

War With No Arms

Commentary

With *War With No Arms* I wanted to develop a small game which would let the player experience the fate of an individual in a dark futuristic scenario. Besides I also wanted to convey some ideas to specific topics, which are explained in this commentary to avoid any misunderstandings.

Euthanasia

So the goal of the game is to help this hopeless man, who lost everything, to be released from his pain. I'd say that in the game's scenario death is obviously the only possible way to achieve this. So the player must help to kill this person, which some people might consider to be inhuman. In my opinion it would be inhuman to keep him suffering. If somebody is incapable of doing anything in his life, if his life consists of nothing but pain, if he doesn't have any longer any social responsibilities and if he, as well as his relatives and friends, wish to end his life, I don't see a reason not to do so. And still, today, in most countries the victim couldn't make use of euthanasia.

In my opinion nobody does give the state the right to condemn such a victim to further suffering. Every human being has the right to live. Isn't it absurd not to have the right to die too? Eventually death is also part of life. Without death, life couldn't exist. And still there is for centuries this fear and loathing for death, as you can see for example in all the religions promising some kind of better life after it.

If an animal can't be saved it's absolutely natural to euthanize it. In countries with capital punishment it's even no problem to kill a criminal. But innocent people, hit by a tragic stroke of fate, longing for nothing but their peace, not hurting anybody, are condemned by laws to keep on suffering. Somebody who helps them to commit suicide is in certain circumstances even liable to prosecution. Isn't this all just perverted sadism?

Organ trade

Fortunately organ trade, or rather organ cultivation, as it is described in the game doesn't occur yet today. And hopefully will never occur in such a form. But still there are organized networks trading organs on a grand scale. Whether buying it for a ridiculously low price from the donor or even killing the victim to get it. So a life in the Third World gets extinguished to save one in the developed world and let huge sums of money flow in between.

But still I wouldn't consider the idea of a downright cultivation of human organs, as it is described in the game, to be a completely impossible idea. If you lumped together organ trade, slave trade, the crimes of World War II and factory farming, this would probably be the result.

Suicide

In the game suicide brings salvation. And yet you probably have a bit of a weird feeling at the end, when the character actually dies. Likely because, for obvious reasons, it's hard for a living being to throw its life away. But despite this there are almost a million people committing suicide every year. More victims than those caused by terrorist attacks, war and murder.

Nevertheless, in most games the goal is to kill as many enemies as possible, by preference evil terrorists or enemies from former wars. If you achieve this, you're the hero. Wouldn't you probably save more lives though, if you'd fight the most common causes of suicide? But the problem is that the public doesn't feel quite comfortable if it comes to this topic and prefers to close its eyes to it. In a death notice suicide is often just slightly implied. Why this shame? Because one didn't try to help the victim? So you keep sweeping the problem under the carpet?

Probably it's also just a result of the good, old hubris. The own character is of course so incredibly strong that it will never ever be seduced by such an absurd idea like suicide. So why even waste the tiniest thought about it, right? It's much more fun to be worried of malicious terrorists, able to attack at any moment, hit anyone, fought against with a billion dollar budget and incursions in personal freedom but well, still not causing that many victims.

Ruthless society

Of course a situation like that in the game can only arise if a society is self-willed, ruthless and ignorant enough to allow it. But if you take a look at the crimes already committed today, especially in the Third World, for real banalities, then it's easy to imagine what people will be capable of if it's a matter of life and death. If on banana plantations the big corporations can use pesticides that cause impotence to the workers and destroy their possibility to raise a family, for the sole purpose that the wealthy western families can now buy their bananas for a few cents less in the supermarket, then it shouldn't pose a problem for most people to accept a life-saving kidney, cut out of some unknown, brown man's body. Anyway he still has one left. The workers who lost their chance to start a family, lost their only chance.

A game?

Now you could discuss if *War With No Arms* is a game in the true sense or not. You don't have an influence on the end, there is nothing to win, nor to lose, there's no highscore and no specific reward for finishing it. The goal is nothing but selflessly helping to end the pain of the character. Still I see it as a game, because the player is the one who determines the course of the game, controls the character, reacts to the feedback and thus interacts with the game. Some people might think that serious issues and such a rendering have no place in video games. But maybe games are even the best medium for such topics. Compared with films or books for example, in a game the player is more than just a passive observer, he actively influences what's happening on the screen, he controls this character, identifies with him and feels responsible for what's happening to him. In this regard video games have a lot of potential and fortunately there are more and more games

concerned with serious issues, so that maybe one day video games will have the same status as other media and will be regarded as a form of art too.

I've deliberately decided to show just the short fate of an individual, so that the player can easily see things from the character's specific perspective. Additionally there is no possibility to make any choice that could lead things to a better end or whatsoever. The game starts purposely at the point where everything is already irrevocably lost and shows the scenario that arises when previously the wrong decisions were made, respectively when the problem was blindly ignored and its solution postponed again and again, as it is the case for so many current issues. This decision lies outside the game, in its past. Since the events take place in the future you could even interpret it that the decision is taken in the real, current present or near future. This is one of the most interesting aspects of Science-Fiction. The possibility to draw with a certain freedom a vision of the future, which depicts an extrapolation of the present and thus eventually refers to the present.