Religious and Philosophical Themes In Games

#1 (/forums/gufu-the-i-might-fix-up-this-board-someday-one-day-909178748/religious-and-philosophical-themes-in-games-10040779/?page=1#js-message-11492003)
Posted by **TruthSeeker777 (/profile/TruthSeeker777/)** (101 posts) - 8 years, 22 days ago

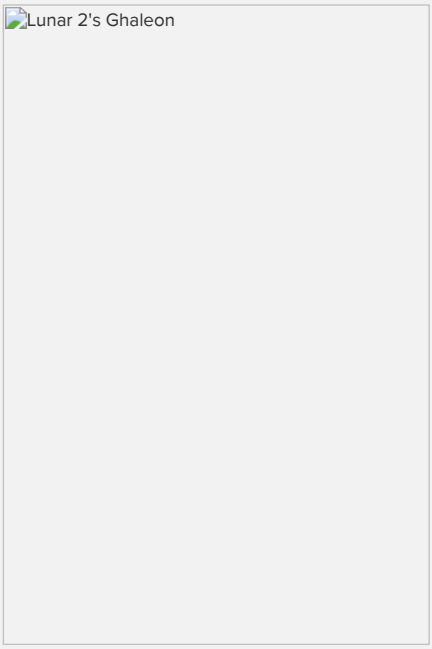
I find it fascinating when a game's story incorporates religious themes and motifs in its narrative. One of my favorite game series to do this is the *Lunar* series.

SPOILERS

Although on the surface one could dismiss the *Lunar* series as a simple boy meets girl, boy falls in love with girl, boy saves girl (and the world) plot, what I found fascinating is the deist theme hidden beneath the surface (Deists are people who believe the universe was created by a intelligent deity who does not interfere with humanity or the laws of the universe).

Early in the course of the game, the player discovers that the world was created by the goddess Althena. Unbeknownst to all of the world's inhabitants (exempt the game's main characters who discover this mid-game) this goddess chose to stop playing an omnipresent & omnipotent role and was reincarnated in human form (the main love interest Luna), thus sacrificing her immorality. She decided humanity as a whole were moral beings who could function better without her.

The series' most fascinating character is the main boss of the first game, Ghaleon (who returns in the sequel). Ghaleon, one of the Goddess' former protectors, is extremely bitter and enraged with the Goddess' decision to give up her power and become human. He believes humanity needs an all-powerful deity to watch over mankind. Ghaleon decides that he will find, capture, and control the human incarnation of the goddess (Luna) and channel her buried power to control the world and become the new divine leader.



Ghaleon (above)

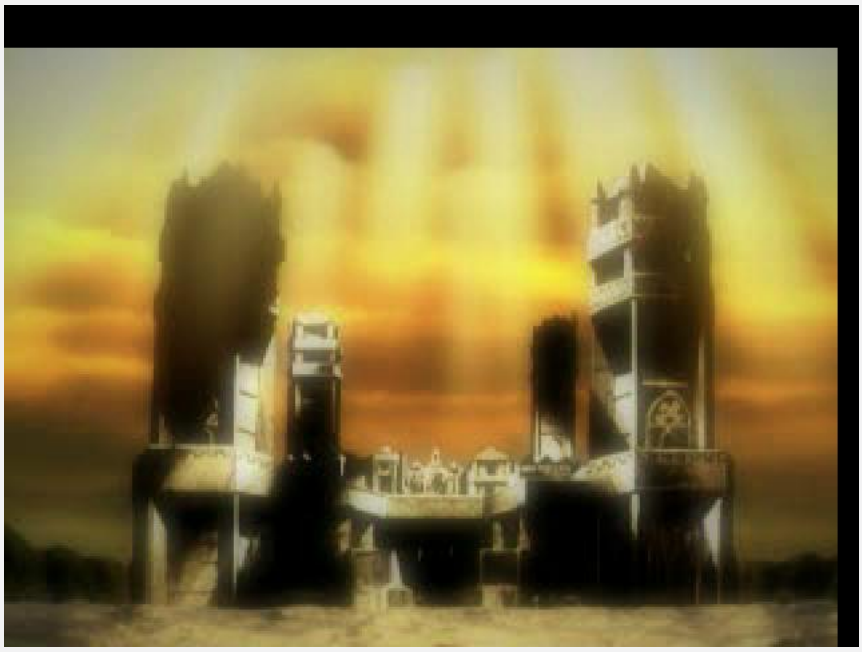
To me, Ghaleon is not evil; he just has a different philosophy on what is best for humanity. Lunar's world history is not unlike ours, it is filled with bloody wars and senseless violence. I believe Ghaleon generally wishes for a more perfect, utopian world and believes the best way to accomplish this is to strip humanity of its free choice and force it to his will by whatever means necessary. He wants to play cosmological babysitter and actively intervene in humanity's affairs, preventing mankind from inflicting harm upon itself and the planet.

Ultimately Ghaleon is defeated by the heroes who believe human beings as a whole are morally good. The heroes fight Ghaleon to protect humanity's free choice from a controlling, all-powerful deity.

The sequel *Lunar 2: Eternal Blue*, which takes place a thousand years after the events of the first game, features a religious sect called Althena's Chosen. This group shares similarities with the Catholic Church: Althena's Chosen worship in large cathedrals with bright colored stain ****windows, they dress in formal ropes similar to Catholic bishops and obey every command made by a woman who claims to be the goddess "Althena" (in actuality she is an impostor since the real Althena/Luna died a thousand years earlier). "Althena" dresses in attire similar to the Pope and resides in the holy city of Pentagulia (*Luanr 2*'s Vatican).

ABOVE: Althena's Chosen cathedral with two "bishops"

ABOVE: The Althena imposter and boss (notice Pope-like hat and cane)



ABOVE: The Holy City Pentigula (Lunar 2's version of the Vatican)

Althena's Chosen is portrayed as a grossly corrupt sect. They charge your party an outrageous sum of money to pray/heal at their temple's Althena statute (Althena statues serve as healing stations that restore your party's HP and MP and can be used for free in every location in the game except for the Cathedral of Althena's Chosen) and constantly pressure the world's inhabitants to donate money to gain favor with the goddess (money they secretly pocket themselves).

To me, the game's creators painted a world which matches the philosophy of deism: a deity created the world and then decided to leave humanity alone. Those who believe in and worship the goddess are deluded and misinformed. Organized religion in *Lunar 2* consists of groups of people who worship a goddess who in actuality died over a thousand years ago! Worse yet, some of these believers (Althena's Chosen) prey on others' emotional vulnerabilities to fuel their greed and corruption all while hiding behind the name of the goddess. They make empty promises of gaining favor and good fortune with Althena in exchange for money. The game's creators undoubtedly possessed an unfavorable view to organized religion, alluding to some of the corrupt practices of the ancient Catholic Church.

Ultimately, the story of Lunar 1 & 2 is one of optimism and hope. The world of Lunar consists mostly of moral characters. The game's message is that humanity is good and is capable of a peaceful co-existence with the planet and each other.

END SPOILERS

I am sure there are other religious allusions in *Lunar,* but this served just as an example. Would anyone else like to share their observations of religious (real or fictional) and/or philosophical themes and allusions in video games?

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#2 (/forums/gufu-the-i-might-fix-up-this-board-someday-one-day-909178748/religious-and-philosophical-themes-in-games-10040779/?page=1#js-message-11492004)
Posted by **jechtshot78 (/profile/jechtshot78/)** (29851 posts) - 8 years, 22 days ago

Even in GUFU people are scared of texty posts :P

Anyway, Yes. I noticed this in Dragon Quest a lot. And of course The obvious themes in games like Devil May Cry.

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#3 (/forums/gufu-the-i-might-fix-up-this-board-someday-one-day-909178748/religious-and-philosophical-themes-in-games-10040779/?page=1#js-message-11492005)
Posted by **sonicmj1 (/profile/sonicmj1/)** (9130 posts) - 8 years, 22 days ago

Andrew Ryan sez, "Objectivism is Cool!"

Of course, look what happened to Andrew Ryan...

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Posted by **The_Game21x (/profile/The_Game21x/)** (26352 posts) - 8 years, 22 days ago

Well, Jecht, it wasn't so much that I was scared of the post, (thought it was a very thought provoking post and an excellent read) more that I couldn't think of anything to post about besides the more obvious games such as the aforementioned Devil may Cry and possibly Halo. I feel that much research is in order before I can speak at any length about religious and philosophical parallels in gaming.

Well, Truthseeker, even though I can't really contribute to this thread as much as I'd like to, I must say that this has inspired me to look up the information I need to do so in the near future.

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Posted by **DementedDragon (/profile/DementedDragon/)** (5095 posts) - 8 years, 22 days ago

If you've ever played FFX or Okami, they're filled to the brim with religous overtones.

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#6 (/forums/gufu-the-i-might-fix-up-this-board-someday-one-day-909178748/religious-and-philosophical-themes-in-games-10040779/?page=1#js-message-11492008)
Posted by **fuzzysquash (/profile/fuzzysquash/)** (17374 posts) - 8 years, 22 days ago

bookmarked for after I finish my test 2morro

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#7 (/forums/gufu-the-i-might-fix-up-this-board-someday-one-day-909178748/religious-and-philosophical-themes-in-games-10040779/?page=1#js-message-11492009)
Posted by **FalconZero (/profile/FalconZero/)** (15023 posts) - 8 years, 22 days ago

Hmm...I always wanted an excuse to do this.

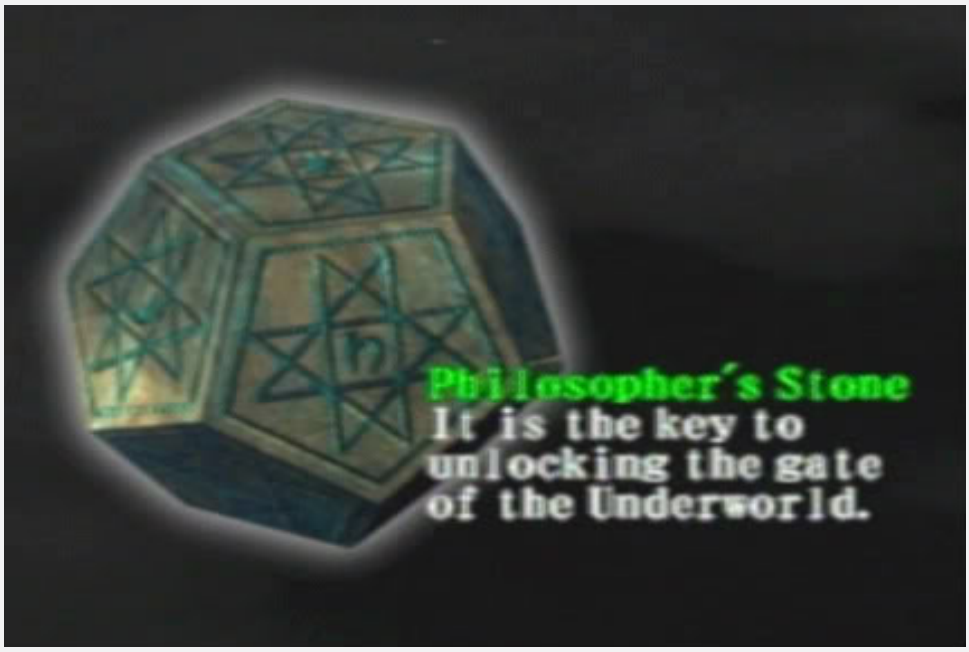
Let's see how deep we can go. ;)

It says "nagatasinsuke" in Greek code. Shinsuke Nagata has been the stage cgi artwork guy since DMC2. It's written on some shops in 3rd mission for Dante.

The 4 arcana are based off of the suits for the 4 minor arcana of the tarot, being daggers/swords, goblets/cups, pentacles/coins, and wands/sticks. Their names (spada, calice, medaglia, and bastone respectively) are the Italian translations of the latter of each item.

These fellows here are a fairly well known A-s-syrian deity by the name of Nisroch. It's an eagle-headed celestial being, and also an angel/god mentioned in the Bible as being worshipped by Sennacherib. He can be found on page 207 of Davidson's A Dictionary of Angels, where we are informed that in demonology he is the head of cuisine in Hell. He is usually depicted holding a bucket or pouch and some kind of cone fruit, in front of a pre-Judaic tree of life. He is presumed to be fertilizing the tree with pollen from the cone fruit.

Here we have the philosopher's egg, and above the egg, is a crow or raven with wings spread, in flight. The crow or black bird is representative of the beginning stage of the alchemical work, the black phase called "melanosis," which consists of calcination and putrefaction. As you well know, the egg is put into the fire to release the elixir, and this could be understood as calcining the egg. The fact that the crows wings are spread means that the work has begun or is about to begin.



The philosopher's stone shown here is a regular dodecahedron with signs of the planets in 8 pointed star things. The planetary signs show are Saturn, the Moon, and the Sun, and it can be assumed that the other 8 former planets are on the other faces along with another symbol. Saturn, Luna, and Sol represent lead, silver, and gold which are the first, 6th, and last operations of the Work respectively. The pentagonal dodecahedron (http://www.dartmouth.edu/%7Ematc/math5.geometry/unit6/unit6.html) is the Platonic solid (http://www.kheper.net/topics/cosmology/solids.html) to which is attributed the heavens of cosmos, so the stone itself can be seen as a microcosmic form of the prima materia.

"Bolverk" was a disguise the Norse God Odin used.
"Freki" is one of Odin's wolves.
"Geri" is one of Odin's wolves.
"Nevan" is taken from Irish folklore.
"Beowulf" is the name of a Norse hero who slayed the Grendel.
"Cerberus" is fashioned after the three-headed guardian of Hades.
"Griffon" is supposed to be a Griffin.
"Agni" is the Hindu deity of fire.
"Rudra" is the Hindu diety of wind.
"Arachne" is a woman who was turned into the first spider by the Goddess Athena.
"Fallen" are fallen Angels, of course.
"Alastor" is the chief executioner of hell.
"Ifrit" or Ifreeti, is the name of a race of fire Djinns (masterless Genies).
"Beelzebub" is a fallen angel, who's as powerful as Satan.
"Kyklops" is another spelling for "Cyclops," a race of one-eyed giants.
"Sargasso" is taken from the "Sargasso sea" which is said to be haunted.
"Leviathan" is a gargantuan sea-serpent of immense power from the bible.
"Dullahan" is the headless horsemen, which inspired the story of "Sleepy Hollow."

At the bottom left is a book with an ouroboros on the cover, signifying that the book is about alchemy. If you look carefully at the painting, you can see the same 8 pointed star as on the floor panel (in another pic for later) and the Philosopher's Stone. The rest of the picture is too fuzzy to see anything, but it looks as if some people may be carrying the circle on something?

...The caduceus on the door, which is the staff of Hermes and also an an emblem of alchemy.

The Skull. And some very interesting info on the mythology of the skulls. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crystal_skull)

Credit to Moses. :D

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#8 (/forums/gufu-the-i-might-fix-up-this-board-someday-one-day-909178748/religious-and-philosophical-themes-in-games-10040779/?page=1#js-message-11492010)
Posted by **PelekotansDream (/profile/PelekotansDream/)** (7602 posts) - 8 years, 22 days ago

Bioshock is interesting.

The man who created an underwater city rejected God yet the people who lived there did not. There was a smuggling business going on and guess what was being smuggled? Bibles and Crosses, you can see the Evidence in the "Evidence" crates in Port Neptune.

Silent Hill has a big play on religion, it challenges it by being open minded to all possibilities and different views of religion.

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Posted by **Jandurin (/profile/Jandurin/)** (95559 posts) - 8 years, 22 days ago

I'll read your and Falcon's post later.

Anyway: The first game I ever remember strong religious type themes was Breath of Fire 2.

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Posted by **BlazeDragon132 (/profile/BlazeDragon132/)** (7951 posts) - 8 years, 21 days ago

FFT is kinda interesting with religion also. The princess was praying at the startin the chapel. It mixes religion with politics, which makes the story very good. Everyone should play it.

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#11 (/forums/gufu-the-i-might-fix-up-this-board-someday-one-day-909178748/religious-and-philosophical-themes-in-games-10040779/?page=1#js-message-11492013)
Posted by **chutup (/profile/chutup/)** (7656 posts) - 8 years, 21 days ago

Okami is quite interesting from a religious perspective. It's based on the Shinto religion, which provides a very different view to Western religions. Where Christianity, Judaism and Islam have a single, all-powerful god, Shinto and Okami have a vast number of them, and none of them particularly powerful. I mean, you play as basically the strongest god in the world. Still, it's never really challenging in the way other religious fiction can be.

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Posted by **the-very-best (/profile/the-very-best/)** (14486 posts) - 8 years, 21 days ago

Well, that was certainly interesting. I had no idea about any of that, considering I've never played one game in the series, yet. Game's message is rare, can't actually think of a game I've played that promotes stuff like that anymore (well, promotes it strongly).

> *Let's see how deep we can go. ;)*
>
> *-- FalconZero*

I actually did read your post Falcon and I thought it was interesting, but this quote was my favourite part.

> *I'll read your and Falcon's post later.*
> *-- Jandurin*

Lies.

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Posted by **CJL13 (/profile/CJL13/)** (19137 posts) - 8 years, 20 days ago

Tales of Symphonia deals with racism.

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#14 (/forums/gufu-the-i-might-fix-up-this-board-someday-one-day-909178748/religious-and-philosophical-themes-in-games-10040779/?page=1#js-message-11492016)
Posted by **MoldOnHold (/profile/MoldOnHold/)** (11760 posts) - 8 years, 20 days ago

I know of several JRPGS that have religious themes.

Final Fantasy (both the main series and even Tactics) and Dragon Quest come to mind. Correct me if I'm wrong, but doesn't Valkyrie Profile fit into this category as well?

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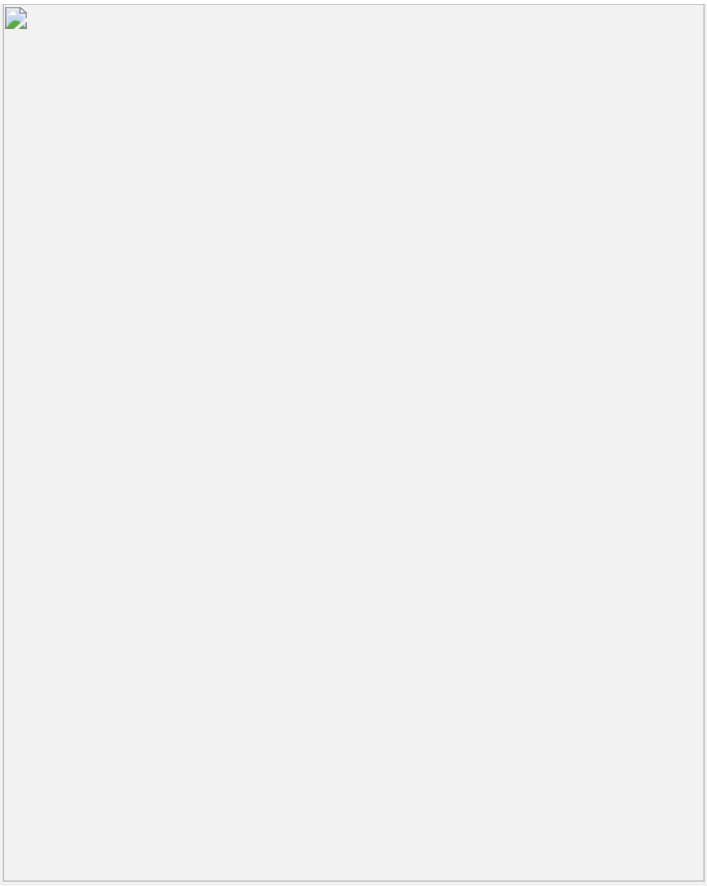
Posted by **fuzzysquash (/profile/fuzzysquash/)** (17374 posts) - 8 years, 20 days ago

Another game with religious overtones:



Truth and I actually beat this game together. He sucks at it, though.

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Posted by **kage_53 (/profile/kage_53/)** (12671 posts) - 8 years, 20 days ago

Shin Megami Tensei Nocturne

There are almost no humans in the game. Its in a post-apocalyptic wasteland without humans. SMT: Nocturne is a chaotic world; demons forming organizations and waging wars at each other trying to shape a "new world" after the humanity has been annihilated. Even the hero was turned into a demon. There are only five humans left in this world. Each of them is trying to find his own way amidst the demons and the gods, striving to find the reason; a concept that would excuse the struggle for power and consolidate the creation of a new world

There are no good guys in the game as everyone are demons and the few humans become even more demonic than the demons themselves as the game progresses and the "bad guys" are not totally bad. Instead of being automatically on the good side the hero can choose their own path in this game. You'll have to make moral choices in the game to see which philosophy suits you most and to choose to help the side that represents it or to oppose them all. There are no set parties at all in the game. The only character you are forced to play as is the hero. All other party members which are all demons must be recruited by talking to them in random battles and by fusing them to make a more powerful one

When you view the demons in Demon Compendium in fusion rooms you can also see a description of the demon, which mythology it originates from, etc.. You'll meet creatures from European folklore such as pixies or trolls, bizarre Japanese creatures and gods such as Arahibaki or Mizuchi, Hindu deities Sarasvati, Kali, Ganesha, and Shiva, Northern gods Thor and Loki, Kings of fairies Oberon and Titania, Seraphs Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael, dark demons of Judaism and Christianity: Abbadon, Beelzebub, or Lilith; and many, many more like Dionysis the Greek god of wine and the fallen angel Ose. They even bring in some exact mythological parallels and details. For example, if you have an Orthrus in your party and meet a Cerberus, they'll exchange some words since they are related in a mythological way due to both being guardian hound demons.

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Posted by **BlazeDragon132 (/profile/BlazeDragon132/)** (7951 posts) - 8 years, 20 days ago

> *I know of several JRPGS that have religious themes.*
>
> *Final Fantasy (both the main series and even Tactics) and Dragon Quest come to mind. Correct me if I'm wrong, but doesn't Valkyrie Profile fit into this category as well?*
>
> *-- MoldOnHold*

Ivalice (place in FFT) and FFX had big religion in it. Yuna's religion allowed her to summon the creatures.

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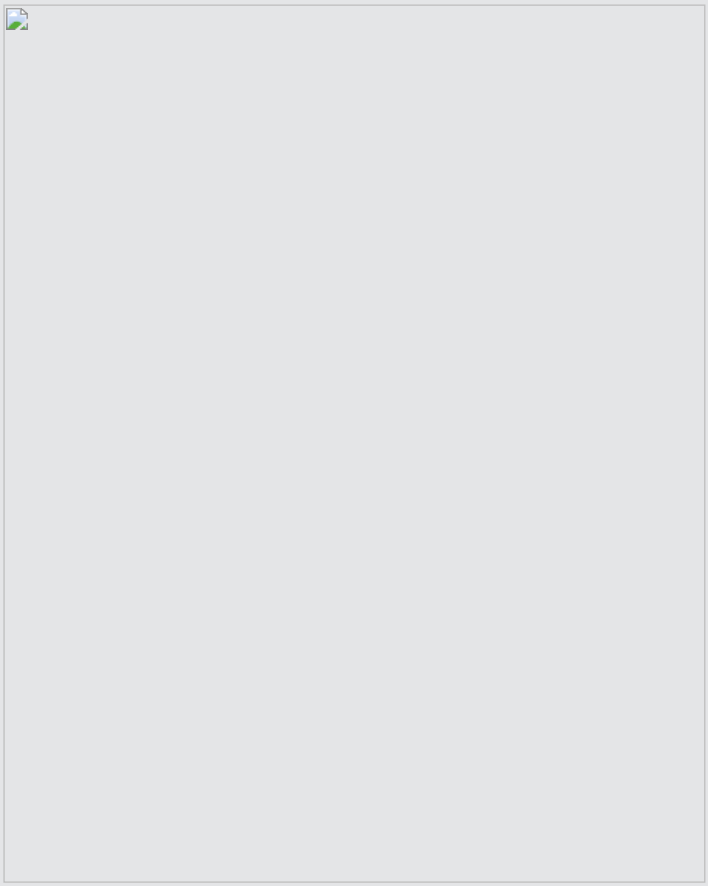
Posted by **TruthSeeker777 (/profile/TruthSeeker777/)** (101 posts) - 8 years, 19 days ago

> *Another game with religious overtones:*
>
> 
>
> *Truth and I actually beat this game together. He sucks at it, though.*
>
> *-- fuzzysquash*

How do I suck If I beat the game's final boss in only 2 or 3 attempts? hmmmph? You need to check yourself before you wreck yourself fuzzy.

;)

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#19 (/forums/gufu-the-i-might-fix-up-this-board-someday-one-day-909178748/religious-and-philosophical-themes-in-games-10040779/?page=1#js-message-11492021)
Posted by **chutup (/profile/chutup/)** (7656 posts) - 8 years, 19 days ago

Oh yeah, I forgot about GoW. The 2nd one has most of the religious stuff. When Kratos was all like "I am what the gods have made me!" and then he smashed that talking statue... that was awesome. I hope in the third game they really get stuck into that stuff and don't just cop out with some new villain or something.

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#20 (/forums/gufu-the-i-might-fix-up-this-board-someday-one-day-909178748/religious-and-philosophical-themes-in-games-10040779/?page=1#js-message-11492022)
Posted by **fuzzysquash (/profile/fuzzysquash/)** (17374 posts) - 8 years, 19 days ago

> *How do I suck If I beat the game's final boss in only 2 or 3 attempts? hmmmph? You need to check yourself before you wreck yourself fuzzy.*
>
> *;)*
>
> *-- TruthSeeker777*

I went back and beat it blind-folded with one hand behind my back, hanging upside down. So, yeah.

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#21 (/forums/gufu-the-i-might-fix-up-this-board-someday-one-day-909178748/religious-and-philosophical-themes-in-games-10040779/?page=1#js-message-11492023)
Posted by **CJL13 (/profile/CJL13/)** (19137 posts) - 8 years, 19 days ago

> *[QUOTE="MoldOnHold"]I know of several JRPGS that have religious themes.*
>
> *Final Fantasy (both the main series and even Tactics) and Dragon Quest come to mind. Correct me if I'm wrong, but doesn't Valkyrie Profile fit into this category as well?*
> *-- BlazeDragon132*

Ivalice (place in FFT) and FFX had big religion in it. Yuna's religion allowed her to summon the creatures.

FFX took place in Spira.

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#22 (/forums/gufu-the-i-might-fix-up-this-board-someday-one-day-909178748/religious-and-philosophical-themes-in-games-10040779/?page=1#js-message-11492024)
Posted by **Jandurin (/profile/Jandurin/)** (95559 posts) - 8 years, 19 days ago

> *Truth and I actually beat this game together. He sucks at it, though.*
> *-- fuzzysquash*

Be honest. You wanted Truth in this union so you could make fun of him, didn't you?

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#23 (/forums/gufu-the-i-might-fix-up-this-board-someday-one-day-909178748/religious-and-philosophical-themes-in-games-10040779/?page=1#js-message-11492025)
Posted by **Jandurin (/profile/Jandurin/)** (95559 posts) - 8 years, 18 days ago

Closest I could find. :P

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#24 (/forums/gufu-the-i-might-fix-up-this-board-someday-one-day-909178748/religious-and-philosophical-themes-in-games-10040779/?page=1#js-message-11492026)
Posted by **fuzzysquash (/profile/fuzzysquash/)** (17374 posts) - 8 years, 18 days ago

> *[QUOTE="fuzzysquash"] Truth and I actually beat this game together. He sucks at it, though.*
> *-- Jandurin*

Be honest. You wanted Truth in this union so you could make fun of him, didn't you?
Pretty much :P

No, actually I told him this is pretty much the best community on GS so he decided to join.

And lol@ at the pic. Who is that, Jack from Jack & the Beanstalk?

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Posted by **FalconZero (/profile/FalconZero/)** (15023 posts) - 8 years, 18 days ago

I want to say something else, but I feel I'd get smacked for it. Religion is quite a touchy subject... >_>

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Posted by **Jandurin (/profile/Jandurin/)** (95559 posts) - 8 years, 18 days ago

> *And lol@ at the pic. Who is that, Jack from Jack & the Beanstalk?*
> *-- fuzzysquash*

A Tarot card, I believe.

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#27 (/forums/gufu-the-i-might-fix-up-this-board-someday-one-day-909178748/religious-and-philosophical-themes-in-games-10040779/?page=1#js-message-11492029)
Posted by **Datheron (/profile/Datheron/)** (266 posts) - 8 years, 17 days ago

Well, a lot of JRPG's certainly *love* putting in cultural references in their games. Even the most "generic" Final Fantasy is filled to the brim with names from Greek, Nordic, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, etc. references. The last Final Fantasy Retrospective from Gametrailers does a good job detailing some of it.

But not many games go into the trickier issue of talking *about* religion or philosophy beyond using cool sounding names for monsters or weaponry. Bioshock is obviously one, and the other one I've played (I'm surprised no one has mentioned it) would be Xenogears and the Xenosaga series. Hopefully Bioshock's success will spur other developers to create games which do try to make a statement/opinion these viewpoints; it's a sign of maturity for our industry that we've moved beyond a "shoot anything that moves" religion.

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#28 (/forums/gufu-the-i-might-fix-up-this-board-someday-one-day-909178748/religious-and-philosophical-themes-in-games-10040779/?page=1#js-message-11492030)
Posted by **kage_53 (/profile/kage_53/)** (12671 posts) - 8 years, 16 days ago

> *I want to say something else, but I feel I'd get smacked for it. Religion is quite a touchy subject... >_>*
>
> *-- FalconZero*

Just post it or PM it to me so I can post it for you then. Its teh internet.

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#29 (/forums/gufu-the-i-might-fix-up-this-board-someday-one-day-909178748/religious-and-philosophical-themes-in-games-10040779/?page=1#js-message-11492031)
Posted by **TruthSeeker777 (/profile/TruthSeeker777/)** (101 posts) - 8 years, 15 days ago

> *Well, a lot of JRPG's certainly love putting in cultural references in their games. Even the most "generic" Final Fantasy is filled to the brim with names from Greek, Nordic, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, etc. references. The last Final Fantasy Retrospective from Gametrailers does a good job detailing some of it.*
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>
> *-- Datheron*

One of my old high school friends loved Xenogears. I have never played the game, but I heard it talks about the existence (or non-existence?) of God. Can you please tell us what the game's story says on the matter? Would love to hear.

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#30 (/forums/gufu-the-i-might-fix-up-this-board-someday-one-day-909178748/religious-and-philosophical-themes-in-games-10040779/?page=1#js-message-11492032)
Posted by **Jandurin (/profile/Jandurin/)** (95559 posts) - 8 years, 15 days ago

> *One of my old high school friends loved Xenogears. I have never played the game, but I heard it talks about the existence (or non-existence?) of God. Can you please tell us what the game's story says on the matter? Would love to hear.*
>
> *-- TruthSeeker777*

Good game. Very long. I got... 35 hours in... which I think is like a third of the way, and my memory card got corrupted...
I never had the gall to start it back up again.

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#31 (/forums/gufu-the-i-might-fix-up-this-board-someday-one-day-909178748/religious-and-philosophical-themes-in-games-10040779/?page=1#js-message-11492033)
Posted by **Datheron (/profile/Datheron/)** (266 posts) - 8 years, 14 days ago

> *[QUOTE="Datheron"]*
> *Well, a lot of JRPG's certainly love putting in cultural references in their games. Even the most "generic" Final Fantasy is filled to the brim with names from Greek, Nordic, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, etc. references. The last Final Fantasy Retrospective from Gametrailers does a good job detailing some of it.*
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> *-- TruthSeeker777*

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Man, it's been such a long time since I've played that game; I don't remember much of it beyond a general "good vibe" which comes with the *veni, vidi, vici* of a really good game. From what I do remember, a lot of the game features commentary on religion (specifically Christianity, although there were traces of Buddhism as well) and actually uses religious labels that correspond to the event or object in the game, such as the Noah's Ark being a spaceship which carries the last humans away from earth. It's certainly deeper than, say, summoning a Hindu-inspired monster Shiva, having something that *kinda* looks like the god, and have her blast ice.

Might want to check out this link too:

http://www.christiananswers.net/spotlight/games/2000/xenogears.html

Jandurin, I remember finishing the game at around 60 hours or so, certainly above average length for an RPG, although it did have its share of cutscenes. You really should go back and play it again; IMO the story's held up well and the battle system's a lot more satisfying than its comtemporary successors (i.e., Xenosaga).

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#32 (/forums/gufu-the-i-might-fix-up-this-board-someday-one-day-909178748/religious-and-philosophical-themes-in-games-10040779/?page=1#js-message-11492034)
Posted by **Jandurin (/profile/Jandurin/)** (95559 posts) - 8 years, 14 days ago

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>
> *-- Datheron*

I think I will some day. I had been playing a friend's copy, and have since purchased it for myself. Someone should tell "them" that there are enough games out, they can stop releasing games for awhile now.

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