

Abstracts

Jeffrey Wimmer: Moral Dilemmas in Digital Games. How Computer Games can Conduce Ethical Reflection

Computer games can be understood as moral objects, as well as intermediaries of ethical values. Game narratives, rules, achievements or high scores suggest righteousness and virtue. Following this approach, moral dilemmas embedded in gameplay could potentially sensitize gamers in respect to real-world moral dilemmas and therefore stimulate ethical reflection. The article outlines and examines the peculiarities of moral dilemmas, which are applied in current game design.

Stefan Piasecki: Bearing the Cross with the Game: Why Religious Content in Computer Games Deserves Greater Attention

Traditionally, computer games are places full of myths, riddles, magic and also religion. Newer games confront players with the need to make moral decisions. Content and the overall range of experiences are no longer determined by predefined scripts or technical requirements and boundaries, but through the results of human and individual decisions made and actions freely taken in increasingly complex gaming worlds. Games are also no longer isolated places of entertainment, as the traditional boundaries between the (fictional) gaming environment and the “real world” begin to merge. Almost all technical appliances include and offer some form of games. Many computer and video games independently “report back” to players concerning ongoing events in their gaming world via smartphone apps, for instance. If the gaming experience now overlaps into the “real world” and is capable of influencing behavior and thinking, it is time to consider by whom and with which intentions these games are being developed. In a study conducted by the Berliner Games Academy in 2012, game developers were surveyed for the first time regarding their world view and opinions.

Melanie Verhovnik: It's all just a Game? Violence in Computer and Video Games and their Effects

Computer and video games are part of the modern media world, but also a repeated source of emotional public debates – especially at election times and when events such as school shootings dominate the coverage. Although computer and video games such as „Counterstrike“, which is considered a prototypical, violent, first-person shooter game, are massively played by teenagers and young adults, only a small part of that group becomes violent. However, the similarity to real events in comparison with the game stories does provide cause for speculation towards belief in a connection between fictional and real violence. This research field is well studied, although the numerous individual studies concerning the effects of media violence do not contribute to overall clarity. The paper summarizes the current state of research in this area, provides an overview of computer and video game content, their use and economic significance. It also presents theories related to the effects of media violence, as well as the corresponding empirical results thereto.

Barbara Müller: Media Asceticism: The Benedictine Use of Digital Media

How do people, who have deliberately chosen an ascetic way of life, deal with modern means of communication? As a part of an international empirical study conducted in 2013 on the use of digital media in Benedictine monasteries, the monks were asked about traditional guidelines, which determine their attitudes towards digital media and their use thereof. The vast majority of those surveyed see a positive relation between the Benedictine tradition and the use of digital media. As a consequence of their clearly prioritized religious values and their structured lives, Benedictines maintain a very targeted use of these media, which also represents a field of application based upon and designed according the principles of the traditional Christian-spiritual way of life. That a substantive example is being set is reflected through the many visitors who remain for a time in the monasteries. The use of digital media by monastery guests is one the questions which the project considered. Digital-Detox could also become an increasingly important service of today's monasteries for the world.

Alexander Filipovic: The Monastery as a Theoretical Structure. Manfred Rühl's communications sciences pursuit with organized silence and speech

Monasteries do not play a prominent role within the communications sciences, either empirically or theoretically. However, the social and communications scientist Manfred Rühl, with his defining contributions towards German communications sciences theory construction does, on two occasions, address monasteries in his work (Rühl 1993 and also 1999, Pages 39-47) and thereby accords a theoretically interested communications sciences examination thereof with a certain position. Wherein lies this theoretical meaning and what reasons might we have to keep these theoretical perspectives in mind?

Johanna Haberer: Who We Are and How We Are Seen. Authenticity and Staging from a Theological Perspective

The “native user” generation is developing personal identity in digital environments through permanent negotiation processes with a virtual public. The terms “authenticity” and “staging” thereby gain the significance of successful self-management: The making of “I” through permanent presentation. The article reflects upon the loss of inner freedom and potential for growth of the personality, due to the social pressure towards staged self-externalization, from a theological perspective. The game, involving the attribution of authenticity by means of a public and through constant effort with respect to virtual self-production, causes the “spiritual meadow” (Morozov 2013) to dwindle.