

SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS IN ENGLISH

Title: *Gry wideo jako przestrzeń sporu filozoficznego. Wybrane zagadnienia (Video games as space of philosophical dispute. Selected issues)*

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The main research problem of the thesis is as follows: how can we explain the way that philosophical content exist in video games as a whole? Answering such a questions requires a presentation both of what philosophical ideas, precisely, are most often found in video games and what commonalities dictate, which ideas can be found in this or that kind of game. The main hypothesis supposed here in order to describe the philosophical dispute undertaken in the space of video games is that this dispute is strongly connected to a distinction within the electronic entertainment industry into the high-budget, mid-budget and low-budget segment. This connection is shown trough the analysis of nine examples of philosophical video games that refer to ideas belonging to either ontology, anthropology or axiology. An overview of this three varied fields of philosophy in such a way that they are present in video games allows to demonstrate dependencies between to which of the three segments certain game belongs and what kind of philosophical ideas can be found in it.

Methodology that is utilized in the thesis, though philosophical at its core, is also by necessity interdisciplinary. It is however important to distinguish between particular research methods used in the thesis and the problem of the overall methodology of the thesis. While the former are diverse tools that video games researchers have been using with great success for a long time and are necessary in their work, the overall methodology of the thesis is customized to study the philosophical dispute undertaken in the space of video games from a holistic perspective. The issue of methodology that connects all those particular methods in a new way is discussed in the first part of the thesis.

The first part of the thesis is titled *Filozoficzność a branża gier wideo (Philosophicity and the video game industry)*. This part is an introduction to the relationship between the content of video games and philosophy. As a key part of this introduction the various concepts related to this theme are presented. The main axis of all introductory considerations is the matter of philosophicity of video games. This part of the thesis firstly contains an outline of cultural history of video games and then how video games can be understood as the electronic entertainment industry. Next is the subchapter on methodology, where there is presented not only the “narratology vs ludology” dispute, but also the many auxiliary methods. Then the relationship of video games to philosophy is discussed, taking into consideration a holistic perspective on both video games and philosophy as well as the way that philosophical ideas can be presented in video games and the very nature of philosophy as dispute. At the end of this part of the thesis is the description of the query of philosophical video games that resulted in selection of nine examples analyzed in parts second, third and forth.

In the second part of the thesis, titled *Byt i świat (The being and the world)* the matter of what kind of ontology can be found in video games is analyzed. High-budget *Assassin's Creed Origins* (Ubisoft Montreal 2017), the first of the exemplary philosophical video games, presents to the player a vision of dualistic, Manichean metaphysics where every being is assigned to the forces of Good and Evil while under the pretense of chaotic reality one can find a rational, harmonic structure

that guarantees the stable existence of everything. In case of the mid-budget *Pathologic Classic HD* (Ice-Pick Lodge 2015) everything is different, as the game shows next to each other three vastly different perspectives on the world of three vastly different character. This is utilized by the creators of the game in order to present to us a postmodern ontology of the discourse, where the world is a construction of those who are a part of it. Low-budget *The Norwood Suite* (Cosmo D 2017), meanwhile, is about an absurdist ontology where things rational and irrational alike are indistinguishable from each other and all claims about existence are justified.

In the third part of the thesis, titled *Natura i kondycja człowieka (Human nature and condition)*, presented are visions of philosophical anthropology that can be found in video games. While high-budget *Final Fantasy XV* (Square Enix 2016) analyzed here is inspired by Christian and Christocentric anthropology and mid-budget *Disco Elysium* (ZA/UM 2019) is a game about polyphonic and non-substantial subject, low-budget *Diaries of a Spaceport Janitor* (Sundae Month 2016) tells a story about the fluidity of our existence that has strong similarities to thoughts created in the LGBTQ+ community.

In the fourth part of the thesis, titled *Wartości i postawy moralne (Moral values and attitudes)* discussed are following games: *Red Dead Redemption 2* (Rockstar Games 2018; high-budget), *NieR: Automata* (PlatinumGames 2017; mid-budget) and *LISA: The Painful* (Dingaling Productions 2014; low-budget), as well as axiology and ethics contained in them. The first of these games develops the theme of moral dualism (Good and Evil) coupled with absolute validity and existence of these two values. The second of these games is about how all values are in fact only a creation of human beings, but this does not mean that they are not binding. The third of these games presents to the player a perspective of total moral nihilism and the idea that any and all ethical projects are doomed to fall apart, as their original source is suffering that is present in each and every aspect of human life.

Conclusions of the thesis, presented in the fifth and last part, are divided according a distinction between material and formal conclusions. Material conclusions are centered around the observation that depending on the budget segment we can find in video games either a form of strong philosophy that puts accent on ability of the subject to influence their surrounding, on how the world is an ontologically ordered structure and how moral values are absolutely valid; or we can find in video games a form or very weak philosophy were the subject is fluid and the world is too while values are only non-binding constructs; or, finally, we can find in games a more nuanced way of thinking, were human beings are treated as non-substantial subjects, the world is a function of the discourse and values, while not transcendent, are still constructed as morally binding.

Formal conclusions of the thesis are centered around the observation that philosophy is introduced in video games both trough conventional elements that are familiar to the players beforehand and inventive elements that are original creations of their authors. Philosophical conventional elements of video games are related to genre conventions and to monomythical storytelling that dominates these games. Philosophical inventive elements of video games can be divided into artistic ones that are being introduced trough the analogy to the modern artworld, and core philosophical ones that are being derived from core philosophy in a direct and almost unchanged manner.

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