by loosing their property and citizenship. Nevertheless, they would line up along the riverbanks to pledge their lives to Christ in baptism, aware of the persecution that would ensue.

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[109] Ferrell, L Emerson (2007) Superspiritual Believing Christ Consciousness. Florida, USA: Voice of the Light Ministries, p. 135.

Persecution to the point of death is unfamiliar to most Christians in the West, but was undeniably the most important dynamic for spreading Christianity throughout the world. Furthermore, except for baptism the Bible does not speak about a public altar call to follow Jesus.

Baptism altered the consciousness of the disciple to witness the spiritual realm known as the Kingdom of Heaven. The fear of death was eliminated and indeed another level of faith flooded their souls.

The Devil knew the strategy to destroy the spread of Christianity was to change the spiritual principles of God into formulas and rituals. The result is religion or form without substance and has grieved the Lord as much as Adam's betrayal.

Moses asked God thousands of years before *"to show him the ways of His spirit."* Moses wanted to *"know"* God in the way a husband and wife unite as one flesh. He knew intimacy would please God and establish order.

> *If you really are pleased with me, show me your ways so that I can <u>know you</u> and so that you will continue to be pleased with me.*
>
> *Exodus 33:13 GW (emphasis added)*

If we want to know God we must do things His way and baptism is no exception. The person, addicted to gaming having a distorted image of himself and a distorted image of God needs to restore that image through the immersion of baptism in order to reestablish the ways of God in such a person's life.

A quote from Saint Basil the Great (330-379) "*- one of the most important saints of the Orthodox Church: This great sign of baptism is fulfilled in three immersions, with three invocations, so that the image of death might be completely reformed, and the newly-baptized might have their souls enlightened with divine knowledge.*"[110]

> ***Jesus however came near and said to them, All power in Heaven and over the earth has been given to me.***
> ***Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptize (baptizo[111]) them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; And teach them to obey every command, which I have given you. And remember, I am with you always, day by day, until the close of the Age.***
>
> ***Matthew 28:18-20 WEY***

Jesus is commanding an allegiance and undyng faith in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit illustrated by immersion into each of the characters and natures.

Kingdom baptism in both physical and spiritual immersion into the nature and character of the father, Son and Holy Ghost. In the following Scripture, Peter is speaking about the kingdom baptism into the character of the Holy Spirit:

> ***Who, in the days of Noah, went against God's orders; but God in His mercy kept back the punishment, while Noah got ready the ark, in which a small number, that is to say eight persons, got salvation through water.***
> ***And baptism, of which this is an image, now gives you salvation, not by washing clean of the flesh, but by making you free from the sense of sin before God, through the coming again of Jesus Christ from the dead;***
> ***Who has gone into heaven, and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been put under his rule.***
>
> ***1 Peter 3:20-22 BBE***

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[110] St. Basil The Great, On the Holy Spirit, p. 59.
[111] The Greek word used by Jesus for baptism is *baptizo,* which means repeatedly immersed.

Peter describes a baptism of power to go through the storm, not to escape it. The consciousness of man is changed by the baptism into the Godhead. Peter is further describing salvation as the water of Christ. The power over sin is in the Godhead and the act of baptism changes man's consciousness from sin to salvation.

The final authority over powers and principalties and a sinful nature is after Jesus baptizes us with the Holy Spirit. The immersion into the Godhead empowers us with the Holy Spirit. The fire of the Holy Spirit is an ever-increasing baptism, which is administrated by Christ.

> **But you shall receive power (ability, efficiency, and might) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the ends (the very bounds) of the earth.**
>
> **Acts 1:8 AMP**

The journey into Christ is eternal. Those who are willing to renounce everything- all worldly pleasures, all alternative realities and identities, and trust the following words of Jesus are eligible to taste the goodness and freedom of God.

> **Jesus said to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by Me**
>
> **John 14:6 KJV**

## 7. The Implications of An Altered View of God

As this chapter has illustrated, whatever enticements it offers, technoshamanism, and worshipping counterfeit gods in cyberspace suffers from an internally inconsistent and ultimately unlivable worldview.

As Scripture affirms, **"Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain"** (**Psalm 127:1**). Jesus also taught that those who live by His teachings build their house on a rock that can withstand the vicissitudes of life, while those who fail to obey build only on shifting sand (Matthew 7:24-27). Erecting a worldview upon silicon is no better than building it on sand.

Fred Zaspel has rightly noted, *"Doctrines subjected to neglect soon give way to heresy."[112]* Every person is admonished, as was Timothy, to **"study to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).** The great crisis in conservative, Bible-based teaching comes from a failure to be taught, and a failure to study the core doctrines of the Christian faith. Infidelity to God's Word is also tempting - no less than is infidelity to a marriage partner. New "truths" entice the faithful, as do new illicit relationships. Heresy is no respecter of godliness.

Therefore, one needs to provide resources for advancing the truth in a Christian world of ignorance, misinformation, apathy and heresy regarding the implications of altered views of God. Essentially, when changing the Biblical meaning about God, one changes the Biblical image of God.

An improper view of God can lead to an improper self-identity. When a person looses the God-imagery of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit taught in the Bible, he/she lost the ability to view themselves in the proper manner and therefore lost the ability to interact properly with God.

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[112] Fred Zaspel, The Person of Jesus Christ, at
http://www.biblicalstudies.com/bstudy/christology/jesus1.htm.
See the Catholic Encyclopedia, at http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07706b.htm.
See Trinity IIIex at http://www.christian-thinktank.com/trin03ex.html.

It is important for us as Christians to know and understand that we do not have the right to name ourselves, the world, or God. If we attempt to do this, it will undoubtedly lead to a distorted pattern because of our fallen human minds. God has the only right to name Himself, the world and other people He created, for He chose to reveal Himself to us.

Author Timothy Keller notes *"It is impossible to understand your heart or your culture if you do not discern the counterfeit gods that influence them."*[113] In Romans 1:21-25 Saint Paul shows that idolatry is not only one sin among many, but also what is fundamentally wrong with the human heart:

> ***For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God or gave thanks to him… The exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator.***
>
> ***Romans 1:21,25***

Paul goes on to make a long list of sins that create misery and evil in the world, but they all find their roots in this soil, the inexorable human drinve for "god-making."[114] In other words, idolatry is always the reason man ever do anything wrong! No one grasped this better than Martin Luther. In his *Large Catechism* and his *Treatise on Good Works* he wrote that the Ten Commandments begin with a commandment against idolatry. This comes first, argues Luther, because the fundamental motivation behind law breaking is idolatry.[115]

In view of this statement from Luther one can argue that a person must not just identify the idols of his own heart but also the idols in the culture he lives in.

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[113] Keller, Timothy (2009) Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promise of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope That Matters. NY: Dutton, p. 168

[114] On Romans 1:21-25, commentator Douglas Moo writes: "In … paradigmatic fashion [Paul] describes the terrible proclivity of all people to corrupt the knowledge of God they possess by making gods of their own.

[115] Luther, Martin (1935) *Luther's Large Catechism.* Minneapolis: Augsberg Publishing House.

It is therefore impossible to understand a culture without discerning its idols. The Jewish philosophers Halbertal and Margalit make it clear that idolatry is not simply a form of ritual worship, but a whole sensibility and pattern of life based on finite values and making created things into godlike absolutes.

In the Bible therefore, turning from idols always includes a rejection from the culture that the idols produce. God tells Israel that they must not only reject the other nations gods, but ***"you shall not follow their practices" (Exodus 21:24).*** There is no way to do cultural criticism without discerning and challenging idols.[116]

A good example of this is the preaching of Paul in Athens (Acts 17) and Ephesus (Acts 19). Paul challenged the gods of the city of Ephesus (Acts 19:26), which led to such an alteration in the spending patterns of new converts that it changed the local economy.

This is similar to people who lives in a "cyber-culture" or who belongs to a group of gamers coming together regularly, playing the same game having similar interest. One needs not only to turn away from the game, but also from the whole culture of gaming. Turning from idols is ***"setting the mind and heart on things above"*** where ***"your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1-3).***

The way forward, out of despair, is to discern the idol of your heart and the idol worship presented by computer technology and role-playing games as well as the gaming-culture that is associated with it. However, that will not be enough.

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[116] Halbertal M and Margalit, A (1992) Idolatry. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard, p. 6: *"[Continually] shared values, derived from the association of fixed visual perceptions, create a certain shared sensibility in people... The commandment 'You shall not follow their practices,' which is meant as a rejection of the lifestyle of the idolatrous culture, reflects a complex weave of lifestyle, ritual and faith... the category of idolatry includes a criticism of the culture in which idolatry developed."*

The only way to free oneself from the destructive influence of counterfeit gods is to turn back to the One True God. The living God, who reveals Himself both at Mount Sinai and on the Cross, is the only Lord who, if you find Him. Can truly fulfill you, and, if you fail Him, can truly forgive you.

## 8. Conclusion

The first Chapter of Genesis describes the story of the creation of reality. The image behind the Biblical exposé of the Creator is an omnipotent God whose very Word is law. God speaks and the entire universe is created. God speaks, *"Let there be light,"* and there is light. In response to God's Word, reality happens. Nothing intervenes between the Word of God and reality. God speaks. Reality happens.

This image can be changed. Instead of an omnipotent ruler issuing commands, one can portray "God" as a divine computer programmer, sitting at a keyboard. "God" types *"Light"* and light happens. "God" types *"Separate light, darkness"* and it happens. Furthermore as the divine computer program is run, light happens, water happens, dry land happens, vegetation happens, animals happen, humanity happens.

One may feel uncomfortable with that image. Indeed, if anyone were to suggest that humankind could make Genesis 1 more relevant by thinking of "God" as a computer programmer rather than as a Heavenly King, the idea would be unbiblical and disrespectful toward a Mighty God. However, this illustration does explicate how one can have a distorted view of reality.

Computer programmers and gamers alike will testify that they are familiar with a God-like feeling they get from the power that computers place in their hands. In programming a computer or playing a MMORPG they create worlds. They type, and it happens. They bring worlds into being *ex nihilo* - out of nothing.

Analogous to the equivalent of creating reality, gamers can create an image/avatar of how they want to be perceived in virtual reality. One could argue that there exists a relationship between the human spirit and the artifacts of human creativity that can be described as an organic relationship. However, in the intimacy that exists between the gamer and their creations, they are constantly being recreated in the image of their image.

They integrate their technologies into even the most spiritual dimensions of their lives. It is not only the material environment that is transformed by their machinery but also their spiritual world. How the gamer view reality, their structures of meaning and their sense of identity are all touched and transformed by the technologies and gaming capabilities, which they have allowed to mediate between themselves and their virtual world. They create and avatar in their own image, but in return this image recreate them.

Gamers can be very conscious of the transience of their creations. As the game unfolds in virtual reality, their reality happens. When the computer is turned of, that reality is gone. To the gamer, the game is the reality that happens in response to their commands, just as God gave the command for the universe to come into existence. When the a command is given, a reality comes into being, only to disappear into nothingness when the computer is turned off, or even they exit the game.

The reality they inhabit when a game is played is the world that is brought into being by the commands of the gamer. He enters this strange reality they have come to call *Cyberspace*. It is the product of their imagination. The gamer projects him into cyberspace; yet cyberspace takes on a life of its own. Like God, he can find himself alienated from his own creation.

However, the Bible teaches that the substances of all things are in and of Christ. E Ferrell defines substance as *that which is real whether material or spiritual, in distinction from that which is apparent; that which constitutes anything what it is; real or existing essence; the most important element in any existence; the characteristic and essential components of anything.*[117]

In essence, substance is assumed to be real because it is verifiable by our senses and man-made instruments. Science has many problems describing phenomena at the sub atomic or energy level because they have no instruments to measure what is indeed spiritual.

The irony is that scientists are asking humanity to have faith in what they are saying concerning energy, because they can't prove it. For example, man knows that the wind is real however, to describe the substance from which the wind is formed, requires believing in something that is not visible.

> **Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.**
>
> **Hebrews 11:1**

> **By faith we understand that the world were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.**
>
> **Hebrews 11:3 NSAB**

The physical world was created form the invisible. The Bible says God called things that were not into being.

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[117] Ferrell, L Emerson (2007) Super spiritual Believing Christ Consciousness. Florida, USA: Voice of the Light Ministries, p. 67.

> **Abraham believed when he stood in the presence of God who gives life to dead people and calls into existence nations that don't even exist.**
>
> **Romans 4:17 GW**

The invisible world has shape, even though it is hard to describe. E Ferrell notes that perhaps fire, light or spirit is the best way to describe the heavenly substances.[118]

When Christ touches one for the first time we experience the substance of he Holy Spirit. At that point, one becomes conscious of the inner void and of the need of being reconnected with God. This emptiness that one feels, longing for stability and fullness challenges a person to believe! Unfortunately, people have built through the years a belief system that is marred and false.

Man puts his trust and faith is the systems of the world and in computer technology. They are formed through sin to protect his pride and search for godliness. Man builds his belief system from visible substances such as computer technology formed from the darkness if his mind. Those who builds on the knowledge of their own false beliefs will continually be at the mercy of the Devil.

The substance of Heaven and the Kingdom of God are formed through faith and create belief systems founded on the Rock of Jesus of Nazareth. Christ is the Kingdom of God and those who enter His Kingdom must be immersed in His Spirit and consciousness. The reality we are living is the result of the kingdom in which we believe.

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[118] Ferrell, L Emerson (2007) Super spiritual Believing Christ Consciousness. Florida, USA: Voice of the Light Ministries, p. 68.

CONCLUSION

PhD

PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR
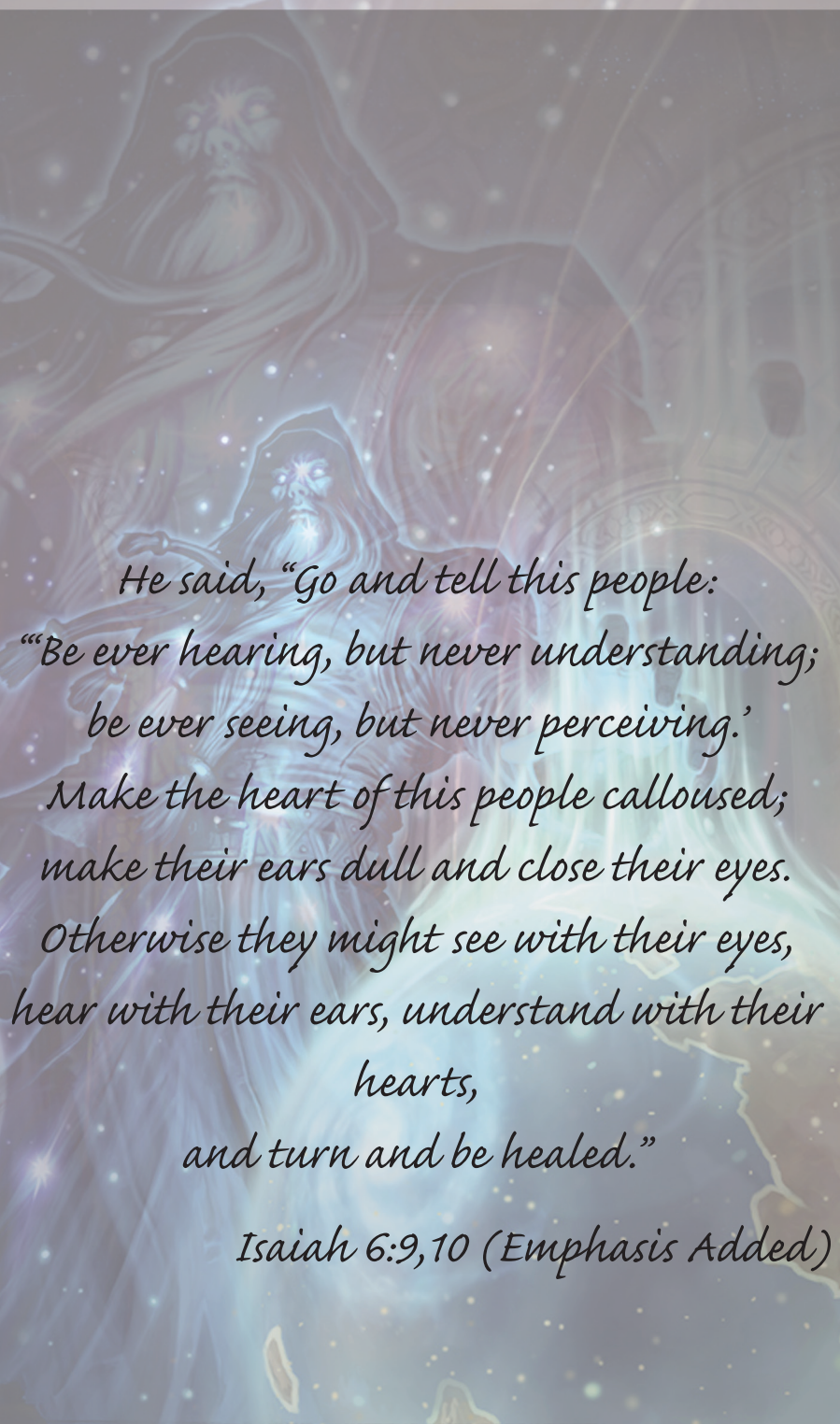
He said, "Go and tell this people:

"'Be ever hearing, but never understanding;

be ever seeing, but never perceiving.'

Make the heart of this people calloused;

make their ears dull and close their eyes.

Otherwise they might see with their eyes,

hear with their ears, understand with their

hearts,

and turn and be healed."

Isaiah 6:9,10 (Emphasis Added)

*To*

## An Exegetical Interpretation of The Esoteric Powers Working Through Fantasy Role-Playing Games As A Catechism Of The Occult

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If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them.

But the line diving good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?

-Alexander Solzhenitsyn[1]

It has been apparent throughout this thesis that many of the subjects introduced during the scope of this thesis, are a fields of enquiry or reference individually. As a matter of fact, to emphasize the above statement even more emphatic is that in some areas this study has barely scratched the surface. The more the Word of God is studied, -especially in this unknown field of esotericism- the more God seems to reveal.

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[1] Excerpt from Alexander Solzhenitsyn: Volume 3.
(http;//www.saidwhat.co.uk/quotes/political/Alexander_solzhenitsyn/if only there were evil people 2732).

> **The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.**
>
> **Deuteronomy 29:29**

Moses ends this prophecy of the Jews' rejection, similar to Paul, ending his discourse on the same subject, when it became fulfilled, as stated in Romans 11:33.[2] However, man is curiously forbidden to inquire into the secret counsels of God and to make determinations concerning them.

Man is however directed, and encouraged, to diligently inquire in depth into that which God has made known. He has omitted nothing that is advantageous to mankind, but withheld that of which is to man's detriment. The motivation for all Divine revelations are, not to become the subject of curious speculation and discourse, but to encourage man to obey and follow this laws in entirely and hence be blessed in return for one's deeds.

God, in His ultimate wisdom, elects to keep certain things to Himself. On the other hand, He reveals Himself through nature, a revelation that is at everyone's disposal.

God Himself revealed in His Word in **Proverbs 25:2 "It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out." (English Standard Version)**

**God is the ultimate source of information.** He is also the **Ultimate Symbologist.[3]**

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[2] Romans 11:33: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!". (KJV)

[3] Klein, John; Spears, Adam (2005) Devils and Demons and the Return of the Nephillim. USA: Xulon Press, p. 187.

His Great Book is multi-layered and multi-faceted and nearly everything contained therein, forms an intricate interaction with other texts in a manner that is often overlooked in conventional, non-Hebraic, Greco-Roman methods of Biblical exegesis.

God's creation is every bit as infinite as He is Himself. Electron microscopes assist in seeing it on universal level, whilst gigantic telescopes help man see this on universal level. However, only God can direct man to see it on a Biblical level.

During Jesus's resurrection, He ***"disarmed principalities and powers, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it (the cross or redemption)"[4]*** Therefore, the only device the devil has at his disposal is deception rooted in fear. One of the methods for deception is manifested through the virtual world of RPG: a world created by the human imagination, the transcendence of physics, with the goal of transforming the image of man.

> ***That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting***
>
> ***Ephesians 4:14 NKJV***

> ***The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.***
>
> ***John 10:10 NKJV***

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[4] Colossians 2:14 NKJV

Therefore, this thesis is a diligent search for God's wisdom relating to the technologies of cyberspace, as applicable media for Occultic role-playing games, that are increasingly attracting people into its web of magical experiments and rituals. It demonstrates that reality is strictly a manifestation of our own perceptions, and can therefore be manipulated and even re-created.

Revelations of the secrets relating to the esoteric powers, implored through FRPGs are, in conjunction with its consequent effects on a person's spirit, soul and body. This study explored through numerous methodologies, the effect of these games on an individual and incorporates and reveals, evidence of esoteric powers at work.

Spiritual explorers are increasingly venturing in to cyberspace to satisfy the needs of the soul. However, this enthusiasm for the mystical potential of human technology is misplaced, illogical and spiritually dangerous. It is a vain endeavor to construct a spiritual reality on the misconstrued, silicon foundation, instead of on Jesus Christ. As this strange phenomenon unfolds, this thesis emphasizes that Christians need to address the issue Theologically, Hermeneutically and Biblically if it is our intention to impact today's technological culture effectively, with the message of Jesus Christ.

To ensure the effective distribution of this important message across the world, we desperately need to illuminate and emphasize the delusions from Satan using Virtual Worlds as a diversion away from God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. As a game designer expressed in a 1996 Computer Game Developers' Conference:

*"The Web isn't just something that happens in the world; it's something that's happening in you. When people set up e-mail accounts or personal web sites or join a chat room or create a MUD persona, what are they doing? They're saying to the world, I AM. I signify. I am part of a large community. I am part of something bigger than myself.*

*These are empowering acts. These acts are an expression of hope. These are spiritual acts. [In fact,] the adjective 'spiritual' simply refers to things, which have no body, form, or substance. Spirituality is about things that are disembodied, things that are formless, things that are insubstantial, things that are virtual. Spiritual experiences are, in fact, our business. Ours will be an economy of spirits."[5]*

**Chapter One** examined roles, role-playing and personhood in the context of popular role-playing games. Role-playing games constitute a unique environment in which fantasy, imagination and reality intersect. Therefore the purpose to understand the significance of the unique ways these role-playing games configure fantasy, imagination and reality as participants necessarily negotiate between persona, player and person was exemplified.

Concurring with Scripture, Leviticus 19:26 says not to practice any kind of magic. A very popular online game: *Dungeons & Dragons* claims to involve the players in the worship/service of other gods. Exodus 23:13 forbade man not to mention the names of other gods… D&D contains much information and encourage activity that deals with the occult world.

The thesis argued that fantasy role-playing consists of collections and performances resembling magic ritual acts. The various relationships between role-play and magical ritual performances were discussed. In FRPG one will encounter magic, sorcery, witchery and demon summonsing additionally the gamer will be educated on occultism, mysticism, demonology and the spirit world.

One needs to acknowledge the existence of demonic entities for they are very real. The Bible makes more statements about Demons than it does about Angels and it points out in **Luke 10:18** that demons are evil.

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[5] Moriarty ,Brian (1996) Mpath's Computer Game Developers' Conference. San Jose, California. 1 February 1996. (http://ludix.com/moriarty/point.html).

Mark 5:8-9 indicates how numerous they are and Matthew 10:1 shows that they are unclean. **Matthew 12:21-30** states that they are under the command of Satan and **Matthew 8:29** show that they can possess humans.

Demons are real, individual, spirit beings and they are the ones manipulating all the evil in the world today. Although humans are spirit beings, humans are confined to physical bodies. The great spiritual warfare that rages today is between the "spirit of man" and the "spiritual forces" of evil directed by Satan which are contending for control and manipulation of our fleshly, physical bodies. The Word of God clearly states man's battle is ***"not against flesh and blood"*** (things in the natural realm), ***"but against ... spiritual wickedness." "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal..." (2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:12)***

Man's spirits fight by faith[6] and through one's sovereign will; while the devil and his [fallen] angels fight through deceit, cunning, trickery and temptation. One must make no mistake about this war or the weapons involved because the Scriptures are evident.

> ***...the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.***
>
> ***2 Corinthians 4:4 NASU***

> ***...who made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities ...you have destroyed your land and slain your people.***
>
> ***Isaiah 14:17,20 NKJV***

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[6] Paul says that faith is of primary importance: "above all..." ***Ephesians 6:16 "Above all, taking the shield of faith, where ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."*** Also 1 Peter 5:8-9; 1 John 5:4-5.

*....their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools...who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator...*

**Romans 1:22-23,25 NKJV**

*For son dishonors father, daughter rises against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own household.*

**Micah 7:6 NKJV**

Being made in the image of God, man, like God, has a sovereign will and no spirit can violate that will without the permission of the person himself. Because of this, these demons have developed great skills in deception. The basic principle of their operations is to make something evil as desirable, beautiful, and non–threatening as possible so that the person being tempted will lower his guard and accept whatever it is that is being used to cause SIN. However, it is important that man recognizes who his enemy is and what his tactics are *"For we are not ignorant of his (Satan's) devices."*
*(2 Corinthians 2:11)*

Satan's main device is deception.[7] Once someone is deceived, it becomes easier for the deception to remain. In the case of possession, it becomes easier for the demon to maintain his control.[8] Man's greatest weapon, however, is the Word of God.[9] It was the spoken (*"Rhema"*) word that Jesus used in confronting the Devil in the wilderness. He did not recite miscellaneous Scriptures to the Devil, but he delivered the Word of God with authority and power.[10]

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[7] Genesis 3:1; Genesis 3:4; John 8:44.
[8] Pittman, Howard. "Placebo"
(http://spiritlessons.com/dreams_and_visions/placebo_howard_pittman.htm).
[9] Ephesians 6:17; Mark 11:24-25; Numbers 13:30.
[10] Luke 4:4,10,12.

In his description of the weapons used in one's spiritual warfare, Paul insists the Word of God (Ephesians 6:11-18) as the only offensive weapon mankind has. Man is adequately prepared for battle and God has given a promise of victory of Satan and his devices.

> ***No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper;  and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord ...***
>
> ***Isaiah 54:17***

> ***And you shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this,  saith the Lord of hosts.***
>
> ***Malachi 4:3***

> ***Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall  by any means hurt you.***
>
> ***Luke 10:19***

> ***For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers ... nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.***
>
> ***Romans 8:38-39***

> ***... Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.***
>
> ***James 4:7***

To stand victoriously in battle against the Enemy, the spiritual requirements of obedience[11], a right relationship with God[12] and no area in one's life left exposed to the Devil: giving him foothold[13]; must be met in the life of the believer.

It is the responsibility of the believer to prepare for battle, to put on the ***"whole armour of God" (Ephesians 6:11)***, and to ***"stand against the evil one" (Ephesians 6:11-14).*** However, it is God who fights the battle. Indeed, Jesus Christ has already defeated the enemy for every human. One simply needs to walk in victory.[14]

**Chapter One** will present case studies to illustrate the potentially devastating consequences on the body, soul (mind, will and emotions) and spirit of a person, involved in FRPG.

It will demonstrate that these RPG's are utterly in contradiction to the Word of God, considering the highly demonic and magical content of much of these games. It violates the commandment of 1 Thessalonians 5:22 to ***"Abstain from all appearances of evil."*** It is a very high price that the individual, and in most cases such a person's family, has to pay for their failure to honour God's Word.

The case studies to be presented, will indicate that where excessive amounts of time was spend, playing the game, their minds became "re-wired" by its immersion into a world where demons, magic and spells are real.

The high level of intellectual and emotional engagement involved magnifies the truth.

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[11] Deuteronomy 11:22-25; Deuteronomy 28:1,7.
[12] Deuteronomy 11:22-25; Psalm 91.
[13] Ephesians 4:27.
[14] Deuteronomy 20:1; 2 Chronicles 20:15; Colossians 2:15.

Unless the gamer is a person of strong moral fibre, it is likely that he/she will eventually be enthralled in by the seductive power of magic, into thinking thoughts that are entirely contrary to the thoughts of God, consequently creating a perverted mind. A mind that will eventually replicates a demonic mind.

**Chapter Two and Three** reveals Satan's final efforts in the battle to destroy the image that man was created in. If Satan can destroy the image, then he can avert his own destruction. Satan will use man's desire to be his own god, to deceive him into believing a lie: to find "God" in cyberspace and "to come alive"!

Virtual reality provides a powerful metaphor, one that purports to be a world of digits that is matched by spiritual reality. The world where our spiritual selves may flourish. It offers a new dimension, beyond the limitations of metaphors, based on atoms or on the work of Science. People are invited to prosper in cyberspace.

What will this prosperous life look like? How do people come alive in cyberspace? What is the great task of Christian living? A Biblical answer will be, to love God and to love your neighbor, as you do yourself.[15] A present-day answer might be more banal; to live for oneself, or to life a life worth living!

St. Irenaeus said: *"The glory of God is man fully alive."*[16] To some it is a person fully alive. A space could be reinvented in which one could fully indulge in bodily pleasures, by getting rid of one's actual body. *"An ideological fantasy… In short, this vision is that of a state without lack and obstacles, a state of free floating in the virtual space in which desire none the less survives somehow."*[17]

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[15] Mark 12:31

[16] From *Adversus Haereses (Against Heresies)*, 4. 34. 5-7.

[17] Zizek ,Slavoj (1997)  The Plague of Fantasies. London: Verso, pp. 132-33. Zizek goes on to

The Word of God elucidates that in order to become fully alive, to live a full and abundant, life is to obediently follow Jesus, and have an intimate and loving relationship with Him.

> ***I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (abundant life).***
>
> ***John 10:10***

> ***That you may be filled with the fullness of God***
>
> ***Ephesians 3:19***

> ***Whoever believes in me, streams of living water (abundant life) will flow from within him.***
>
> ***John 7:38***

Cyberspace attempts to link people in unison in the immediate contexts of its interfaces. Through infantile gesturing and graphical effects, fantasies can be acted on. This becomes possible when a person becomes one of many bodiless subjects, relating across the infinity of time and space. *"The finite individual is thrown into a situation whose co-ordinates are not regulated by clear universal rules, so that the individual has gradually to find his way in it."*[18]

Timothy Stanley, doctoral student at the University of Manchester, presented that, in finding your way, people venture into a journey that appears to be limitless cyber-spatial clairvoyance, which enhances the intimacy all the more. Cyberspace is therefore a paradox of infinite immediacy.

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discuss more in detail what the desire represents in the Lacanian psychological approach he is famous for. The author will not be going down that road in this thesis, although desire is an important aspect of the cyberspatial habitus. For more on this see Ward, *Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice.*
[18] Zizek, Slavoj (1997)  The Plague of Fantasies. London: Verso, p.132.

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What one interfaces, functions as an infinite, beyond a field of cultural production, which transcends the individual. Cyberspace is not subject to control. It shapes us in a unique habitus[19], which influences social imagination and how we relate to others.[20]

Due to the phenomenon of the Information Age, the new technology of communication, the new geography of consciousness and the new technique of existence in cyberspace, combines to create a linchpin on which the universe is about to turn. People will progressively take part in online role-playing games, which aim is to invent virtual worlds, which resemble the real world as closely as possible, and vice versa.

In light of the above, man is now able to invent a new human reality, a new world formed by Science and Technology, without the need of a Creator God. Stephen Hawking is the of opinion that the *"The Scientific account is complete, theology is unnecessary."*[21]

This statement is exemplifying that "god" is within every person, which is the worship of the self. The infinity of the virtual has taken the place of the infinity of the Divine. Man has fashioned himself as an image in the virtual world, that does not necessarily resemble himself, but a divinity that he experiences, and gathers in it a "god on command".

The Jewish philosopher, Abraham Heschel, commented that the existence of idols, bear a perverse testimony to man's need for the divine.

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[19] Habitus: is the logic of a field internalized into the subject. It therefore guides the individual's particular position-takings in the field of cultural production. Habitus represents the unique ways individual subjects internalize their field of cultural production, which in turn guides the dynamic behavioral praxes they will enact. This accounts for all sorts of ambiguity and surprise as each subject will internalize the field in diverse ways.

[20] Stanley, Timothy (2005) "Redeeming the Icons." Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory vol. 6 no. 2, p. 7. (http://www.jcrt.org/archives/06.2/stanley.pdf).

[21] Stephen Hawking on Larry King Live. (http://www.tomsguide.com/us/stephen-hawking-god-space-theory,news-8005.html).

If the Divine is not accepted on its own terms, an individual will create fascinating and mystifying surrogates that take on a life of their own - becoming an entrancing mystery that cannot easily be resisted.[22]

Due to the influence of strange, and sometimes wonderful, computer technologies, those not availing themselves of God's own revelation in Christ and the Scriptures will seek alternative revelations.[23]

Groothuis, in his paper *Technoshamanism: Digital Deities in Cyberspace* asks the following question: *Apart from God, where better to seek revelations than cyberspace?* The answer he provides is that it's as close as the keyboard, and as esoteric as the Internet. It can be as engrossing as any technology in existence. Its mysteries beckon exploration, and its potentials are not fully known. Through it's massive connectivity, it offers a kind of *visio dei*— a God's-eye vision of endless data through the dimensions of cyberspace.[24]

This explains the aspiration of Jobe, as portrayed in the movie *Lawnmower Man*, who, after having tasted the powers of computers, wanted to incorporate all knowledge into himself by becoming one with cyberspace. He verbalized that, he would become a "cyber-Christ" (although towards the end he acted more akin to a cyber-Satan).[25]

Heim rightly comments:

*"Our love affair with computers, computer graphics, and computer networks runs deeper than aesthetic fascination and deeper than the play of the senses. We are searching for a home for the mind and heart....*

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[22] Heschel, Abraham (1951) Man Is Not Alone: A philosophy Of Religion. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, pp. 33-34.

[23] On this theme, see Groothuis, Douglas (1994) Christianity that counts: Being a Christian in a Non-Christian World. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, pp. 102-105.

[24] Groothuis, Douglas. *Technoshamanism: Digital Deities in Cyberspace.* CRI Statement DC-228, p. 4.

[25] The Lawnmower Man (1992) Writer: Stephen King.

*The world rendered as pure information not only fascinates our eyes and minds, but also captures our hearts. We feel augmented and empowered. Our hearts beat in the machines."*[26]

Of course, this same interpretation can be applicable to any form of idolatry.

God clearly reveals in His teachings that He is a jealous God, and will have no other gods before Him irrespective of whether they are flesh; stone; blood, or anything similar.

> **You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God.**
>
> **Exodus 20:4-5**

God have not tolerated this kind of worship in the days of the Pharisees, and He is not about to tolerate it now in this post-modern age.

> **For they provoked Him with their high places, And aroused His jealousy with their graven images**
>
> **Psalm 78:58**

That same idea is present in the New Testament. After a discussion of idolatry in the Church of Corinth, Paul asks, **"Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?"(1 Corinthians 10:22).**

**God Is Jealous for His Holy Name.** God's Name is the epitome of who and what He is, and He says His name is Jealous. Jealousy is not merely a passing disposition with God. It is the essence of His person.

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[26] Heim, Michael (1994) The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 85.

He cannot refrain from being jealous, as He is the Highest and Greatest Being- infinitely Holy and Glorious. He is passionately committed to preserving His honour and supremacy. He zealously desires exclusive devotion and worship. Acceptance of anything less, would tender Him inferior. God said about Himself:

> ***I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images***
>
> ***Isaiah 42:8***

God is Sovereign and Supreme above all. Were He to share His glory with other so-called gods, He would be elevating them to a status that would not benefit their true nature, and in return, would have the effect of making Him acting contrary to His own nature. He must be faithful to Himself, and maintain His High and Holy position; furthermore, He demands that His creatures attribute to Him that degree of honour.

That is what He denotes when He says, ***"I shall be jealous for My holy name (Ezekiel 39:25)***. His jealousy is not born from insecurity; anxiety; frustration; covetousness; pride, or spite- as attributed to man's jealousy. It is the natural and indispensable consequence of His absolute Sovereignty and infinite Holiness.

If God, by virtue of His essential being, is jealous for His uniqueness and His supremacy above all, then those who know Him and want to serve Him should be equally jealous for Him. A total dedication to one's relationship with Him, shall consequently exalt Him above everyone, and everything else in your life- one should be absolutely dedicated to living for His honour, as well as be zealously committed to doing His will.

That is the way the prophet Elijah lived his life. He risked his physical safety, to prove that the Creator God is the Supreme God when he stood alone against the prophets of Baal, and prayed for fire from Heaven on his water-soaked sacrifice. The fire of the Lord consumed the sacrifice, (the wood, the stones, the dust), and licked up the water in the trench around the altar.

> ***"And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God'"***
>
> ***1 Kings 18:39***

It was a victory for the Lord over the pagan idols of the Canaanites. It all transpired as a consequence of one obedient prophet, who said***, "I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts"(1 Kings 19:14).***

We live in a pagan society, where knowledge is god, and the *SELF* is the main objective of man's worship. This thesis acknowledges that humanity hungers for people who have the capability of being very jealous for the Lord God of hosts, people who will stand in isolation, if required, against this insidious and contagious brand of idolatry, and show the world that the Lord is God. People who will adopt a simplified lifestyle, and utilize their resources for His glory, rather than for their own comforts and pleasures.

Unfortunately, the entire subject matter of idolatry remains somewhat of a mystery for modern believers. Man has long since lost any real understanding of what could constitute the worship of false gods. In part this is true, as mankind has literally incorporated pagan influences, pagan references and even pagan holidays into the very fabrics of their lives. In our pagan culture, Satan attempts, and has already succeeded, in counterfeiting every good thing that God has introduced into the world.

Since the Garden of Eden, Satan has never changed. He still aspires to be God, and deludes mankind in thinking that the whole concept of the knowledge of Good and Evil, involves the decision by human beings to replace God with *self* as the ultimate standard of reference. It involves a decision to replace God's self-disclosure with the limited needs and desires of humanity itself, as understood by the individual. That is the ultimate turning point of the will.

The fall did not create technology, yet the consequence of fallen human nature, laid the foundation for man's pursuit of it. Brooke states that the fall determines man's reason's for inventing technology and determines how people use technology.[27] The fall involves, above everything else, the turning away from God and toward the self, for all one's own self-perceived requirements and self-expressions.

The Word of God often predicts and emphasises that a powerful delusion and deception will prevail in the last days. Second Thessalonians teaches, that a spirit of delusion will come in the last days and it will result in many turning away from the Truth, and believing in lies. ***"For false Christ and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect." (Matthew 24:24)***

This passage does not purport to imply that it is not possible to deceive the elect. A more accurate interpretation would be that the false prophets would arise, who will mislead *even those who should have know better.* ***"Some of those who have insight will fall in order to refine, purge and make them pure until the end time; because it is still to come at the appointed time (Daniel 11:35).***

The Book of Revelation unmasks the greatest counterfeit of all time, commonly known as the ***"antichrist."*** He will attempt to replace God in the hearts and minds of mankind, and for a time he will be successful.

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[27] Brooke, Tal (1997) Virtual Gods. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, p. 177.

However, God's guaranteed victory in the end is not a guarantee that man will automatically partake in that victory with Him. Man is instructed to be cautious and prepared, to ensure purity for the Bridegroom.[28]

In this modern age, mankind needs to review their lives — to identify their foundations, hold on to God's values, renew his obligations to Him, and refrain from any kind of worship, attributed to pagan concepts, customs and practices that have permeated Western thought. Paul states, ***"Therefore, my dearly beloved, shun [keep clear away from, avoid by flight if need be] any sort of idolatry [of loving or venerating anything more than God]" (1 Corinthians 10:14, AMP).***

**Chapter Four** has illustrated how the use of Avatars is on the rise, as the technology that makes them more real and more customizable, is on the increase. This thesis elucidates, that when a human being take on the form of a virtual Avatar, the powerful esoteric powers working through these Avatars, will, in a calculating manner influence such a person's entire existence, with a distinct possibility of possession. Acting through these Avatars, will influence one's thoughts and actions, it will shape one's personality and it will negatively impact on a person's life in accordance with the blueprint that is determined by the Avatar. It is an effective, magnificently packaged doorway into occultism.

Users may experience a sense of power in designing their Avatar or when guiding it within virtual environments, but as this chapter reveals, avatars have an affect beyond the mere virtual. Ultimately, the relationship between Avatars as users, is reciprocal:  As humankind influence Avatars, they influence humans on a very deep, spiritual level.

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[28] Matthew 24:42; Revelation 19:7.

The following questions was argued:

1. Can a Christian play these games without subscribing to a Magical Worldview? A worldview axiom in death and destruction?
2. Considering the high level of emotional and intellectual commitment these games require, the question arises whether or not the participant could stay truthful, without being trapped in devastating deception and prone to Lying spirits?
3. These games engage the whole person at deep levels and it can last months if well played. How can a person, Christian or not, immerse themselves into a reality view so deeply and not have an impact on the rest of their lives?

**Chapter Five**, on Restoring one's identity and image, will show how having an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, will restore one's identity and intimacy with the Father. God ultimately gives understanding that nothing, no sin so grave that the blood of Jesus cannot overcome it.

> *"Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal their lands"*

> *2 Chronicles 7: 14*

God has given man the ability to overcome sin, but this is a conscious choice. Only intimacy with Jesus can emanate in the right choice- identity must be found in Him.

> *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

> *Galatians 2:20*

People under the power of role-playing games, are influenced by these games, to the extent that it has the capacity of having a negative impact on their entire lives. Considering the significant impact on the minds of the players, one is exhorted to bring "***into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.***" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

The process of building Christ's character into people's lives, involves submission to God, resisting the flesh and walking in love. People need to understand that, unless one allows the Lord to build His character in us, our own fleshly labour is in vain. Every person represents a house being built by Jesus—His worth is showcased to the world through our lives. This is why the fundamental building blocks in finding one's identity are centralized around Christ. If one fixes our eyes on Him, He will build the house.

Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25 states ***"There is a way that seems right to man, but in the end leads to death."*** Proponents who are convinced that RPG's have no effect whatsoever are deceived about the falsity of their beliefs and especially about the source of their misguided mind-set. This source is none other than Satan, the Father of lies and the god of this world.

The Bible warns in 1 Timothy 4:1 ***"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving head to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."*** Occultism, witchcraft and magic through RPG's involve interaction and trafficking with demonic spirits, whether or not these facts are acknowledged.

The Bible therefore condemns idolatry and occultism in all its forms, and if not heeded to the judgment of God, for participating in such abominable activities, will befall the sinner.

This thesis concludes with a five-point message:

**Point Number 1: An Antidote to the Heresy of the Antinomians**

The Word "Antinomian", is an anglicised form of two Greek words: "*Anti",* meaning against, and "*nomos",* meaning law.[29] According to the definition, antinomians hold that, under the gospel dispensation of grace, the moral law is of no use or obligation, as faith alone is the sole requirement for salvation.[30]

Antinomians claim that a person can live in sin, and still have fellowship with God. 1 John 1:6 inoculates the believers against the heretical teachings of the Antinomians. Here John says, ***"If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and are not practicing the truth."***

According to this verse, fellowship with God cannot cohabitate with walking in the darkness. The Satanic darkness is a direct antithesis to Divine Light and the Satanic lie, to the Divine Truth. The Divine Truth, as the expression of the Divine Light, is in contrast to the Satanic, being the expression of the Satanic darkness.

If a person alleges he has fellowship with God, who is Light, yet walk in darkness, he is dishonest and expressing the Satanic darkness, and not the truth in the expression of the Divine Light. If a person persists in sin, he does not possess the Spirit of Truth in him![31]

1 John 3 clearly states, that sin is the rejecting of the Divine law. In Him, that is, in Christ, there is no sin. The sinful weaknesses that were consequences of the fall were taken upon Him, all those infirmities of mind or body, which subject man to suffering, and expose him to temptation.

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[29] Lee, Withess ( 2003) Life Study: 1,2, & 3 John, Jude. Volume One. 1 John- Part One. CA: Living Stream Ministry, p. 72.
[30] Antinomian. (www.merriam-wenbster.com/dictionary/antinomian).
[31] Ferrell, Ana Mendez. Testimony of Ana Mendez Ferrell. Deliverance of Witchcraft. (www.youtube.com).

But man's moral infirmities, our predisposition to sin, are not characteristic of Jesus. He that abides in Christ does not persist in the practice of sin. Renouncing sin is the great proof of spiritual union with, continuance in, and saving knowledge of the Lord Christ.[32]

> *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*
>
> *1 John 3:3-10*

Beware of self-deceit. Man cannot act like the devil and at the same time be a disciple of Christ Jesus. A person cannot participate in occultic games and do magical ritual acts in the game-world and still be filled with God's Spirit of Truth. To be born of God, is to be inwardly renewed by the power of the Spirit of God. Renewing grace is an abiding principle. Religion is not an art, a matter of dexterity and skill, but a new spatial relation. Moreover, the regenerate person cannot persist in sin as he did prior to being born of God and as others do who are not born again.

There is that light in his mind, which enables and empowers him to identify the evil and malignity of sin. There is that bias upon his heart, which enables him to loathe and hate sin.

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[32] 1 John 3. Matthew-Henry Bible Commentary.

There is the spiritual quality that is in opposition sinful acts. There is further repentance for sin, if committed. It is against the core of the person to sin with forethought.

**Point Number 2**: **The Blood of Jesus Christ Cleanse One From All Sin**

The Word of God says that **"blood speaks"**. The blood of Able spoke of revenge, and the blood of Jesus speaks of mercy.

> **And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.**
>
> **Hebrews 12:24**

Of all substances, blood is the most mysterious, and in some senses the most sacred. Scripture teaches, **"the blood is the life thereof**,"—that the life is in the blood.[33] Blood, is therefore, the mysterious link between matter and spirit. Blood has a very special quality in the spiritual world.

The Word of God says that the blood of His Son, Jesus, overcame the devil. The blood of Jesus declared man's victory. His blood placed the seal on the devil's defeat. The crucifixion was absolute and put an end to the entire concept of rebellion, sin and iniquity. It is Jesus' blood that has sprinkled hearts and in the process consciences were cleansed. It is His blood that has sprinkled the tabernacle, and in doing so created a path into the Holiest of Holies - the throne room of God - has been consecrated for mankind. (Hebrews 10:19-22.)

The blood of the bullock and of the goat were sprinkled seven times, in three places upon the mercy seat, in front of the mercy seat and upon the horns of the brazen alter. (Leviticus 16:11-15,18-19).

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[33] *Leviticus 17:11 "For the life of the flesh is in the blood".*

The High Priest went into the Holiest of All only once a year, and that was with the blood of the Sacrifice on the Day of Atonement. There is no access into the presence of God without the shedding of sacrificial blood (Hebrews 9:6-14).

The blood of Jesus speaks about mercy to the Father, speaks judgment to the devil and about righteousness and holiness to mankind. According to Revelation 12:11, *"And they (the believers) overcame him (the accuser of the brethren) because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death."* Jesus died for all sinners! However, salvation did not follow automatically. Each person has to approach the Lord in repentance, and receive for him/herself Jesus' atoning sacrifice. If this does not occur, the absolution of the cross will not be affected in that person.

**Point Number 3**: **There Is A Hell And There Is A Heaven And There Is A Choice**

The Bible is not vague on the subjects of Heaven and Hell. There are many verses in the Bible that teaches about both places. Jesus said in *John 14:2:* **"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you**." In the book of Revelation there are many verses that describe the allure and beauty of Heaven**,** especially in chapters 21 and 22. These chapters describe the New Jerusalem, the capital city of Heaven, where there is no tears, no sadness, and no pain. The streets are pure gold, as clear as glass, and the walls are decorated with beautiful gems.

However, Jesus spoke more about Hell than He did about Heaven, and warned everyone that Hell was a place to be avoided.

> ***And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they, which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.***
>
> ***Luke 16:22-28***

In stark contrast to Heaven, **Hell is described as a place of eternal torment and pain where the body suffers.** Many testimonies attest to this fact: people who have died and experienced Near Death Experiences, going to heaven or hell and coming back to life, share there amazing experiences.[34]

One such a person, Dr Rogelio Mills, died in October of 1998, and recollects that his soul and spirit left his body, and he came face-to-face with the Almighty God- and His archenemy Satan (the Devil.) In his book: *While out of my body, I saw God, Hell and the Living Dead*, Dr. Mills describes Gods appearance in detail. He also depicts a chilling detailed account of his tour of the Outer Darkness of Hell, and the tormented souls of the Living Dead; burning in the eternal fires of Hell. Mills also paints a vivid image of some of the other things he witnessed, including the pits of fire; demonic spirits; Satan; the Room of the Future Dead; the Old Paradise (Garden of Eden), and more.[35]

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[34] Hell is Real. (www.youtube.com).
[35] Mills, Roger (2007) While out of my body, I saw God, Hell and the Living Dead. Triunity Publishing.

Jesus said, ***"The kingdom of Heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered, some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth," (Matthew 13: 47-50).***

Man's eternal destiny is decided here on earth. After a person's death, the decision taken on this earth regarding one's eternal destination, Heaven or Hell, is irrevocable. In the story of Lazarus and the rich man, in Luke 16, the rich man closed his eyes and died, immediately opening his eyes in Hell.

Matthew 10:28 states ***Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. (NIV)***

Man's immortal spirit will be lost in eternity unless he turns to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the only One who claimed to be God, has died and been resurrected. He is the only One qualified to comment. Jesus said that every person who dies without salvation awakes and opens his or her eyes in Hell. Romans 2:3 notes that no man will escape the judgement of God.

We may never be presented with the opportunity, similar to the people in this book, to glimpse what lies beyond the final frontier of death. Nevertheless, one derives insight after reading about their experiences. Their experiences cannot be proven or disproved. Their sightings have however been confirmed by the teachings of Jesus whilst He was on Earth, and what God revealed to other authors of the Bible.

**Point Number 4: There Are Tragic Consequences For Disobedience**

Author John Bevere, states that there are two culprits at work that act in a symbiotic fashion. The first is deception. This darkness is locked in their hearts due to their disobedience of God's Word (James 1:22). The second culprit is the tangled snare of controlling spirits who are sanctioned to attack at will, as a result of disobedience.[36] The paradox: people are deceived, and project the blame, failing to acknowledge their own disobedience. They are blinded to exactly what is required to secure their freedom.

The light of God's Word exposes deception by discerning between the thoughts and intentions of one's hearts (Hebrew 4:12). David said it this way: ***"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your Word... It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes." (Psalm 119:67,71)***

Unfortunately, when someone is afflicted due to disobedience, they persist in ignorance. They continue wandering in the wilderness of disobedience. This is akin to people living in disobedience, due to their involvement in MMORPG. They shift the blame for their involvement, and refuse to depart from their ways.

Scripture portrays a man whose identity was defined by the intricacies surrounding a sacrifice, rather than the obedience presented by the offering. In Genesis, chapter 4, God acknowledges the offering that Abel presented, but rejected Cain's offering. In verse 6, the Lord spoke to Cain about the nature of his sacrifice, which resulted in his fallen countenance.

> ***And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.***
>
> ***Genesis 4:6,7***

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[36] Bevere, John (2006) Enemy: Access Denied. Slam the devil's door with one simple decision. Florida: Charisma House, p. 65

Cain's disobedience culminated in an act of betrayal against Abel and ultimately led to his own destruction. Cain further suffered because of his refusal to repent on his disobedience, resulting in a curse over his life. He lived the reminder of his years on earth, as a fugitive and a vagabond. His aimless and hopeless wandering was an example to future generations. It served as a warning of the price of refusal to repent and obey.

However, there is a great blessing when a person truly repents of disobedience. Joel cried, ***"Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him. (Joel 2:13-14.)***

**Point Number Five: Role-Playing Games Is Idolatry That Results In Iniquity**

Voltaire advocates, ***"Self-love never dies"***.[37] In addition, God calls the love of self, idolatry, which is an inequity. It is a sin before the Almighty God. Furthermore, worshipping false deities is sin (Joshua 23:7, 16; 2 Kings 17:16) so are occult practices a sin (Deuteronomy 18:10-12; 2 Kings 17:17; Galatians 5:19-21).

> ***For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king.***
>
> ***1 Samuel 15:23 ESV***

In the Old Testament, Scripture educates man on the interpretation of the word sin.

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[37] Gay, Peter Prof (1966) Great Ages of Man: Age of Enlightenment. Nederland: Time-Life International, p. 58.

It contains elements of three different "sins", contained in one paragraph! These are in fact, the 3 different "categories" of sin that can be committed against God.

> ***Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving <u>iniquity</u> (5771) and <u>transgression</u> (6586) and <u>sin,</u> (2403)and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.***
>
> ***Exodus 34:7***

Etymologically iniquity means, *"twisted and distorted."*[38] It is anything that turns away from God's straight and perfect plan. The origin of iniquity was demonstrated in the fall of Lucifer. It occurred the moment this archangel, full of beauty and perfection, entertained a thought that was in direct disobedience to God, and started believing something different and contrary to the Divine Justice.

Divine Justice is an essential attribute of God, whereby He infinitely, perfectly, and independently, exercises this discretion to do it or refrain from doing it as He represents the divine justice, by every definition, His actions are inherently just. Therefore, God defines for man what justice is, because He is by nature just and righteous, and what He does reflects that nature.[39]

Just as faith is the substance of our belief,[40] that is, the power that activities the invisible world of heavens, this twisted thought derived by the archangel, produced a spiritual substance that was the origin of evil.[41]

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[38] Ferrell, Ana Mendez (2011) Iniquity: The Major hindrance to see God's glory manifested in your life. Florida, USA: Ana Mendez Ferrell, INC, p,11.

[39] John MacArthur, from his forward to Lawson's Foundations of Grace (2007) Reformation Trust, pp. 8–9.

[40] See Hebrew 11:1; Acts 17:11

[41] Ferrell, Ana Mendez (2011) Iniquity: The Major hindrance to see God's glory manifested in your life. Florida, USA: Ana Mendez Ferrell, INC, p.11.

> **Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till <u>iniquity</u> was found in thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine evilness, by the <u>iniquity</u> of thy traffick...**
>
> **Ezekiel 28:15 and 18 (Emphasis added)**

The words iniquity and evil are referred to on numerous occasions in the Bible, and are vital in the understanding of the root of the vast amount of difficulties man is confronted with. Evil is the diabolic seed, from which all wickedness originates.[42] It is then bestowed on to man at birth, impregnating his heart with thoughts and intentions, as opposed to righteousness, truth, love and everything God represents. "*Iniquity is the sum of all twisted thoughts or the total of all that is evil in mankind.*"[43]

> "*If you do not take the distinction good and bad very seriously, then it is easy to say that anything you find in this world is a part of God. But, of course, if you think some things are really bad and God really good, then you cannot talk like that.*
> *You must believe that God is separate from the world and that some of the things we see in it are contrary to His will… Christianity… thinks God made the world…*
> *But it also thinks that God made and that God insist and insist very loudly, on our putting them right again And, of course, that raises a very big question. If a God made the world, why has it gone wrong?...*"
>
> *- Mere Christianity, CS Lewis*

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## 4. Conferences Attended

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## 7. Bibles

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**Amplified Bible Version** (AMP) © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation, La Habra, CA 90631

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**GOD'S WORD** ®Translation (GW), © 1995 God's Word to the Nations All rights reserved, Published by Green Key Books, 2514 Aloha Place, Holiday, Florida 34691.

**King James Version,** in Public Domain

**New American Standard Bible,** 1995 edition. © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved.

**New King James Version,** copyright 1979, 1980, 1982, Thomas Nelson Inc.

**New Living Translation,** Copyright (C) 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation.

**New Revised Version of the Bible,** copyrighted 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States America.

**Word English Bible** (WEB). Trademark of Rainbow Missions, Inc. The World English Bible is not copyrighted.

**NOTE:** All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible has been use, unless otherwise indicated.

| | |
|---|---|
| **3-D** | - Three Dimensional |
| **ADD** | - Attention Deficit Disorder |
| **ARPANET** | - Advanced Research Projects Agency Network |
| **B.A.D.D** | - Bothered about Dungeons and Dragons |
| **BBE** | - Bible in Basic English |
| **C.C.A.N** | - Cult Crime Action Network |
| **CD-ROM** | - Compact Disc, read-only-memory |
| **CRPG** | - Computer Role-Playing Game |
| **CT** | - Computed Tomography |
| **EA** | - Electronic Arts |

| | |
|---|---|
| **EMA** | - Education Maintenance Allowance |
| **ESA** | - Entertainment Software Association |
| **D&D** | - Dungeons And Dragons |
| **DNA-** | - Deoxyribonucleic Acid |
| **FRPG** | - Fantasy Role-Playing Game |
| **fMRIS** | - Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging |
| **GURPS** | - Generic Universal Role-Playing System |
| **GW** | - God's Word Translation |
| **IAD** | - Internet Addiction Disorder |
| **LHRH** | - Luteinising Hormone Releasing Hormone |
| **LARPG** | - Life Action Role- Playing Game |
| **M.I.T** | - Massachusetts Institute of Technology |
| **MRI** | - Magnetic Resonance Imaging |
| **MMORPG** | - Massive Multi-player online role-playing game |
| **MTV** | - Music Television |
| **MUD** | - Multi-User Dungeons |

| | |
|---|---|
| **NASU** | - New American Standard Bible |
| **N.C.T.V.** | - National Coalition on Television Violence |
| **NKJV** | - New King James Version |
| **NIV** | - New International Version |
| **NLT** | - New Living Translation |
| **NPD** | - National Purchase DIary |
| **OBE** | - Out-Of-Body Experience |
| **OCD** | - Obsessive Compulsive Disorder |
| **O.T.O** | - Ordo Templi Orientis (*Order of the Temple of the East*, or the *Order of Oriental Templars*) |
| **PC** | - Personal Computer |
| **RPG** | - Role-Playing Game |
| **TRH** | - Thyrotraphin Releasing Hormone |
| **VR** | - Virtual Reality |
| **VRML** | - Virtual Reality Modelling Language |
| **WHO** | - World Health Organisation |
| **WOW** | - World of Warcraft |

**WWW**            - World Wide Web

# ADDENDUM ONE: Questionnaire

1. How does your assumed role-playing identity influences the "real" you?

2.a Which characters did you play?

b. With which character do you identify with most?

3. Did you notice any personality changes in yourself since you become involved in role-playing?

a. For the better?

b. For the worst

c. Or both

4. Does the interplay in cyberspace affect your "real" dream-time (while you are sleeping)? How do your actual dream world and your imaginary dream world correspond, if any?

5a. Do you perceive cyberspace as just an unreal alternate universe or do you see cyberspace as a real world where you can be someone completely different?

b. Do you prefer the cyber world above the real world?

6.a On average- how many hours did you spend playing per day?

b. Did your time in front of the computer stay the same? Increased or reduced?

c.  Do you perceive the hours spent in cyber space on the Internet whilst gaming as long?

7. With relation to your friends who played the same game, how would you rate yourself in terms of time played:

a. Did you spend considerable more time in the game world to become better?

b. Was it more or less the same?

c. Did you spend less time?

d. Not sure

8. Did the games affect you in the sense of:

a. Make you more aggressive

b. Make you less aggressive

c. No change at all.

8. Did you become more competitive with other people?

9.a Afterwards, did real people bore you?

b. Scare you?

c. Inspire you?

d. Angered you?

10. Did the gaming inspire you to obtain more or less of your potential?

11. Concerning depression, oppression and possession which of the above would you ascribe to yourself?

12. Concerning the unseen world, did your perception regarding the entities, "gods" with whom you played or encountered

a. Altered

b. Stayed the same

c. Have no view

13. What is your perception regarding these avatars, gods and creatures? Do you only see them as:

a. Graphic representations of someone's imagination / just an image with no ties to anything specific

b. Adaptation of Greek/ Roman mythology, which is untrue and a myth

c. An embodiment of your personality/ an extension of yourself with whom you played online

d. None of the above

14a. In your opinion, can the images in the game be more than just an image?

14b. Is there a deeper, spiritual connection behind these images?

15. Concerning your personal spiritual life, did your view of a Creator God:

a. Altered- Better or Worse

b. Stayed the same

c.  Have no view

16. Do you regret becoming involved in MMORPG?

a. If so, why?

b. No regrets

16. Which of the other "gods" do you relate to? Did it change over time? If yes, why?

17. Did your involvement with RPG had any overt or covert effects on your

a. Body

b. Soul

c. Spirit

18. Did you had any contact / or are you aware of any contact you had with

a. Angels

b. Demons/ Powers

19. During your involvement with RPG in cyberspace, did you have any craving/yearning to "connect" with the entities or powers online? Did you want more of their "powers"?

20. In the case where you are married:

a. Will you sacrifice personal, intimate time with your spouse to play a game?

b. Not applicable

21a. Do you think you are addicted by these games?

b. Can you break free from gaming?

22. Do you describe yourself as power-hungry?

a. Before

b. After

23. In your opinion, can a person be involved in the occult and still be a Christian?

a. Yes

b. No

c. Not sure

24. In your opinion are games such as Diablo, WOW, D&D is occultic in nature?

a. Yes

b. No

c. Not sure

25. In your opinion can MMORPG such as Diablo, D&D, WOW can lead a person into Witchcraft and occultism?

a. Yes

b. No

c. Not sure

26. In your view, is playing a MMORPG leading a double life?

a. Yes

b. No

c. Not sure