

Article

Disenchanted Faith—Religion and Authority in the Dishonored Universe

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Abstract: This game-immanent study approach and game content analysis focuses on the Dishonored video games series. The article examines how the topic of authority and religion are represented and discussed in the video game universe of the Dishonored games, where religion is referenced through explicit authority constructions. For comprehending the concept of authority and how it is created in the games, Max Weber’s tripartite authority distinction is used as a comparison for understanding the authority image’s legitimatisation in the game stories. The article explores how religion is reflected by the identified three authority ideals, and how the ideals are presented and constructed in the located main characters or agents. The Dishonored games can be interpreted as stories commenting and contesting societal authority models, asking who or what in which circumstances may have societal control and domination over others.

Keywords: game-immanent; video game; content analysis; Dishonored

1. Introduction

Mainstream video games today have reached, in design and mechanics, such cinematic proportions, that gameplay, narrative, and game aesthetics now portray extremely convincing new realities to explore. Not only video game systems and stories raise questions that correlate to real world issues (Bogost 2008), games hold an increasing economic and innovative status in society (Zeiler 2017). Traditionally, films have been described as mirroring the surrounding culture, as both representations, and offering self-reflection surfaces for the viewer (Pesonen 2016). This process may now be seen describing video game play. In this sense, video games have the ability to facilitate complex discussions, raise conversations, and comment on different societal themes, such as issues on religion. The focus of this article is to examine how the topic of authority and religion are represented and discussed in the video game universe of the Dishonored series, where religion is referenced through explicit authority constructions. For comprehending the concept of authority and how it is created in the games, I use Max Weber’s tripartite authority distinction as a comparison for understanding the authority image’s legitimatisation in the game universe (Weber [1922] 1978). I use the tripartite distinction as a model of how religious authorities can be located and discussed in the studied games. Regarded as one of the first early sociologists, Weber’s legacy and relevance is still discussed and debated today (Hanke 2016; Ringer 2004). His concept of the tripartite distinction, which I use as an analytical application, rather than a focal point for theoretical critique, provides an interesting counter companion to discuss religion and authority models, and how they are represented in recent video game worlds.

This game-immanent study approach and game content analysis focuses on the Dishonored games: the first game “Dishonored” (Arkane Studios 2012), the second game “Dishonored 2” (Arkane Studios 2016), and the third game “Dishonored: Death of the Outsider” (Arkane Studios 2017). The shorter (length in play time) dlc games (downloadable content) “Dishonored: The Knife of Dunwall” (Arkane Studios 2013a), and “Dishonored: The Brigmore Witches” (Arkane Studios 2013b),

are noticed as complementing the main story and characters. Altogether, the games vary in length, playthrough time, and how in-depth the main story is continued in each game. The main story is primarily forwarded in the actual games, but new characters may be introduced in the additional shorter downloadable games (dlc). For example, the main antagonist in Dishonored 2 is brought already as an acting character to the game universe in Dishonored: The Knife of Dunwall. In addition, the nature of one of the main characters, the Outsider, is reviled in story of the Dishonored: Death of the Outsider, the third Dishonored game.

The article's games represent religion through conflict with varying authority types, and therefore, the games problematise different constructs of legitimisations of power. For this reason, the Dishonored video game universe has been chosen for closer analysis. The analysis' focus is especially mainly on antagonist characters, the story villains, as they represent the opposing powers that are to be fought against in gameplay. Following Weber's definition of the three ideals of authority; charismatic, traditional, and legal, (Weber [1922] 1978), religious authority in the games can be identified within these ideals. The article asks how religion is reflected by the identified three authority ideals in the Dishonored universe, and how the ideals are presented and constructed in the characters.

The key characters or agents which I define in the games, who legitimate their status through religion, are The Outsider, the order of The Abbey of the Everyman, and Delilah Copperspoon. These operators are the focus of the analysis, while through them, the authority models which relate to religion are carried on in the game narratives. Religion in this article is understood as how the game stories present the concept in character building and game story.

I will also reference on depictions of members and followers of the located religious authorities, and how authority positions are reflected by the followers. A definition by Émile Durkheim for identifying religions is to acknowledge the followers, the collective's position, as formulating the religion itself (Durkheim [1912] 1995). In the Dishonored games, I see the followers of the religious authorities reflecting the leader's positions of domination, as well as creating a community. The explicitly named and organised religion-related groups consisting of members in the games are The Overseers, The Oracular sisters, The Eyeless gang, and The Cult of the Outsider. The antagonist-counter partners, the protagonist, and main player characters (the characters which the player has the option to play in the main games), Corvo Attano, Emily Kaldwin, and Billie Lurk, reflect the authority legitimisations, as well.

Mainstream video games may encompass varying cultural material, where religion is one theme among many others. Cultural values and beliefs are reflected widely in popular culture, where video games are not an exception (Love 2010; Oswalt 2003). Video games do not shy away from controversial topics in game stories or moral explorations in gameplay. Including themes on sexuality, gender or killing, religion has been and is a "hot potato" among video games and video game culture, which has stirred debates of appropriateness. So-called moral entrepreneurs or religious groups have criticised video game contents as not portraying their faith properly (Zeiler 2014). Popular games, such as the BioShock-series, Horizon Zero Dawn (Guerilla Games 2017), or The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt (CD Projekt Red 2015) also deal with, among other themes, issues concerning religion, whether it is linked to authority images or it represents a way of discussing belief conventions. In a critical sense, video games can be seen joining popular culture conversations on religion criticism by also making explicit claims on issues concerning religions, such as Dishonored games do, concerning ideas about religious authority and its legitimisation.

Religious authority images may be argued to have had overall problematic representations in popular culture stories. Philip Jenkins argues that the Catholic Church, as a historical religious authority, has, in Western popular culture film and television, been treated in a negative way. Church leaders have been associated with conspiracy and violence, including resemblances to organised crime (Jenkins 2003). As a story discourse the anti-Catholic narrative conventions can be seen continued in video game depictions of organised religions and authorities, as the Dishonored games show. Religion, concerning its institutionalised stereotypical form in video games, has previously been, as well, linked

as a motivator for violence and conflict in the video game stories (Perreault 2012). The video game narrative of criticising religious authorities is, however, closely tied to gameplay and the procedural nature of the game system and story conventions, and how narrative is forwarded in the games.

2. Game-Immanent Study Approach and the Dishonored Universe

Whether we comprehend video games as programmed processes the player learns to follow, or approach games only as stories where the player is seen as a reader, the active element of play cannot be surpassed. The play experience is a multimodal interactive experience influenced by game design, the game world, and the player's subjective reception (Salen and Zimmerman 2004). In general, Heidbrink et al. (2014) suggest that religious elements can be studied in "game narratives", "game aesthetics", "game worlds", "gameplay", and "gaming culture". To analyse game content is to acknowledge the researcher subjects' limitations, but also position oneself in a research framework. The recently established approaches have been the game-immanent and actor-centred study approach (Heidbrink et al. 2014, 2016). The game-immanent frame comprehends research questions that focuses on the game content itself, gameplay and narrative, as the actor-centred approach stresses receptive experiences (Heidbrink et al. 2014). These naturally overlapping approaches can also be seen defining the researcher's position towards their study material, which is the case in this article. In this study, I understand the utilised game-immanent approach also as a close reading of the game "text", a process which is sometimes used to describe a game content analysis (Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum 2011). Information of the story and characters I explicate in the following analysis are forwarded and to be found in the Dishonored games' main story events, gameplay actions, game character dialogue, video scenes, and game world lore, which may be discovered in various documents from letters to books, and heard from "audiographs" situated the game world. In this chapter, I also demonstrate the games' story for comprehension, where and how the tripartite distinctions may be compared and read.

However, the Dishonored games challenge a general game content reading, while gameplay (play strategies and styles used to proceed in the game), is tied to different narrative outcomes. The game reading of the Dishonored games is heavily influenced by subjective play while the altering narrative options, and ultimately, game endings are determined through the player's individual choices. Although the main narrative ending outcomes are limited only to two different main endings, a positive or negative ending (varying slightly in a third ending if certain characters were killed), and the final video scenes may vary based on the actions of the player during the game (Dishonored Wiki 2018). Choices in the game narrative outcomes and options are, today, popular traits in video games (Boyan et al. 2015), while they are seen pleasurable and empowering to the player (Eichner 2014).

The first Dishonored games motif: "Revenge Solves Everything" can be seen as a question defining gameplay for the player—does, indeed, revenge solve everything? The Dishonored games represent a style of branching video game stories, which means that the narratives alter along different gameplay paths that are chosen by the player (Lebowitz and Klug 2011). In the Dishonored games, the player may choose to use a low-chaos or high-chaos gameplay path, meaning that the game presents options for killing hostile characters or to find other ways of proceeding in the game story. These taken paths affect the amount of reoccurring hostile characters or environmental hazards in the game worlds, where low-chaos results in a less hostile world, and high-chaos in a hostile one. The chaos count also affects how the ending story unfolds, altering from an unhappy to a positive one. This means that on the high-chaos path, the ending video scenes depict the protagonist to be a revengeful and aggressive victor, as the low-chaos result describes a merciful and just protagonist. The games motif, the preliminary question, can therefore, in a reflective sense, have different answers concerning how the games are played and what choices the player makes. The player may self-reflect, while playing, if revenge is the gameplay option of choice, or is a more altruistic, non-lethal path possible.

In genre, which in video games can describe gameplay features or storytelling conventions, the Dishonored games situate as first-person shooters and stealth games, where hiding, using the environment, or assassinations are strategic traits used to proceed in the games. The aesthetic

environment of the Dishonored games situate them to a retro future genre, a more technically developed historical environment than their assumed age (Bosman 2014). Even though the game worlds are situated at the end of 1800, they are enhanced with futuristic steam and metal innovations regarding weaponry, means of transportation, and architectural housing infrastructures. The game environments give the impression of a culturally and temporally European Victorian style harbour city milieu, but with some distinct advances from factual historical portrayals. Dishonored has been referenced as “neo-Victorian” in visual style (Hanson 2016).

The whole main story of Dishonored is tied to protagonist and player characters Corvo Attano and Emily Kaldwin, beginning from the grey harbour city of Dunwall in the first Dishonored game. In the rat plague-infested city of Dunwall, common people live in misery, as the city elite wine and dine. Brick walls and street corners are garnished by catchphrase graffiti that underline the societal segregation such as “Send us Food not Bullets”. Organised crime gangs control the city’s black market, handling smuggling and extortion. A religious militant order, called The Abbey of the Everyman, upholds the law and marches the streets, observing and disciplining anyone using or worshipping unorthodox magic, especially magic originating from the deity Outsider. In the world of Dishonored, magical forces or deities are not framed strictly as supernatural phenomena, although there is only one worshipped deity, the Outsider. The story of the Outsider or his origins are not explicated in the first game, while there he is mainly referenced among the common people as a mystical saviour who is the object of folk beliefs. The Outsider is, though, a major factor in helping chosen individuals in their lives by giving them the “the Outsider’s mark”, and granting magical abilities, which is where the protagonist characters Corvo and Emily receive their powers.

In the first game’s story, the player character is Corvo, a bodyguard for the Royal Empress of Dunwall Jessamina Kaldwin. The game begins with the assassination of the Empress, and Corvo is framed for her death. Corvo’s goal is to escape his accusers, find out who is really behind the assassination, and save the kidnapped Empress’s daughter Emily. During the events The Abbey of the Everyman’s leader, the Lord Regent has taken reign over Dunwall, which tightens the orders’ religious soldiers, and The Overseers’ activity in the streets. In the beginning, Corvo encounters the Outsider, who sees Corvo as an interesting subject to help. The varying aiding supernatural powers that Corvo receives are, for example, the Blink action. With this function, Corvo is able to move fast over long distances or heights. From time to time, the Outsider returns to look over Corvo narrating, in the video cutscenes, the previous gameplay options, whether they were chosen towards low-chaos or high-chaos options—killing enemies or proceeding in stealth.

During the first game and its following chronological dlc-games Dishonored: The Knife of Dunwall, and Dishonored: The Brigmore Witches, it is reviled that the Outsider has granted magical abilities to many others. The so called “Knife of Dunwall”, the assassin leader Daud, had been bestowed these abilities as well, but chose to use them for his own benefit. The Brigmore witch leader Delilah Copperspoon, was rewarded these abilities too, but turned them into her own brutal campaign to become the next sovereign. The second Dishonored game, Dishonored 2, centres on Delilah’s endeavour, while the protagonist aims to stop her plans.

The second game takes place in the same Dishonored universe, but mainly in another harbour city in the south of the Empire called Karnaca on the Island of Serkonos, and 15 years later from the first games’ events. The sandy and windy city of Karnaca is built similarly as Dunwall, having the same elements portraying miserable life for the common folk and a more glamorous one for the city elite. Graffiti texts on the walls tell the same story of mistrust in city officials: “No one will keep us from death”. The Overseers and soldiers watch the streets, and more fighting gangs lurk in alley corners. The rat plague is now the bloodfly infestation, and more people are shown homeless, but the presence of the Outsider is less essential.

In Dishonored 2, the player has the gameplay option of not choosing The Outsider’s gift of supernatural abilities into the game. In this case, the gameplay would be executed without the extra abilities, making the gameplay very different, using only weapons and the protagonist’s physical skills.

In the game, the player has also now the choice of playing with Corvo as the player character or to choose his daughter, who has now grown to be the Empress Emily Kaldwin. The events begin again by a coup, in which according to the player's choice, Corvo or Emily, is imprisoned and the one must save the other and stop the coup—stop the antagonist character Delilah. Now, the game motif stands: "Take Back What's Yours." The player has, again, the option of low-chaos or high-chaos gameplay, resulting in an according story outcome in similar branching paths.

Whether playing Emily or Corvo, the characters enter Karnaca with awe when they see the state of the city. They talk in game dialogue: how could have they been so blind as not to realise the poor conditions of people and how local leaders have misused their power? This retrospective viewpoint emphasises the game's ways of building authority images through societal tensions. Authority is pinned with responsibility, or the lack of it, where I see the image of religious authority is also placed for discussion.

Compared to the first game, in *Dishonored 2*, The Overseers and The Abbey of Everyman are referred to in game dialogue as bringing order to people's lives in a positive manner. The orders—dogmatic scriptures called "The Seven Strictures"—are even said, in game dialogue, to bring comfort to some. *Dishonored 2* expands, also, on the story of the orders' presence in the game worlds, while now a sisterhood, The Oracular sisters' division is said to reside in the Island area. In the second *Dishonored* game, the antagonist characters are not only hostile Overseers, but consisting of a new group of all female witches led by the coup leader Delilah Copperspoon. As the game's main antagonist, Delilah's plan is to become an immortal sovereign for all to worship eternally. The player character has the option in the game finale to kill Delilah in a hostile way, or to find a non-lethal solution for her.

The third *Dishonored* game, *Dishonored: Death of the Outsider*, is a sequel to *Dishonored 2*, continuing the main narrative by expanding and focusing on the Outsider's story. Events, which occur a few months after *Dishonored 2*'s ending, are shown through the previous supporting character (now protagonist) and player character, Billie Lurk. Billie is reviled already in *Dishonored 2* as the pseudonym Megan Foster, and to have been a part of Daud's assassination group while the Empress mother was killed in the first *Dishonored* game. Now Billie tries to atone her past by beginning a mission to save Daud, who has been in hiding for many years. After finding Daud, he asks for one last favour—to kill the Outsider. Daud is convinced that the Outsider deity, in his words, "the black-eyed bastard", is the reason for all the previous havoc and chaos in the Empire which needs to stop, and Billie feels obliged to help. Even though she is not granted the Outsider's mark, Billie finds magical artefacts which make her supernaturally powerful. She begins investigating different locations for clues where the Outsider could be in Karnaca, where the events take place. She finds out that a criminal gang called The Eyeless, who as well as running a private club, manufacture bonecharms, a sort of talisman for magical purposes. She also finds out that the gang is actually an organisation for the lowest members of a religious cult that was formed around the deity itself. Billie sets out to find the location of The Cult, since they could lead her to the Outsider. The Cult, as referenced in the game, is not only interested in the deity, and are more focused in a supposed other realm called the Void. The Cult believes that the Void is a supernatural and magical plane which is inhabited by the dead, but where the living may visit or draw powers from. As magic is considered a plausible force in the *Dishonored* universe, the Void's essence and powers are shown studied and "theologically", investigated by the cultists in the third game. When Billie reaches the cultist's hideout, blackboards, a vast library, and school desks are to be found in the environment. The Cult is convinced that magical properties and eternal life can be harnessed from the forces of the Void, where the Outsider is also believed to have originated from. During the game, Billie may, in gameplay, react to the world in stealth or in a lethal way, but the story finale—killing the Outsider or to deal with him in a non-lethal way—may be chosen at the very end, as Billie reaches the Void itself (Thielenhaus 2017).

3. Tripartite Ideals of Authority and the Characters of Dishonored

The story of the Dishonored games circulates around power struggles in a societal scale; who can dominate, and how is it justified. Especially in the formulation of the main located agents, The Outsider, the order of The Abbey of the Everyman, and Delilah Copperspoon, the authority ideals concerning religious authority are carried on in the games. The tripartite authority model by Max Weber may be used to examine the construction of these characters, and locate depictions of religious authorities.

Max Weber (1864–1920) a German historian and social scientist, is considered as a classic in the fields of sociology and sociology of religion. He is most known for his understanding approach in humanities, and his pioneering work on examining societal structures, authorities, work ethics, and religion in society. Weber argued that religion is not merely a representation of humanity, but a force and action of its own, causing societal changes and developments. Especially his work on Calvinist Protestantism led to the conclusion that its ethics of individualism, obedience to hard work, and obedience to authorities paved the basis for Western capitalism. His idea was that religion and individual motives would reside in a dynamic relation with social constructions, which may, in time, lead to societal changes (Bowie 2008; Davie 2008). Even though the plausibility of this framework can be regarded today as applicable, Weber's thoughts on the advancements of Western capitalism and rationalism may be debated (Ringer 2004).

His notable work consisted of concepts explaining social and economy structures, where the three-part model was formulated, explaining how authority is legitimised in societies. The three ideal types of authority, which may be found in Weber's "Economy and Society", were built on Weber's understandings of historical authority depictions. According to Kieran Allen, Weber was not, in fact, as much interested in how domination and power were achieved, as how power was maintained. According to Weber, the use of power became visible in the dynamics of the one in command and the one being ruled, where a natural desired contract of obedience was formed. The followers of the one leading would obey the contract as a "valid norm", which Allen points out to be the most acclaimed definition on the formulations of authority legitimations in Weber's work. Even though, according to Allen, Weber did not focus on the aspect of economic necessity and domination, and he assumed that in time, domination generates legitimacy. The aspect of survival may also be seen cultivating authorising positions, when tied to distribution of economic resources (Allen 2004).

Authority and domination, by Weber, was understood as regarding the structural governance of economic resources, such as the positions of banks or the distribution of natural resources, as Allen explains. On the other hand, domination meant also an official governance and distribution of non-economic resources, such as referenced to armies and state officials, which Weber concentrates on in the tripartite distinction—the three ideals. The ideal types of authority; traditional, charismatic, and legal, reflect societal structures of authority divisions. The traditional ideal of authority derives from cultural customs and age-old conventions founded on the continual belief in them. Allen references that Weber's traditional authority ideal may be found in the description of a tribal chief or feudal leader. The charismatic authority ideal may be found in the domination of a heroic persona or appealing, "charismatic" figure. This may manifest in the positions of a warrior, a prophet, or for example, a religious leader, according to Allen. Weber himself describes the charismatic authority, also defining through "supernatural" or "superhuman" qualities (Weber [1922] 1978). The legal authority ideal references that domination is gained from trust in official rules, which appear among state offices and bureaucrats (Allen 2004).

In the Dishonored universe, authority can be located in similar distinctions. Authority is seen in the city images, where the divide is visible in the examples of how the protagonist characters, common people, the elite, state soldiers, and religious leaders react to one another. The games contest the three ideals in creating conflict and power struggles between these actors mentioned above, especially among the protagonist and antagonist characters. The game story of conflict; the fight against these authorities, mark the antagonist characters—the authority that demands resistance as a premise for the story. By these contested authority legitimisations, the games raise the question of what can

be plausible grounds for domination, especially regarding religious authority. The games may be seen asking, are these authority ideals worth the obedience and given legitimisations, or should the conventional norms of domination be challenged? The contest of these authority ideals is rooted in the main story events, as previously discussed, where dilemmas of good leadership and taking responsibility of the ones being ruled also arise. The authority ideals are contested mainly by the antagonist characters or agents, which I examine here further, reflecting on the previously discussed game story.

3.1. The Abbey of the Everyman; Tradition and Legality as Authorities

The organized, state empowered religion of the Dishonored universe The Abbey of the Everyman begins, in the first game, as an ultimate evil and fanatically-led religious group, who watches and controls common people by denying religious plurality, and endorsing the order's own ways. The order's status is shown in The Overseer brothers' assignments to hunt magical artefacts or monitor citizens' lives, if they are seen as heretic, as referenced in the games. All beliefs or rituals connected to the Outsider are seen as foul. In game dialogue, the Overseers might even comment on the player character's heretic ways, as they bare The Outsiders' mark. In the first game, the player learns that for repelling heresy, The Overseers have developed a technical musical device to block the use of supernatural powers. The device resembles an organ grinder, while the sound prevents the player character's actions if they are too close to the device. In addition, The Overseers outfits' consist of an armoury and weapons, emphasizing their militant image. The atmosphere towards The Abbey, as it is sometimes shortly referenced in the Dishonored games, changes though in the second game, while another more powerful antagonist is set as the main target for the player character's fight. In the second game, now, the reigning Empress, Emily Kaldwin, is shown to have worked together with The Abbey to bring stability and protection to the common people after the first game's events, and has now defeated the rat plague. In game dialogue, it may be heard The Overseers' reference to The Abbey as something to be "served", or The Abbey may be hoped to "give blessings" to someone. Although the second game consists of Emily trying to gain back her reign and fighting against the hostile Overseers, she (if chosen as the player character) contemplates in game dialogue The Abbey bringing at least peace to people when Delilah's actions are seen even more monstrous.

The third game expands on The Abbey of the Everyman's position and actions in the Empire. During Billie's movements in the city, public announcements may be heard where it is reminded that citizens should regularly attend The Abbey's sermons for moral guidance. The announcements also notify that neighbourly vigilance is preferable, and all unordinary activities are to be reported. These public notices may be seen as mediating a sense of fear and worry in the city among people. In the third game, it is also revealed that The Oracular sisters and Overseer brothers do not converse with one another, and the sisters are depicted to live more isolated from city life. The sisters, who tie their eyes with cloth to be more intuitively immersed with their surroundings, declare prophecies, which are nevertheless seen as an ultimate authority within The Abbey.

The Abbey's existence is at least shown as controversial in the Dishonored games, while from hostile beginnings, The Abbey's depiction changes and broadens to be shown including aims to stabilise the society after disastrous events. In the third game, The Oracular sisters and The Overseers join forces and work together to investigate and purge the remaining heresy, as they call the mess that Delilah and her witches made in Karnaca during the second game's events. However, the investigations are far from merciful, regarding the captured witches. The inquisition like research methods, resemble torture. In one of the third game's side stories, a captured witch may be found in one of The Overseer's torture cellars. She begs Billie for her life, and the player may choose how to deal with the situation, to set her free or leave her be.

The Abbey more or less defines itself through depictions of what they are not. They do not console with magic attributed to the Outsider, as game lore documents reveal, but they watch strictly over people's lives, and place importance on the Empire's future. Billie explains, in one cut scene in

the third game, that The Abbey teaches the Void to be the “source of doubt, heresy, and suffering”. The authority ideals that The Abbey of the Everyman reflects in the previously-described game events are legitimatised as the traditional and legal ideal. The orders status is legitimatised through tradition, the Empire’s trust in them, and in the legal role of protecting the ruled; to uphold the belief that they will protect the cities from heretical forces. The Overseers’ traditional authority legitimatisation is, however, questioned in the story, and also in the game milieu’s graffiti texts, where their protective watching is referenced as “butchering” (graffiti found in the third game).

3.2. *Delilah Copperspoon and a Charismatic Domination*

Delilah Copperspoon’s life, up to her violent self-proclaimed reign, had been miserable. She was born as the Emperors’ illegitimate child at the same time Emily’s mother had been born. Delilah was, however, denied her birth rights, and in time, banished to face the Dunwall streets. Later, Delilah became interested in the occult and witchcraft, and studied natural philosophy and the structures of the world. The Outsider took an interest in the scholarly gifted Delilah, and granted her supernatural abilities, but Delilah obsessed over revenge. Her first plans to take over the reign resulted in her imprisonment inside an oil painting, a story that is told in the dlc game Dishonored: The Brigmore Witches. During Dishonored 2, the player finds out that certain individuals let, in a séance, Delilah out of the painting, and she came back as a supernatural being, residing in between the Void and the world of the living.

Compared to the traditional and societal depiction of a religious authority of The Abbey of the Everyman in the first Dishonored game, Delilah’s image is a more fantastic one. In the second Dishonored game, she acts as a supernatural and magical figure, reaching deity-like attributes, but still depending on her earthly followers and believers to gain authority. Delilah’s converted followers and minions consist of women who she shares her powers with, but who blindly follow Delilah in her plans. The player character may find letters and documents, where Delilah’s supporters scheme systematically to convert the Oracular sisters to join Delilah’s cause. The witches are shown as magical hostile characters, who are also depicted as chanting, make potions, studying magical properties, but fearing their leader.

Delilah can be interpreted to claim a charismatic ideal of domination. Her persona and supernatural powers also underline this legitimisation. Her own aim is to be obeyed and worshipped forever, as she reveals in the ending scenes of the second game. This may be also seen as aiming towards gaining traditional domination; as a ruler, she demands loyalty from her subjects. However, in the end, most of Delilah’s followers perish alongside her after her final defeat, as peace is restored in the ending of Dishonored 2. In the third game, some of the defeated witches are shown to have joined The Eyeless gang as a last consolation to access spiritual powers. In the third game, some witches can be heard to comment in game dialogue on The Eyeless being only “pseudo-spiritual” in their aims of gaining supernatural powers. The idea of an orthodox way of conducting religion or supernatural abilities are present in the game worlds, also in the witches’ statements. If religion in the first Dishonored game is built to reflect negative connotations of a traditional religious authority, the second Dishonored game builds a charismatic religious authority to be extremist, mindless, and fanatic.

3.3. *The Outsider as a Charismatic Authority*

While the Outsider is not a straightforward antagonist character to be fought against in the Dishonored games, he represents a contested authority that may be located as a religious authority reflecting on the tripartite ideals of domination. The Outsider receives his authority in a charismatic authority legitimation, while the model of a deity or a god can be interpreted linking to the charismatic ideal of domination, in Weber’s distinction (Allen 2004). The Outsider’s mystery, persona, and ancient origins are shown to fascinate people, especially because of his powers and the continuing possibility to be gifted by his mark.

Throughout the games, the Outsider acts as an independent, supporting character, who appears from time to time to reflect in cutscenes on the player character's actions and choices, simultaneously living in the in-between world, the Void. In general, the Outsider is shown as an ambiguous trickster deity, whose intentions are not clear, but enjoys being a spectator of human life. In the third Dishonored game, the player learns that the Outsider is not originally a deity, but a man who had been purposefully trapped and ritually sacrificed by ancient cultists to the Void to act as a resource beacon distributing the powers of the Void to the human realm and to The Cult. Since his tragic birth, the origins of the Outsider had remained hidden, and he became the source of inspiration to new generations of cultists and folk beliefs.

The Outsider's domination constructs also from the people and followers who believe in his mystery. The Outsider is considered as a saving deity for common folk, while, for example, graffiti stating: "The Outsider is watching", can be found around the city in the first game. In the third game, The Eyeless gang and the more scientifically-oriented cult investigates the enigma of the Outsider and the Void. The final story, however, reduces this mystery of the deity and the belief in him to secular origins. The Outsider is stripped away from his mystical god-like status, and replaced with a humanised explanation. In the end, the Outsider was only a man, who was a victim of other men. The authority image, which was built around the deity's charismatic attributes, shifts dramatically in the third game.

The authority image of the Outsider is also contested in one of the last scenes in the third Dishonored game. The assassin, Daud, contemplates, in game dialogue, how the Outsider's mark, the granted magical abilities, are a gift that is bestowed only onto selected few. "All the bitterness, hatred, and fear—and the Outsider gets to choose who wields his black magic, and who cowers in the dark. That's something no one should decide." he says to Billie during his last days. Daud reflects on the dilemma of the deity's authority: who or what can be in a position of domination and decide for others. Billie, however, replies by reminding that their own or other people's actions cannot all be blamed entirely on the Outsider, but Daud stays determined. Daud assumes the Outsider as the perpetrator for all misfortune in the Empire, while Billie sees responsibility in their own doings. The conversation between Billie and Daud underlines a dilemma that is increasingly highlighted from the second Dishonored to the third game: how does the sense of responsibility, and religious authority and domination combine?

After the Outsider is released back to the world, whether the player chooses the lethal or non-lethal ending option, Billie narrates equally in the ending scenes on the future of the Empire. She points out that even though the influence of the Outsider is now gone, the magic of the Void continues to exist in the world and affect people in unknown ways.

4. Discussions

The Dishonored games can be interpreted as stories commenting on the located authority models asking who or what in which circumstances may have societal control over others, and what would that control or domination require from that authority. As previously discussed, Weber did not focus, in his work, on the aspect of how authority positions were gained, as much as on the explanations on authority distinctions. Allen argues that Weber did not explicate on "contradictory motives" why people become ruled, or comparing how entire nations might have overthrown their once legitimate leaders (Allen 2004). The Dishonored games definitely brush on the aspect of individuals overpowering displeasing authorities. The displeasing ruler is shown, composed of several qualities that sum up to the ideal that an authority should express a sense of responsibility. A ruler's negligence is depicted in the lack of care for common people, which is visible in the city milieus of Dunwall and Karnaca. It is visible in the actions, status, and the strict religious control of The Abbey of the Everyman, which is actualised in the Overseers' and the Oracular sisters' work. The antagonist Delilah's dictatorship, and treating followers as subordinates, reflects a negative authority image as well. In the third game, the Outsider's assumed authorising position, of an otherworldly caring deity, is challenged and taken

apart. All that is left is the subjective authority of the protagonist. The subjective authority is gained as a separation and othering process, detaching the protagonist from the displeasing located religious authorities. In the games, the protagonist becomes their own authority, where religious authorities or the idea of deities as authorities are dismissed.

The Dishonored games may be viewed as accommodating different models of legitimisations of authority. In each game, the models are tried on in constructing a religious authority, but discarded in the end, as a resolution of the protagonists' fight against the story antagonists. On the other hand, the games, regarding their temporal situation in the late 19th century, can be seen as stories contesting today's postmodern individual player, by placing them in conflict with "historical" authorising models of domination and control relating to religion.

The religious criticism the games can be argued to partake in, is, however, situated in a traditional frame. William James makes the distinction that religious criticism should be directed separately onto the individual believer or the religious institution (James [1909–1921] 1999). The Dishonored games may be seen continuing similar distinctions in its criticism, while the story of contested religious authorities is forwarded between the protagonist characters, "the individual believers", and the located religious authorities, "the religious institutions". The criticism is placed in between these actors' problematised dynamics.

The relationship connecting the protagonist characters' and the located contested authorities also provides contemplation on how politics and power are represented and debated in video games and popular culture narratives. Tim Nieguth argues that popular culture products "challenge socio-political realities", and would then provide a plausible arena for research, also within political sciences, whether focused on narratives, conceptual discussions, or processes constructing popular culture production (Nieguth 2015). The examination of Weber's conceptual ideals on authority and religion regarding images of social or societal power in the Dishonored games, as a research application, would then provide very topical possibilities to be expanded to other genres of popular culture products.

The Dishonored games can be, therefore, summarised to ask, who has and who should have control and authority in society—a religion, a god, or human beings? The tripartite authority distinction can be seen compared between the games, forwarded and carried from character to character, where each game and additional game concludes in defeating the authority legitimisation ideals.

5. Conclusions

Religious authority in the Dishonored universe can be located and reflected by Weber's tripartite authority ideals. The ideals can be argued to be presented through a criticising frame in the depiction of the game's religious authorities. The religious authorities are shown as poor models sustaining peace and care, and taking responsibility for the ruled, as the game stories or character constructions depict.

The religious authorities, based on the three ideals of domination, are contested in the first Dishonored game by displaying the negative sides of the traditional and legal religious authority represented by The Abbey of the Everyman. The order is shown as threatening to common folk, denying people's freedom of religion and choice. In the second Dishonored game, the charismatic religious authority, Delilah Copperspoon, rules as a fanatic individual and dictator, oppressing all to her will.

The critical argument the first game begins with, is continued and strengthened in the second game; religious authorities in their domination become dictating authorities. The third game, however, approaches this statement differently. The defeated deity Outsider, as a charismatic authority, is portrayed as ambivalent and ambiguous. The humanisation the deity undergoes, contests a charismatic authority, which resembles nihilistic reflections, where demystified gods become obsolete authorities. The only leading authority that remains after each game's end is the individual subject, the player protagonist.

The Dishonored game's different depictions contesting religious authorities, and especially the fights against them, can be argued as reflecting negotiations of religious authorities' placements in

today's society. The video game narrative of criticising religious authorities, as discussed above, does relate to anti-Catholic stereotypes, but moves to focus more on the individual's relation to authority. The individual's choice to obey an authority, the legitimisation of the three ideals, seems not to be sufficient reasons for domination, according to the games. As the games contest the religious authority ideals, they leave room for speculation of what would, then, an adequate religious authority be, or should there be one at all? The sense of responsibility, at least, would be one acquired notion the games make on preferred authority. All in all, the games build the image of religious authorities, or faiths, as disappointing and disenchanting.

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