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The Word Has Become Game:

Researching Religion in Digital Games

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Abstract

In this article, the author proposes a multi-layered methodology for researching religion in video games. The author differentiates between five levels at which religion can be encountered in video games and/or video game research: material, referential, reflexive, ritual and meta level. These levels range from explicitly religious to implicitly religious, from game-immanent to game-transcendent, and from developer-intended to gamer-experienced. In this context, the author proposes a four-step methodology, which incorporates insights from both game-immanent and actor-centered approaches: internal reading (playing the game), internal research (collection of in-game information), external reading (mapping the intermedial relationships), and external research (gathering out-game information). Before doing so, the author proposes a new definition of video games as 'digital, playable (narrative) texts' that incorporate both ludological and narratological elements.

Keywords

1   Introduction

During one episode in *Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain* (2015), the game protagonist Big Boss sits in the back of an open jeep. He listens to a long speech by his archenemy Skull Face, the physically deformed commander of a private army. In his hands, Skull Face holds a test tube containing a contagious and deadly parasite that nestles on the vocal cords of its victims and that is activated when the host speaks a certain pre-programmed language. Speaking English, German or any other programmed language will lead to certain doom and death. When Skull Face raises his biological weapon, he utters the words: 'The Word became flesh.' This unexpected quotation of the

opening words of the Gospel of John (1.14) is remarkable. The quotation is appropriate to the context of the game, but its original meaning is turned inside out. The real question is: what does it mean? Why did developer Kojima interpose this reference to a well-known Biblical verse into a game that cannot be called 'religious' in the strict sense of the word?

Religion, however, is no stranger to the world of modern video games. In *Fallout 4* (2015), for instance, there is a little chapel in the town of Diamond City. Pastor Clements welcomes the player to his one true pluralistic church of the Wastelands:

> I suppose I should say this chapel really belongs to God. But since I never get around to deciding which God in particular, I guess you could say it belongs to all of them.

In *The Talos Principle* (2015), a voice from above guides a young robot in search of a purpose in life, identifying itself as 'Elohim', which means 'God' or 'Gods' in Biblical Hebrew and denotes the God of Israel. And in *Child of Light* (2014), a young princess, Aurora, is executed on a Good Friday in order to be resurrected on the following Easter Sunday, after having rescued a hellish underworld from an evil queen. The list is almost endless: a statue of the Virgin Mary surrounded by written supplications in *Hitman: Absolution* (2012), an enforced and deadly baptism in *Bioshock Infinite* (2013), an eerie gun-selling priest who is called Longinus in *Far Cary 4* (2012).

Although it is certainly not the largest section of the relatively new field of digital gaming research, the study of religion and video games has expanded quite considerably since 2010 at least. Through landmark publications such as *Halos & Avatars* (2010), *Godwired* (2011), *eGods* (2013), *Of Games and God* (2013), *Religion in Digital Games* (2014), *Playing with Religion* (2014) and *Religion in Digital Games Reloaded* (2015), 'religious game studies' has become a multidisciplinary field of research that has attracted experts from scholarly disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, religious studies and theology (Grieve/Campbell 2014, pp. 51-66).

This overview – which is anything but exhaustive – shows the richness of the scholarly research of religion and digital games, but at the same time illustrates that the discipline as such is only in its adolescence (Heidbrink, Knoll & Wysocki 2014, pp. 5-50; Grieve & Campbell 2014, pp. 51-66). The ludology-versus-narratology debate still lurks in the background, despite having been declared 'over' (Heidbrink, Knoll & Wysocki 2014, pp. 11-13). Game-immanent approaches compete with actor-centered alternatives (Heidbrink, Knoll & Wysocki 2015, pp. 67-79). I will return to these discussions later on in more detail. And there continues to be debate about how to define what video games actually are (Schut 2013, pp. 15-28).

In this article, I wish to propose a multi-layered methodology for researching religion in video games (third part); a methodology that differentiates between five levels at which religion can

play a role in video games (second part). These five levels run from explicitly religious to implicitly religious, from game-immanent to game-transcendent, and from developer-intended to gamer-experienced. Before I do so, however, I will also propose a new definition of video games as 'digital (interactive), playable (narrative) texts' that incorporate both ludological and narratological elements (first paragraph). By way of conclusion I will articulate two suggestions for further research.

2   The Definition of 'Video Game'

What is a video game? The answer to this simple question also seems simple enough. Virtually everyone, even non-gamers, has some idea what a video game is. Ask a random person on the street to name a video game and some iconic game titles such as *Pacman* (1980), *Super Mario Bros* (1983) or *World of Warcraft* (2004) will probably be mentioned. It is not even necessary to have played any video games to know that they exist and to grasp the impact they have on our society and culture (Lauteren 2002, p. 218). But at second glance, the question is much more complicated. What do these video games have in common? Games such as *Tetris* (1984) and *Final Fantasy XII* (2006) may both be called 'games', but 'what they have in common may in fact be rather less interesting or important than the ways in which they differ' (Carr 2006, p. 7).

Discussion of the definition of a video game has surfaced most distinctly in the so-called 'ludology-versus-narratology debate'. Ludologists such as Markku Eskelinen (2001), Jesper Juul (2001) and Gonzalo Frasca (1999) view video games (exclusively or primarily) as *ludus*, as a game to be played by players. Eskelinen: 'True stories are just uninteresting ornaments or gift-wrappings to games, and laying any emphasis on studying these kinds of marketing tools is just a waste of time and energy'. Narratologists such as Chris Hansen, on the other hand, approach games (exclusively or primarily) as narratives that the game tell the gamer, through the interaction between game and gamer (Hansen 2010). The sharp edges of this debate seem to have softened a little over the last decade, as both ludologists and narratologists have agreed that their debate is difficult to settle (Frasca 2003; Jenkins 2004; Murray 2013). Jan Simons has suggested, however, that 'the issues at stake seem to have been blissfully ignored rather than resolved (Simons 2007).

In 2008, Robert Buerkle (pp. 46-66) formulated seven differences between video games viewed as texts (narratological approach) and video games viewed as games (ludological approach). As texts, video games are fixed tangible objects, produced by a semiotic system, that utilize a one-way flow of information from source to author, address a mass audience, provide a definite object of analysis, imply past tense (evincing predetermination) and foreground their mediation. As games,

on the other hand, video games are activities that create their own system of meaning, allow a two-way flow of information between gamer and player, address individual players, imply present tense (evincing uncertainty) and suggest immediacy. In short: as texts, video games are written and read, and as games, they are played.

Buerkle's distinctions, as well as the implications of the narratology-ludology debate, suggest that every definition of the concept of a video game must incorporate both dimensions, which at the same time makes such an endeavor extremely difficult (Mukherjee 2015, pp. 76-77). Some scholars have proposed a very simple but effective definition. Richard Ferdig (2014, p. 71), for example, defines video games as all 'digital games played on a television or computer screen'. Others, such as Oliver Steffen (2012, pp. 249-250), have proffered elaborate descriptions of all the different elements that constitute a video game: they are simultaneously 'entertainment software', 'system(s) of rules and control' and 'sign-producing machines [with the] ability to tell stories'.

I wish to propose a new definition for the purposes of researching religion in video games; a definition that takes into account both ludological and narratological insights, and that distinguishes video games from 'regular' games. Video games are digital (interactive), playable (narrative) texts. The five terms that constitute this definition – digital, interactive, playable, narrative and text – need further clarification.

In the first place, video games are *texts*. The problem with the notion of 'text' is similar to that which bedevils 'video games'. Everybody knows what it means, but when you try to give a definition, the concept proves elusive. In the classical definition, a 'text' is 'any discourse fixed by writing' (Ricoeur 1981, p. 145). But in postmodern contexts, the notion of 'text' includes far more than just written words and sentences, such as films, paintings, clothes, architecture and – even – video games (Buerkle 2008, pp. 26-35). In other words, in the postmodern context, any object that communicates information in such a way that it can be conceived as doing so, and interpreted in any way, is considered a 'text'. The hypothetical character of the interpreter makes it possible to identify something as communicating information even though an actual interpreter does not (yet) view it as such. To put it differently: a text is an object that can in any way be interpreted as communicating information.

Video games certainly qualify as text, as Buerkle has shown. Video games are fixed objects, traceable as coherent, limited units on a storage medium. Video games have a discursive instance, that is, a communicative exchange occurs between game and gamer. And video games have exterior meaning, that is, they can only exist because of the intertextual relationship between the game itself and all other media it is dependent upon (Allen 2000, pp. 8-60). Video games are texts in so far as they are 'mediated sign systems and they are given meaning by their audience, not only through and

during the act of playing itself, but also through the extensive, intertextual culture associated with games' (Lauteren 2002, p. 218).

Video games are *digital* texts. As Marie-Laure Ryan (2006, p. 98) has described, video games are digital systems that have the following features:

1. an interactive and reactive nature,

2. volatile signs and variable displays,

3. multiple sensory and semiotic channels, and

4. networking capabilities.

The first property of video games in particular is very important, as Chris Crawford (2002, p. 191) has explained: 'It mandates choice for the user. Every interactive application must give its user a reasonable amount of choice. No choice, no interactivity. This is not a rule of thumb, it is an absolute, uncompromising principle'. Without interactivity, there is no game at all, and certainly no video game. The interactivity of video games can take different forms, as Ryan (2006, pp. 108-122) has suggested: internal (the player exists in the game world by means of an avatar) versus external (as in the god game genre), and exploratory (the choices of the player do not alter the game world) versus ontological (the choices of the player alter the game world).

In order to incorporate the issues raised by the ludology-narratology debate, it is necessary to add two more elements to the definition of video games: narrativity and playability. For narrativity, I turn – again – to Ryan (2006, pp. 8-9). She has organized the conditions of narrativity into three semantic dimensions (spatial, temporal and mental) and one formal/pragmatic one:

1. Narrative must be about a world populated by individuated existents.

2. This world must be situated in time and undergo significant transformations.

3. The transformations must be caused by non-habitual physical events.

4. Some of the participants in the events must be intelligent agents who have a mental life and react emotionally to the states of the world.

5. Some of the events must be purposeful actions by these agents, motivated by identifiable goals and plans.

6. The sequence of events must form a unified causal chain and lead to closure.

7. The occurrence of at least some of the events must be asserted as fact for the story world.

8. The story must communicate something meaningful to the recipient.

It is easy to see how elaborate role playing games such as *The Elder Scrolls: Skyrim* (2011) or *Fallout 3* (2008) meet these requirements of narrativity. But it is more difficult to maintain that narrativity is a prime feature of video games when we consider abstract games such as Chess of Go (abstract ludic actions), or games that consist of a simulation of real-life games such as soccer or tennis (simulation of abstract ludic actions). Ryan (2006, p. 194) tries to establish, successfully I believe, that even these abstract (video) games have a narrative dimension. Using the example of a hypothetical radio broadcast of a local baseball game, Ryan (2006, pp. 75-93) shows that it is almost impossible for human psychology not to interpret this game *as a narrative*. The same applies to chess or tennis. It is almost impossible for any person feeling at least some excitement about the game (sufficient to bother participating in or watching it), not to make up some basic narratives, at least in the safe environment of their own thoughts (Worth 2004).

Incorporating the narrative (or narratological) element of video games is not enough, however. We have to add the 'strategic dimension of gameplay to the imaginative experience of a fictional world' (Ryan 2006, p. 203). In other words: it is necessary also to include the ludological approach in our definition. Georg Lauteren (2002, p. 218) has suggested that video games must be viewed as 'playable texts'. We have already seen in what way video games might be interpreted as 'texts'. And quoting Huizinga's famous *Homo Ludens*, Lauteren has accentuated the 'game as contest' (Huizinga 1987, p. 9). Similarly to Huizinga, Roger Caillois (2001, pp. 9-23) has distinguished four types of play: *agon* (competition)*, alea* (chance), *mimicry* (simulation) and *ilinx* (vertigo). All of these can also be applied to particular video games.

We may conclude this section by formulating the following definition. Video games are digital (interactive), playable (narrative) texts. As a text, a video game is an object of interpretation. As a narrative, it communicates meaning. As a game, it is playable. And as a digital medium, it is interactive.

3   Five Levels of Religion in Video Games

After having established a working definition of the video game, we now turn to the phenomenon of 'religion' in the context of such digital games. Scholars have published on religious aspects of

individual games, such as *Dragon Age II* (2012) or the *Mass Effect* trilogy (2007, 2010, 2012). Others have studied religious notions and figures in video games and game series, such as for example on transcendent horror in the *Silent Hill* (1999~2012) series and *Fatal Frame* (2001~2015) series, on dystopia and religion in *Bioshock* (2009), *Bioshock Infinite* (2013), *Dishonored* (2012) and *Brink* (2011), or on the appearance of old Jewish mythological figures such as Lillith and Nephilim in *Diablo 3* (2012), *Darksiders* 1 and 2 (2010, 2012), and *DMC: Devilm May Cry* (2013) (Bosman & Poorthuis 2015). Other scholars have examined ritual behavior found in players of MMORPGs (Gazzard 2013, pp. 95-102). And some scholars have construed video gaming as a kind of religion in itself (Wagner 2012).

Ferdig (2014, pp. 71-77) has advanced a framework to negotiate the different ways in which religion can and has been studied in the context of video games. The four components of Ferdig's framework are:

1. game content: content explicitly related to religion;

2. game context: story, environments and situations within the game that explicitly or implicitly refer to religion;

3. game challenge: actual goals and presupposed outcomes of the game that are connected to religion;

4. layer capital: the religious element introduced by the gamer him- or herself.

Anthony (2014, pp. 29-39), on the contrary, has proposed seven 'religious game' types, partially based on classical Greek mythology and religious play (such as the Olympic Games):

1. didactic games: games by which the player is instructed about a religion (*Left Behind: Eternal Forces*, 2006);

2. hestiasic games: games as a religious celebration;

3. poimenic games: the 'divine' as an active player in the game;

4. praxic games: devotional games (*Leela*, 2011).

These first four categories of Anthony's classification system are not very convincing. The categories of hestiasic and poimenic digital games are particularly problematic, and even Anthony fails to mention actual video game examples. Moreover, examples of the first two categories are few and far between. The last three categories, however, are very interesting:

5.   allomythic games: games that explore non-existent traditions (*Mass Effect* trilogy);

6.   allopolitical games: games that 'hinge on digital social space, a community that exists only online, where identities are mediated by screen names or avatars' (*Second Life*, 2003);

7.   theoptic games: these games fall into the traditional category of 'god games' such as *Black & White* (2001) of *Godus* (2013). Despite its interesting nature, Anthony's typology cannot – as we will see – cover all cases of religion in video games or of scholarly research of them.

Based on these studies, and on my personal experience over the past three decades of playing over a hundred and fifty different games, I wish to introduce five different levels at which religion occurs in these games, ranging from explicit to implicit, from game-immanent to game-transcendent, and from developer-intended to gamer-intended. Religion can be found at the following levels (instances may pertain to more than one level) in video games: the material, referential, reflexive, ritual and meta-level.

Material religion is the explicit occurrence of (existing or fantasy) religion within the game itself. Examples are the buried church in the 'Our Daily Bread' mission in *Mad Max* (2015), the 'Church of the Children of Atom' in *Fallout 3* or the celebration of holy mass in *Assassin's Creed II* (2010). Every player will identify these elements as religious, whether or not they are religious themselves.

The second level on which religion may occur in digital games is **referential**: the implicit or explicit reference in the game to an existing religious tradition outside the game. The mass just mentioned in *Assassin's Creed II* is an example (this is a reference to the Roman Catholic liturgy), but so is Skull Face's reference to the Gospel of John ('The Word became flesh') in *Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain*. Another example of the referential use of religion in games is the 'Kyrie Eleison' mission in *Assassin's Creed Rogue* (2014), a clever and critical reference to the historical Lisbon earthquake of 1755, which has played an important role in the discussion about the existence of evil in Christian theological tradition.

Thirdly, there is the level of the **reflexive** occurrence of religion in games: reflection on existential notions that are traditionally associated with religion within the game itself. Many games, especially those with elaborate narratives, reflect more or less implicitly on the existential themes of humankind: friendship, love, sacrifice, birth, life, death, sin, salvation, forgiveness et cetera. Religions have been reflecting on these existential themes for as long as they have existed, and they are part of their 'core business'. Examples are: freedom versus predestination in *Kingdoms*

of Amalur. The Reckoning (2012), redemption and violence in *Hitman: Absolution*, or the question of 'being human' in *The Talos Principle*.

The fourth level at which religion can be found in video games, is the **ritual** level: players who are involved in in-game behavior that is traditionally associated with religion. Interesting examples can be found in 'Capsuleer Cemetery' in *Eve Online* (2003), created by players as an unofficial monument to dead clones, or in the case of James Payne, who dies of cancer and is immortalized as a Roman commander in *Total War: Rome II* (2013). This ritual behavior is not typically the result of intention on the part of the game developer, although this can be the case (as it is in the forced baptism at the start of *Bioshock Infinite*.

The fifth and last level at which religion occurs in video games is the **meta-**level, where the experience of gaming itself is identified as religious (by scholars and/or the gamers themselves). This level is often associated with the genre of the god game, such as *Black & White* and *Godus*. In her famous book *Godwired*, Rachel Wagner (2012, p. I) has considered virtual experiences – such as stories, games and rituals – as forms of world building or cosmos construction that serve as a means of making sense of our world. Such activities, Wagner has claimed, are arguably religious.

Of course, instances may pertain to more than one of these levels. The mass celebrated in *Assassin's Creed II* is effective on a material, referential and even a ritual level. It is a performance that can be easily identified as religious, it refers to the real-life Roman Catholic liturgy and it is even possible for the player to go in among the worshipers in the Sistine Chapel to 'attend' mass. And Skull Face's exclamation in *Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain* is not only referential (to the Gospel of John), but also functions on a reflexive level by symbolizing the evil nature of his plans to destroy the English language and everyone who speaks it. Moreover, in a much more complex way, the gamer of *Wolfenstein. The New Order* (2014) is invited (or forced) to restore the true cause of history by in-game utilization of Judaist religious notions such as *Da'at* ('knowledge'), *Yichud* ('communication') and *tikkun* (the 'restoration' of the cosmic order) in the game. *Wolfenstein*'s use of religion is referential, reflexive and 'meta' at once.

These five forms or levels run from explicitly to implicitly religious, from game-immanent to game-transcendent, and from developer-intended to gamer-experienced. The material level tends to be more explicitly religious than the meta-level. And while the material and referential levels tend to be intended as such by the game developer, the ritual and meta-levels are often non-intentional on the part of the creator. The players are typically 'responsible' for experiencing (and reflecting on) the reflexive, ritual and meta-levels of religion in any particular video game. The first two levels are therefore more likely to be game-immanent, while the other levels are more usually player-immanent.

4   Methodology of Studying Religion in Digital Games

Espen Aarseth (2003, p. 3), one of the founding fathers of modern video game research, has formulated three different ways in which knowledge about games can be acquired.

> Firstly, we can study the design, rules and mechanics of the game, insofar as these are available to us, e.g. by talking to the developers of the game. Secondly, we can observe others play, or read their reports and reviews, and hope that their knowledge is representative and their play competent. Thirdly, we can play the game ourselves. While all methods are valid, the third way is clearly the best, especially if combined or reinforced by the other two.

Aarseth thus combines the two mainstream approaches to game research (game-immanent and actor-centered), while underlining the importance of the actual playing of the game by the gamer/researcher. According to Aarseth (2003, p. 6), however, there are also ways of carrying out 'non-playing analysis':

> Previous knowledge of genre, previous knowledge of game-system, the player's reports, reviews, walkthroughs, discussions, observing others play, interviewing players, game documentation, play testing reports, interviews with game developers.

The two approaches, the game-immanent and the actor-centered approach, should ideally be combined, as both the information and experience received by playing the game, and the information and experience of other gamers (be they hobbyists, professionals and/or researchers) are equally important to the research itself (Heidbrink, Knoll & Wysocki 2015, pp. 63-79). Other game researchers have developed similar methodologies (Bainbrdige 2013, pp. 19-20; Masso & Abrams 2014, pp. 51-56).

In the context of researching religion in video games, I would like to propose a four-step methodology, which incorporates insights from both game-immanent and actor-centered approaches. The first two steps, *internal* reading and research, can be done more or less simultaneously, because both are done within the game world itself. The third and fourth step, *external* reading and research, can be done at any time, but are typically done during the later stages of the research process (Van Wieringen 2012).

The first step is **internal reading**. This deceptively simple step involves **playing** the game. There are many different arguments for a 'hands-on' approach to game research. In this phase the following holds true: researching = playing. This step may seem too obvious to mention, since no serious scholar would presume to write an article on a movie or a book without having watched or

read it. But in the context of video game research, a warning is not amiss (Heidbrink, Knoll & Wysocki 2015, p. 71). And, 'playing the game' means a lot more than just racing through the game to only one of several possible endings.

All possible features of the game should be tried by the researcher, or as many of them as is practically possible. This means playing the game multiple times (playthroughs), including main quest (mission) and side quests (missions), reaching every possible ending (where this is humanly possible). This requires quite an investment from the gamer/researcher, because even a linear game (without side quests and only one ending) can take up several dozen hours of play time, while more open-world games (with multiple side quests and/or multiple endings) can require more than a hundred hours. And games that concentrate on multiple players who compete against each other (such as *World of Warcraft*), or games without any fixed end (open-ended games such as *Minecraft*) can require an undetermined, possibly endless amount of playing time. It is for this reason that I have added the clause 'or as many of them as is practically possible' to the description of this step – researchers, like gamers, are only human.

The second step is **internal research**: **collection** of all the in-game information, for example (the list is not exhaustive), texts, audio, video, pictures, NPC stories, and such like. Just as the first step, this collection is part of the in-game world, that is, it is restricted to the digital world, created by the developer, 'inhabited' by NPCs and engaged in by the player. During the phases of internal reading and research, the player/researcher is primarily the player, who pretends during the process that there is no other world except the game world, and that no player is engaged in the game other than he himself (with the possible exception of other players playing together or against each other in the one game world).

In the third step, **external reading**, the gamer/researcher must become less of a gamer and more of a researcher. His or her identity as a researcher takes over from his or her identity as a player. The researcher/gamer widens his or her scope of the world *outside* the game, **mapping** the intermedial relationships between his particular game or game series and all other media that provide background information for the game, the game world and the game narrative. 'Intermediality' in the broad sense is usually understood as the medial equivalent of intertextuality, and it covers any kind of relation between different media (Grishakova & Ryan 2010, p. 3). But in the case of this specific methodology, it is used as a term to denote additional medial objects, usually generated by the game developer, to extend the narrative and the world of the game beyond the limits of the game itself. Elaborate game series such as the *Assassin's Creed* and the *Mass Effect* series are 'surrounded' or 'enriched' by all kinds of other media (websites, Facebook pages, novels, comics and the like), which convey information about the game world.

The fourth step is **external research**, the **gathering** of all out-game information that is not provided by the developers of the game themselves: articles by game enthusiasts and fellow game researchers; professional game reviews by specialized magazines and websites; interviews with the developers, voice-actors, and writers of the game and the corresponding additional media; and playthroughs and walkthroughs by other players on platforms such as *YouTube* and *Twitch*.

5   Future Research

The study of religion and video games is a young discipline that is developing very quickly. In this article, I have tried to contribute three things to its development: a new definition of video games as digital (interactive), playable (narrative) texts; a five-level classification system of the occurrence of religion in video games (the material, referential, reflexive, ritual and meta-levels); and a four-step methodology of studying video games (internal and external reading and researching).

There are, however, many issues that require further research. I will name two of them, which I think are pressing at the moment. The first one is the dominant reductionist or instrumentalist interpretation of religion in video games. As Kevin Schutt has observed, the majority of material religious phenomena in video games are instrumentalized by the developers to achieve certain goals which are outside the religious realm itself: to serve as a background story, to provide a motivation for NPCs, to ground the morality of the inner game world, et cetera. Schutt (2014, p. 273): 'Uncorrected by any contrary force, video games have a tendency to mechanize faith, presenting an impoverished vision of what religions mean to adherents'.

The second topic deserving further research is the question of religion itself: what do we mean by 'religion'? Although the definition of a 'video game' is heavily debated among game scholars, discussion of the definition of 'religion' in this context has been almost totally neglected. This is surely caused by the complex nature of 'religion', which therefore eludes precise definition, but also by the fact that most people (gamers included) do in fact have some kind of idea of what is meant by the term 'religion'.

In postmodernism, the phenomenon of 'religion' is described as 'a system of beliefs and practices that are relative to superhuman beings' (Smith, Green & Buckley 1995, p. 893), 'a search for significance in ways related to the sacred' (Pargament 1997, p. 32) or comparable formulas (Newman 1998, pp. 129-133). In the context of video game and religion research, other definitions have been used. Ferdig (2014, p. 70) has defined 'religion' as 'a belief in a god or group of gods or

an organized system of beliefs and rules used to worship that god or gods'. Luft (2014, p. 156) has taken a different approach: 'the ceaseless effort to negotiate what is necessary to construct a meaningful space'. But this discussion is far from over, particularly in the realm of religious game studies.

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Biography

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