Ethical Decision-Making in Video Games:

Implementing Video Games as a Tool for Experiencing Ethical Theories

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A research paper submitted to the University of Dublin,

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science Interactive Digital Media

2019

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere gratitude goes out to my fiancé Marek. Without his support, I would not be here and pursuing this degree. Thank you for agreeing to go an adventure and move to Ireland with me!

All my love goes out to my parents and my brother for their love and support – again, without all of you, I would not have made it to this point. I am privileged and grateful to have grown up in a family that values education and self-realisation as much we do.

To all my friends, both the ones I have made during my time in Dublin, and the ones back home, thank you for the mutual support, love, all the laughs and, at times, the shared misery we have experienced. I would not have it any other way.

Finally, I would like to thank my supervisor Mads Haahr who has inspired me during this Master's programme with his work on game studies and design. I am especially grateful to have gotten the opportunity to volunteer for ICIDS 2018 and see the types of intriguing and inspiring works presented there, which encouraged me to pursue the research conducted in this paper, despite the fact that it required me to delve into unfamiliar territory in the form of the field of ethics.

SUMMARY

The goal of this paper is to examine the potential of utilising video games as a tool for experiencing established ethical theories. This falls under the wider field of study of video game ethics, which is a relatively young field of study, stemming from the fact that video games as a phenomenon only came to existence around 70 years ago and they have been a valid object of academic study for an even shorter amount of time. In this regard, this paper hopes to contribute to the body of academic works that are concerned with video games.

Over the last couple of decades, more academic works have been conducted that have examined the ethics of video game design as well the ethics explicit within the narratives of video games. This paper takes a slightly different approach and is intended to showcase that video games that give players control over the direction of the narrative by having them make choices with moral implications can also be used as a tool for practicing ethical theories in a simulated environment.

Instead of analysing the ethics of the narrative or how the internal moral compass of a player may affect how they make decision in games, the focus here is on approaching the ethical decision-making moments in games with a clearly defined set of ethical principles and identifying whether it is possible to make and justify decisions based on those principles.

The paper implements a descriptive-analytical approach through Robert K. Yin's multiple-case study methodology. Relevant literature is used to give an overview of the types of ethical theories used in this paper. For the analysis proper, a framework for making ethical decisions proposed by Sheila Bonde and Paul Firenze is used to examine two games: *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* and *Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You*. The paper concludes that certain video games do have the potential to be used for experiencing ethical theories and proposes that games could be used as tools for learning about ethics in a practical manner.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

> *Evil is evil. Lesser, greater, middling, makes no difference. The degree's arbitrary, the definition's blurred. If I'm to choose between one evil and another, I'd rather not choose at all.* ("The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt - Killing Monsters" 00:01:02-00:01:25)

This is a line spoken by the Witcher Geralt of Rivia in the cinematic trailer for the video game *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. The quote, which originates from Andrzej Sapkowski's 1993 novel *The Last Wish* (Polish: *Ostatnie życzenie*) and has been slightly altered, reflects the story's main character's views on the world from an ethical standpoint. Someone watching the trailer, or in the case of the novel, someone reading the passage, can infer from this quote that Geralt is the type of character who believes in a clear definition of what is good and what is evil and who, if faced with such a decision, would not commit acts he deems to be evil. And from the point of view of a viewer or a reader, it is easy to accept this characterisation of Geralt as fixed since it is being presented to us through forms of media that we cannot affect through interactions of our own.

But what if Geralt could and would decide to do something he would consider evil? What if he was presented with a decision where committing a so-called evil act would result in something good? In the case of video games, the consumer takes on the active role of a player who can affect change within the game world. More specifically, in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, the player takes on the role of Geralt and is given the power to decide in his stead how to act when faced with certain decisions in the game, many of which influence the narrative of the game and carry with them a moral aspect related to that narrative.

This is just one example of a large number of video games that put the player in charge of making decisions that have ethical ramifications attached to them. This trend has become increasingly more popular over the last couple of decades with more complicated

morality systems and *Choose Your Own Adventure*-style choice-based branching narratives being implemented in games, often in the form of a combination of the two.

Accompanying these progressively more complex games is an increasing amount of academical research being conducted into the ethics of video games and video game design, and ethical agency within video game mechanics and narrative. Over the years, a multitude of articles, research papers and even books have been written that approach video games from various angles within the field of ethics. The present research paper also aspires to contribute to that body of research by providing further evidence of video games being valuable objects of academic study that can be used for exploring ethical theories.

The current research focuses on ethical theories in video games, which serves as the **subject** of the paper. The **object** of the paper is to study how modern video games act as platforms for experiencing various ethical theories. This leads to the **aim** of the research which is examining two video games through the framework for making ethical decisions, created primarily by Sheila Bonde and Paul Firenze with input from seven other contributors in Brown University in 2013. The **problem** of the study is applying Bonde and Firenze's framework to both games to demonstrate how decisions presented to players in these video games can be approached from multiple moral standpoints, thus proving that both games serve as practical tools which can be used for experimenting with and experiencing different ethical theories.

The **material** used for the research comprises the video games *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* and *Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You*. Both works have been subjected to the descriptive-analytical as well as Robert K. Yin's multiple-case study **methods**.

The paper is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter gives an overview of Yin's methodology for studying multiple cases which will be implemented in the analysis of the games.

The second chapter presents an overview of the three main types of normative ethics theories. This narrows down the focus of the paper to the specific parts of the field of ethics that are relevant to the later analysis as these theories also form the basis for Bonde and Firenze's framework for ethical decision-making.

Finally, the third chapter attempts to examine *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* and *Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You* through Bonde and Firenze's framework to determine whether they can be used as a practical means to experiment with experiencing differing sets of ethical strategies from a personal point of view.

CHAPTER 1. ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

The first chapter focuses on the theoretical methodology necessary for the analysis conducted in chapter three. The chapter gives an overview of Robert K. Yin's multiple-case study methodology, followed by a description of how the methodology will be implemented for this research paper.

1.1 Case Study Research

Robert K. Yin first proposed his case study methodology in 1984, when the first edition of *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* was published. Since then, his methodology has seen a significant amount of usage within academic works, as can be evidenced by the 2016 statistics compiled by London School of Economics and Political Science's Associate Professor of Development Studies Elliott Green. According to his list of the "most cited methodology books in the social sciences" in Google Scholar, Yin's book placed second, with over 100 000 citations attributed to it. Based on this, it could be said that Yin's methodology has become a standard methodology in academia for relevant types of research. As defined by Yin, case studies are a preferred method of study when the research question posed is a "how" or "why" question that focuses on contemporary events that the researcher cannot control (1, 5, 9).

The research conducted in this paper meets the above three conditions, which is why the case study methodology was chosen. At a closer look, this paper attempts to analyse how modern video games can be interpreted and utilised as platforms through which an agent (the player) can experiment with different ethics theories. Thus, the question posed is a "how" question that focuses on a contemporary phenomenon (video games) within confines that the author is unable to control, i.e. the actions that can be taken within the games are pre-programmed and cannot be changed.

Additionally, Yin talks about the importance of ensuring that any research being conducted has a properly defined research design, which connects the empirical data collected during the study to the question(s) posed in the beginning of the study (20).

Yin highlights five components that he considers most crucial for a research design, which are as follows:

1. The question(s) of the study – this component helps to decide which research strategy would be most relevant for the research being undertaken. As mentioned above, Yin recommends case studies for "how" and "why" questions;
2. The proposition(s) of the study – this component helps direct the researcher's attention to something specific for examination within the research. Since the questions "how" or "why" do not explicitly state what should be studied, then the researcher must create propositions, which will then guide them towards relevant evidence;
3. The study's unit(s) of analysis – the actual case(s) being studied. According to Yin, suitable units of analysis can be chosen when the initial research question is posed as accurately as possible;
4. Linking the collected data to the propositions – this can be achieved through various methods, although Yin mentions this component as being one of the two least well developed ones. One approach that he mentions as promising is "pattern matching", a method where multiple pieces of information gathered from one case can be connected to a theoretical proposition;
5. The criteria used to define the results – the second least well developed of the five components of which Yin says that there is currently no detailed guidance on how to define these criteria. (21-8)

1.2 Multiple-Case Study Methodology

In his book, Yin defines four basic types of case study designs: single-case holistic, single-case embedded, multiple-case holistic, and multiple-case embedded types (39). Here, the definition of "holistic" means that a single case study is confined to just one unit of analysis, whereas in the case of embedded studies, a single case will also look at one or more subunits of analysis (42-43).

Yin claims that one advantage of doing multiple-case studies is the fact that the evidence gathered from them is frequently regarded as more compelling and thus, the resulting research is construed as being better substantiated than in the instance of a single-case study. On the other hand, he emphasises that multiple-case studies can take more time and exhaust more resources than a single-case study and so, the decision to opt for a multiple-case study should be made if each case can be shown to have a reason to be included in the study. One such important reason that Yin gives for conducting multiple-case studies is when the results of all the cases are the same or similar. In other words, when similar results can be replicated in each case. Specifically, Yin describes two replication types that can be used as a basis for selecting cases: literal replication and theoretical replication. In the first instance, each case would have to be selected so that it "predicts similar results". In the latter, the cases would have to predict contrasting results for predictable reasons (46-47).

Yin then proceeds to illustrate the replication approach to multiple-case studies, which begins with the development of a theory, followed by the selection of appropriate cases and defining the data collection protocol. Once this process for the research has been defined, the actual case studies can be conducted, each of which will be summarised in an individual report. Here, Yin also draws attention to a "dotted feedback loop", which indicates the possibility that during one of the case studies, a discovery is made that forces the researcher to, for example, switch out a case that is suddenly deemed unsuitable for the study

or make other changes to the study, such as redefining the theory. Once the case studies are conducted, the research can move into the final phase, where the researcher can then draw conclusions based on the results of all the cases, modify the initially developed theory if necessary, state any policy implications that might be inferred from the results of the study and finally, write a cross-case report that sums up the findings of the study (49-50). This process, adapted from Yin's book (50), can be seen in Figure 1 below.

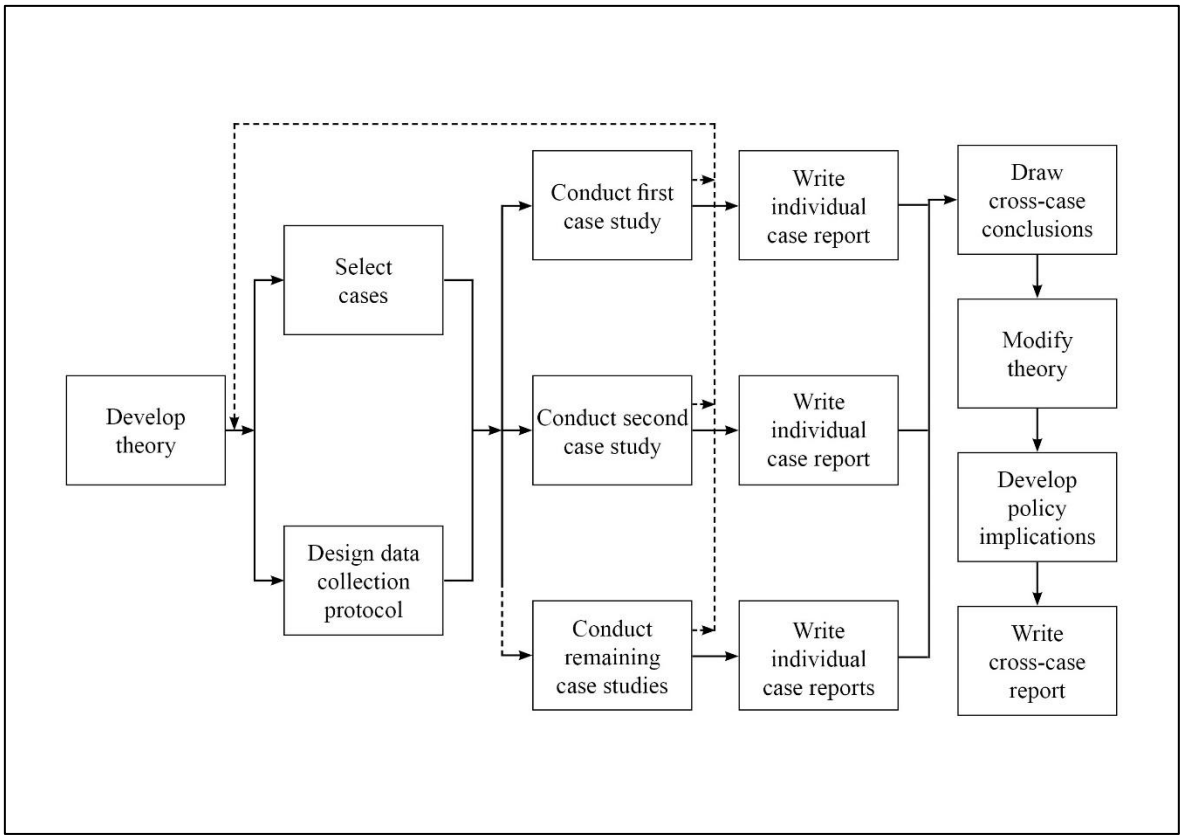

Figure 1. Adaptation of Yin's illustration of the replication approach to multiple-case studies

For the purposes of conducting the research in the present paper, this model has been adapted with a few alterations.

First, since all relevant research, including the separate case studies, will be conducted within this paper, no separate reports will be created for each of the case studies. Instead, each case study and its results will be shown in its section within chapter three.

Second, as far as the author can logically deduce, the question posed within this paper is highly unlikely to result in any policy implications. Instead, the author sees the case studies

as a suitable method for demonstrating the theory posited in this paper. Thus, once the case studies have been conducted, an overall conclusion shall be developed based on their results, the initial theory modified if that is deemed necessary based on the results, and finally, future courses of study within this area will be recommended.

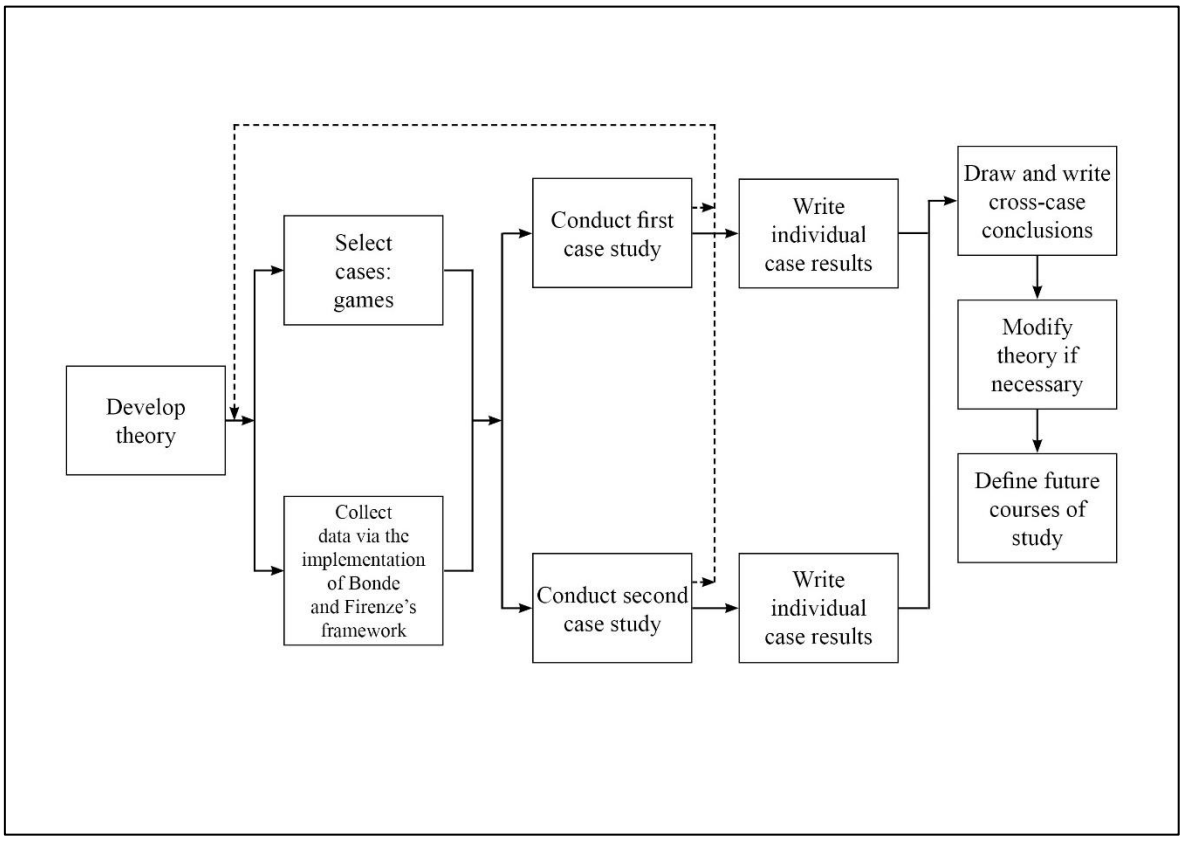

Figure 2. Altered multiple-case study design used in this paper

CHAPTER 2. ETHICS

Ethics, also known as moral philosophy, is a field of study within philosophy that is concerned with "systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong behaviour". Traditionally, this very wide area of study is most often divided into three major subject areas: metaethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics (Fieser; Bonde et al.).

A brief overview of all three is as follows: metaethics attempts to determine where any of the human ethical principles originate from and what the nature of right/good and ethical claims is; normative ethics attempts to establish clear moral standards that help determine what should be considered as wrong and right behaviour; applied ethics is concerned with applying ethical theories to specific issues, especially ones found in public life, such as abortion or animal rights (Fieser; Bonde et al.). Fieser also mentions that it is often difficult to differentiate between the three main areas since the analysis of any given question from an ethical standpoint will frequently expand into all three.

As will be demonstrated below, the framework created by Bonde and Firenze is built upon ethical theories that fall under the category of normative ethics. Thus, before establishing an overview of the framework which will be used in chapter three, normative ethics and its theories will be examined in further detail.

2.1 Normative Ethics

Three main directions are generally identified in normative ethics: virtue theories, duty theories, and consequentialist theories (Fieser).

2.1.1 Consequentialist Theories

Consequentialist theories determine whether an action could be considered ethical or not by examining its consequences. According to the broadest definition of consequentialism, an

action is construed as morally correct when its consequences can be considered as more favourable than not. That is, the good and bad results of an action are tallied and compared against each other (Fieser).

A well-known and often used example of a consequentialist theory is utilitarianism, which considers the most moral action to be one that results in the most happiness or favourable results for everyone. This theory originates from the antiquity and more specifically, the fourth century BC, when the Ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus of Samos proposed the consequentialist philosophy of hedonism, a predecessor to utilitarianism (Fieser; Bonde, et al.). Epicurus's philosophy claims that actions can be morally evaluated by the amount of pleasure they create for an individual and that each individual should aim to maximise their pleasure in life whilst also conforming to societal rules. Thus, the theory gives moral value to those actions that result in the most favourable outcomes for the person committing the actions. (Fieser; Webber and Griliopoulos 229).

Utilitarianism as a separate theory was properly developed much later, beginning with the 18th-19th century philosopher Jeremy Bentham, who was among the first to introduce a fully developed version of utilitarianism (Fieser, Sweet). Bentham, whose work was influenced by enlightenment era philosophers, such as David Hume and John Locke (Sweet), stated in his 1776 work *A Fragment on Government* that right and wrong could be measured by "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" – a principle he named the "greatest happiness principle" (qtd. in Webber and Griliopoulos 233).

Although Bentham's ideas did not garner as much traction during his lifetime, they did have an impact later, when the work on them was being continued by Bentham's students (Sweet). Among them was John Stuart Mill who published a series of papers titled *Utilitarianism* in 1861. These were later compiled into and published as a book in 1863 (Heydt). In this book, Mill defines utilitarianism as follows:

> The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest-Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. (qtd. in Webber and Griliopoulos 231)

As can be seen from this quote, Mill uses the term utility as what is described by Webber and Griliopoulos as a "near-synonym" for happiness. Webber and Griliopoulos additionally emphasise the fact that utilitarianism is set apart from Epicurus's hedonism by its focus on maximising society's happiness, which is in contrast with hedonism's goal of maximising a single individual's pleasure/happiness in life (228, 231).

2.1.2 Duty Theories

Duty theories are also known as deontological theories, a word derived from the Greek word δέον / *deon* which means "obligation, duty". These theories state that the most ethical actions are those that rely on clearly defined obligations that all humans must adhere to (Fieser). Duty theories are sometimes also called non-consequentialist theories, which according to Bonde et al. refers to the fact that they are focused on the intentions of a person who is faced with an ethical decision, not the consequences of that decision. Similarly, Fieser's definition of non-consequentialism emphasises that these theories do not consider the consequences of ethical actions, but unlike Bonde et al., he traces the origin for this term back to the fact that any ethical action undertaken by a person according to non-consequentialist theories must be conducted based on the "specific, foundational principles of obligation" that apply to everyone.

Fieser identifies four main duty theories. The first of these is the approach proposed by German philosopher Samuel Pufendorf in the 17th century. Pufendorf categorised duties

as belonging under one of three main headings: duties to God, duties to oneself, and duties to others.

He claimed that we all have two types of duties towards God, a theoretical one commanding us to know "the existence and nature of God" and a practical one that guides us to worship God completely. Pufendorf also specified two types of duties that we all have towards ourselves, those of the soul, which obligate a person to further their talents and skillset, and those of the body, which require us to not harm our physical bodies. Finally, Pufendorf divides our duties towards others into absolute duties – we must avoid wronging other people, treat others as equals and promote their wellbeing – and conditional duties, which are born as a result of agreements between two or more parties. Here, a person's main obligation is to keep any promises made (Fieser).

The second approach is the rights approach. Here, the term right is defined as a "justified claim against another person's behaviour", which means that one person's duty is born from the rights of a second person (Fieser). The history of rights theory can be traced back to the Stoics of Ancient Rome and Ancient Greece, but the foundations of this approach were most influenced by the work of British philosopher John Locke in the 17th century. Locke asserted that the laws of nature decree that no person should harm another person's life, health, freedom or possessions as all people have a right to these, thus making those actions which protect these rights the most ethical ones. These moral rights are often also described as being natural, universally and equally applicable to all, and non-transferable (Bonde, et al.; Fieser).

The third duty theory is 18th century German philosopher Immanuel Kant's theory that focuses on "a single principle of duty". Kant was in agreement with Pufendorf's categorisation of the duties we have towards ourselves and others, but he believed that even those moral duties stemmed from a single primary principle of duty, which he named the

categorical imperative. Kant notably defined this principle in the form of a single rule: that one should only undertake an action if that action could be done by any and every person in such a way that it would not cause any issues in society. In other words, if that action can be universalised, then it is considered ethical. An example of an action that could be universalised in this way would be "always speak the truth". Another definition Kant gives of the categorical imperative is that other people must always be treated "as an end, and never as a means to an end" (Fieser; Bonde, et al.; Webber and Griliopoulos 203-5).

The last main duty theory, according to Fieser, is the pluralist one proposed by the 19th-20th century British philosopher William David Ross, which is based on so-called *prima facie* (Latin: at first sight) duties. Ross described these duties as fundamental principles that can and do, at times, conflict with one another. In these situations, he claimed that although it might initially be clear to us what our obligation seems to be, further consideration will reveal what our actual duty is (Simpson).

Ross established seven *prima facie* duties:

- Fidelity – our duty to be truthful and to keep promises;
- Reparation – our duty to make amends to others after we have somehow wronged them;
- Gratitude – our duty to be grateful and express gratitude towards those that help us and, where possible, to help them in return;
- Non-maleficence – our duty to avoid harming others, whether physically or psychologically;
- Beneficence – our duty to help others become better people, e.g. by helping them become wiser;
- Self-improvement – our duty to improve ourselves through self-development;

- Justice – our duty to be fair and to distribute any benefits and burdens in an even manner. (Fieser; Simpson)

2.1.3 Virtue Theories

The third and final category of normative ethics is virtue theories. Virtue theories are among the oldest normative ethics theories within Western culture that date back to the times of Ancient Greek philosopher Plato and his student, Aristotle. These theories proclaim that the most ethical way of living is by aspiring to become a person that embodies ideal human virtues and acts based on these virtues (Fieser; Bonde, et al.; Webber and Griliopoulos 212).

Plato named several important virtues, such as generosity and sincerity, but he also highlighted four characteristics which later earned the name "cardinal virtues": wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. Aristotle added that ethics as a field should focus on a person's whole life. To attain the previously mentioned virtues, virtue theories look towards moral education that especially helps young people to better develop the virtuous traits within themselves. Another important element that helps people become more virtuous is role models who can help form a better understanding of the virtues and how to act upon them in ethical situations (Fieser; Bonde, et al.).

During the medieval times, the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and charity were added to the Greek lists and virtue theories remained relevant until the 19th century when duty-based and consequential theories rose to attention. However, the middle of the 20th century renewed the interest of some philosophers in virtue theories. These philosophers believed that both duty and consequential theories were too focused on the rules of ethical behaviour and they wanted to return to the notion of being a virtuous person. For example, in the 1980s, philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre claimed that virtues play an important role in moral theories and that they originate from social traditions (Fieser).

2.2 State of the Art – Video Games and Ethics

Over the last couple of decades, an increasing amount of academic research has been conducted that looks at video games as a viable object for academic study. Within this body of research is a variety of papers and articles that specifically attempt to examine video games from the point of view of ethics. But ethics is a significantly wide field of study with a very long historical background, as this chapter has already demonstrated, and video games are a relatively young cultural phenomenon that dates its beginning back to just 1950, when Josef Kates created the first computer that could be used to play tic-tac-toe: Bertie the Brain (Simmons). Due to this, the available research that does look at video games through the lens of ethics theories is comparatively new. Despite this, there are still many noteworthy works that have been published. This section aims to establish the current state of art in the field of ethics studies within video games in the form of a few selected examples of research and then to establish the relevance of the current paper within that state of art.

One of the most important works that has been published in the field of computer game ethics is Miguel Sicart's 2009 book *The Ethics of Computer Games.* Sicart's purpose in writing this book was to create a theoretical framework that could be used to analyse video games from an ethical standpoint, thus demonstrating why video games can be construed as being ethically relevant and the ethics of video games could be understood. Before this publication, no such framework existed (7, 223).

In the book, Sicart takes a philosophical approach to video games and he makes two main arguments in establishing his definition of computer game ethics. The first of these is that video games should be considered designed objects that consist of systems of rules that have ethical values embedded within them. Thus, according to Sicart, a gamer's creators are ethically responsible for the design of the game rules and the world. In turn, this ethical

design will affect how the player will interpret and react to it and here, Sicart mentions that players themselves are responsible for their experience of any given game (58-9).

The second argument Sicart makes is that players are moral beings who are responsible for how they experience a video game, instead of being passive participants in a gameplay situation. Through this, Sicart gives players ethical responsibility in a gameplay scenario and he even hopes to see players develop themselves to achieve the goal of becoming a moral, ethical player (225-6). It should also be noted that in his definition of what makes a good, virtuous player, Sicart uses the Aristotelian virtue ethics theory as a basis for creating a list of virtues that a video game player should have. To establish the specific virtues on the list, he combines virtue ethics with, among other examples, Richard Bartle's player types (92-101).

The next published work this section will look at is Weaver and Lewis's study which examines how players make moral choices within video games and how making these choices affects them. In this study, 75 participants were asked to play through the first act of the single-player action role-playing game *Fallout 3,* during which, the players were presented with 17 separate interactions that presented the player with a moral choice. Players' reactions to these moments and other factors were all recorded after which, all participants were asked to fill out a survey to give insight into why they decided to pursue certain courses of action. Overall, the study found that the majority of players made decisions based off of their personal moral compasses in real life, i.e. they reacted to situations in the game the same way they felt they would in real life. Interestingly, the study also found that in situations where a player purposely behaved in what was deemed an antisocial manner that violates the player's personal moral code, the level of enjoyment of the game was not affected, although the players would report feelings of guilt in such cases (610-3).

Another study that explores decision-making in video games is the one conducted by Dechering and Bakkes. In their paper, they aim to establish how games provide players with moral engagement. For their analysis, they use two interactive narrative games: *The Walking Dead Season 1* and *Life is Strange.* Both games are defined by Dechering and Bakkes as featuring meaningful choices and ethical agency. The study identifies multiple recurring themes in the decisions of both games that are directly reflective of morality. Examples of these themes include lying and killing. After a closer look at each theme, the authors conclude that interactive narrative games "provide good situational context" for studying moral engagement due to the fact that neither game explicitly gives the player's actions specific values. Instead, the player has to attribute meaning to the games, which is defined by Dechering and Bakkes as one part of what makes up a player's ethical agency within a game. The other requirements that they describe as necessary for this are immersion, competency, autonomy, confidence, and being able to relate to the relevant characters in the story. They conclude that if an interactive narrative game meets all of these criteria, then it can promote moral engagement in its players.

One more way of approaching video games and morality is the approach and analysis conducted by Zagal, which examines if and how games can be used to force players to think about and reflect upon ethics issues. To prove that this can be done, Zagal analyses three video games that present the player with moral dilemmas that address the player from a personal level, which can enable the player to feel a certain sense of responsibility for the decisions they make in a game (1, 8). Zagal believes that video games are a perfect platform that could be used for learning about ethics in a practical way, but that little research has been done into how exactly games could be used for this and so, further exploration into the field is required (8).

These are just a few examples of the types of studies that have been conducted within the burgeoning field of video game ethics. This paper hopes to make a contribution to the type of research that was also conducted by Zagal by looking at how games could be used to facilitate experientially learning about the three classic normative ethics theories.

2.3 Bonde and Firenze's Framework for Making Ethical Decisions

In the creation of their framework for ethical decision-making, Bonde and Firenze lean on the three normative ethical theories described in the first section of this chapter, and they propose three broad frameworks that can be applied to situations where a decision affected by morality is presented to an agent. The three frameworks they propose are:

- The Consequentialist Framework
- The Duty Framework
- The Virtue Framework

2.3.1 The Consequentialist Framework

The first of the suggested frameworks is the Consequentialist framework, which is implemented by examining the presumed future outcomes of all possible actions in a given situation. This framework takes into account all the people who would be either directly or indirectly affected by the results of the actions. The potential consequences are then weighed against the preferable results of the situation. The framework then dictates that the action regarded as ethical and thus, the one that should be taken, is the one that achieves the most preferable results for the most people. In other words, "the person using the Consequences framework desires to produce the most good" (Bonde, et al.).

One advantage of this method that Bonde and Firenze mention is the fact that this approach is a pragmatic one as it works best in circumstances where multiple people are

involved by seeking a result through compromise. On the other hand, they admit that not every individual is open to compromise and that it is not possible to always predict the consequences of a situation, which means that there will always remain a possibility that an action which is expected to create the best results could instead cause harm to the people affected.

Furthermore, they stress that the Consequentialist framework does not state explicitly that there are any kinds of actions that would always be considered immoral. Accordingly, the framework then allows for any action to be considered ethical if its results can be considered as favourable to a larger number of people, even if the action, such as murder, would be considered as unethical within the confines of other theories. In short, within the Consequentialist framework, "the end justifies the means" (Bonde, et al.).

2.3.2 The Duty Framework

The second proposed framework concentrates on the obligations a person has in a given situation. In applying this framework, the person has to consider two factors: what are the ethical duties they have, and what kinds of actions they should never proceed with, regardless of the specifics of a situation. Here, the action considered as ethical is the one that ensures the person both follows their duties and at the same time, does the right thing, i.e. an action that does not create a conflict with the list of things one should never do. If these two conditions are adhered to, then the resulting action can be regarded as the correct one (Bonde, et al.).

The advantages of this framework are defined as two-part. First, it allows for the creation of a clearly defined system of moral codes that applies to everyone in an equal manner. Bonde and Firenze state that this encourages the treatment of each person with the same kind of "dignity and respect".

Second, since this framework is fixated on ensuring that each person follows the rules of a predefined moral system, then even if the outcome of an action is not favourable, the person can still claim to have acted ethically. This is described as being useful, for example, in circumstances where it is important to understand why duty either forbids or commands particular courses of action (Bonde, et al.).

However, this approach also comes with its own disadvantages. Namely, Bonde and Firenze state that the duty approach could be conveyed as being impersonal since some deeds could cause harm even if they are committed by strictly following a set moral system. They also admit that the framework does not provide guidance in a situation where multiple duties are at odds with one another nor does it account for any possible personal circumstances and instead, the idea of obligatory duties is applied to everyone in the same manner.

2.3.3 The Virtue Framework

The final framework is the Virtue framework which focuses on determining what types of characteristics would motivate a person to action in a given situation. That is, the person applying the framework will have to establish what kind of a person they should aim to be, and what others can deduce about their character based on their actions. In this case, the ethical course of action is considered to be the one that a "virtuous person" would opt for in a decision-making situation and the goal of the person who is following this framework is to cultivate those same virtues in themselves (Bonde, et al.).

According to Bonde and Firenze, the advantage of this framework is clearly apparent in those cases that try to determine what type of person one should be, what type is considered virtuous. They also bring to attention the fact that this framework has the most freedom in defining ethical actions, as the idea of a good or virtuous person has a wide variety of definitions. This is best illustrated by the fact that the framework accounts for the

whole human experience – all of an individual's emotions, thoughts and experiences in life – when determining an ethical course of action.

Conversely, the disadvantage of the Virtue framework is essentially the same range of freedom mentioned above. The more room there exists for the interpretation of virtuous traits, the higher the likelihood of disagreements on the subject, which makes it complicated to arrive at a certain conclusion for what would be the true virtuous and thus ethical course of action. In addition to this, Bonde and Firenze also indicate that it is more difficult to understand which actions to opt for or what the ethical rules as such as within the Virtue framework since it is focused on examining a person's character, not their actual actions.

The final drawback of the Virtue framework that Bonde and Firenze describe is the fact that as this framework requires role models to look towards for guidance on what is considered virtuous, then as a result, it might simply "reinforce current cultural norms as the standard of ethical behaviour".

2.3.4 Combining the Frameworks

After introducing all three frameworks, Bonde and Firenze conclude that, when applied to a moment of decision, each of the three helps highlight certain features of that decision. They also emphasise that concurrently, each framework may conceal other features that yet another framework would instead bring focus to. Hence, they suggest becoming familiar with all three to help facilitate an understanding of what their similarities and differences are.

They also indicate that since the main ethical questions posed by the frameworks are not mutually exclusive, then each can be applied to a given ethical situation. According to Bonde and Firenze, oftentimes, the result and therefore, the recommended ethical course of action, will be the same or a similar one for all three frameworks, with the difference being in the reasons each provides for suggesting that particular route. However, it is also

mentioned that stemming from the fact that each framework is based on a different ethical theory, then sometimes the conclusions may also differ from each other.

Bonde and Firenze have also created a chart that describes all three frameworks in a concise and clear manner and, at the same time, contrasts them against each other. This chart can be seen in Figure 3.

	Consequentialist	**Duty**	**Virtue**
Deliberative process	What kind of outcomes should I produce (or try to produce)?	What are my obligations in this situation, and what are the things I should never do?	What kind of person should I be (or try to be), and what will my actions show about my character?
Focus	Directs attention to the future effects of an action, for all people who will be directly or indirectly affected by the action.	Directs attention to the duties that exist prior to the situation and determines obligations.	Attempts to discern character traits (virtues and vices) that are, or could be, motivating the people involved in the situation.
Definition of Ethical Conduct	Ethical conduct is the action that will achieve the best consequences.	Ethical conduct involves always doing the right thing: never failing to do one's duty.	Ethical conduct is whatever a fully virtuous person would do in the circumstances.
Motivation	Aim is to produce the most good.	Aim is to perform the right action.	Aim is to develop one’s character.

Figure 3. Bonde and Firenze's Combined Frameworks for Ethical Decision-Making

CHAPTER 3. GAME ANALYSES

This chapter analyses the two chosen cases for this paper – the video games *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* and *Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You*. The reason why these two games were selected is that both games emphasise meaningful player choice that cannot be undone within the constraints of the narrative. Additionally, in terms of genre, the games represent different styles of gameplay and are thus suitable for demonstrating that the theory can be applied to different types of games, as long as they involve meaningful player choice in the narrative.

The analyses will be conducted by applying Bonde and Firenze's combined framework of the three ethical decision-making frameworks described in chapter two to both cases. Each section will provide a synopsis of the game, followed by detailed overview of the specific part of the game that will be used for conducting the analysis to inform of the context and moral implications involved in the decision-making moment that will be analysed. The last part of a section is the analysis proper.

3.1 *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*

3.1.1 Synopsis

The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt is a single player action role-playing game and the third instalment in a series of video games based on Andrzej Sapkowski's *The Witcher* novel series ("Contact & Legal"). The game is a sequel to the 2007 video game *The Witcher* and the 2011 video game *The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings*. All the games in the series follow the adventures of the main character Geralt of Rivia, who is one of the few remaining Witchers in the game's world. Witchers are genetically enhanced humans, who, through this process, have become infertile, but in return, gain special powers and longevity. They are then trained to become professional monster hunters, who travel across the lands and hunt monsters in exchange for payment and, in general, prefer to remain neutral in all matters political.

The first game in the series, *The Witcher*, introduces the player to the series' main protagonist Geralt. The main story starts after a separate sequence in the beginning of the game and the player takes on the role of an amnesiac Geralt who is trying to regain his memories. Over the course of the game, Geralt is involved with investigating a criminal organization and getting involved in the rising tension between a group of freedom-fighters and knights which eventually culminates in a civil war that Geralt helps end. The game ends with an assassination attempt on the local king, which is thwarted by Geralt. The sequel, *The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings*, picks up a short while after the first game, when Geralt has been jailed under the suspicion of being responsible for another attempt, this time successful, at the king's life. He is eventually deemed innocent and the rest of the game follows Geralt's journey to find the real murderer, which he achieves. During this game, Geralt also continues his efforts in recovering his lost memories.

The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt begins after the events of *The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings* in the midst of the Third Northern War between the Nilfgaardian Empire and the Northern Realms. While the war is being waged, Emperor Emhyr of Nilfgaard requests an audience with the Witcher Geralt which he attends with the sorceress Yennefer of Vengerberg whom he has a complicated romantic relationship with. Emhyr tasks Geralt with finding his daughter Ciri who has just recently been seen in various locations in the game's world after being missing for a long time. In addition to being the emperor's daughter by birth, Ciri is also the assumed last Child of the Elder Blood which is an ancient elven bloodline that grants those of its line access to powerful magic. Additionally, Ciri is also the adopted child of both Geralt and Yennefer who, when Ciri was younger, raised and trained her to be a Witcher in the old fortress of Kaer Morhen where Witchers used to be trained.

The main story arc of the game follows Geralt's attempts at following and finding Ciri, during which he travels across several locations, meets up with old friends who aid him

in his journey, and gets involved in various situations ranging from offering his skills as a Witcher in exchange for information on Ciri to getting involved with criminal underworlds and politics. All the while, Geralt (and Ciri) are being hunted by the Wild Hunt, a group of spectral wraiths who are thought to be an omen of war, but who are eventually revealed to be a group of elven warriors from a parallel dimension who wish to conquer the world where Geralt and others live in. As their own world is being threatened by the White Frost, a destructive force that freezes the world and wipes out all life in it, then they require Ciri's Elder Blood to be able to open up portals that would enable all of their people come through to the realm inhabited by the game's main protagonists.

Eventually, Geralt finds Ciri and the two of them gather together various allies to make a final stand against the Wild Hunt. They defeat the Wild Hunt, which is followed by Ciri entering a portal to the realm being devastated by the White Frost, which she defeats alone. The ending of the game varies, and the precise outcome depends on which choices the player makes and does not make over the course of the playthrough.

3.1.2 Crookback Bog, the Ladies of the Wood and the Whispering Hillock

During the first act of the game, when Geralt is still looking for Ciri, he is directed towards the swamps in the province of Velen, where three sister witches known as the Ladies of the Wood reside. Geralt finds a small village where the witches reside by following a trail of treats in the swamp. There, he meets a group of children live there and are minded by an older lady called Gran who seems to be suffering from some sort of illness.

Here, it is important to mention an earlier quest that has the player take control of Ciri. This quest details, in the form of a flashback, what Ciri was up to around the same area earlier on in the game's timeline. Ciri is running away from someone in a forest where she eventually comes across a little girl named Gretka who tells Ciri that she got lost in the

woods after her father sent her into the woods to follow a trail of treats. Gretka mentions that this happened because she broke a jug of milk earlier in the day to which her mother had said she should be spanked, but her father had said that "it would do no good, too many mouths to feed anyway". From this, it can be inferred that the trail of treats is used by those parents who are no longer able to take care of their children, likely due to the effects the ongoing war has had on their food and money supplies, and who thus decide to send their children into the woods in the hopes that they get lost and relieve the family of what could be considered an extra burden. When Geralt later goes looking for the Ladies of the Wood and finds the way to their hut via a trail of treats, it becomes clear that the children who are sent into the woods are actually sent to the witches and so, all of the orphans living in the bog are very likely children whom the local villagers abandoned due to the war and famine.

Eventually, Geralt gets to talk to the witches who task him with going to the nearby village of Downwarren to help the people living there with an issue suitable for Geralt's skills as a Witcher. Namely, the ealdorman of Downwarren asks Geralt to remove an evil spirit trapped in a nearby tree in the Whispering Hillock that has been disturbing the villagers. As a side-note, while walking through Downwarren, the player might hear a child say something about how if they act really good, their mother promised that they could go down the trail of treats. This illustrates the fact that abandoning children is not rare in this area during this time and that it is a kind of open secret that all the adults know of but none of the children really understand.

Geralt takes up the quest given to him by the ealdorman, and once he reaches the heart of the tree where the spirit is trapped, he has a conversation with it. The spirit informs Geralt that it used to be a druidess when alive and that it is trapped in the tree because it was cursed by the Ladies of the Wood, whom it calls the Crones, after the sisters killed it in life. The spirit tells Geralt that the Crones get their strength from eating human flesh and warns

him that the children Geralt saw in the swamp are all in danger. The spirit asks Geralt to set it free and promises it would save the children in return. As Geralt, the player has to decide between two options here: whether to kill the spirit in the tree or set it free. If the player decides to help the spirit, then it will possess a black horse and will gallop away once freed. The consequences of both actions will be described below.

Once Geralt has dealt with the spirit, he returns to Downwarren and informs the ealdorman of the result. In both cases, Geralt will also tell him that the Ladies of the Wood asked him to remind the ealdorman of the payment to which the latter responds by cutting of his ear and giving it to Geralt to take to the witches. When Geralt asks the ealdorman about the payment, he says that that is the village's pact with the witches and considered honest pay for their protection. He also tells Geralt that he is a stranger in Velen who does not know what it is like to live there – this part could be interpreted by the player to also refer to the trail of treats, which at this point also seems to be a possible form of payment to the witches for their protection.

Geralt returns to the swamp, where he finally meets the witches in their true, grotesque form. He gives them the ealdorman's ear and informs them of what happened to the spirit in the tree. In return, they give him information about Ciri.

Here, Geralt also finds out that Gran is actually the missing wife of a local baron, Anna. In the past, Anna had made a pact with the Crones who offered their help in return for a year of servitude. Thus, Anna, who's mind is at this point somewhat addled, was placed in charge of the orphaned children, tasked with taking care of them until the witches were ready to eat them. If the player decided to kill the spirit in the tree, then the Crones will be happy and will comment that Anna has done well in ensuring that the orphans are "plump as piglets". However, if the player freed the spirit, then the Crones will be angry with Anna,

blaming her for allowing the children to escape. Once Geralt tells them that he freed the spirit, they will also know that the children were taken away by her.

Following this, Geralt visits the baron and tells him that he has found his wife. The baron proceeds to ask for Geralt's help to save Anna from the Crones. They agree to meet up in Downwarren and then go into the swamp together with some extra forces. Once they meet up, they are also joined by the baron's and Anna's daughter, Tamara.

If the player decided to kill the spirit, then upon reaching the orphan's village, they only find Anna there, who is talking nonsense and has clearly lost touch with reality. The dialogue and earlier information combined with the fact that the children are now gone from the village imply that the Crones ate the children. All of this is shown to have caused Anna to suffer from a breakdown or as Geralt describes it: "She's been through a lot. Lost a child, was carried off by a fiend, lived in the Crones' village taking care of children who're now gone… It's left its mark, as it would on anyone." As a result of this, the baron decides to take his wife to a hermit healer he knows of in the hopes that he would be able to help Anna.

If, instead, the player helped the spirit trapped in the tree, then upon reaching Downwarren, Geralt will see that the village has been destroyed. The ealdorman however is still alive and says that a "horse fiend" came to the village and drove all the villagers insane, as a result of which they all started attacking each other until they had all killed one another and the destroyed the village. Geralt tells him that the horse was the freed spirit of the forest who sought out revenge on the inhabitants of Downwarren who were responsible for trying to kill it earlier.

As with the other option, Geralt, the baron and Tamar along with a few more characters will then proceed to the Crones' village. This time however, the Anna they find has been transformed into a water hag – a type of monster found in the game's world. They quickly deduce that Anna must have been cursed by the Crones and so, Tamara asks Geralt

as a Witcher to lift it. Geralt learns from another character who lives in the swamp and with whom he had interacted earlier, that the Crones cursed Anna as a punishment for letting the orphans escape. He describes what the witches did, which prompts Geralt to go back to try and break the curse. To achieve this, Geralt must remove one of four representational dolls found on the witches' altar in the cellar of one of the buildings. Here, the player is presented with having to deduce which one to remove. If the correct one is removed, then Anna turns back into a human, but all the characters present quickly learn that the witches tied the curse to Anna's life and she dies within minutes of curse breaking, after getting to say her final words to her husband and daughter. If the player removes the wrong doll, then Anna bursts into flames and dies as the water hag.

In both cases, the baron and Tamara are devastated, but the baron tells Geralt that he can collect his payment for helping back at the baron's keep. A scene shows Geralt arriving at the keep later only to find that the heartbroken baron has hanged himself.

3.1.3 Analysis

The critical decision-making moment in the above narrative is the moment when the player has to decide whether to kill or help the spirit trapped in the Whispering Hillock. This decision will now be analysed through Bonde and Firenze's framework. If the decision can be approached and justified from the perspective of all three ethical theories, then it can be concluded that *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* is a proven example of a video game where at least one moral decision presented to the player can be used as a tool for experimenting with and experiencing specific ethical theories. This is in contrast to the intuitive approach demonstrated by Weaver and Lewis's study described in chapter two, where most players followed their personal moral compass in such moments.

According to the Consequentialist framework, Geralt's goal in dealing with the spirit would be to ensure that his decision would bring about the best possible consequences and the most good to all the characters who are affected by this. Assuming that the player does not know what the consequences of either decision are, then based on the information available to the player at that time, the most ethical course of action to take would be to free the spirit since this would, in theory, result in the most lives saved: both the spirit's and the orphans'. Even though this decision will actually result in the deaths of all the villagers of Downwarren, Anna, and the baron, which is not the best possible result, then based on the data available to the player at the moment of the decision, it still remains the most ethical consequentialist choice.

On the other hand, if we assume that the player knows exactly what the consequences of either decision are, then the only ethical choice they can make according to the Consequentialist framework is to kill the spirit as this spares the lives of all the villagers, Anna, and the baron, which can be construed as producing the most good.

According to the Duty framework, the decision should be approached by looking at what Geralt's obligations are in the situation and what are the actions he should never do. Supposing that his obligations are defined only within the boundaries of the game's world, then his duty as a Witcher, a professional monster hunter would be to kill the evil spirit and it would be considered the ethical thing to do as in this manner, Geralt fulfils his obligations and does the right thing in the sense that the spirit is described as evil due to having caused the deaths of multiple villagers.

If we define Geralt's obligations from, for example, a real-world Kantian perspective, then the maxim of "one should always kill" cannot be universalised and so, the only ethical course of action for Geralt would be to spare the spirit as it would be morally wrong to kill

any being. Even though the spirit will proceed to kill the villagers later, then Geralt and through him, the player, will have acted ethically at the time of the decision.

Finally, according to the Virtue framework, the question the player must ask of themselves in the role of Geralt is what kind of a person they should aim to be and how would their actions be construed. For this framework, we can define a fully virtuous person as someone who encompasses all four of Plato's cardinal virtues, i.e. as someone who is wise, just, courageous, and capable of showing self-restraint, and can also be characterised by other important virtues, such as being kind and generous. In trying to emulate such a role model, it could be argued that the most ethical course of action for Geralt is saving the spirit. This would be due to many factors. First, the act of sparing a life can be characterised as a kind and generous one. Second, since the spirit promises to help save the children from the Crones, then it is also a wise decision. Third, as this decision would be born from Geralt giving the spirit the opportunity to make its case and ask for help and thus, restraining himself from immediately killing the spirit without hearing it out, then sparing the spirit would also depict Geralt as well-tempered. Furthermore, since at this point, the player is aware of the fact that the children in the swamp end up there as orphans because they are abandoned by their parents, then saving them by saving the spirit can be defined as the just course of action. Dependent on the exact definition of the term "justice", one more way of interpreting this act and so, Geralt, as just, would be the fact that freeing the spirit allows it to be free from the seemingly unjust death and imprisonment forced upon it by the Crones. As such, from a Virtue theory perspective, to be able to say that they have attempted to develop their moral character, the player as Geralt should opt for helping the spirit.

From these examples, it is clear that *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* provides opportunities for experimenting with moral decision-making. Even more, the context of the game creates

room for multiple interpretations of the ethical theories, which in turn allows for more experimentation.

3.2 *Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You*

3.2.1 Synopsis

Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You is an episodic simulation game created by the German independent developer Osmotic Studios, released in 2016. The name is an allusion to the English author George Orwell, who is best known for his dystopian novel "Nineteen Eighty-Four" which describes the totalitarian world of Oceania in which people have no privacy as they are constantly being watched by the government, a fact that Oceania's citizens are being reminded of in the form of the portrait of the head of the country's Party, Big Brother, which is accompanied by the caption "Big Brother is watching you" – which the subtitle of *Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You* alludes to as well – and is present in all public spaces in Oceania ("Orwell"; "Big"; "Nineteen").

The story of *Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You* takes place in the spring of 2017 in a fictional version of the real world in a country called The Nation. This country is run by the Party who were elected into the government in 2009 and who, in 2012, passed the Safety Bill – a law that gives the government of The Nation the right to spy on its citizens to prevent any possible risks to national security and "to protect the freedom of The Nation's citizens".

In the game, the player takes on the role of an Investigator – a person from outside The Nation who is working for The Nation's government on a new, secret surveillance system called Orwell, the interface of which also serves as the user interface of the game for the player, thus literally putting the player into the role of the character they are playing.

At the start of the game, Orwell has just been launched in its test phase and the player, who has been selected for this position from thousands of applicants, is among the first

people who gets to try the new system. Orwell is designed to work with input from two groups of people: Investigators, such as the player, and Advisers. The task of the Investigators is to use the Orwell system to peruse through the personal communications and other data, such as phone calls, computers or news, of persons of interest with the goal of finding information that will either serve as evidence of any wrongdoing or will help clear their name. Upon finding any usable information – highlighted bits of text and images called datachunks –, it is the job of the Investigator to determine whether that data is relevant to the case they are working on and if it is, to upload it into the Profiler of the Orwell platform. The Advisers, who are citizens of The Nation, only receive the information that gets uploaded and sent to them by the Investigator and they must analyse the data they receive and based on any conclusions they can draw, they will then request appropriate action from The Nation's authorities.

The story of the game begins after a bomb explodes in the Freedom Plaza in Bonton, the capital of The Nation. The player is immediately thrusted into action in cooperation with their Adviser Symes, who helps them quickly learn how to use Orwell as they start working on figuring out who was behind the bombing. Over the course of the game, the player profiles multiple characters, most of whom are connected to a group called Thought – an activist group that is protesting the "growing digital surveillance" implemented by The Nation. As the player delves deeper into the case and attempts to identify who is behind the bombing, they will uncover that and much more.

The specifics of the story, including its ending, will vary based on the choices made by the player on which datachunks to upload to Orwell's Profiler. The main purpose of the storyline as whole seems to be to make the player think about ethical issues, such as data privacy, the right to personal privacy and hypothetical situations that could stem from the kind of governmental surveillance that the Orwell system represents.

3.2.2 Who is Nina?

In the second episode of the game, the player learns of a person called Nina who is shown to be involved with Thought. In the third episode, Symes asks the player to look into Nina further and identify who she is and if she is connected to the bombings – at this point, there will have been a total of two or three bombings.

The player uses Orwell to learn that Nina is a dishonourably discharged veteran and a single mother whose boyfriend was killed in action years earlier, an event that has left her suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD), and who is at the time of the game struggling with making ends meet as due to the Safety Bill, she cannot procure a proper job and has to work long hours at temporary jobs to provide for herself and her son. As a result of all this, she is paranoid and openly disdainful of The Nation's law enforcement.

Near the end of the episode, after the player has gathered enough information on her, Nina will realise that someone is watching her and is afraid that she is being stalked by someone dangerous. She eventually ends up calling her friend Juliet asking for a place to hide out for a while. Dependent on what kind of information the player has uploaded about Nina before the call and the choices the player makes during Nina's call with Juliet, one of three things will happen to Nina: she will escape the authorities with her son, she will be arrested or she will be killed in a shootout. After this sequence, an email arrives in Nina's inbox, which proves that she was connected to the bombings.

To ensure that Nina is able to escape The Nation's police, the player must not upload Nina's real address or any negative information about her, such as about her PTSD or, during the call, about the fact that she is armed with a gun. Additionally, the player must not notify Symes of where Nina intends to pick up her son on that day. To further divert the police from her track, the player can opt to upload false information about Nina into the Profiler,

for example the claim she makes to a friend that she was in bed the whole week. This strategy will enable Nina and her son to get on a bus out of Bonton, which will then get stopped by the police who have set up road blocks. Here, Nina is still on the call with Juliet and will mention trying to escape via the emergency doors, a lie she tells in the hopes that the someone she suspects of listening in on the call, i.e. the player, will relay that to the authorities. If the player uploads this piece of information to the Profiler, then the officers on board the bus will quickly leave, and Nina and her son escape.

To ensure that Nina is arrested, the player must avoid informing Symes of Nina's negative characteristics and of the gun she is carrying. Again, the false information about staying in bed all week can be uploaded to alleviate certain suspicions. However, for the arrest to take place, Nina's real address and the location where she will be picking her son up from need to be supplied to Symes. As a final assurance, the datachunk concerning her planned bus journey can also be uploaded.

Finally, the route that leads to Nina's death is guaranteed if the player uploads most of the (accurate) information they uncover about her. Especially important here is to inform Symes of Nina's gun. The location of the shootout will then depend on whether the player uploads Nina's real or fake address and the location where she collects her son into Orwell.

3.2.3 Analysis

In the case of *Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You*, there is no singular critical decision-making moment. Rather, there is a range of smaller choices, described above, that can be made by the player which affect the outcome of this part of the story.

These decisions will now be examined through Bonde and Firenze's three frameworks to determine if decision-making in this game can support all three approaches.

By the beginning of the third chapter, the player has formed an understanding on how the information they provide The Nation with affects the game world, so it can be assumed that the player is aware of how strongly Symes may react to the information he receives from the player. This assumption will form a part of the basis for the following analysis.

According to the Consequentialist framework, the player should ensure that the data they upload into Orwell results in the most good for all the characters. As the player does not uncover any truly incriminating evidence that would definitively connect Nina to the bombings until the end of this chapter, then the player will likely conclude that Nina is the unfortunate victim of tragedy and bad circumstances who is just trying to get by and is not a threat to anyone. Thus, the most ethical course of action for the player to take when it comes to deciding what kind of information to upload to Orwell's Profiler about Nina, would be to deliberately avoid giving Symes reasons to believe she is a threat to The Nation and to aid her in her escape from Bonton. This will ensure that Nina lives and her son does not become an orphan, which is the best possible outcome based on the data the player has access to up to this point in the game.

According to the Duty framework, the player should remain dutiful and fulfil their obligations. Similar to the way this framework was applied to *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, the idea of what being dutiful means can be interpreted in at least two ways here. First, assuming that the players most important duty is doing their job with the goal of protecting The Nation from terrorists, then the player should upload all the information they acquire on Nina that they deem to be objectively correct and relevant. Although this leads to Nina dying, the player's actions would be ethically justified as they informed the relevant authorities of a possible danger to many people. The potential threat that Nina represents here makes reporting her the right thing to do.

Alternatively, if applying Kantian ideas of what is dutiful to the framework, then we must first find a maxim that would be applicable for this situation and would also hold true universally. A good example would be “always be honest” or “never lie”. This principle would guide the player down the same path as the first interpretation of the duty framework as, to avoid being deceitful, the player would have to upload every datachunk they are convinced is genuinely true into the Profiler. This is the most ethical way for the player to conduct themselves in this situation.

Therefore, in this case, the two sample applications of the Duty framework have an extremely high likelihood of resulting in Nina’s death due to the fact that the player would be obligated to tell Symes that Nina is armed and potentially dangerous.

Lastly, we will look at the Virtue framework, which commands the player to act as virtuously as possible. Let us establish three potential directions that the player could take within this framework.

First, the player may aim to embody being honest and diligent. This would require the player to, once more, upload all information found on Nina truthfully and as fast as possible. In this situation, this would be the most ethical course of action for the player.

Second, the player may aspire to virtues such as bravery and courage, kindness and empathy. To embody these, the decisions the player makes have to be based on trying to understand Nina and her situation, followed by being dishonest with The Nation in order to protect Nina from any sort of potentially negative outcomes. In other words, lying to authorities could be considered as the most ethical action in this case.

For the third set of virtues, we will once again use Plato’s set of four cardinal virtues: wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. Assuming these requirements for being virtuous, the player should take great care to analyse all the datachunks they uncover, and refrain themselves from uploading new information immediately upon receiving it. To ensure acting

justly, the player must not endanger Nina's rights with the decisions they make, for example her right to live and to explain herself. It could be posited that the most ethical conduct for the player here would be to calmly assess all the information they receive and upload those that are true but do not create a false picture of Nina as being dangerous. The most likely outcome of this behaviour could then be that she is arrested and brought in for questioning.

Once again, all three frameworks have proven to be applicable within the game's ethical decision-making confines. Similar to what was found in the analysis of *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, *Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You* also supports multiple interpretations of ethical theories within a relevant framework, which provides more freedom for experimentation, such as the possibility of focusing on just one specific ethical principle or many.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

This intention of this paper has been to establish whether video games could be used as an experiential learning tool in the field of ethics. Specifically, the goal was to confirm whether it would be possible for an agent to approach a video game that provides the player with important moral-based decisions that affect the direction of the narrative and possibly, the state of the game world with a predefined set of ethical principles based in an accepted ethical theory and make the in-game decisions by applying those principles to them, regardless of whether these principles correspond with the agent's personal morals. This was proven possible through the analysis of two video games that are connected to each other by the fact that the continuation of their narratives is dependent on the player making a number of choices based in morality.

Weaver and Lewis proved in their work that in the context of playing video games, people implement a significant suspension of disbelief, which is why most players tend to make moral decisions in games by intuiting what they would personally do in a similar situation in the real world, and they experience feelings of guilt when they opt for the antisocial choices (612-3).

By combining Weaver and Lewis's findings with the results of this paper, it can be deducted that if an agent knowingly applies ethical principles that are foreign to them on a personal level to the decision-making points of a moral choice-based video game, then they will be able to experience that ethical theory from a personal standpoint.

The author of this paper proposes that these findings could most easily be implemented by students of ethics who wish to gain a better understanding of ethical theories through an empathetic learning method.

As this paper was only able to accommodate two examples, then further work into would be required to prove more definitively the viability of this approach. This could be

achieved through the examination of additional case studies through the methodology outlined in this paper.

As there is potential for expanding this theory into other areas of ethics or, more widely, into other philosophical studies, then additional research could also be conducted with the purpose of identifying further applications for video games a practical learning tools for philosophy.

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