

Preface to Part I

The dream is to Utopia as the starship is to the traveller in his desire to find his inmost self. It is a vessel to explore the unknown, to seek out possibilities beyond our current imagination, and to uncover and follow one's hidden wishes. The road leading there may be bumpy and plastered with hurdles, tough. One may get lost from time to time, and even hurt, since the dream is reluctant to give clear directions. Instead, its appearance is distorted in all senses and confronts the utopian traveller with a hardly comprehensible but fascinating realm.

However, despite all these challenges, the route of the traveller is one well worthy to pursue. For the dream hides a secret within all its misconfigured appearance and unconsciously guides the traveller in desperate times. The pathway towards this secret is thus a cathartic, emancipatory one. It not only grants the traveller a more thorough understanding of the own self—by letting him explore the deepest regions of his unconscious and having him confront his inner demons—but it also enables him to strive for something far greater. It is this universal desire for a better future that is valid for all of humankind and comes in the form of a regenerative wish for a Utopia.

Utopia, one may say, lets dreams become a reality, whereas dreams guide the utopian traveller towards Utopia's realisation. To fulfil such a wish in the empirical world is an entirely different matter, however, and may run into severe problems. But dreaming and the playful exploration of hidden possibilities are the first step.

Part I of this study introduces the reader to the philosophy of Utopia (or utopianism) and its manifestations in fictional narrative form. As philosophy of hope, Utopia can be found in many different real world attempts to create a better society but also in a more or less disguised form in representational artwork. Whether these fictional explorations come in the form of dreams of a future Eden or visions of nightmare, they all hold dear Utopia's desire and hope for the betterment of

society as a whole and embark the participant on a journey towards emancipation, to seeing the necessity for Utopia.

The genre of the video game dystopia is no different in this respect. Although such games involve players in nightmarish gameworlds, which most often seem beyond the possibility for redemption, they retain the notion of hope. Consequently, the VGD fuels players' creative faculties and involves them in a trial action and a struggle for Utopia in both the gameworld and the empirical world.