

Faith

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Game Design

Orientation: C

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Figure 1: The player is the modern Sisyphus

Abstract

Faith is the conviction of a belief, something absolute. It interacts deeply with expectation, trust or meaning. By those terms, it is easy to make the comparison with video-game. Players have expectations, they trust the game designer and believe a video-game has a meaning of any sort. By playing, their experiences transform into faith. Using this notion, my master project is a video-game, where faith is deconstructed into its different meanings. Puzzle after puzzle, the player will follow the footsteps of Sisyphus, with confrontation to unusual short-term mechanic. Through the mechanics, the player will understand how faith works, how faith is linked to philosophy with the quest of truth and it impact his expectations when he is playing.

“Faith” ist die Überzeugung eines Glaubens, etwas absolutes. Faith hängt stark mit Erwartung, Vertrauen und Bedeutung zusammen. Mit diesen Begriffen fällt der Vergleich zu Videospielen leicht. Spieler haben Erwartungen, sie vertrauen dem Game Designer und glauben daran, dass ein Videospiel eine Art von Bedeutung hat. Durch das Spielen wandeln sich ihre Erfahrungen in Faith um. Mein Masterprojekt ist ein Game, das diese Idee nutzt und Faith in seine verschiedenen Bestandteile zurückführt. Rätsel um Rätsel folgt der Spieler den Fusstapfen von Sisyphus und wird mit ungewohnten Kurzzeitmechaniken konfrontiert. Durch diese Mechaniken soll der Spielende verstehen, wie Faith funktioniert, wie Faith mit der Philosophie durch Suche nach der Wahrheit verbunden ist und wie Faith seine Erwartungen während des Spielens beeinflusst.

Starting point

Faith is the conviction of a certain belief. From this definition, we have a broad view of the theme. It can be related to religion, due to the "belief" part. It can be related to epistemology, because science is based on faith at his very basis (the mathematical axioms are a good example of scientific faith).

It is the contrary of doubt. Then, what is the frontier between doubt and faith? This is subjective and objective. It depends on the social environment, on the probability, and a lot of other variables. Being sure that the train will be at the right time is certainly objective faith, as compared to religion where the faith is more subjective. We can define this factor by the seriousness of a belief.

With the digital distribution revolution that happened recently, video-game creation has never been as easy as now. This opened up the question of video-game as art. A lot of question have been raised. Can video-game represent sexuality? Can it represent love? Can video-game represent faith?

Project's Goal

The main goal of my master project is to create a video-game with a preponderant focus on faith. Of course, this could mean going on the controversial side of religious, but there is more to this. From the core of faith, the game will play with the trust and the expectations of the player.

Current status

The current prototype contains three different stages:

- The Leap of Faith
- The Sisyphus' Myth
- The Falling Choice

The Leap of Faith is a very simple yet efficient integration of a puzzle that plays with the expectations of the player. The player is facing a jump pit where the normal reaction would be to try to jump. Of course, doing this is impossible, because the playable character does not jump far enough. The answer to the puzzle is just to walk and then an invisible box allows the playable character to cross the pit.

On the other side, the player has to execute some easy tasks before being on top of the jump pit. It is the main point of the Leap of Faith puzzle, because players have learned that falling in the pit is a failing condition. A hint helps the player by saying: "[...] Where failing is an option." In order to complete the stage, the player has to fall in the pit where he goes to...

The Sisyphus' Myth main focus is to ask mechanically and narratively to the player: "Is there an end to the game?" As Sisyphus, the player has to push a rock on top of a mountain. Meanwhile a narrator switches between random inspirational quotes and a narration linked to the main character and the player. The idea is to push to player to the end and to make him doubt about this end. I used several tricks:

- A countdown to a false end.
- False story revelations
- Philosophical questions

At each step, the player can choose to go back to go the the Falling Choice. This last puzzle is a pretty simple inversion of expectation. The narrator asks a very simple question: "Do you believe there is an end to this game?" Two pits shows the two different answers the player can choose: "Yes" or "No". If the player chooses "Yes" and did not finish the Sisyphus' Myth puzzle, he will be thrown back to it at the same step. If the player chooses "Yes" and finished the Sisyphus' Myth puzzle, he will be spawn again in the Falling Choice. Finally, if he chooses the answer "No", it triggers the end and shows the credits. The prototype (Windows 64-bits) is available at <http://eliasfarhan.ch/Faith0.2.zip>

Results of experiment

The first prototype (only containing the Leap of Faith puzzle) was played by 13 people during the exhibition of the #NotInYourMouth Master conference. I was recording the reactions of the players and analyze them. 8 people out of 13 didn't think they finished the game victorious. From those 8 people, 5 didn't understand they finished the game and 3 had a negative reaction to the end, thinking they had triggered a bad ending. Also, worth noticing, 3 out of 13 people triggerred gameplay breaking bug, meaning they could go in places they sould have not be able to go to.

The second prototype was tested during the Swiss-French Game Developer Meetup the 10th of June. 7 people tested it. It contained the three puzzles, with some little buggy behavior and some game breaking bug due to the large amount of texts to manage. The goal of this playtesting session was to see how long would a player go on with the Sisypus' Myth puzzle. 3 out of 7 went after the first false end and only one get until the final end. The other 4 were quickly bored, even frustrated after some steps of Sisyphus' Myth with the main reaction of being unvalidated.

Planning

- [10 June] Play-testing of the Sisyphus prototype in the Swiss-French Game Development Meetup
- [End of June] Confirm the full commitment to the master project compared to other project's topics.
- [Beginning of July] Begin research for an art style and set up Sisyphus' Myth as the main guideline puzzle.
- [Beginning of August] New play-testing of the Sisyphus prototype in the Swiss-French Game Development Meetup
- [End of August] Set up the music style with the musician
- [End of September] Begin the full production of the game.
- [Beginning of October] New play-testing of the Sisyphus prototype in the Swiss-French Game Development Meetup

References

- [1] Chris Bateman, *Game Writing: Narrative Skills for Videogames*, Delmar Thomson Learning, 1st edition, 2006.
- [2] Ernest Adams, Joris Dormans *Game Mechanics: Advanced Game Design (Voices That Matter)*, New Riders, 1st edition, 2012.
- [3] Philip Clayton, Steven Knapp *The Predicament of Belief: Science, Philosophy, and Faith*, Oxford, 1st edition, 2011.