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The Religious Symbolism in SOMA

(self.soma)

submitted 2 months ago by Vatyan

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First of all, and unfortunately, I'm not a religion expert. But when I played this game, I thought it had a lot of religious theme in it. The buddha statues lying around, the supposed "continuity" theory that clearly symbolized reincarnation, maintaining your consciousness despite having another body ("your body is your temple and somewhat different from your mind")... etc.

As I said, I can't really go into much depth because I don't know much about religion in the first place. But maybe you do, and that's what I wanted know. There's clearly a lot to be discussed.

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SOMA

SOMA is a sci-fi horror game from Frictional Games, creators of the groundbreaking Amnesia and Penumbra series.

The radio has gone silent on PATHOS-2. As isolation bears down on the staff of the remote research facility, strange things are happening.

Machines are taking on human traits and alien constructions have started to interfere with routine. The world around them is turning into a nightmare.

The only way out is to do something unimaginable.

Rules

- All posts must be relevant to SOMA by Frictional Games.
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[–] **Levaru** 3 points 2 months ago

It does draw many parallels to religous themes. The biggest one that i noticed is the ark representing heaven. Eternal bliss without a future.

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[–] **TheLastBeast** 3 points 2 months ago

The name of the ARK itself has two overlapping Old Testament references which are both extremely relevant. As the story goes, God decided all of mankind was

wicked, except for one family. He commanded Noah, the head of that family, to build an ark (a giant-ass boat) to hold a breeding pair of each animal on earth - then He sent a tremendous flood that killed everything on earth's surface that wasn't on the ark.

In other important Arks, the Ark of the Covenant is a sacred box that held the Ten Commandments that were passed directly to mankind from God, among other sacred items. The ARK shown in SOMA looks not entirely unlike popular illustrations of the Ark of the Covenant. Yeah, this is what melted those Nazi faces in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

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[–] **Thraed** **3 points** 2 months ago

To me, most of the religious themes were incidental, but added to the philosophical musings of the game. I thought the most interesting concept was when Simon brings up the whole "What if there's another me in heaven" scenario. Since many religions mention a heaven where the righteous go when they die, what would that mean for Simon 2 and 3? Is there a place they could all go after they die? Do they each have souls, or is the only "real" soul the original Simon? Those questions become more difficult when the question of what consciousness is arises. There's another cool religious theme which is how would these "scans" die? What does it mean for them to die? It seams that if they lost power they'd die, but that's not necessarily a permanent state since they could possibly be powered up again. I guess the only way they'd die for sure is for the electronics to be broken beyond repair. I guess it's not all that different from our natural human state. I suppose none of this is that hard to accept if you don't believe in anything, but if you do, it makes you wonder how it would all work out.

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I really feel this is the first game to break the "ludonarrative dissonance" curse.

[–] **Vatyan** [S] **1 point** 2 months ago* (last edited 2 months ago)

This question is extremely philosophical. There's no way to answer it. I guess we can say that our bodies hold our souls, and when our bodies die, so does our souls with it. A copied consicousness is not you, since it doesn't have a body or soul.

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[–] **Thraed** **2 points** 2 months ago

Well I always wondered how bodies would "hold" souls. If they potentially have no physical form then would it be possible for them to be associated with another form than they started with, right? But if they do have a physical form, can't they be copied and therefore survive detached from a body? But that sort of raises the other issue of whether that is effectively the same thing as dying, and then putting someone's consciousness into another form would be like transferring their soul to another body, effectively raising them from the dead.

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[–] **WoofyArcticWolf** **2 points** 2 months ago

The very name of the game, SOMA, is (probably) a religious reference. In ancient hindusim, a special drink called soma was drawn from a toxic/halucinagenic plant and then drunk during religious ceremonies. When a worshiper drank the soma, he/she would feel closer to God(s), englightenment, and draw closer to immortality. This has some very clear analogues to the games structure gel, which is electromagnetically charged and can produce extreme mutations and static from even being near it. And, like the drink, the structure gel can produce "immortality" through reanimating dead bodies.

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[–] **Vatyan** [S] **1 point** 2 months ago

That sounds a lot like Ayahuasca.

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[–] **WoofyArcticWolf** **2 points** 2 months ago

Entheogens are pretty interesting stuff. I wasn't aware of this South American one you mentioned, so thank you!

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