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EUTHANASIA IN VIDEO GAMES – EXEMPLIFYING THE IMPORTANCE OF MORAL EXPERIENCE IN DIGITAL GAMEWORLDS

Abstract

The paper classifies euthanasia and discusses its typological presence in storytelling video games. It aims to illustrate the importance of experiencing simulated moral challenges in the context of gameworlds as a significantly influential, exponentially growing form of interactive media. In contrast to older works of art and media, such as film and literature, the difference should be emphasized in light of the player's ability to make choices in video games. Although the influence of gameworld content depends on the player, the experiences and knowledge gained from playing storytelling video games may influence the player's problem-solving orientation in the landscape of difficult moral dilemmas they may encounter throughout their lives.

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Introduction

Storytelling video games are one of the fundamental types of video games[1] and, following video games in general, are being mass-produced in exponential growth.[2] Being deeply aware of the explorative, cognitive, and emotional potentials of interactivity in video games, video game developers often make use of these potentials by virtually situating the player into difficult life situations, such as war,[3] through simulating world conditions. These situations are often envisioned on the basis of personal experience, theoretical interest or inspiration from the artwork (which is itself often based on the former).[4] In contrast to novels, music, film, play and comics, video games players, however, greatly

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1 Video games can be broadly divided into narrative, such as *Bloodborne* (2015), and non-narrative video games, such as *2048* (2014). Non-narrative video games sometimes include video games with an insignificant narrative framework, intended to mask the purely mechanics-based experience, such as *Arkanoid* (1986). In the narrative video games category, storytelling video games aim to provide an experience of story and characters, similar to novels, movies, comics or plays.

2 Based on 2018 revenue of over $130 billion and a significant increase over the past decade, it is estimated that the video game industry will exceed $300 billion in annual revenue by 2025 (GlobalData 2021). In comparison, it surpasses the production of newspapers, literature, and scientific press, as well as theatre, music, and film altogether, which we consider constitutive of human civilisation. In the most lucrative sector of the video game industry, the average annual salary is ~$70,000, and the number of regular players in the world has exceeded two billion. The first channel on YouTube ($10 to $13 billion in annual revenue) to surpass a record fifty million subscribers was devoted to commenting on and playing video games, and the owner, Felix Kjellberg, is now "worth" between $20 and $30 million. In 2016, the net worth was ~ 60 million (cf. Influencer Marketing 2019. E-sports – video game competitions – grossed about $1 billion per the last several years and bring together gamers from around the world. They are usually funded by big-name sponsors - companies like Monster and Amazon, wealthy professional athletes and others (cf. Influencer Marketing 2021).

3 For example, *This War of Mine* (2014), and *Prisoner of War* (2002).

4 For example, *That Dragon, Cancer* (2016) is an explorative video game based on author's personal experience of raising a child diagnosed with cancer. *It's Winter* (2019) is a video game, or perhaps better an anti-video game, created as part of a larger multimedia project by Russian poet Ilia Mazo, in which the player assumes the role of an ordinary citizen, a "gopnik" in the suburbs of post-Soviet Russia. In the game, the player can do nothing much but prepare their lunch, take out the garbage, and walk through the depressed landscape. As the authors explains, it is "an indie game which genre could be classified as sandbox, post-soviet, sad 3D, Russian sadness. Nothing awaits you: there is no chance to get out, no room for adventures and breathtaking plot". For more, visit http://iliamazo.ru/itswinter (accessed on 30 April 2022). Finally, Tom Jubert, a video game developer by profession but with a degree in philosophy and English, was hired to develop the storytelling content of *The Talos Principle* (2014), and co-author Jonas Kyratzes once recommended a list of authors for a better understanding of all the links within the game, including Aristotle, Hegel, Marx, Dennett, Spinoza, and others. – Available at: https://steamcommunity.com/app/257510/discussions/0/540744935336803403/ (accessed on 30 April 2022).

invest themselves in virtual worlds of video games through meaningful action, often based on the ability to make hard choices that impact outcomes of the lives of characters, stories, and their personal experience of video game content. Given the previous research and models related to "moral education" through gaming,[5] video games fall naturally into the category of media with the capacity for assisting the orientation in morally challenging situations.

The simplest comparison to consider is the difference between participating in a football match, playing a football game in a video game,[6] and watching a football game presented in the movie.[7] To players, as Isbister (2016: 3) argues following her observation and neuroscientific research, "playing a game is more like actually running a race than watching a film or reading a short story about a race". The most prominent example of this similarity is the level of physically identifiable positive or negative responses to events unfolding. The dominant difference in the established processes of interaction between the subject and the artwork or media, in the case of video games compared to other forms such as novels and films, is the ability of the participant in the video game experience to intervene in the world of the video game and receive a response. Video games "offer players the chance to influence outcomes through their own efforts. With rare exceptions, this is not true of film, novels, or television" (Isbister, 2016: 2). Using such utility creates a direct existential connection between the subject and the events unfolding in the virtual world, and the *willing suspension of disbelief* (as introduced in Coleridge, 1834: 174) achieves a different operative meaning (which is yet to be researched). Video games could be called "half-real", as Jesper Juul argued, because

> "… video games are real in that they consist of real rules with which players actually interact, and in that winning or losing a game is a real event. However, when winning a game by slaying a dragon, the dragon is not a real dragon but a fictional one" (Juul, 2011: ch. "Introduction", para. 1 [EPUB format]).

Having rules is characteristic of a game,[8] and in that sense, greatly differs from other mentioned media in terms of how they are perceived and interacted with. Other forms of art and media have various levels of interaction, but as soon

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5 See (Ryan, Formosa and Tulloch 2019) for the entire journal issue dedicated to morality play.
6 E.g. *Pro Evolution Soccer* (1995–2020).
7 E.g. *Escape to Victory*, John Huston 1981.
8 In the sense of "a constructed system that invites players to take actions, according to rules, to achieve a goal" (Frome, 2019: 6).

as they include any form of game-like elements, they overstep their boundary (cf. Frome, 2019: 2–3) and become *transexpressionary* by bringin the purpose of *gaming* into artistic expression. Becoming a game means beginning to include elementary structures of the natural phenomenon of *playing*, thus inviting a different structure of emotional eliciting entangled with the formation of meaningful experience, one that more closely borders with a realistic experience. In the sense of being "half-real", then, they can be considered as a subset world of the world as such:

> "Virtual worlds are experientially and existentially subordinate to the actual world, and virtual experiences can be considered a subset of actual experiences. By this understanding, the existential structures that we can develop and establish in virtual worlds are ultimately meaningful and valuable only insofar as they accrue meaning and value within the projectual structures of the individual's existence in the actual world" (Gualeni and Vela, 2020: 9–10).[9]

Precisely so, well-designed storytelling video games can achieve strong personal immersion through the entanglement of audio-visual rendering, narrative mechanics and the possibilities of interaction via interventive action.[10] More so, because video games are not all based on "slaying a dragon" and often directly draw inspiration from "real life" or are even designed precisely because of "real life", such as *The Stairway to Tax Heaven* (2017), informing a player about Panama papers scandal and the methods of becoming rich through avoiding or bending the law. Among other things, it means that players involved in story-driven video games will often encounter morally challenging and personally difficult situations that include specific

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9 Cf. "Ultimately, these possibilities exist because our feelings in everyday life, as well as games, are integrally tied to our goals, our decisions, and their consequences. People go through a rapid and automatic set of evaluations as things happen to them, about what each event might mean for their goals and plans. Emotions arise in the context of these appraisals, and help guide quick and appropriate actions. Psychology researchers focused on this appraisal process, in fact, have used video games as research instruments, in order to tightly control situations and demonstrate how particular challenges lead to emotional responses. For example, adding events that match up to someone's in-game goals reliably induces more pride and joy in players, while adding events that block their goals leads to anger" (Isbister, 2016: 2–3).

10 The data analysis from 2010 shows the increased investment into the effective portrayal of emotions on characters, for example, and this has only gone upward since (cf. Ip, 2011, first remark on p. 207). Among the best examples is the near-revolutionary indie title *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice* (2017), whose development team took a hard look at discussing personal dealing with mental health issues, assembled an interdisciplinary team of experts to address the problem and invested greatly into technics of bringing emotions to the forefront through computer-generated graphics to create conditions for empathy.

"… types of emotional response not available, in some cases, in noninteractive situations. Self-conscious emotions such as pride, shame, and guilt often rely on a sense of responsibility tied to action (Lewis, 2016). Noninteractive works rarely generate self-conscious emotions like pride because the audience ordinarily is not responsible for any of the work's features" (Frome, 2019: 10).

Given the number of years of experience in video games,[11] and the age span of video game players today – ranging from two-year-old children to the elderly – it is possible that the younger the player is, the greater are the chances that by playing storytelling video games they will encounter difficult life situations in a virtual world of video games long before those situations happen to them, their relatives or their friends in their real life. The important possibility is that the experiences and knowledge gathered through playing story-driven video games *may* impact their orientation[12] in the moral landscape of such situations.

For the purpose of demonstrating the problem, the presented research aimed to explore and discuss the presence of euthanasia concepts, types and practices in video games and to bring to attention the omnipresence of such morally challenging situations in the most popular artwork and media today. The reason for choosing euthanasia is to discuss the importance of experiences accessible by playing video games is not only because euthanasia is one of the hardest moral experiences a person could go through in their life, and thus appears as one of the most difficult topics in ethics and bioethics, but also because it is often present

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11 An average quest in a video game related to the main story often spans from 2 hours to 20 hours of gameplay experience. An experienced player can go through the challenges of a video game faster due to their advanced skills, but still experience the main story equally (in this sense, they can have richer experiences in a shorter amount of time, but the more complex the game or challenge is for a player, the more unique the experiences are per person). In other words, the consummation of single video games in terms of main story equals from 1 to 10 average movies.

12 *Orientation* is here understood as a synthesis of Werner Stegmaier's definition of orientation and Jürgen Mittelstraß's definition of orientative knowledge. "… to 'manage' or 'cope' with what arises and thus 'handle it well' and 'make headway' with it. If one cannot act with promising prospects, then one might not, as the saying goes, 'master' the Situation, and will instead run the risk of being 'mastered' by it. In a third step, orientation can thus be defined as the achievement of finding one's way in a Situation to make out opportunities for actions to master the Situation" (Stegmaier, 2019: 5). – "… it is important to realise that information in the strict sense does not give orientation, but that it does belong to the preconditions or foundations of orientation. Decisive for this stipulation is that information knowledge is, first of all, knowledge of facts, that is, knowledge about what is the case. Orientation knowledge (or 'Socratic knowledge'), by contrast, may be defined as knowledge of aims and purposes, that is, as knowledge of what (justifiably) ought to be the case" (Mittelstraß, 2010: 22).

in storytelling video games and comes as one of the most common examples of difficult choice a player is challenged to make, thus opening the possibility to think more thoroughly about what they are being asked to do. Since the choice of mere killing is much more present in video games than its subsets, such as euthanasia and suicide, one might argue that the choice of a less present theme is not sufficient as an example. However, there are two reasons for this choice. First, killing is normalized in video games – just as it is in film and literature - and within this "normal" framework, specific subsets of events are seen as truly relevant to the recipient, in this case, a player. We can take war as an example from real life where killing is considered normal, but not everyone can be killed "normally", for example, children. Secondly, it is precisely these special cases that game developers use to pose a moral challenge to the player, which means that they spend dedicated resources on drawing the player's attention to the problem of the content presented.

In literature, the terminology referencing the matter of, very roughly speaking, helping a living being to end physical or spiritual suffering through inducing their death stretches among the notions of *euthanasia, medicide, assisted suicide, assisted killing* and *mercy killing*, all of which have diverse discourses within their respective scopes, often intertwined. Since this paper is not dedicated to resolving the moral question of euthanasia or clearing the entanglement of definitions and meanings, the use of literature relies on detecting the important elements that can be compared to cases of euthanasia in video games. In that regard, certain choices and clarifications had to be made, but they should not be taken as aiming to resolve the matter, as they most certainly require a special, dedicated analysis, with more euthanasia-dedicated literature consulted. That being said, since the representation of morally difficult situations is a key phenomenon analyzed here, the most important was a clear basic structure and typology of euthanasia.

Typological framework

Euthanasia

The etymological trail of the word *euthanasia* leads to its early use in Greek and Roman discourse, where

> "… good death is just a good death: a good end to a good life, a painless, swift natural death or, for others, a noble, heroic death. Unlike the modern term it does not involve or imply any medical assistance or context" (Broeckaert, 2016: 1188).

In contemporaneity, *euthanasia* became an expert term in the 19th and 20th centuries, near-universally related to specific cases in the context of the healthcare system and related to the status of living beings, predominantly human beings, as *patients* (van Leeuwen and Kimsma, 2016: 1194, 1196; Brock and Vanderpool, 2014: 1838, 1849; Cholby, 2017: vii-viii; Huxtable, 2007: 5). In this context, three new elements constitute the source of problem: (1) beliefs that forbid induced death, (2) beliefs that do not find such way of dying a "good death", and (3) the possibility of misuse. The mid-phase of the notion, especially between the 16th and 19th centuries as popularised by Francis Bacon, bridges the two extremes: the phrase refers to "good death", but death is induced by another person; and it refers to physician's practice, but also other practices, such as religious practices, dedicated to easing the process of dying and the passing of soul. The practice, which started to represent *euthanasia* as a term in the 19th and 20th centuries, was by then separated from the non-medical meaning of deliberately ending life by introducing the notions such as *palliative care* to distinguish those who primarily opposed euthanasia (Brock and Vanderpool, 2014: 1849), especially since in the 19th and the first half of 20th century, in Germany the concept was used, together with *eugenics*, to commit "nothing other but murder", under the governing ideology of "Volkshygiene" (Bartenstein, 2000: 6; cf. Huxtable, 2007: 4), also known as *Sozialhygiene* and *Rassenhygiene*. The debate on the contemporary medical practice of euthanasia was most likely incited by nonphysician S. D. Williams in 1870 in England, who "suggested the use of ether and chloroform to intentionally end patient's life" (Emanuel, 1994: 1891–1892). In the span of fifty years, debates on euthanasia integrated into law and politics and later received a response from the wider public. In the given sense, the history of practice occurring under *euthanasia* as a word defines four primary possibilities within two primary categories:

(A) By context:

    (A1) "good death" inside the healthcare system.

    (A2) "good death" outside the healthcare system.

(B) By intentionality:

    (B1) "good death" is induced unintentionally by a living or non-living being.

    (B2) "good death" is induced intentionally by another living being.

The pair of "good death" outside the healthcare system induced unintentionally by a living or non-living (A2–B1) references various forms of dying "acceptably" by an act of nature or natural process, while the pair of "good death" outside the healthcare system induced by another living being (A2–B2) references various forms of dying "acceptably" related to non-healthcare practices, such as dying honourably in battle, being assisted into death by family, sacrificing oneself in a religious ritual, et cetera. Most of these were historically present in the course of the development of the notion of *euthanasia* outside the context of healthcare. Here, notions such as *mercy killing*, *assisted killing*, and *assisted suicide*, also find their use outside the context of the healthcare system.[13] The other two pairs define the common use of *euthanasia* today, most precisely A1–B2, with A1–B1 meaning an accidental death that *may* have been a "good death".

In the context of contemporary discourse on euthanasia, although sometimes authors are unintentionally imprecise in their definition, such as L. A. Calaluca and H. L. Hirsch, who defined active euthanasia as "the taking of positive action to end the life of a terminally ill patient" (Calaluca and Hirsch, 1984: 156), the concept of *good death* usually presupposes that (1) the state of death will end something that by its power and effect permanently overcame the will to live or has made life irreparably meaningless and that (2) the one being brought into death finds it justifiably "good". The majority of issues related to an act of euthanasia stem from these two elements. In the case of (1), for example, ending a life on the basis of simply being in a certain state, e.g. "terminally ill", greatly differs from ending a life of a terminally ill person because the pain that illness produces is unbearable. This situation, in contrast, differs from ending a life of a terminally ill person because the pain that illness produces is unbearable, by their own request.[14] The latter two, furthermore, differ from a situation in which a terminally ill person might seek death because they are, for example, feeling overwhelming guilt over financially and emotionally burdening the family (cf. Singer and Siegler, 1990: 1882; Emanuel, 1994: 1895–1896), or something else,

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13 Many examples of "mercy killing" or, one could say, "euthanatic murders", later considered in the later formation of laws regarding euthanasia outside healthcare system, and thus euthanasia in the healthcare system, were provided in a historically interesting article from 1958, reprinted in 1976 for its continual relevance: (Kamisar, 1976).

14 This is why, for example, in 2002 Netherlands regulated euthanasia based on two primary ideas – a patient making a request, and the patient's pain being unrecoverably unbearable. Cf. "Wet toetsing levensbeëindiging op verzoek en hulp bij zelfdoding" ["Termination of life on request and assisted suicide act"], article 2. Available at: https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0012410/2021-10-01 (accessed on 30/4/2022); cf. (Groenhuijsen, 2007: 5).

possibly irrational.[15] These, again, differ from a situation in which a doctor is ending a patient's life because of their own agenda, as it was in the case of Death Brothers, Murad Jacob Kervokian, American "Dr Death", who suspiciously supported euthanasia and played a role in inducing around 130 deaths of his patients, and Harold Frederick Shipman, British "Dr Death", who killed around 250 persons and committed additional crimes, such as fraud.

In all four examples, however, it is possible that from a religious perspective, e.g., in various Christian, Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist streams of belief, ending a life in this way might be a "good death" but would certainly not be a "good ending", rather a path to a state of even greater suffering, such as a soul being transported to Hell. Alternatively, the odds might change, and the unbearable pain might end, the person's weakness of will might cease, or the guilt might end, or a family situation might change, and from these possibilities arises opposition to euthanasia that is not necessarily based on constitutive concepts such as dignity. The opposition might reject the idea that bringing about death terminates life for the welfare of the person beyond doubt. Similarly, in the case of (2), for example, the evaluation of whether a death was truly a "good death" is based on a consensus perception, even belief, regardless of the likelihood of the rightness of the action and its outcome. Consider, for example, a terminally ill child of two, Tommy, who is too young or too ill to express their state with words, or an adult, Matthew, who has Alzheimer's disease. One's experience and knowledge may suggest that Tommy and Matthew are suffering unbearably, but one can do nothing about learning their perspective. Either one do not make crucial decisions, or we make all decisions on their behalf and assume that they know better or that we understand what Tommy or Matthew wants. However, this knowledge is unattainable since one cannot be them and thus cannot understand their noumenon, making one's judgment purely hypothetical and based on probability calculus. In addition, one is confronted with the insurmountable perceptual limit that death imposes on us.

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15 "The need to analyse an individual's motives in relation to family pressures is always necessary because of certain forms of family relationships. It has, for example, once been reported in the Netherlands that a patient who has asked for euthanasia does not feel free to withdraw this request because it has taken on 'a life of itself' with the family and the patient feels inhibited openly to change his mind (Bange, 1991). The resulting advice for physicians has been to be aware of any sign of doubt and to be sure to ask patients up to the very end whether this intervention is really what they want" (Kimsma and van Leeuwen, 2007: 369).

These issues eventually led to the formation of four distinction categories of action in the context of the healthcare system (van Leeuwen and Kimsma, 2016: 1196):[16]

(I) *By the source of action* – Inward, Outward: *inward euthanasia* is not truly euthanasia in the sense of its most common, widest use. It is a concept stemming from Bacon's idea that priests offered the dying person "a good death for the soul" and that physicians should do the same for the body, thus performing "*outward euthanasia*" (Baker, 2006: 789). Van Leeuwen and Kimsma (2016: 1196) described it as a "good death" from the inner perspective of the person. Physically, euthanasia is always an external action, even if a person loses the sense of self due to Alzheimer's disease, for example, since the self is interwoven with the physical, at least through the brain. However, the concept of inward euthanasia is important in cases outside the healthcare system because the state of mind, for example, in the case of honourable death in combat, dictates the perception of the value of dying. Moreover, it could also be crucial within the healthcare system if considered that an argument or belief can convince a person that outward euthanasia is what the person wants, even if the person does not want to die prematurely at a particular time.

(II) *By the recipient's acceptance of action* – Voluntary, Involuntary, Nonvoluntary: *Voluntary* refers to a person expressing a wish to be euthanized, *involuntary* refers to a person being euthanized against their wish, and *nonvoluntary* refers to a person being euthanized without having person's explicitly stated with for or against euthanasia, e.g. in the case of incompetence. Voluntary can be considered the least dubious of the three, involuntary can be considered the closest to or exactly the same as the criminal act of murder, while nonvoluntary can be considered the grey spectrum of situations between voluntary and involuntary (Biggs, 2001: 12; Brock and Vanderpool, 2014: 1847–1848; Calaluca and Hirsch, 1984: 156–158; van Leeuwen and Kimsma, 2016: 1196; McDougall and Gorman, 2008: 32).[17]

(III) *By the deliverer's involvement in action* – Direct, Indirect: *Direct* refers to a deliverer executing an action with the intent to euthanize a person, while *indirect* refers to a deliverer speeding up the process of dying without trying to

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16 Originally, the categories are not named. The names of categories provided here are my attempted contribution to the clarification of their nature.

17 *Nonvoluntary* and *involuntary* are sometimes used in reversed meaning. Such is the case in comparison between Leeuwen/Kimsma and McDougall/Gorman. Based on the use of the notion of *involuntary*, I find that Leeuwen/Kimsma properly attributed the difference. Huxtable provided some additional detail regarding the thin lines between (Huxtable, 2007: 5–6).

euthanize a person (van Leeuwen and Kimsma, 2016: 1196; Biggs, 2001: 55–56; Brock and Vanderpool, 2014: 1849–1850),[18] for example, by delivering strong medication to ease the paint, but it may also refer to unintentional euthanization in the lack of knowledge. The case of indirect euthanasia requires closer consideration since such a possibility can be used to disguise the true intent.

(IV) *By the deliverer's execution of action* – Active, Passive: *Active* refers to euthanasia as a result of an action performed by the deliverer, while *passive* refers to "letting die", euthanasia as the result of not taking action, e.g. starting kidney dialysis or changing diet, or stopping action in progress, e.g. withholding medical treatment or stopping nutrient provision (McDougall and Gorman, 2008: 32; Biggs, 2001: 12; Calaluca and Hirsch, 1984: 156–158; van Leeuwen and Kimsma, 2016: 1196; Brock and Vanderpool, 2014: 1849–1850).

The heated debate in medical ethics and later bioethics helped clarify elementary typology that can be used more broadly. Following the European tradition of bioethical research, the bioethical dimension in this analysis considers euthanasia by its *euthanatos* – in a scope broader than the terminological use in a narrow medical sense limited by the notion of the *patient* and its manifestations within the healthcare system. However, it also does not include the widest possible meaning as originating in ancient Greek and Roman culture, where "good death" may not be related to another person intentionally assisting in or causing death. This latter can certainly be analyzed in the context of video games, but here we will remain focused on (B2), enframed with two key elements:

- The ending of unending and unbearable physical or spiritual suffering by death fulfils the purpose of "good death" in the given conditions.

- A sentient being is executing a choice to end another sentient being's life for the purpose of ending their unending and unbearable physical or spiritual suffering, thus providing "good death".

Brief elaboration of these two formulations is offered in the following:

(1) "Good death" is put in quotation marks because death does not appear "good" by itself, but by its instrumentalization, by its accidental property of eliminating an unfavourable condition. In the studied video games relevant to the question of euthanasia, this is often the background from which the

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18 The distinction between categories III and IV are sometimes non-existent, depending on the author. E.g. Leeuwen and Kimsma distinguish it while Brock and Vanderpool do not. Taking into consideration the motive behind the action, I find the distinction between III and IV justified.

dilemma arises, but the point can also be confounded by the inability of players to experience serious and lasting consequences of death in nearly 100% of cases.

(2) The notion of "sentient being" is used instead of person or patient for two reasons. First, we often perform euthanasia on non-human animals and plants under less stringent conditions and under many premises taken for granted. Second, the cases in video games often refer to situations outside the healthcare system and often involve not just non-human animals or plants but non-human living beings or non-human non-living but self-aware beings.

(3) The definitions, both in state law and in the scholarly literature, are not universal, and the various approaches shade the argument for or against euthanasia in many ways, sometimes to a degree not thought of by the author. Be that as it may, if the motive for euthanasia is focused on the welfare of the recipient, a "good death" is almost always to be achieved for the purpose of ending an undesirable condition that imposes itself as an intolerable, unavoidable permanent state, currently or in the future. This condition causes suffering, and the suffering goes so far as to destroy the meaning of life for the recipient. This is almost exclusively the case in relevant video games as well and is often the main reason for a decision.

(4) It is made clear that suffering can be either physical or spiritual for two reasons. First, because living beings, especially humans, are psychophysical systems, their bodily suffering extends into the "spiritual" realm of meaning (either in a materialist or non-materialist sense, emergenist or non-emergenist), and purely physical pain may not be the ultimate reason for wanting to die. However, it may also be the primary reason for wanting to die, clouding the reasons to live and repressing the power to keep the reasons "in sight". Second, because video games tend to clearly distinguish between the two domains – physical and spiritual – and many cases of euthanasia dilemmas are based on the understanding of that difference.

(5) The first element is based on the hardly justifiable but nevertheless existing tendency of both recipients and givers of euthanasia, both supporters and opponents of euthanasia, to believe, to know that death will be a "good death" or that it will not be (Huxtable, 2007: 8–9). We choose this element for two reasons, first, because all doubts originate in the gaps among deliverer, recipient and death, and second, because the context for situations in video games is primarily presented as facts of the gameworld.

(6) The second element excludes all situations of euthanasia in which there are no living beings consciously performing the euthanasia. There are two reasons for this: First, the presence of another living being intervening is the main reason we discuss euthanasia, mercy killing, assisted killing or assisted suicide in the first place. Second, while there are situations in video games where euthanasia is merely observed by the player, more often, the player is challenged by the video game to make a decision. The decision to euthanize makes the player a virtual inducer of euthanasia – a euthanizier .

Storytelling video games

In the context of the possible influence on orientation, the importance of storytelling video games can be pinpointed by two criteria of presence. First, by the amount of awards they receive from the critique, playing community, and industry; second, by their best-selling status. Taking into consideration the 28 most influential game award events, services, portals, and journals,[19] from the year 2010 to the year 2021, over 95% of all "Game of the Year" awards were given to storytelling video games. The top twenty video games with the most "Game of the Year" awards – *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* (19), *God of War* (17), *The Last of Us* (13), *Hades* (12), *Overwatch* (10), *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (9), *Dragon Age: Inquisition* (9), *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (9), *Red Dead Redemption* (8), *Mass Effect II* (7), *The Last of Us Part II* (7), *Portal 2* (6), *Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice* (6), *Journey* (6), *Outer Wilds* (5), *Resident Evil 2* (5), *The Walking Dead* (5), *Deathloop* (5), *Bloodborne* (5), and *Grand Theft Auto V* (5) – all heavily rely on storytelling, including a multiplayer video game *Overwatch*. All the listed video games were financial successes and received numerous other rewards for their achievements. However, among them, 9 were also among the top ten best-selling titles of the year (*The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*, *God of War*, *The Last of Us*, *Overwatch*, *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*, *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, *Red Dead Redemption*, *The Last of Us Part II* and *Grand Theft Auto V*), which is an exquisite feat given that extremely profitable multiplayer video games usually lack artistically significant storytelling. Among the listed video games,

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19 *British Academy Games Awards*, *D.I.C.E. Awards*, *Famitsu Awards* (only titles that were present in other awards), *The Game Awards*, *Game Developers Choice Awards*, *Golden Joystick Awards*, *Japan Game Awards* (only titles that were present in other awards), *National Academy of Video Game Trade Reviewers*, *New York Game Awards*, *Spike Video Game Awards*, *Steam Awards*, *SXSW Gaming Awards*, *Ars Technica*, *Destructoid*, *Easy Allies*, *Edge*, *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, *Empire*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Eurogamer*, *Game Informer*, *GameSpot*, *GamesRadar+*, *Giant Bomb*, *Hardcore Gamer*, *IGN*, *Polygon*, and *Time*.

all primarily solve difficult conflicts by killing, and at least half of them include some form of euthanasia, with *Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice* and *Bloodborne* being entirely based on *euthanatos* (more on that in the next chapter).

Storytelling video games, thus, play a major role in how and why video games are continuously gaining popularity, and they impose their own typology based on how the player is connected to the events. The attachment depends on what kind of character mode the player enters, what kind of narrative the player goes through, and how a particular video game switches between being a game art piece and a non-game art piece. For example, in video games that tell a story, it is common for there to be a "cut scene" or, more specifically, an "event scene" during which the player cannot intervene in the unfolding events. In such cases, video games take the form of a movie, temporarily transforming the player into a spectator. However, the occurrence of cutscenes may depend on the player's previous decisions – apart from those that enable the basic progress of the story – and, although intervention is not possible, it shows the result of the player's decision, thus reducing the difference between a game and a movie. Another fundamental difference is among storytelling video games genres, where some have a dedicated character that the player embodies and by controlling the character experiences the character's story, such as *Silent Hill* (1999), while other video games have a general narrative in which the player builds their own character fitting the setting, such as *The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind* (2002), and finally video games, usually multiplayer, that have a loose general narrative and freedom of storytelling among players, such as *Guild Wars* (2005). The feedback loop relevant to this study is based on the degree of direct involvement of the player in the decision to euthanize or not. This criterion can be used to define seven levels of involvement:

> (L1) The player witnessed a critical action performed by other characters, and the player's previous action did not contribute to this outcome.
>
> (L2) The player witnessed a critical action performed by other characters, and the player's previous action contributed to that outcome. This level can be divided into two types. In a video game, once the artwork is initiated, the story cannot progress without the player playing the game. This means that everything that happens to a character is always related to the player's input of commands. This can be particularly interesting when a video game forces the player to make a decision with which they personally disagree, preventing the ability to progress in the video game. Nevertheless, overall this general, technical level of involvement related

to the operation of the video game artefact is distinct from the narrative level of integrated decision-making that can change the story and, thus, the fate of characters.[20]

(L3) The player witnessed a critical action by their predesigned character, and the player's previous action did not contribute to this outcome.

(L4) The player witnessed a critical action by their predesigned character, and the player's previous action contributed to this outcome.

(L5) The player performed a critical action through a predesigned character.

(L6) The player performed a critical action through a custom character.

(L7) The entire gameworld is based on a principle action.

The effect of the event depends on how well the game designers have represented the problem, how the player perceives that representation, and whether the player is aware of the causality in the game with respect to the event. In an ideal state, where the player is fully engaged and immersed in the events within a video game, the player's reception of the problem still depends on how it was designed, whether the player is aware of the context of decisions, what kind of character and knowledge the player possesses, and whether the player had any premeditated intentions, e.g., in the case of L6, a player may decide in advance to embody a heartless, murderous character. However, this also influences thinking, and both the characters and the events in a video game may surprise the player and challenge the player's fixed conception of their character. For example, a player may "fall" for one of the characters and change their approach to events related to that particular character, which in turn changes its design.

The analysis in the following chapter is based on the typological framework laid out beforehand, and the descriptions of situations were prepared to demonstrate that the developers of storytelling video games usually try to contextualize the problem and prepare the player for the dilemma, which means that they aim to make the player think about the situation and take a stance on the matter.

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20 For example, in a role-playing video game *The Witcher* (2007), the player can choose to spare the life of a person transformed into a werewolf without knowing if it will be related to anything. Saving the werewolf, however, alters the course of the story later, as the werewolf comes to aid the protagonist, and later may even marry another person.

Euthanasia in video games

Euthanasia inside the gealthcare context

The problem of euthanasia within the healthcare system (A1–B2) is least interesting to video game developers. The situations mostly occur in video games dedicated to some type of medical simulations, which often lack stories and focus on organizational aspects. Such video games are, for example, *Project Hospital* (2018) and *Hospital Tycoon* (2007), in which euthanasia is not strictly an option, but the player can manipulate the behaviour of hospitals to make it indirectly possible, thus developing a system of personal reasons for including it into their gameworld. In terms of narrative storytelling video games, *Trauma Center: Under the Knife* (2005) places a player into the role of surgeon Derek Stiles. As the story progresses, a case of possible euthanasia occurs, and the titular character fights against carrying it out, believing that doctors should do everything they can in trying to heal the person until the last moment (the case of L3 involvement). In general, *Trauma Center* rejects any scenario in which a doctor is giving up, and the narrative is based on the player managing to successfully perform all surgeries and save lives, including the life of the patient Chase and Stiles discuss.

Image 1. Tyler Chase, a doctor practising euthanasia, is discussing the issue with protagonist Derek Stiles. The problem is made more difficult because the patient is Chase's sister. From: *Trauma Center: Under the Knife* (2005).

Trauma Center is a good example that takes into consideration that that game developers can integrate a viewpoint into a video game through a general narrative, much like other art forms do, but they can also connect it to a "morality system" developed for the virtual world in a video game. Morality systems in video games are either (1) predefined disposition of characters who, together through events, reveal the general moral preference of the creators, pointing at either the creator's true disposition or the choice they made for the video game (e.g. *Trauma Center*), or (2) they are based on tracking and evaluating player's choices, and then showing the player the reaction from the virtual world. Usually, it is either based on (2.1) the system of branching that enables or disables possible choices or outcomes or (2.2) the evaluation scale that evaluates each action, usually from "evil" over "neutral" to "good" and adds or subtracts the number, with demarcation lines for classification.[21] In story-driven video games, the message is often connected to several choices a player has made, and they are summed into what is known as "multiple endings". The concept of *multiple endings* is common in video games, and although they do not have to be linked to morality, they often are. For example, in *Silent Hill: Homecoming* (2008), a psychological survival horror adventure video game, a player cannot get a "good ending", an ending that game developers envisioned as either most appropriate or morally acceptable, without the player euthanasing his or her character's mother.

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21 For example, in Fallout (1997) and Fallout 2 (1998), post-apocalyptic open-world tactic role-playing video games, acts are followed by reputation and depending on how the player is behaving to non-playable characters (NPC) in the world, NPC's react in accordance. If a player kills a child, the word spreads fast, and he/she becomes a "childkiller", and any NPC, however "good" or "evil", is universally less approving of the player. In Fable: The Lost Chapters (2005) and sequential instalments, the character physically changes, is perceived by others, and world events shift into different courses depending on how evil the player acts towards others and what choices the player makes. The changes activate depending on the internal, hidden scoring on a scale from – 1000 (absolute evil) to + 1000 (absolute good). In Frostpunk (2018), a community manager and survival strategy video game, the morality system takes into consideration the player's choices regarding what laws are being passed, how workers are treated, are lives sacrificed so that certain developments would be advanced, etc., for the pure purpose of survival, and at the end of the campaign, the game displays a moral message on how the player performed. Given the historicity of the approach, this might as well be called "the Bentham principle", and it comes with all the flaws of the original (cf. Bentham, 2000: 31–34).

Image 2. The player learns that protagonist Alex's mother, Lillian, is suffering greatly, bound to a crucifix in the alternate dimension, and she begs Alex to end her life. From: *Silent Hill: Homecoming* (2008).

Aside from *Trauma Center*, there is another title referencing euthanasia in healthcare. An indie first-person horror shooter from 2010, titled *Euthanasia*, takes euthanasia as a starting point in the adventure: the player's character is voluntarily euthanized, and the player explores a possible dream in "that sleep of death" before truly dying (this would be a quirky example of L1 involvement).[22] The game ending is ambivalent towards the matter, and how the narrative is built – that the sleep of death is a terrifying place, but it may end in a good manner – may not be the evaluation of euthanasia from the developer's perspective.
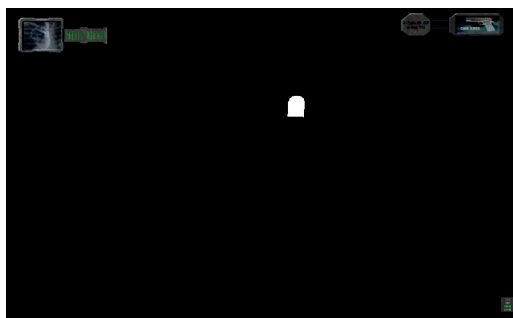

Image 3. After breaking through the maze, the player enters a long hall leading towards the light. No details make the walk feel positive or negative. The audio plays, and a voice says, "In that sleep of death, what dreams may come?". From: *Euthanasia* (2010).

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22 Available at: https://www.indiedb.com/games/euthanasia (accessed on 30/4/2022).

Tied to the healthcare context is the upcoming video game *Medic: Pacific War* (2022), in which the player takes the role of field medic in World War II. Based on the promotional material, it is certain that at some point, a player will have to make decisions that will change the course of battles and will be challenged with the euthanasia dilemma.

Euthanasia outside the healthcare context

In contrast to (A1–B2), there is an abundance of video games, including many history-making titles, bestsellers, games of the year, and masterpieces, that involve some form of euthanasia in the context outside of the healthcare system. In these video games, the challenge of euthanasia often takes place in a complex world that incorporates various metaphysical, environmental, and social structures different from our own, as well as specific details regarding the characters – their origins, nature, and *raison d'être*. These game-specific details of the world sometimes make the context behind a dilemma clearer, such as in a world where we know what the afterlife is like or what a particular character's exact point of view is because we have witnessed some of their arguments through cut scenes before meeting them, but not necessarily simpler. In this category, it is often appropriate to use the term "mercy killing" as a synonym for euthanasia in non-medical cases because most cases are informal and amount to euthanizing another being to end its unavoidably painful condition permanently. First, we will briefly provide some representative examples of the seven levels of involvement from influential video games to demonstrate the variety, intensity of presence and depth of case complexity, and afterwards, we will discuss the saturation of categories and reasons for euthanasia.

An example of indirect L1 involvement – the player witnessed a critical action performed by other characters, and the player's previous action did not contribute to this outcome – is a role-playing video game *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic II – The Sith Lords* (2004). In a conversation with an NPC named Atton Rand, meeting certain conditions and following a certain branch of the conversation can lead to Rand telling the story of how he killed a person who awakened the Force in him. The chain of reasons why Rand killed a Jedi who helped him is quite complex and twisted, mostly because of how the Force works and the politics revolve around it, but ultimately it was a case of borderline voluntary euthanasia that happened in the past and that the player was informed about in detail by the euthanizer. After that, the player has a choice about how to act towards Rand.

Image 4. A cadre from a dialogue scene in which Atton Rand explains his dark past and how he killed a Jedi that saved his life. From: *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic II – The Sith Lords* (2004).

A more direct case of L1 is the action role-playing video game *Nier: Automata* (2017), in which continuous replaying of the game opens different "routes" of progress in the story. In one of the routes, the player's character, an android named 9S, witnesses the NPC android A2 (android's name) euthanize B2 at B2's request before a logic virus B2 has been infected with destroys her internal structure and makes her uncontrollably violent towards others.

Image 5. From the perspective of playable character 9S, the player witnesses A2 euthanizing B2 on request from afar through a non-interventive event scene. From: *Nier: Automata* (2017).

L2 involvement – the player witnessed a critical action performed by other characters, and the player's previous action contributed to that outcome – is somewhat of an exotic, hard-to-detect category. As noted earlier, by playing the video game, the player drives the story and, in this sense, influences the outcome, but this is not really part of the story but rather a way of operating the artefact that contains the story. From a game development perspective, L2 is an interesting option to motivate players to think about their actions, but it is rarely, if ever, used. It would basically mean that the player did something to the NPCs that would later lead to one NPC euthanizing another without the player having any involvement or say in the euthanization.

In the science fiction action role-playing video game *Mass Effect 2* (2010), for example, the player can take on a strange, morally quite difficult mission of preventing a rogue artificial intelligence linked to the common enemy from taking over technological systems and unleashing the enemy across the galaxy, only to find that a human-survivalist paramilitary enterprise Cerberus, for which the player is temporarily working, has an experiment on a human gone wrong. At the centre of the experiment is savant David Archer, who, apparently voluntarily, was fused with virtual intelligence because of his brilliance in eidetic memory and computation and is now suffering horrible agonies, tied to a machine in a world of signal madness, as the AI has overpowered him. After a whole series of morally questionable events, the player will eventually take out the rogue AI and has the choice of taking David Archer away from Cerberus or keeping him with Cerberus so they can continue their research. If the player leaves David Archer with Cerberus, in the next instalment of *Mass Effect – Mass Effect 3* (2012) – the player will learn that David Archer eventually stopped responding altogether and his brother Gavin Archer, who led the experiment, nonvoluntarily euthanized him.

Image 6. A moment where the relevant choice is made for the tortured David Archer. Without the possibility of knowing what might happen, the result will reveal itself in *Mass Effect 3*. One outcome is that David Archer was euthanized by his brother. From: *Mass Effect 2* (2010).

An example of L3 involvement – the player witnessed a critical action by their predesigned character, and the player's previous action did not contribute to this outcome – can be considered common. It happens in video games in which a player enrols into a character but has not developed the character themselves. By playing the video game, a player is a form of "higher force" helping the story to unfold and, at the same time, learn about it. When the story is not idealistic and does not rely on the conception of generally accepted behaviour (that is, on the "average player"), the actions of protagonists in these kinds of video games can sometimes perceptively backfire because the player may disagree with what the character they are controlling – and even sympathize with – is doing.[23] In both cases, but especially in disagreement, the challenge will stimulate the player to reconsider their disposition.

A famous case that made a great impact on players is in the psychological horror survival video game *Silent Hill 2* (2001), often considered a storytelling classic. The player controls James Sunderland, a widower who receives an

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23 Some game developers subverted this on purpose to induce surprise and reveal the unexpected course of the story. Such is the case of the extremely popular Little Nightmares (2017), a brilliant puzzle-platform horror adventure video game in which the player controls a seemingly innocent female child that eventually commits murder in an event scene out of the player's control, disturbingly disillusioning the player regarding her character and her true role in the story.

invitation from his dead wife, Mary, who was terminally ill, to visit the town of Silent Hill. However, Silent Hill shapes its contents depending on the person who visits it, and the story becomes a journey into James' complicated psyche and his past relationship with Mary. Near the end of the story, in an excellently executed cut scene that shocked the players emotionally, James watches a videotape of his past that shows him suffocating the terminally ill Mary on her deathbed. This could be considered involuntary euthanasia at best and most likely outright murder, especially after James comments that he thought he was doing it for her but realized he was doing it for himself until the final cut scenes of multiple endings completely blur the reasons and reveal the complexities of the internal struggles of people afflicted with a serious illness whose only outcome is a painful death. Thus, in this case of L3, the player witnesses their own character's action that happened before the game proper, completely changing the story's perspective and the adventure's purpose.

Image 7. A cut scene from the possibly "good ending", in which James and Mary discuss what Jame's choices. The scene occurs in the Silent Hill hotel, where they spent their best and worst days. From: *Silent Hill 2* (2001).

L4 Involvement – the player witnessed a critical action by their predesigned character, and the player's previous action contributed to this outcome – is rarer than L2. For most video games in this category, continuous progression through play cannot be considered as making choices towards the character performing a euthanization, especially if no choices are available during play. L4 refers to players contributing towards their character performing euthanasia by previous choices, but during the event in which this could occur, the video

game takes control away from the player and does not suggest a choice, but instead performs the euthanasia in their name, conveying to the player that the character being played would do just that. From a developer's perspective, if done poorly, this kind of loss of control would make the player feel cheated and may ruin the experience, especially if they had a choice beforehand. However, if it is done right, the player will re-evaluate the controlled character and rethink the story without feeling like they are being conned in the event. Currently, we could not find a proper, clear example of the L4 category, but *Spec Ops: The Line* (2012), a third-person psychological war shooter set in the 21st century, could be a borderline example. In *Spec Ops*, in which the player controls a soldier, United States Captain Martin Walker, there is a terribly disheartening event in which Walker orders the bombing of enemy territory with white phosphorus. After the bombing, Walker and his team walk through the burned site and witness the horror of their action. Among non-playable characters, many of the half-burned-to-death men crawling across the sand ask the player to end their misery by execution. Later, the player can perform mercy kills – "executions" – on soldiers already wounded by their hands. Although layered existentially and psychologically, *Spec Ops* provoked heated debate about whether or not something such as the anti-war story can get its message across through enjoyable gameplay and high production value revolving around killing.

Image 8. The player is moving through a field bombed with white phosphorus. The man at the centre of the image in front of the player is crawling across the field with no legs and open wounds, dying. From: *Spec Ops: The Line* (2012).

One of the possible reasons why this category is almost absent could be related to the logic of video game design. *Far Cry Primal* (2016) can be taken as a clarifying example. In this first-person shooter action-adventure set in Europe at the beginning of the Mesolithic period, the player takes on the role of Takkar, a hunter who gets involved in a clan conflict with the Udam tribe. In the course of the story, Takkar encounters and captures Dah, a Udam commander who has important information. As the story progresses, Dah changes his attitude towards Takkar, and they become collaborators. It is soon revealed that Dah suffers from an incurable genetic disease and when the pain becomes unbearable, he asks Takkar to kill him, which Takkar – the playable protagonist – does. This is an example of the L3 category. However, if the player learned of Dah's illness beforehand and had the option of either locking him up or doing something else, especially if the player had the opportunity to make further decisions along the way, a scene in which Takkar puts Dah to sleep would be considered forced upon the player and would violate the previously agreed-upon rules of gameplay. From the perspective of what the player can do and what their gameplaying experience could be like, this approach is neither logical nor satisfying. Precisely because of that, however, forced euthanasia would most likely incite precise feelings and thoughts in a player, and a game developer oriented towards testing the player could make use of this.

The L5 category – the player performed a critical action through a predesigned character – is the first of the three extremely popular categories. In these video games, the player takes on the role of a predefined character (with the occasional ability to change the character's appearance, nature, and statistics to some degree, but not so to be completely theirs or even be able to tell their own story), usually the protagonist, with the possibility to temporarily take control of other characters in the story, and serves as a narrative vessel. These video games usually challenge the player with moral dilemmas, and even if the player complies with the story, for the most part, some details or crucial moments may be left to their decision. The already cited *Silent Hill: Homecoming* is a relatively simple, typical example of L5, but there are many other video games in this category that make complex, thought-provoking challenges. An intriguing example of such a video game is *SOMA* (2015), a sci-fi first-person horror puzzle adventure. After an introduction in which the player is a human being surviving an accident and going to a brain scan, the player, as the character Simon, then wakes up in 2104, a year after a comet impacted Earth and obliterated most of life, and proceeds to explore what appears to be an underwater facility to find out what is going on.

Eventually, the player realizes it is not Simon from 2015 but a copy initiated in a mechanical body and that no humans are left on Earth. The last human crew tried to launch an "artificial reality capsule" into space, in which humanity would be simulated, and all saved identities copied to exist eternally in a virtual world. Unfortunately, they failed to complete the mission. In collaboration with some remaining identities in machines and computers, Simon attempts to launch the capsule and secure the future of humanity, even if only existing as a digital simulation.

SOMA has a number of cleverly constructed situations between characters that question and discuss the meaning of existence. In one of these situations, Simon finds a functional body with specific abilities that he needs to perform the necessary tasks and changes bodies with the help of Catherine Chun, who has accidentally awakened as a brain scan stored in a computer system. However, Simon, just like the player, does not yet understand that the mind is not transferred from one body to another but copied. In this case, Simon is confronted with a situation where he doubles himself and is in a room with another Simon who does not understand what is going on and why the transfer is not working. After feuding with Catherine over this disturbing event, especially because Simon II cannot survive for long without a body with specific abilities, the player is given a choice: nonvoluntarily (and possibly involuntarily) euthanize Simon II while he is sleeping to spare him the lone decay, or to abandon him to find a way out on his own.

Image 9. A well-executed moment after Catherine copies Simon, in which both the character and the player hear the old Simon commenting, before falling asleep in the room to the right, that the process is not working and realizing that Simon was copied, not transferred. From: SOMA (2015).

Aside from this situation of possible euthanasia, there are several other variants at *SOMA*, including the possibility that the player believes they are committing nonvoluntary euthanasia, only to realize through the horrified reaction of the entity that they probably committed some form of, at worst, murder, at best, termination of a sentient being. In general, the L5 category is situationally diverse, and developers often present the player with genuinely challenging choices.

In the first *Mass Effect* (2007), for example, the player is asked to kill children of an insect race that have been taken away for experiments and have lost the ability to communicate. The request comes from their mother, the imprisoned queen insect. She explains that without being able to communicate with their kind, without being able to "sing", they are stripped of the ability to form meaning, only feel fear, and will be extremely aggressive until meaningless death. In *Deus Ex* (2000), a masterpiece science fiction action role-playing video game set in 2052, in the basement of one of the more suspicious NPCs, Morgan Everett, a player may meet Lucius DeBeers, a conscious person in a cryogenic pod waiting for the cure to be found that will restore his body. The player has the possibility to turn the cryogenic pod off, but they do not have to do so, and no prior discussion on the matter occurs. If they do so, DeBeers dies unwillingly, making the player a murderer. However, if the player talks to Everett about it, they can learn that DeBeers is basically being lied to and exploited, that they could have been cured a long time ago and freed from the cryogenic pod, but Everett does not want to. If this information is given to DeBeers, then DeBeers will ask to be euthanized, and the player can decide whether to keep him alive or not.

Image 10. After learning about being lied to and exploited, DeBeers explicitly commands to be euthanized. From: *Deus Ex* (2000).

Another daring take on the matter was presented in *BioShock Infinite* (2013), a popular and philosophically interesting first-person alternative history science steampunk video game. In one of the events, after the player defeats Captain Cornelius Slate, a soldier and leader of a rebel army in the city of Columbia, Slate asks to be killed before the official soldiers of Columbia, supporters of the gameworld antagonist, find him. If the player lets Slate live, they will later find Slate in a club, tortured to the point of falling into a catatonic state, and once again have the option to end his life or prolong it, suggesting a case of (most likely) nonvoluntary euthanasia.

Image 11. A moment in which the player finds Slate still alive but catatonic after being rortured. This scene occurs only if the player keeps Slate alive in a previous encounter. From: *Bioshock Infinite* (2013).

In comparison, the L6 involvement – the player performs a critical action through a custom character – differs in that the player usually has a character that is completely customized according to the rules of the game system, including details such as name and origin, and the narrative of the world is designed to support such characters. Almost all decisions depend on the player, sometimes to such an extent that the player can ultimately destroy or recreate the meaning of the gameworld itself. The character's final nature is defined through the player's action, and the ideas behind the action are not present in the game code but the player themself. Previously mentioned titles such as *Fallout*, *The Elder Scrolls*, *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*, *Outer Wilds*, and *Dragon Age* are such video games. The majority of these types of video games belong to the genre of role-playing video games. Role-playing video games often have the main plot and a plethora of subplots that the player can undertake, sometimes simple and less

thought-out, sometimes quite challenging, emotional and thought-provoking, but almost always bioethically significant enough to be discussed. In these video games, it would be unusual not to encounter some form of euthanasia from L1 to L7.

An example can be taken from *Dark Souls II* (FromSoftware, Bandai Namco Games – FromSoftware 2014), in which the player embodies an Undead, cursed being that cannot die and can become a "Hollow" over time, a mad, broken being that has no will of its own and is bound to some simple motives, ideas or needs. The player can eventually encounter King Vendrick, a once great and noble king who has retreated into underground crypts to prevent certain scenarios from coming true. He wanders aimlessly in a single room, obviously hollow and physically ruined. The video game offers the player no direct choices. Instead, the player has the possibility to attack and kill Vendrick of their own volition or leave him where he is. If the player understands the story and setting well, they know that this would be an extremely terrible state for Vendrick to be in and that this depraved existence is nothing more than an eternal agony of fear and pointless fixation. Although Vendrick is made up of only polygons and limited scripts, the player's ability to empathize with Vendric may motivate the player to end Vendric's life out of their simulative concern for the world of their character. It is thus up to the player to perform nonvoluntary euthanasia without the video game proposing it. However, if the player does not understand the world well, executing Vendric might bring him peace, but from the player's perspective, they do not perform nonvoluntary euthanasia but murder for personal gain.

Image 12. Hollowed king Vendrick wandering around in one of the crypts underground. From: *Dark Souls II*. Image available at: https://darksouls. fandom.com/wiki/Vendrick (accessed on 30 March 2022).

Ultimately, there is a number of examples of the L7 involvement – the entire gameworld being based on a principle action, in this case, euthanasia – and one particular game developer, FromSoftware, has most, if not all, of their very popular, very influential, and very artistic video games anchored in *euthanatos*. The L7 category refers to video games in which the gameworld is built around the premise of euthanasia, in some form or another, and as soon as the player begins playing the L7 video game, they are immediately a part of the system. Usually, this is understood only as *a posteriori* from the reconstruction of the story.

Old but gameplaying-wise, extremely popular examples are *Diablo* (1997) and *Diablo II* (2000), hack & slash dark fantasy isometric 2D video games in which the player embodies a hero who will stop evil beings from taking over the human world. In *Diablo*, a player's self-designed character visits the town called Tristram, and in the dungeons beneath it, eventually slays Diablo, Lord of Terror, a Prime Evil who corrupted the champion who previously defeated Diablo and freed Tristram. However, to prevent Diablo from coming back to the world, the new champion had to contain Diablo's essence within themselves. In the next instalment, *Diablo 2*, a player learns that Diablo's essence corrupted the previous champion – that is, the player's hero in *Diablo* – and again sets to end Diablo's existence, much like it did many times before, but this time trying to find another way to stop the Prime Evil. The story of *Diablo 2* introduced Soulstones that were used to imprison the Prime Evils and whose shattering can end them. Still, otherwise, the gameworld is such that once the Prime Evils inhabit a person, they cannot be banished without killing the carrier, which is, however, considered merciful, as their mind, body and soul continue to decay in torment.

A newer, quite provoking example is the previously mentioned phenomenal action role-playing horror video game *Bloodborne*. In *Bloodborne*, a player embodies a hunter of beasts in an isolated city of Yharnam, where the culture grew around using blood, first and foremost, for healing, but also for many other purposes, including drinking. As various diseases began to spread through the blood, including lycanthropy, the culture began to fall into a dark time, and a powerful institution, the Healing Church, was corrupted, while hunters became a common presence. As the story progresses, the player also learns that the world of Yharnam is connected to cosmic entities on a grand scale (probably inspired by Lovecraft's artwork and alchemy) and that the Healing Church is somehow connected to these entities. Very complex lore and tragic stories intertwine as the

player progresses in the story, and the finale resolves in an especially interesting element of the world, the Hunter's Dream, a safe zone for the player's character, a dream place made real, where the hunters gather to consult with the Gehrman, the first hunter. Throughout the game, the player will encounter many tormented souls who want to end their lives or whose inevitable addictions continue to rob their lives of meaning. Even most ordinary killings are considered acts of mercy from the gameworld's point of view since the blood diseases are such that they cause terrible agony, physically, mentally or spiritually. In the end, the player learns that Gehrman is somehow connected to one of the entities and serves to continue the existence of the never-ending nightmare in which the players find themselves. At the same time, Gehrman wishes to die and end the torment and also to stay alive and save other people from being enslaved by the nightmare. Gehrman explains that the nightmare and torture will never end and offers to "show mercy" to the player's hunter by killing the hunter. By killing "the player", they will "die, forget the dream, and awake under the morning sun"; that is, they will be "freed from this terrible hunter's dream". The video game developers are playing with the players here because a complete understanding of the world, reminiscent of Sisyphus' fate, may make submitting their life a reasonable choice, but the addictive gameplay and fascinating world entice the player to keep playing. In Bloodborne's gameworld, that implies continuing to hunt and consume blood, reliving the story and never really ending the nightmare. In this sense, in *Bloodborne,* the player can choose their own euthanization, making it voluntary.

Image 13. A moment in which the choice is given to the player after Gehrman offers to show mercy by waking the player from the nightmare through death. From: *Bloodborne* (2015).

From the aspect of the player's health, this might seem like a form of assisted suicide. However, in video games, the euthanasia dilemma does not necessarily have anything to do with physical condition, nor does it always have to do with the current state of affairs. The hunter is obviously fine, and there seems to be no reason to end their life. However, from the penultimate perspective of the gameworld, the hunter is constantly suffering, and it will only get worse. For this reason, many characters will try to end the lives of other characters, including the player, to spare them the inevitable fall into torment they are aware of or have experienced themselves. It can be compared with euthanizing a terminally ill person before reaching the most painful, near-death stage. This idea that some beings, even if everything seems to be fine physically or mentally at the moment, should be euthanized because of the structure of the world or their inevitable fate is widespread in fantastic art. This includes, in this sense, many video games, for example, *Arcanum: Of Steamworks and Magick Obscura* (2001), *Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice* (2019), and in one instance within the massive multiplayer online video game *Wizard101* (2008). From the standpoint of the categories of euthanasia, this requires a certain metaphysical theory factually embodied in the world and requires reasoning beyond most of the examples with which we are concerned. However, they are a simulated result of ideas that deal with the futility of violence, pain, and suffering in life, the general existence of humanity threatened by larger cosmic forces such as stars and asteroids that can end all life on Earth in an explosion or impact and wipe out history in seconds, radical antinatalism, and others.

Saturation of content

In the paper thus far, we mentioned about thirty influential video games that in some way address the case of euthanasia, which is but a fraction of popular titles that feature hundreds of different cases in their respective gameworlds. Primarily, since *inward euthanasia* is not "true euthanasia", all the relevant cases in video games can be understood as *outward euthanasia* by its source. Regarding the deliverer's execution of the action, in almost all cases about which we have enough information, and especially in cases where the player can make a decision, euthanasia is *active*. Regarding the deliverer's involvement in action, it is almost always *direct*, with some cases where it could be *indirect*, by the player's mistake or misunderstanding, thus occasionally being an unintended murder. These preferences come from the basic logic of video game construction, which is the ability of the player to interact with the content through interventive action and

receive a response. In terms of the recipient's acceptance of an action, all three types of euthanasia – *voluntary*, *involuntary*, and *nonvoluntary* – are present in video games, with the tendency of game developers to prefer to challenge the player with the "least problematic" of the three – voluntary euthanasia.

Noticeable is, however, that there are many instances of euthanasia in video games that lie on the border between involuntary and involuntary euthanasia. More specifically, game developers often provide players with enough knowledge to make them feel like they know what is really good for the sentient being they are about to kill, and often the characters who commit non-proposed euthanasia are designed to have advanced knowledge of the consequences based on which they decide to push through with the act. However, from the perspective of the recipients of euthanasia, this can be seen as a lack of consent and outright murder.

For example, in *Amnesia: A Machine for Pigs* (2013), a puzzle survival horror video game set in the 19th century, the player eventually learns that their character, Oswald Mandus, previously killed his children because of the real vision he had in Aztec ruins, showing him how his children are going to die in the Battle of the Somme and gaining the knowledge of horrific events unfolding in the 20th century during the two World Wars. From Mandus's perspective, however, killing the children he was responsible for was considered a "good death". The case of a single person possessing enough knowledge about the world to feel that it is all meaningless and has to be destroyed for the better of all humankind is not uncommon, while gameworlds based on euthanasia, such as in *Bloodborne*, *Dark Souls* and *Sekiro*, presuppose that the player is delivering "good death", even when enforcing it (or when NPCs are enforcing the same on the player who, in that sense, continues in not realizing the true nature of their existence). In the cases where the player is challenged with the choice (e.g. *BioShock Infinite*) or has the possibility to act upon (e.g. *Dark Souls II*), the situations are often designed in such a way that all the relevant information is provided to the player, thus envisioning that with the knowledge the player has, a proper decision can be made. In very personal cases, such as in *Silent Hill* and *Mass Effect* series, euthanasia is often approved by other characters or the coded morality system within the video game that is not necessarily connected to other characters (e.g. *Frostpunk*).

The continuous occurrence of these approaches to euthanasia signal the average game developer's preference in constructing the narrative: *euthanasia is morally proper in the case in which the deliverer knows beyond doubt the*

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truth of the situation in which the sentient being is, and that situation is either unavoidable unending or presently unending unbearable life from which they should be absolved to conserve dignity and meaning of existence.

This disposition can be found even in minor details in some video games, for example, in the mentioned *Spec Ops: The Line*, in which the player can "mercy kill" characters already wounded by their hand with the aim to simply kill. The truth of the situation – in the sense of knowledge nests referencing the existential structure beyond our possible misperception of reality – builds reasons that apply to the usual cases of euthanasia dilemma in bioethics but also go beyond reasons related to medically understandable physical or even mental pain, and often involve deeper states of spiritual dissolution that expand the pool of possible reasons, the rights to death, and the rights to induce death to another sentient being. Observed in the context of the history of euthanasia and the reasons for wanting to terminate one's life, the approved euthanasia outside the healthcare system in video games stretches from situations of unending and unbearable physical or spiritual suffering (e.g. *Mass Effect* series) to situations that rely on complex probability projections (e.g. *Amnesia*).

However, even in the most clear-cut cases, where one takes into account and knows how and why the person thinks about euthanasia, an underdeveloped awareness of internal physical or psychic structures that influence decision-making may play a role and cloud perspective. This is the case, for example, with gender-specific decisions, as Rickard L. Sjöberg and Torun Lindholm suggest in their 2003 study, in which they show jurors in euthanasia cases (involving severely brain-damaged patients) are more likely to favour euthanasia in cases involving the opposite gender. Since gameworlds are subworlds of the world, it can be assumed that imperfect knowledge, the perception of this imperfect knowledge, and subconscious influences affect the player in their gameworld. However, this means that gameworlds can, on the one hand, bring out the hidden understanding of the moral disposition, the personal attitudinal structure toward the morally challenging problem and, on the other hand, convey these structures and the content of the problem. The content does not necessarily have to take hold of the player, but it can.

Accordingly, this raises the question of whether indirect experience or direct participation in morally challenging situations in gameworlds has a real impact on moral orientation. The question of whether saturation of content promotes understanding of the moral problem of euthanasia or leads to a blunting of is an old but valid one nonetheless. In general, we had had this problem many

times before, first in the 20th century with newspapers, which increasingly (and exploitatively) reported acts of violence and morally challenging situations on a daily basis, ultimately turning it into an acceptable standard, then with novels and movies. The ability to choose and intervene should place video games under the same loupe again,[24] given the continuous increase of consumption and integration with everyday life. Does the general preference of video game developers, in terms of attitudes toward morally challenging situations, steer players' thinking of games in the long run? Is this preference the result of the cultural context that shows the general orientation on the matter, and does the normalization of a particular choice in the video game experience lead players to not think critically about the problem of euthanasia? These are examples of the general pool of issues related to media consumption.

It should be mediated that euthanasia occurs predominantly in video games with a killing-based mechanic: the player solves problems predominantly with a very limited number of options and methods that end life, often in quite bloody, brutal ways and without physical consequences for the player or significant digital consequences for the player's character. Some early psychosociological studies on the relation between morality and video games show the connection between violent video games and player's increased violence (cf. Anderson and Dill, 2000; Bartholow, Sestir and Davis, 2005). However, it has since been shown that it has a lot to do with the player's personality, psychophysical state and social situation. Researchers are now more meaningfully focusing on reasons for wanting to play violent video games, such as venting out anger or purely experimenting with options that nobody tested wants to engage with in real life (Olson, 2010: 183–184, cf. Breuer *et al.*, 2015), with the possibility of falling into the negative depending on the player's personal and social situation and continuity of play (or, in that sense, development of addiction) (cf. von der Heide *et al.*, 2019: 4–5, 7–8). Furthermore, gamers are aware of the level of fantasy that a video game represents, even more so than film or literature, precisely because the video game is designed and presented that way. Moreover, the older the gamer, the better the understanding of why video games are played, and there is less impact on moral maturation – that is, less influence on moral disposition (cf. Hodge, Taylor and McAlaney, 2019; Hodge, Taylor and McAlaney, 2020). When moral choice appears in video games, however, the system of gameplaying mechanics

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24 In broader sense of its relation to core morality, it already has. "Video games are only the latest art form to suffer from accusations of corrupting morality. Just as Plato and Aristotle argued over the relative merits of tragedy, contemporary social theorists and commentators in the popular media debate the intoxicating effect of video games." (Schulzke, 2009)

is usually suppressed by the narrative; the construction and design aim to bring about the importance of the case being *a moral dilemma.*

In cases of emphasized moral dilemma, video games break away from the unreality of their gameworld and directly communicate with institutionalized moral systems and personal orientation. This is why in story-driven video games, the choice is often designed to entice feelings and stimulate thinking. Players in the context of in-game violence and "evil choices" often engage in *moral disengagement,* the creation of justification conditions for morally dubious action, or the reconfiguration of behaviour in "the mind, which allows an individual to believe that the harmful behaviour is serving morally acceptable purposes (Bandura, 1999)" (Schafer, 2012). However, as Schafer reports, "the most prevalent moral disengagement mechanism was the 'it's just a game' defence, with players reasoning that since the scenario was not real, their actions bore little consequence" (Schafer, 2012). Important in that sense is information that Shafer's findings are also instructive in "that many players, when faced with a moral choice, activated their moral sanctions against reprehensible behaviour rather than disengaging them" (Schafer, 2012). This means that the occurrence of a morally challenging situation affects players' disposition and can turn into an inner test of orientation.

Considering the discussion so far, it can be argued that the orientational outcome of the player's interaction with video game content depends on at least the following factors: (1) the player's personality, social situation, knowledge, and level of physical and spiritual development, as well as their motive for playing and willingness to engage with the content beyond the mechanics of the game; (2) the video game developer's motive for constructing the moral choice, storytelling, quality of construction, and presentation of the problem, as well as the ability to anticipate and control the player; and (3) the pedagogical and critical mediation between the content and the player, e.g., a parent, friend, teacher, or partner, who critically discusses the game and explains the context and content in exchange with insights and experiences of the player. The enhancement of understanding or desensitization, similar to other forms of art, depends on the interaction of these factors for each person individually. Of fundamental importance is the fact that this interplay is inevitable and that it occurs in the currently existing pool of video games, which are rich in morally challenging situations that, albeit often for the motive of pure entertainment, are intended to stimulate feelings and reflections on dilemmas that we face in real life.

For the bioethical case of *euthanasia*, we should consider that the spectre of influence on thinking includes the interaction with art, a great cultural sphere often rooted in the discovery and exchange of meaning. Virtual gameworlds became an influential part of this sphere, and difficult life situations are simulated and presented to the player through the possibility of feeling the characters, considering the consequences and controlling the destiny. The most important aspect regarding the gameplaying experience of morally challenging situations is the game montage, which manages to break the player's epistemic horizon of knowledge and understanding and either trigger emotions or stimulate thinking about moral dilemmas. Although moral content in video games, like everything else, tends to affect younger people, especially teenagers, a well-executed, controlled mediation of moral dilemmas by game developers can also make older players reconsider their attitudes, especially since video games, by their very nature, perform procedural rhetoric, that is, create experiential systems according to rules even before the audiovisual levels become relevant to the player.[25] However, we should take into consideration that today's 12-years-old player might one day become a patient, judge, doctor, ethicist, nurse, news reporter, politician, priest, et cetera, involved with a case of euthanasia, who might have met with the matter through a gameworld experience or *only* through a gameworld experience and had experienced what it could be like to have the choice presented and make a choice for another being, even if simulated. Gameworlds can become experiential sources in the formation of attitudes towards moral phenomena such as euthanasia, and as such, should be taken seriously by (bio)ethical researchers.

Conclusion

Euthanasia in video games was explored as one of the most common occurrences of moral challenges in video games as the most popular manifestation of virtual gameworlds, even though it represents only a fraction of the various ways in which players are morally challenged to react morally in digital environments in general and in video games in particular. It served

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25 "Procedural rhetoric is a general name for the practice of authoring arguments through processes. Following the classical model, procedural rhetoric entails persuasion – to change opinion or action. Following the contemporary model, procedural rhetoric entails expression – to convey ideas effectively. Procedural rhetoric is a subdomain of procedural authorship; its arguments are made not through the construction of words or images, but through the authorship of rules of behavior, the construction of dynamic models. In computation, those rules are authored in code, through the practice of programming" (Bogost, 2007: 28–29).

to demonstrate that video games should not be taken lightly in terms of their potential contribution to the formation of orientation in moral challenges, especially considering the possibility that a player may experience an internal test of moral orientation and receive feedback before morally challenging events happen in their real life.

Clarifying and classifying the types of euthanasia and the types of intervening action in video games were necessary to explain the scope and depth of the presence of morally challenging cases, but also had a secondary goal of offering an identification model to other researchers. The model revealed a pattern showing that game developers have a preference when it comes to how the challenge should be developed and what kind of feedback the player receives. Having a preference means always approving a particular player's action in the same way, although additional research effort would be needed to distinguish more precisely whether the preference is a matter of game mechanics' effectiveness or game developer disposition. To reiterate: The prevailing attitude of game developers in the case of euthanasia is that euthanizing a sentient being is morally proper in the case in which the deliverer knows beyond doubt the truth of the situation in which the sentient being is. That situation is either unavoidable unending or presently eternal unbearable life from which they should be absolved to conserve dignity and meaning of existence.

The defined preference defined is a formidable example of an orientational direction in morally challenging situations. Whether or not it is a morally good direction, uncritical consumption can encourage and may endorse uncritical behaviour, but critical consumption can find video games to be a good source of thought material and a stimulant in thinking about their own actions. In both cases, more attention should be paid to how contemporary game art offers moral experiences and participates in the formation of moral orientation.

Ludography

1. *2048* (2014) Gabrielle Cirulli. Platform played: Android.

2. *Amnesia: A Machine for Pigs* (2013) The Chinese Room, Frictional Games. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

3. *Arcanum: Of Steamworks and Magick Obscura* (2001) Troika Games, Sierra On-Line. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

4. *Arkanoid* (1986) Taito. Taito – Romstar. Platform played: DOS.

5. *BioShock Infinite* (2013) Irrational Games. 2K Games. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

6. *Bloodborne* (2015) FromSoftware. Sony Computer Entertainment. Platform played: PlayStation 4.

7. *Dark Souls II* (2014) FromSoftware. Bandai Namco Games – From Software. Platform played: PlayStation 4.

8. *Deus Ex* (2000) Ion Storm. Eidos Interactive. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

9. *Diablo* (1997) Blizzard North. Blizzard Entertainment – Davidson & Associates – Electronic Arts. Platform played: PSX – PC, Microsoft Windows.

10. *Diablo II* (2000) Blizzard North. Blizzard Entertainment. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

11. *Euthanasia* (2010) SerygalaCaffeine. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

12. *Fable: The Lost Chapters* (2005) Lionhead Studios. Microsoft Game Studios. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

13. *Fallout* (1997) Interplay Productions. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

14. *Fallout 2* (1998) Black Isle Studios. Interplay Productions. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

15. *Far Cry Primal* (2016) Ubisoft Montreal. Ubisoft. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

16. *Frostpunk* (2018) 11 bit studios. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

17. *Guild Wars* (2005) ArenaNet. NCSOFT. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

18. *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice* (2017). Ninja Theory. Platform played: PlayStation 4 – PC, Microsoft Windows.

19. *Hospital Tycoon* (2007): DR Studios. Codemaster. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

20. *It's Winter* (2019) Ilia Mazo. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

21. *Little Nightmares* (2017) Tarsier Studios. Bandai Namco Entertainment. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

22. *Mass Effect* (2007) BioWare. Microsoft Game Studios. Platform played: PlayStation 3 – PC, Microsoft Windows.

23. *Mass Effect 2* (2010) Bioware. Electronic Arts. Platform played: PlayStation 3 – PC, Microsoft Windows.

24. *Mass Effect 3* (2012) BioWare. Electronic Arts. Platform played: PlayStation 3 – PC, Microsoft Windows.

25. *Medic: Pacific War* (2002) Hypnotic Ants. Games Operators – Playway S.A. Platform to be published on: PC, Microsoft Windows.

26. *Nier: Automata* (2017) PlatinumGames. Square Enix. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

27. *Prisoner of War* (2002) Wide Games. Codemasters. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

28. *Pro Evolution Soccer* (1995–2020) Konami – PES Productions. Konami Digital Entertainment. Platform played: PSX, PlayStation 2, PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4.

29. *Project Hospital* (2018) Oxymoron Games. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

30. *Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice* (2019) FromSoftware, Activision. Platform played: PlayStation 4.

31. *Silent Hill* (1999) Team Silent. Konami. Platform played: PSX.

32. *Silent Hill 2* (2001) Team Silent. Konami. Platform played: PlayStation 2 – PlayStation 3 – PC, Microsoft Windows.

33. *Silent Hill: Homecoming* (2008) Double Helix Games. Konami Digital Entertainment. Platform played: PlayStation 3 – PC, Microsoft Windows.

34. *SOMA* (2015) Frictional Games. Platform played: PlayStation 4 – PC, Microsoft Windows.

35. *Spec Ops: The Line* (2012) Yager Development. 2K Games. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

36. *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic II – The Sith Lords* (2004) Obsidian Entertainment. LucasArts. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

37. *That Dragon, Cancer* (2016) Numinous Games. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

38. *The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind* (2002) Bethesda Game Studios. Bethesda Softworks. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

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40. *The Talos Principle* (2014) Croteam. Devolver Digital. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

41. *This War of Mine* (2014) 11 bit studios. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

42. *The Witcher* (2007) CD Projekt Red. Atari – CD Projekt Red. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

43. *Trauma Center: Under the Knife* (2005) Atlus. Atlus USA – Nintendo. Platform played: Nintendo DS.

44. *Wizard101* (2008) KingIsle Entertainment. Platform played: PC, Microsoft Windows.

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EUTANAZIJA U VIDEOIGRAMA – PREDSTAVLJANJE VAŽNOSTI MORALNOG ISKUSTVA U DIGITALNOME SVIJETU IGARA

Sažetak

Članak određuje eutanaziju i raspravlja njenu tipološku prisutnost u narativnim videoigrama. Cilj je predstaviti važnost iskustvenog doživljaja simuliranih moralnih izazova u kontekstu svijeta videoigara kao značajno utjecajnog oblika interaktivnog medija, a koji doživljava eksponencijalni rast. U suprotnosti prema starijim oblicima umjetnosti i medija, kao što su film i literatura, različitnost se naglašava kroz mogućnosti igrača za donošenjem odluka u videoigrama. Premda konačni utjecaj sadržaja u svijetu videoigara ovisi o pojedincu, iskustva i znanja koja se stječu igranjem narativnih videoigrara mogu utjecati na pojedinčevu orijentaciju u rješavanja problema prilikom teških moralnih dilemma s kojima se može susresti tijekom života.

Ključne riječi: euzanazija, samilosno ubijanje, moralnost, bioetika, videoigre, narativ, uranjanje, intervencijska akcija, igranje, simulacija, virutalni svijet, svijet igre