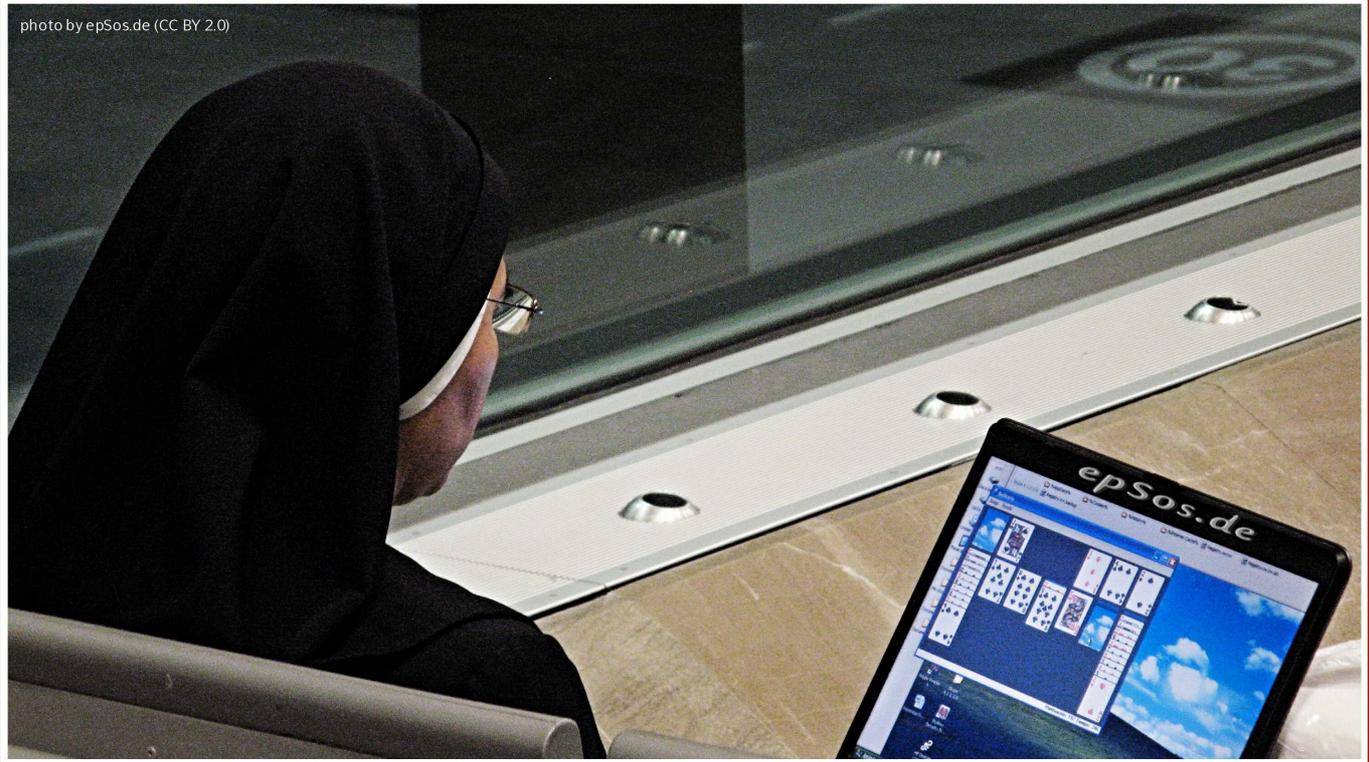




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Simone Heidbrink, Tobias Knoll, Jan Wysocki (Eds.)

Religion in Digital Games Reloaded

Immersion Into the Field

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Nephilim: The Children of Lilith

The Place of Man in the Ontological and Cosmological Dualism of the *Diablo*, *Darksiders* and *Devil May Cry* Game Series

Frank G. Bosman & Marcel Poorthuis

Abstract

Lilith and the Nephilim are not uncommon characters in modern day pop culture at large and in video games culture specifically. In three video games, the *Diablo* series (three games, between 1996-2012), the *Darksiders* series (two games, in 2010 and 2012) and the *Devil May Cry* series (2001-2013, especially in the so called ‘reboot’ of 2013), Lilith and the Nephilim are both named and (in different ways) connected to each other within the greater narrative of the games. In this article I want to describe the three game narratives in which the Nephilim and Lilith have their place, and in what way those three narratives are connected to each other.

The central question of this article is: what have the narratives of *Diablo*, *Darksiders* and *DmC* in common regarding the Nephilim and Lilith, and what theological implications follow from this common ground? I will argue that the combination of Lilith and Nephilim in these three game narratives is key for creating a mix of ontological and cosmological dualism in relation to a more complex anthropological ‘holism’. The three narratives provide a more or less psychologically convenient explanation for the existence of evil in the world, and at the same time take into account the experience that the human beings we encounter in our everyday life appear to us as incorporating both good and bad deeds, intentions, inclinations, traits and thoughts.

Keywords

dualism, holism, videogames, Nephilim, Lilith

1 Introduction

When Death, one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, confronts the demon Lilith in his battle to free his brother War from an unjust verdict, the following dialogue unfolds. Death: “You can come out now, Lilith!” - Lilith: “Do you blame me for hiding? You are Death. Where you ride no one is safe. Not even your mother.” - Death: “You are not my mother!” - Lilith: “Did I not create Absalom, mingling dust of angels and demons? And from that first Nephilim, were not the rest formed? They were brothers to the horsemen. Yet, when the riders slaughtered the Nephilim, only you showed remorse. (...)” - Death: “You, mother, must help me stop him [Absalom].”¹

Without venturing further into the great narrative of the *Darksiders* series (1996-2012) here, we may nonetheless assert that the most intriguing part of this little dialogue is the connection that it makes between the legendary Nephilim (from Genesis 6:1-4) and the equally legendary ‘night demon’ Lilith (from Isaiah 34:14). In *Darksiders*, Lilith formed the Nephilim ‘from the dust of angels and demons’, allowing her to claim the title of ‘mother’ of her ‘children’. Death, himself one of the Nephilim, is none too pleased with his ‘mother’, nor with the other Nephilim she created. The Nephilim, under the command of their ‘first born’ Absalom, ransack multiple planes of existence in the *Darksiders* universe, including the plane which was created especially for humankind, the mythical Garden of Eden. Humankind was given Earth to live on safely until the End War only after both Eden and the Nephilim (with the exception of the Four Horsemen) had been destroyed.

Lilith is not an uncommon character in modern video games. She appears for example as a succubus in the *Darkstalkers* series (1994-2013), as a siren in the *Borderlands* series (2009-2012) and as an enemy specialized in killing her victims in their sleep in the *Final Fantasy* series (1987-2014). She appears even more frequently beyond the field of video games. The Nephilim, too, occur regularly in video games. In *El Shaddai. Ascension of the Metatron* (2011) the Nephilim are human-like creatures who occupy the Tower of Babel. In *Champions Online* (2009) the Nephilim are half-angel, half-demon enemies, headed by Therakiel. And in the *Assassin’s Creed* series (2007-2014), the Nephilim are described as ‘the Ones Who Came Before’ and as the creators of the Apple of Eden. Both characters are frequently accompanied by (other) angels and demons with names such as Metatron, Lucifer, Therakiel and Abaddon, all of which stem from Judeo-Christian mythology and folklore.

In three cases, the *Diablo* series (three games, between 1996-2012), the *Darksiders* series (two games, in 2010 and 2012) and the *Devil May Cry* series (2001-2013, especially in the 2013 ‘reboot’), Lilith and the Nephilim are mentioned and connected to each other in different ways within the greater narrative of the games. In this article we want to describe the three game

1 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDOUeZhz0yg>, accessed 05-26-14.

narratives in which Lilith and the Nephilim play a role, and point out what these narratives have in common. Because both Lilith and the Nephilim arise from Judeo-Christian tradition, we will also give a short overview of the *status questionis* concerning them.

The central question of this article is the following: what common features do the narratives of *Diablo*, *Darksiders* and *DmC* have with regard to Lilith and the Nephilim, and what theological implications follow from these commonalities? We will argue that the combination of Lilith and the Nephilim in these three game narratives is key to the creation of a mix of ontological and cosmological dualism that stands in relation to a more complex anthropological ‘holism’. The three narratives provide a more or less psychologically convenient explanation for the existence of evil in the world, and at the same time take into account the experience that the human beings we encounter in everyday life appear to us as doing both good and bad deeds and incorporating both good and bad intentions, inclinations, traits and thoughts.

2 Lilith and ‘her’ Nephilim: three games

The *Diablo* series (1996-2012) is a single-player, isometric, semi-free, single-ending dungeon crawler with hack ‘n’ slash and role-playing elements that is set in a fantasy world and can be played on multiple platforms (PC, PlayStation 2). The *Darksiders* series (2010 and 2012) is a single-player, third-person, semi-free, single-ending action game with puzzle, dungeon crawling, acrobatics and role-playing elements that is set in a fantasy world and can be played on multiple platforms (PC, Xbox 360, PlayStation 3). *DMC: Devil May Cry* (2013) is a single-player, third-person, linear, single-ending action game with acrobatics and hack ‘n’ slash elements that is set in a contemporary world and can be played on multiple platforms (PC, Xbox, PlayStation 3). All games were published relatively recently (1996-2013), especially when the latest installments of the series are taken into account (2012-2013). All games feature thus a single player and a single ending. All games have been published for multiple platforms. The names ‘Nephilim’ and ‘Lilith’ are not spelled identically in all three game series, but the spelling has been harmonized in this article for reasons of clarity.

2.1 Diablo series: Inarius and Lilith

The mythology of the game lore in *Diablo* is the most elaborate of the three series and describes the creation of the universe in great detail. *Diablo*’s game lore is backed up by a much larger fictional

universe created by novelist Knaak (2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2006, 2007a, 2007b), who also devised the universes of Blizzard's other games *Warcraft* and *Starcraft*.

Diablo's creational myth begins with a single perfect pearl in which the supreme godhead Anu resides. Anu is the sum of all things, of good and evil and light and dark. Anu then reflects upon himself, and, seeking to be totally pure and perfect, casts from himself all that is evil. The evil or 'dissonance' that is cast out becomes Tathamet, the Prime Evil. Anu and Tathamet fight each other innumerable times inside the pearl, ultimately igniting an explosion of light and matter that brings forth the universe, while killing the two gods. After his death, Anu passes on to a benevolent place beyond the universe (thus suggesting the possibility that there is a plane of existence higher than Anu himself).

The name Anu is probably derived from the Sumerian and Babylonian sky-god (Becking & Van der Horst 1999, p. 388).² 'Tathamet' is probably derived from Tiamat, the Babylonian goddess of the ocean, who was killed by the sky-god Marduk, causing heaven and earth to be formed from his body parts (DDD 867-9). The eternal struggle between Anu and Tathamet closely resembles that between Ahura Mazda and his twin brother Angra Mainyu from Zoroastrian mythology (Boyce 1975, p. 192-228).

The Eye of Anu, known as the Worldstone, remains as the centre of creation and as the foundation of everything. Anu's spine cools down and forms the Crystal Arch, the birthplace of the High Heavens and its occupants, the angels. After his destruction, the dragon-shaped Tathamet gives birth to the Seven Great Evils, each formed out of one of his seven dragon heads. Tathamet's body becomes the foundation of the Burning Hells, the dwelling place of devils and demons. Tathamet's dragon form, in combination with his association with the Babylonian goddess of the ocean, resembles the image of the 'first beast' of Revelation 13:1. The three prime evils are called Mephisto (after Goethe's famous villain), Diablo ('devil' in Spanish) and Baal, the iconic idol of the Old Testament (DDD 154-6). The four lesser evils are Andariel, Duriel (which, ironically, means 'the Lord is my house'), Belial (DDD 169-171) and Azmodan (Tobit 6:13; DDD 106-8). The archangels, gathered in the Angiris Council, represent the five divine aspects of Anu: Auriel (Hope), Imprius (Valour), Itherael (Fate), Malthael (Wisdom) and Tyrael (Justice).

The forces of the High Heavens and the demons of the Burning Hells have been caught up in a millennia-old battle called 'the Great Conflict' over possession of the Worldstone. The Worldstone changes hands a number of times, until the angel Inarius and the she-demon Lilith, weary of the ongoing battle, steal it to create a secret realm of existence called Sanctuary. Inarius and Lilith (and other angels and demons that have fled) become lovers, and from their love the Nephilim (or 'Nephalem' as it is spelled in the *Diablo* series) are born.

2 Henceforth abbreviated as: DDD.

And, alas, we are of our fathers and mothers, alike and yet opposite, one decay and the other light. Indeed, the union of angel and demon created a third essence. And we are those children. We are the nephalem. We exist as half angel and half demon, yet fully a new entity. And because of our lineage, they loved us. And because of our difference, they feared us. Within the trembling balance between love and fear is the relation of us to our fathers and mothers. (Dille 2011)

When the parents of the first generation of Nephilim see that the Nephilim are so much more powerful than either angels or demons, they fear that their offspring will alert the High Heavens and the Burning Hells. Their unholy unions would be considered blasphemous and they would be destroyed when detected. Some of the renegades call for the Nephilim to be destroyed, while others believe they should be spared. Lilith is driven mad by the threat of her children's extinction and she murders all of her fellow renegades except Inarius. Eventually Inarius sends his lover to the Void and attunes the Worldstone so that its power over the Nephilim will diminish over time, and therefore slowly diminishing the supernatural powers of the Nephilim.

The Nephilim thus become weaker with every generation, eventually turning into humankind, which colonizes Sanctuary and slowly forgets its glorious past. Humans possess the ability to choose between good and evil, an ability that causes many angels and demons to fear them. Both angels and demons try to lure humankind into their domain (known as the 'Sin Wars'), using two different forms of religion: the Cult of the Triune (demons) and the Cathedral of Light (Angels). Eventually a truce is established between Heaven and Hell, allowing humans to choose for themselves.

The 'Cult of the Triune' is most likely a (hostile) reference to the Christian dogma of the Triune God, suggesting that Christianity is actually a false religion in the service of the dark powers of this universe.

2.2 *Darksiders* serie: the Four Horsemen

The *Darksiders* universe is not as elaborate as the *Diablo* universe (Marmell 2012). There is a universal belief in the existence of the unknown and unnamed Creator. The Creator is believed to have made the three 'kingdoms' that exist in the universe: Heaven, Hell and Earth. The Creator is constantly seeking to find and establish balance in the universe, but to no avail. He is never seen or heard from in the series, and some characters (such as Absalom) claim that the Creator has left the universe out of sadness and frustration.

Amidst the ongoing battle between the forces of Heaven and Hell, a mysterious force rises from the chaos: the Charred Council. This Council fulfils a kind of mediating role and was formed (by someone unknown, perhaps the Creator himself) to keep the balance of the universe. Both

realms seem to submit to the Council's verdicts. The Council itself is depicted as consisting of three demonically shaped, talking volcanoes or fire pits. While they are referred to as a single entity (singular form), each of the three councillors has his own particular character: the first is harsh and accusatory, the second questions everything and the third is slow and wise.

When a third kingdom arises from the ashes of eternal chaos – the kingdom of man (again it is not explained at whose behest) – the Charred Council – certain that humans will be very significant in maintaining the cosmic balance – gives to humankind the world of Eden. The Council proclaims that humankind must be left alone by the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of hell. Only when humankind will have become strong enough, will the End War (or Apocalypse) start, setting the cosmic balance once and for all. The beginning of the End War is bound with seven seals (a reference to the seals of the Biblical book of Revelation).

But humankind does not actually receive Eden, as the Council had proclaimed. Created from the mixed dust of angels and demons, the she-demon Lilith creates a new race, the Nephilim, to offer to her devilish master Lucifer, securing for him an enormously powerful fighting force. Lucifer ('light carrier') is traditionally the leader of the 'Fallen Angels' (DDD 246). The Nephilim soon run out of control and ransack multiple planes of existence, killing all of the inhabitants. When the Nephilim, under the command of their first born Absalom (DDD 230), hear that humankind is being given a realm of its own, they become jealous because no 'home' is being provided for them. The angels defend Eden, but defeat is imminent.

The Charred Council then strikes a deal with four of the Nephilim who are weary of the ongoing slaughter and disruption of the cosmic balance. In exchange for incredible power these four Nephilim, known from this point on as the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse – War, Strife, Fury and Death – execute all of their kin, thus saving humanity. Traditionally the nameless horsemen of Revelation 6:1-8 have been identified with conquest, war, famine and death. Strife and Fury are not commonly used to describe two of them. At the end of the game, Death, the most powerful of the Four Horsemen, kills Absalom, the leader of the Nephilim. The Four Horsemen now become a part of the seven seals with which the Charred Council has bound the unleashing of the End War.

2.3 *Devil May Cry*: Sparda and Lilith

The mythology of *Devil May Cry* series is not derived from any novels. All clues concerning narrativity are in-game, and the game includes more than two and a half hours of cinematography. The latest installment of the *Devil May Cry* series (2001-2013), *DmC: Devil May Cry* (2013), is in fact what is called a 'reboot' of the series as a whole. Capcom gave Ninja Theory the order for the

reboot, thus switching from an Oriental to a Western context of narrativity. For present purposes we will examine the 2013 reboot.

The game narrative revolves around two Nephilim, the twin brothers Dante and Vergil (both references to Dante's famous work, the *Divine Comedy*). Later on in the game the wise Vergil (spelled 'Virgil' in the game) explains the story of their common origin to his brother Dante, who does not know it. Vergil and Dante were born from an 'unnatural' union between the demon Sparda (possibly a reference to the famous Roman renegade slave Spartacus) and an angel called Eve. Sparda's former boss and blood brother, the demon king Mundus (Latin for 'world'), is so enraged by this union of heaven and hell, that he rips out Eve's heart and enslaves Sparda in eternal torture. The boy Dante (and probably Vergil) witness this gruesome event and is shown holding his dead mother in his arms, while angels are depicted almost in Renaissance style. It is an inverted instance of the famous pietà scene from Christian tradition, of which Michelangelo's is the most famous example. In the classic pietà Mother Mary carries her dead son Jesus; in *DmC* it is the son who carries the mother. The proportions are grotesque: mother Eve is much too heavy to be carried by a ten-year old child. But many of the traditional pietàs are also deformed: the figure of Jesus is usually shrunk to 'fit' onto Mary's lap.

The game narrative of *DmC* has countless references to the Christian tradition. The names of both Dante and Vergil have been taken from the famous medieval masterpiece of the *Divine Comedy*: Dante is the name of its author and main character, whereas Vergil, although not a Christian, was said to have predicted the rise of Christianity because he wrote the fourth *Ecloga* predicting the golden age of a royal child. Hence Vergil became Dante's guide through the circles of hell. The angelic mother Eve takes her name from the biblical narrative of Eden, chapters 1 through 3. The half-demonic, half-angelic family enjoys a time of relative peace in a mansion called 'Paradise'. Lilith also appears, this time as Mundus's demonic girlfriend and the bearer of his child, the son who is eventually killed by is eventually killed by Dante. Dante and Vergil are both called 'Nephilim', angel and demon in one. There even seems to have been a whole race of Nephilim, but they were slain by Mundus.

Because they incorporate both angelic and demonic traits, the Nephilim are the only ones capable of destroying the demon king Mundus. Mundus, presented as a trillion-dollar investment banker, effectually rules the entire world through debt. As an international super-banker he controls the financial system and everyone is indebted to him. Everyone has to pay him a large or a small sum. This is not only a poignant allusion to the financial crisis, but also a theological reference. Mundus does not control humankind by financial debt alone, but also by moral debt (sin). The notion of sin is closely tied to debt in this game narrative. Mundus is the 'Lord of the World', the biblical Mammon, a godhead associated in Christian tradition with money and wealth (DDD 542-3).

Just as in many works of fiction, philosophy and religion, the world as we know it is not the real world. In the case of *DmC* the ‘real’ world is the world of Limbo. In Limbo, reality as we know it is distorted, a circumstance that has invited all kinds of amazing level design. Ninja Theory has created a credible excuse to mould buildings, bridges, towers, streets, rocks and even music into a psychedelic and chaotic world where the eternal battle between heaven and hell is being fought out. Dante is dragged into Limbo many times to fight the legions of Mundus. Limbo, of course, is a reference to the theological notion of the *limbo infantium*, the ‘limbo of the children’. Many games feature their own interpretation of Limbo, such as *Limbo* (2011) and *Master Reboot* (2010).

As has been said before, Dante and Vergil are Nephilim, incorporating both angelic and demonic traits. This is mirrored in the weapons the player can use when controlling Dante, and in two kinds of grappling hooks, instruments that are unavoidable in any game that involves some serious acrobatics. The first kind of grappling hook is a ‘Demon’s grab’, the second an ‘Angel’s grab’. The first hook pulls something (walls, etc.) or someone (enemies) towards the player, while the second propels the player’s avatar towards something or someone. These names are not without theological significance. The demonic ‘grab’ is egocentric, centred on the self, making the self the centre of the world to which everything and everyone must come. The angelic ‘grab’ pushes towards ‘the other’, is directed towards the outside world, involves movement of ‘the self’.

Eventually Mundus is killed by Dante and Vergil. Vergil then proclaims himself the new master of humankind, hinting at a new dictatorial era in which the last two Nephilim rule together. Dante refuses to take the place of the slain Mundus, and after an epic battle between the two brothers, Vergil is defeated (but not killed). When Dante leaves the battleground his eyes glow red, suggesting some sort of dominance of his evil side.

2.4 Short summary

The historical sources for Lilith and the Nephilim as described above are very clearly traceable in the narratives and game lore of the *Diablo*, *Darksiders* and *DmC* series. In all three game narratives, Lilith is clearly a demoness, although with varying degrees of evilness. In the *Diablo* series Lilith is initially a demoness weary of the Eternal Conflict between Heaven and Hell, which she flees alongside the renegade angel Inarius. The Nephilim are born from their sexual union, gradually degrading into humans. It is not until the Nephilim become a threat to the cosmic balance that she murders all her fellow renegades. In the *Darksiders* series, Lilith is depicted as an evil spirit from the start: she creates the Nephilim from the dust of angels and demons in order to produce a super army for her demon lover Lucifer. The wickedness of her deed is reinforced by an implicit reference to the procedure God used to form human beings (‘from dust’) in the Genesis narrative. Lilith comes off worst in *DmC*: she is depicted as the evil, lustful ‘girlfriend’ of the demon lord Mundus,

and mother of his unholy child. She is the polar opposite of Dante's and Vergil's angelic mother Eve. Eve is depicted as loving and gentle. She sacrifices herself so that her children might have life. Lilith, on the contrary, is strongly associated with wild and demonic sexual acts. The child growing in her womb is a horrific demon, much larger than she is in his real form. Lilith is associated with evil, demonic powers, lust and sex.

All Nephilim are created by the mingling of angelic and demonic traits. Sometimes this union comes about through love (*DmC* and *Diablo*), sometimes it is abusive (*Darksiders*). In *Diablo* and *Darksiders* Lilith is indeed the 'mother' of the Nephilim, in *DmC* she is not. In *Darksiders* Lilith is only one of the many mothers of the race of the Nephilim, as Eve is in *DmC*. In *Diablo* Lilith is the single 'mother' (in the sense of an alchemistic creational process) of all the Nephilim. In all three cases the Nephilim are very powerful, capable of destroying the cosmic balance in the universe (*Diablo* and *Darksiders*) or, conversely, to regain that same balance (*DmC*). In one game (*Diablo*) the Nephilim are directly connected to humanity: human beings are just the weaker offspring of the godlike Nephilim. In *Darksiders* the only four remaining Nephilim, the Four Horsemen, are bound to protect humankind (and the cosmic balance) as part of the seven 'seals of the Apocalypse'. In *DmC* Nephilim and human beings look very similar, but no explicit connection is made. In all three cases the Nephilim must be destroyed: because of the threat they pose to the cosmic balance (in *Darksiders* this threat is actual, in *Diablo* it is only potential) or in order to restore it (*DmC*).

3 Lilith and the Nephilim in the Bible and tradition³

Lilith is described in the three game series mentioned above as a powerful she-demon and (in two cases) as the mother of the Nephilim. The Nephilim themselves are depicted as powerful hybrids of angels and demons, capable of disrupting the cosmic balance between good and evil. Both characters, Lilith and the Nephilim, derive from the Old Testament and were later reworked several times in Judeo-Christian folklore.

3.1 Lilith: demon and bird?

The word 'Lilith' occurs only once in the Bible, in Isaiah 34:14. The thirty-fourth chapter of Isaiah describes the desolation of the territory of Edom. 'Lilith' is named in a list of eight unclean animals, some of them associated with demonic powers, living in the ruins of Edom, indicating the level of

³ We would like to express our gratitude to our colleague Dr Archibald van Wieringen for his commentary on this paragraph.

desolation (Blair 2012, p. 68-73). The translation of the *hapax legomenon* ‘lilith’ has troubled translators for thousands of years. The Septuagint has *onokentauros*, a mythical creature, half-man, half-ass, borrowed from Greek mythology. The Vulgate translates it as ‘lamia’, also a mythical semi-deity from Greek and Roman mythology, associated with snakes and crimes such as the devouring of children (DDD 521). Other examples of problematic translations are: ‘lamya’ (Wyclif, 1395), ‘schrice owl’ (Geneva, 1587), ‘screech owl’ (King James, 1611), ‘night owl’ (Young, 1898), ‘night monster’ (Good News, 1992), ‘vampires’ (Moffatt, 1922), ‘night hag’ (Revised Standard Version, 1947), ‘night jar’ (New World, 1984) and finally ‘night bird’ (English Standard Version, 2001).

‘Lilith’ is associated with *layil* (Hebrew), *layl* (Arabic), both meaning ‘night’. And ‘Lilith’ is also connected with the Accadian word *lili* (singular) and *lilitu* (plural), meaning ‘spirit(s)’, also meaning ‘night’, especially in combination with the word *lilu* (Blair 2012, p. 26). Some scholars believe that Lilith is also mentioned in the epic poem of *Gilgamesh and the Huluppu-Tree* (2000 BCE), although her name is rendered there as ‘Lilake’. In this narrative a wandering goddess named Inanna nurtures a *huluppu*-tree. But a dragon, a bird and a demoness ‘Lilake’ claim the tree to live in it. When Gilgamesh hears of Inanna’s distress, he recaptures the tree for her, driving Lilake to the desert (Kramer 1938).

The Burney relief (which also dates from the second millennium BCE) has also been associated with the Biblical Lilith. This relief has a representation of a beautiful naked woman with wings and the feet of a bird, standing on two lions and flanked by two owls (Patai 1967, p. 208). However, no inscription has been found to make such a link plausible (Blair 2012, p. 28). Jacobsen has argued that the figure must rather be interpreted as depicting the Inanna mentioned above (Jacobsen 1997, p. 1-24). The same applies to the limestone plaque discovered at Arslan Tash (seventh or eighth century BCE). Some scholars believe that this plaque was displayed in houses to protect pregnant women against demons, but other non-demonic interpretations are also possible (DDD 521). Others have suggested that Lilith is named as a demon of the night in the Dead Sea scrolls IQIsa, 4Q510 and possibly 4Q184 (Blair 2012, p. 29), but again other interpretations are equally possible (Baumgarten 1991-92, p. 138).

In Jewish folklore, the apocryphal work *The Testament of Solomon* (first to fourth century CE) features a female demon, sometimes associated with the Biblical Lilith. This night demoness has many names and is particularly feared because she strangles newborn babies (Schwartz 1987, p. 343). The same image surfaces in Aramaic incantation texts found in Nippur, Babylonia, 600 CE (Patai, p. 211-7). Lilith is mentioned three times in the Babylonian Talmud. ‘Rab Judah citing Samuel ruled: If an abortion had the likeness of Lilith its mother is unclean by reason of the birth, for it is a child but it has wings.’ (Nidda 24b) ‘In a Baraita it was taught: She grows long hair like Lilith, sits when making water like a beast, and serves as a bolster for her husband.’ (Eruvin 100b)

‘R. Hanina said: One may not sleep in a house alone, and whoever sleeps in a house alone is seized by Lilith.’ (Shabbath 151b)⁴ The Talmudic Lilith appears to be a bird-like, long-haired night demon, trying to force herself sexually upon defenceless men (Gaines 2001, p. 16).

The image of Lilith as Adam’s first wife, so popular in our modern age, first appears in *The Alphabet of Ben Sira* (eighth century CE). Some critics regard *The Alphabet* as a kind of parody on Talmud and Midrash (Bronznik 1990). The content of the Lilith narrative is admittedly a little bizarre. The idea that Adam in fact had two different wives derives from the dual creation accounts in Genesis: it seems as if God made woman twice (1:27 and 2:22). The first female, Lilith, was (according the *The Alphabet*) formed from the earth, like Adam before her. Lilith and Adam immediately began to fight with each other, because Lilith refused to ‘lay beneath’ Adam.

Depending on the perspective of the reader, Lilith’s motive is ideological (she refuses to submit to a man, because both were created in the same way) or sexual (the text of *The Alphabet* is often almost pornographic). When Lilith flees her dominant husband, Adam prays God for help. And God sends his angels to fetch her, but to no avail. She agrees to have a hundred of her children die every day, implying that she is the mother of many (or perhaps all) demons. Later Lilith is mentioned in Jewish mysticism (for example in the *Zohar*) and modern occultism (appearing as a succubus in Aleister Crowley’s *De Arte Magica*).

A decisive development in the portrayal of Lilith occurred at the beginning of the thirteenth century, when the rise of Kabbalah took place in Europe. Until that time Lilith had no counterpart and it could therefore be thought that Adam and all men after him had been haunted by Lilith, but what about Eve? The Rabbinic interpretation knew the story of Satan riding upon a snake like a camel (the snake still had legs, because he had not yet been cursed to crawl on his belly). Satan, here called Samael, knew how to mislead Eve and, according to some texts, infused his poison in her. He begat Cain, who is said to have been conceived not by human means (Genesis 4:1). The problem of Cain’s being ‘from the Lord / heaven’ could be solved by emphasizing his demonic origins: he was begotten by Samael, whose name can mean the ‘blind god’, or the ‘poisonous god’.

These two traditions, that of Lilith and that of Samael, were combined in what must be regarded as the most aggressive and demonic layer of Kabbalah: that of the *Treatise of the Left Emanation* (Dan, 1995). It is this combination of Lilith and Samael that led to a wholesale demonization of the universe and even of human relations, such as that between men and women. This combination has also been used by games such as the ones described above. When only Lilith is mentioned, the older tradition of Lilith as haunting male persons at night is used, but when Lilith and her lover (i.c. Inarius) are mentioned, this demonic union between Lilith and Samael is alluded

4 The statement by Hanina may be connected to the idea that nocturnal emissions of semen generate demons, as can be found in Eruvin 18b.

to. The following excerpt gives an impression of this thirteenth-century Castilian Kabbalah, devised by Isaac the Blind:

In answer to your question concerning Lilith, I shall explain to you the essence of the matter. Concerning this point there is a received tradition from the ancient Sages who made use of the Secret Knowledge of the Lesser Palaces, which is the manipulation of demons and a ladder by which one ascends to the prophetic levels. In this tradition it is made clear that Samael and Lilith were born as one, similar to the form of Adam and Eve who were also born as one, reflecting what is above. This is the account of Lilith which was received by the Sages in the Secret Knowledge of the Palaces. The Matron Lilith is the mate of Samael. Both of them were born at the same hour in the image of Adam and Eve, intertwined in each other. Asmodeus the great king of the demons has as a mate the Lesser (younger) Lilith, daughter of the king whose name is Qafsefoni. The name of his mate is Mehetabel daughter of Matred, and their daughter is Lilith.

Note that there is a parallel between the unholy union of Samael and Lilith, of Asmodeus (featuring in the *Dibalo* series as Azmodan) and the lesser Lilith (daughter of Lilith), and of Adam and Eve, paralleled on the divine level by the conjunction of the male and female in God. The demonic Lilith and the lesser Lilith are constantly at war because of Samael's jealousy of Asmodeus and his lesser and younger Lilith.

In an extremely complicated digression the *Treatise of the Left Emanation* explains the relationship between these demonic pairs (from 'the left') through a reference to the Sefiroth tree. It may suffice here to point out that the upper Sefiroth contain the names of Sabiel, Peli'iel, Zequiel and Sagsagel. (old man). The suffix - el refers to a theophoric name. In a peculiar way, the existence of mythological creatures such as Leviathan is combined with the union of Samael and Lilith, not unlike the way the videogames described above combines Sumerian mythology with Biblical and post-Biblical demonology.

3.2 Nephilim: giants or demigods?

The Nephilim occur only twice in the Bible. The first occurrence is just before the story of the Great Flood.

When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. Then the Lord said, 'My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years.' The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also

afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown. The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. (Genesis 6:1-5)⁵

The interpretation of this unusual passage is problematic (Hendel 2004). Who are the ‘sons of God’ (*bene ha elohim*) and what is their business with the ‘daughters of humans’? God decreases the lifespan of human beings, but a connection between the deeds of ‘son of God’ is not clear. Is it a punishment? And if it is, for what crime? The children born from the union of the ‘sons of God’ and the ‘daughters of humans’, must probably be identified with the ‘Nephilim’, and with the ‘heroes of old’ (DDD 618). Then God sees the sins of humankind and prepares to destroy the world with the Great Flood, including – so it seems – the Nephilim. This leaves three (of perhaps four) groups that cannot be clearly identified: the ‘sons of God’, the ‘daughters of humans’, the Nephilim and the ‘old heroes’ (who may well be the same group as the Nephilim).

The second occurrence of the Nephilim in the Bible does not make things any clearer. When the Israelites are planning their invasion of Canaan, they send out twelve spies to explore the land and to assess the amount of resistance they will encounter (Numbers 13).

When the spies return, they report: ‘We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are.’ And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, ‘The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.’ (31b-33)

The reference to the Nephilim in Numbers supports the identification of the ‘heroes of old’ with the Nephilim in the Genesis passage, but it gives no further information. Some passages from the New Testament are frequently held to refer to the Nephilim: Luke 10:18; 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6, suggesting that the ‘mythology’ of the Nephilim was strong in the first century CE (DDD 619).

The etymology of ‘Nephilim’ is also far from certain. The word is probably derived from *npl*, ‘to fall’. Robert Baker Girdlestone has argued that it is derived from the Hiphil or causative form of *naphal*, ‘those that cause others to fall down’ (Girdlestone 2000, p. 54). Girdlestone therefore suggests that *Nephilim* should be translated as ‘tyrants’. Ronald Hendel takes a different stance, interpreting *nephilim* as a passive adjectival construction, literally meaning ‘ones who have fallen’ (Hendel 2004, p. 21-2). In the Bible the term ‘fallen one’ is used for those who died in battle (2 Samuel 1:19,25 and 27 or Ezekiel 23:37). The Septuagint, Targum and Vulgate translate *Nephilim*

5 All quotations from the Bible are from the New International Version.

with ‘giants’. The Septuagint also translates the phrase ‘warriors of old’ with ‘giants of old’. All of these translations are speculations and therefore very precarious. Most modern translations, such as the New International Standard, have provided a reasonable solution by not translating the word, but just rendering it phonetically.

Traditionally there have been two different interpretations of the Nephilim, both directly connected to the identity of their ‘fathers’, the *bene ha elohim*. Either the Nephilim are the offspring of the sons of Seth (the third son of Adam and Eve) or of the ‘fallen angels’. In his *Chronography*, preserved by Syncellus, the church father Julius Africanus (third century CE) explains the two options in detail:

When mankind became numerous upon the earth, the angels of heaven came together with the daughters of men. (...) Now it is recounted, as I believe, about Seth [that his descendants] are called sons of God by the spirit [the Bible]. (...) The descendants of Cain it designates as human seed, having nothing divine on account of the wickedness of their race and the dissimilarity of their nature. So that when they intermingled [the sons of Seth and the daughters of Cain] they caused God vexation. But if we take this to mean ‘angels’, we would conclude that it refers to those who transmitted knowledge about magic and sorcery, as well as motion of numbers and astronomical phenomena, to women, from whom they produced the giants; because of their wickedness came into being and God decided to obliterate the whole faithless race of living beings in the deluge. (translation quoted in: Stroumsa 1984, p. 126)

Dexinger and Klijn have concluded that Africanus was the first to mention the ‘Sethite’ interpretation (Dexinger 1966; Klijn 1977), but it is not clear if Julius’s sources were Jewish or Christian. In early Syrian Christian tradition this interpretation was held by numerous authors, such as Aphrahat and Ephrem the Syrian. Ephrem strongly rejected the notion that the ‘sons of God’ were angels, an idea that – he claimed – was very popular among Manichaeans. According to Ephrem, the children of Seth lived a pure and continent life on a mountain just outside the limits of paradise until they descended in order to unite with the Cainite women (Klijn 1977, p. 74).

The *Cave of Treasures* is most interesting in this respect. This work was probably not redacted before the fifth or sixth century, but it incorporates older material (Stroumsa 1984, p. 128). The *Cave* tells about the offspring of Seth, living near the walls of Eden on the Mount of Victories, who were seduced by the music and the ‘sex-appeal’ of the daughters of Cain. They came down ‘from on high’ to mingle with the Cainite women, and this led to the birth of the giants. When God sent the Flood to punish them for their abominations, they fled to Noah and begged him to let them onto the ark. Noah refused. And thus the era of the Nephilim ended.

Another, much older interpretation of the ‘sons of God’ stems from the book of Enoch which identifies them with the ‘fallen angels’. This story is widely known in the Christian tradition, although it is considered an apocryphal book (except by the Ethiopian church which counts it among the canonical books). This book, which claims to have been written by Enoch, Noah’s great-grandfather, describes the events prior to the Flood (Bamberger 2006, p. 16-18).

The angels, the children of heaven, see the beauty of mortal women. But the chief angel Semyaza (DDD 84) fears that his fellow angels will not dare to do what they are intending to do and binds them on oath. Two hundred angels then take wives and teach them charms and enchantments, root cutting and knowledge of plants. From these unions giants are born, who consume all the possessions of humankind, eventually turning to cannibalism. The earth cries out to God, who sends Uriel (DDD 885-6) to warn Noah of the impending flood, and Raphael (DDD 688) to bind Azazel, one of Semyaza’s accomplices (DDD 128-31), and imprison him in the desert place Dudael, to await eternal judgment, at which time he will be cast into the fire. The whole earth is corrupted by the works which the fallen angels taught. Gabriel (DDD 338-9) is directed to incite the giants to mutual slaughter, in spite of their father’s prayers that they might live for five hundred years. Michael (DDD 569-71) is ordered to bind Semyaza and his companions. After their children (the Nephilim) are slain, they (the corrupted angels) are imprisoned in the valleys of the earth for seventy generations. When the final judgment comes, they will be led off to the abyss of everlasting fire.

This story would find his way into the collective memory and imagination of the Christian West, helped by a number of New Testament references to 1 Enoch. The authors of the Epistle of Jude quote from 1 Enoch (1:14-15), and the authors of the First and Second Epistle of Peter allude to it (1 Peter 3:19-20; 2 Peter 2:4-5). The figure of the archangel Michael in the Biblical book of Revelation (12:7-9) fits nicely into the Enoch story, with Michael the leader of the angelic hosts, fighting a cosmic battle against the demons (traditionally associated with the notion of the fallen angels). In fact, even the Qur’an knows of the descent of the angels, there called Harut and Marut (2:102). The Nephilim also appear in the apocryphal *Book of Jubilees* (7:21–25), as giants, constituting the main reason for God to send the Deluge. Even in modern times the story of the fallen angels is used in popular culture, such as Karl Ove Knausgård’s novel *En tid for alt* (2004) or the *Axe* commercial called ‘Fallen’.

The reason why the Enochic view of the mingling of the *bene Elohim* (sons of God) with the daughters of man proved so attractive is the same as why it was rejected in some Christian traditions: it leads to a hybridization of beings. The giants are the result of an unholy union between angelic and human beings. The mingling of Adam with Lilith produces demons (Poorthuis 2003). There is a clear influence of Greek mythology – in which gods freely mingle with humans and animals – upon this hybridization: the resulting mixed races appeal to the postmodern bending of

gender and of identity. This crossing over of identities may also explain the bizarre manner in which divine and demonic identities feature in some forms of Gnosticism, probably from an Alexandrian background:

The chief archon seduced Eve and he begot two sons: Elohim, who has a bear face and Yave, who has a cat face. (Apocryphon of John II, 1, 24)

Likewise, the Testament of Solomon refers to demons with animal-like traits such as wings and tails, and dragonheads. Rape and prostitution are the violent actions that result in these mixed breeds. A fusion between these demonic identities and modern science fiction with its postmodern (and sometimes feministic) gender bending, as well as crossovers between man and machine results in the incredible universe of *Diablo*. Simultaneously, the hybridization of races prevents too strict an opposition between good and evil, which would lead to a probably quite boring story of how the good ultimately triumphs.

4 'You are not my mother'. Theological reflections

As has become clear by now, the images of Lilith and the Nephilim in the three game narratives were drawn from a very rich reservoir of images provided by Jewish and Christian tradition and folklore. If we compare the genotext of the Judeo-Christian tradition and the phenotext of the three game series as an intertextual relationship, there is more to be said about their connection than simply that they share certain features (Kristeva 1984; Toth 2010, p. 40). The game narratives about Lilith and the Nephilim (phenotext) derive from what is commonly found in Judeo-Christian tradition (phenotext) in a very interesting way: as a curious a curious mixture of dualism and holism.

4.1 Ontological and cosmological dualism

The three narratives provide a complete mythology of the games' cosmoeses, some elaborately (*Diablo*), others only briefly (*DmC*). All three game universes feature one or more forms of dualism, either ontological or cosmological, or a combination of the two (Van Schaik 2004).

At the beginning of *DmC*'s third mission, Vergil takes Dante to the playground to which their mother Eve used to bring them. Vergil tries to revive Dante's memory, which has been clouded by

their father Sparda in order to save and secure the lives of the two young Nephilim. Vergil explains the universe of *DmC* in some brief sentences .

Some things have always been. There have always been angels; there have always been demons. And they've always been at war.

Fundamentally, the *DmC* universe is divided into two different realms or powers: one angelic (good), the other demonic (evil). The creator of the angels and demons (if there is such a creator) is not named, nor is his absence remarked on. The conflict between good and evil is eternal, as are the two races themselves. And humankind is crushed between the two warring forces. *DmC* features both an ontological and a cosmological dualism in the strictest sense of the word. *DmC*'s universe is ontologically dualistic, because of the absence of any unifying principle (God, Creator, et cetera), and is cosmologically dualistic because of the eternal battle between entirely good angels and entirely evil demons.

The *Darksiders*' universe also features a cosmological dualism, as the two oldest kingdoms, Heaven and Hell, wage an eternal conflict against each other, in such a brutal manner that a neutral force (the Charred Council) must ensure the continuing balance of the universe. While the *cosmos* may be divided into two opposing forces who fight each other in an everlasting conflict, there is one unifying principle: the Creator. In the narrative of *Darksiders* all beings believe in the existence of the Creator, who is responsible for the creation of the three kingdoms and their inhabitants and the mysterious 'Old Ones'. These 'Old Ones' (giants in their appearance) have constructed the realm into which the kingdoms subsides. In this respect they resemble the old notion of the 'демиург', who forges the material world while looking to the world of ideas for inspiration. The Creator seems to have vanished, because he is not seen or heard from in the entire series. Nevertheless this concept of the Creator prevents the *Darksiders* universe from espousing an ontological dualism. There may be two cosmological forces, but they have been created by a single source.

As has been stated before, the cosmology of *Diablo* is the most elaborate of the three. The *Diablo* universe is halfway between ontological and cosmological dualism. There is one unifying creature, Anu, by whom all beings are created, both angels and demons. But at the same time this single godhead is split into two different beings, Anu and Tathamet, representing all that is good and all that is evil respectively. From Anu the High Heavens and the Angelic Council are born, and from Tathamet the Prime Evils and the Burning Hells. Cosmologically, the *Diablo* universe is dualistic, but ontologically this is far from clear. Ultimately, the ontological dimension is the strongest, because there is no higher unifying principle left after the split between Anu and Tathamet.

The ontological and (or) cosmological dualism of the three game narratives is used for a more or less 'convenient' separation of good and evil which 'solves' the problem of the existence of

evil. Dualism in all its many forms is a solution for the age-old problem of the theodicy, a problem that is particularly painful for monotheistic religions. If God is good and all-powerful (as all monotheistic religions, including Christianity, claim), how could evil have come into existence? If God cannot prevent evil or – even worse – does not care about the evil in the world, is He worth of been called God after all? Already traceable in the intertestamental book of Enoch, the idea of dualism has been very popular in multiple religious movements, such as Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism and Catharism, and even – in a milder form – in orthodox Christianity (Hanegraaf 2005, p. 244).⁶ Both cosmological dualism and the stronger ontological dualism are capable of constructing a very ‘simple’ universe divided into two fractions – good and evil; one of the oldest, most frequently used and most rewarding narratives of Western culture.

4.2 Anthropological holism

In *Diablo*, *Darksiders* and *DmC* the notion of ontological and cosmological dualism is mixed with a more complex anthropology which could be identified as ‘holistic’.

The Nephilim Vergil and Dante (*DmC*) are ‘hybrids’, a fusion of the demon Sparda and the angel Eve. Therefore, they incorporate both angelic and demonic powers, traits and dispositions. As has been seen before, Dante (and probably Vergil, but the game does not make this explicit), has the possibility of using both ‘blue’ weapons (associated with Eve, angels and good) and ‘red’ weapons (associated with Sparda, demons, evil) and two grappling hooks with the same associations. When Dante faces another wave of enemies, his eyes glow red, indicating some kind of demonic ‘possession’ or the (temporary) domination of the demonic powers over his being.

While the two Nephilim seem to be destined to overthrow the rule of the demon king Mundus, their motivation for doing so is not entirely unambiguous. *DmC* follows Dante’s journey through Limbo, hinting both at egoistic and at altruistic motivations. Dante wants to free enslaved humanity from Mundus’s bonds and, at the same time, to take revenge on Mundus for his mother Eve’s death of and his father Sparda’s eternal damnation.

Almost throughout the entire game Vergil seems to be the morally superior of the two. His eyes do not glow red when he is in danger, his voice is softer, his behaviour more sophisticated, his motivations more noble. Vergil wears a blue necklace, representing the angelic side, whereas Dante wears a red necklace, representing the demonic side. Dante lived his life prior to the events of *DmC*

⁶The body-soul dualism characteristic of these forms of Gnostic esoterism cannot, however, be found in the three game narratives. The distinction between body and soul is made in *DmC* and the *Darksiders* series, but they are not opposed to each other.

in a decadent, hedonistic fashion, while Vergil worked tirelessly planning to overthrow Mundus's empire. Dante seems more prone to the 'dark side', while Vergil appears serene and almost 'holy'.

This almost dualistic distinction between 'the good one' (Vergil) and the 'bad one' (Dante) is subverted at the end of the game, when Vergil reveals that his ultimate motivation for the destruction of Mundus was not to free humanity (as Dante had thought), but to take over Mundus's kingdom and power together with his brother. Vergil turns out to be no better than Mundus and his demons. It is subsequently Dante who fights his brother in an epic battle to preserve the freedom of humankind. The game makes it very clear that 'good' and 'evil' are not distributed according to appearance. Both Dante and Vergil have demonic and angelic traits, and it is up to their own free will to use their powers for good or evil.

In *Darksiders* the Nephilim are initially described as purely evil: they ransack multiple planes of existence and try to conquer Eden, which had been given to humanity as a place to live. The Four Horsemen are equally evil, because they betray their fellow Nephilim in exchange for enormous power in the service of the Charred Council. While War and Death in particular speak frequently about 'keeping the cosmic balance' (that has been instigated by the Council), it is very clear that acquiring power is a very important (maybe the most important) reason for their actions.

In the first installment of the series, however, War is driven by honour to redeem the fact that his deeds annihilated humankind by unwillingly triggering the Apocalypse on Earth. Honour, of course, is a virtue. But more importantly, his brother Death, in the second installment of the series, risks everything (his enormous power and even his life) to redeem the name of his brother, who has been falsely accused by the Council of setting off the End War. Friendship, brotherhood and self-sacrifice are usually regarded as good.

As the story of the second installment unfolds, it becomes clear that Death was not all evil even earlier in his life. When he and his three brothers killed their fellow Nephilim, Death kept the souls of the slain Nephilim in a green amulet around his neck. He shows signs of remorse for the slaying of his brothers by preserving their souls; he has hopes of reviving them again. He is kept from doing so by his fear not only of their wrath, but also of the threat they would pose to humankind and consequently to the balance of the universe. Remorse also is a virtue.

And at the end of the second installment, Death sacrifices himself and the souls of his fellow Nephilim (with the exception of Fury, War and Strife) in the Well of Souls so that humankind can be revived. Again, sacrifice is seen as a virtue. In the *Darksiders* series, as in *DmC*, the main characters show signs of having both good and evil traits, standing halfway between the two universal forces from which they were created. The Nephilim refuse to be 'pinned down' by the dualistic nature of their universe. Both heaven and hell try to lure humankind to its side (the Sin Wars of *Diablo*),

using two different forms of religion: the Cult of the Triune (of the demons) and the Cathedral of Light (of the angels). But to no avail: humankind keeps a middle road between the two.

These Nephilim are holistic in the sense that good and evil are intertwined in every individual. The Nephilim are an expression of everyday human experience. While we are living our lives, we encounter innumerable individuals (like ourselves), whom we experience and think of as morally mixed. Every human being does good and bad deeds and incorporates good and bad intentions, inclinations, traits and thoughts. Some individuals may have a greater inclination to either good or evil than other people, but most people appear to us as somewhere in between, as good and evil at the same time.

This anthropologically holistic idea can be found in many narratives of Western culture (Campbell 2004). The prototypical hero, from Spiderman to Harry Potter, from Luke Skywalker to Bilbo Baggins, has both good and evil traits. The typical hero has to overcome his own weaknesses and bad habits to become the real hero he already is *in nucleo*. The real battle to be won is to obtain victory over the self; this is necessary to defeat the (external) proverbial ‘bad guy’.

4.3 Humanity as the ‘third kingdom’

In *Darksiders* humankind is called ‘the third kingdom’, which lies somewhere between Heaven and Hell. And in the *Diablo* series humankind, as the degraded offspring of the Nephilim, occupies the same place in between the angelic and demonic forces. In *DmC* humanity is more or less the ‘battleground’ where the universal battle between demons and Nephilim is fought out. The Nephilim are the progenitors of humanity in *Diablo* and *Darksiders*. They are the forefathers of humankind, and themselves are some kind of prototypical humans or ‘supermen’, even in the somewhat less elaborate narrative of *DmC*.

In some respects the Nephilim of the three game narratives have a similar cognitive function as the angels in medieval philosophy and theology (Perler 2008). Angels were appropriate subjects of thought for medieval philosophers because the latter were themselves believing Christians, and because the angels could bridge the gap between heaven and earth. Most importantly, however, angels helped to explain the specific status of humankind. Angels are almost like humans, but not entirely. And this small difference enabled medieval thinkers to identify what it is to be truly human.

Surprisingly enough, the angels of the three game series do not have this kind of cognitive function. This role has been transferred to the Nephilim. Because the angels in the game narratives are part of ontological or cosmological dualism, they cannot function as a cognitive mirror for human beings, as they did in the Middle Ages. This is probably because the rigorous righteousness

of the angels in the game does not appeal to postmodern humankind anymore. We are more comfortable with the anthropologically mixed Nephilim, who incorporate – as we do – both good and evil traits.

Everything that has been said in this article about the Nephilim can therefore be applied in a theological sense to humans themselves, to us. ‘Born from angels and demons’ expresses our own experience that we have both good and evil inclinations, between which we can choose more or less freely. The motherly figure of Lilith indicates our postmodern (esoteric) fascination with the idea that humans have a divine origin. The Nephilim revolted against their parents, just as postmodern humankind is revolting against the idea of a transcendent reality. This revolution brings forth the idea of more individual freedom, but at the cost of losing the foundation of human morality. The horrors of the Nephilim of the *Darksiders* simply mirror the monstrosities of modern history, of which the Holocaust was one of the worst.

Lilith and ‘her’ Nephilim in the *Darksiders*, *Diablo* and *DmC* symbolize the morally and anthropologically mixed *condition humaine*, against the backdrop of a cosmologically, or even ontologically, highly dualistic universe. This has two advantages. First, this combination is rooted in the human experience of a morally and anthropologically mixed everyday reality, while, secondly, maintaining a highly differentiated universe as the perfect background for the game narratives. The Nephilim of the three game narratives are mirrors of human beings themselves, both in their desire for freedom and domination, and in suffering the loss of transcendence. ‘You are not my mother,’ Death told Lilith, but he is, whether he wishes it or not.

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