

Dr. Stefano Gualeni (<http://stefano.gua-le-ni.com>). May the 15th, 2015

Philosophy of Computer Game 2015 – Workshop proposition:

‘DOING’ PHILOSOPHY AS GAME DESIGNERS v.2

In this panel proposition, I offer to continue the discussion that commenced at the ‘DOING’ PHILOSOPHY AS GAME DESIGNERS v.2 panel held in Istanbul in 2014. In occasion of the 2014 Philosophy of Computer Games Conference, I organized (together with and other independent game designers-philosophers) a lively panel aimed at discussing the possibilities and merits of using videogames as mediators of philosophical thought.

Pietro Righi Riva (Santa Ragione), Gordon Calleja (Mighty Box), Krystian Majewski (TRAUMA) and Michelle Westerlaken (University of Malmo) and myself presented our practical work, engaged with the audience, and argued against one another for two hours at STUDIO X in Istanbul, the pulsating heart of their independent scene.

The panel and the ensuing discussions were positively received and gave raise to interesting arguments, objections, and new connections. On the background of that positive experience, I am proposing a new chapter of the same format, just refreshed with different game designers-scholars (I am thinking about Chris Bateman and Martin Pilchmar among others). I intend to keep the format largely the same, but with different designers and with a more specific focus that can, perhaps, ask the panelists to reflect on the limitations that the digital medium imposes on our playful, interactive, philosophical work.

Even in this occasion, I believe this proposition will greatly benefit the **Philosophy of Computer Games** community because it would complement the chiefly analytical and detached relationship it traditionally established with video games with a novel one which is synthetic and practice-oriented. Besides for this structural advantage, organizing such workshop (or, ideally, a series of workshops with game designers busy with ‘doing philosophy’) might grant the **Philosophy of Computer Games** community the possibility to directly interface with the independent game developers one and, hopefully, stimulate interesting new opportunities to grow and collaborate.

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTORS: THREE TO FIVE GAME DESIGNERS PLUS MYSELF

TARGET AUDIENCE: GENERAL AUDIENCE

RESPONSIBLE PERSON: DR. STEFANO GUALENI (stefano.gualeni@um.edu.mt)

INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION: Institute of Digital Games – University of Malta

EXTRACTS FROM THE 2013 PANEL PROPOSITION (for your reference):

My work takes place in the intersection between continental philosophy and the design of virtual worlds. Given the practical and interdisciplinary focus of my research - and depending on the topics and the resources at hand - my output takes the form of academic texts and/or of interactive digital experiences. Being both a philosopher who designs videogames and a game designer who is passionate about philosophy, I study virtual worlds in their role as mediators of thought: as interactive, artificial environments where philosophical ideas, world-views, and thought-experiments can be explored, manipulated, and communicated objectively (Gualeni, 2014).

This approach to **'doing philosophy'** in the age of interactive digital media is founded on two core beliefs:

1. The possibility to utilize computer simulations and video games as viable mediators of philosophical thought: instruments and artifacts that grant philosophers of the 21st century the possibility to test, experience and disseminate philosophical notions, thought experiments and alternatives to current ethical, ontological and ideological frameworks, and
2. The persuasion that designing interactive worlds, interfaces and experiences is in itself a deeply philosophical activity, both in its analytical dimensions and in its unique projectual ones.

The material activity of **'doing philosophy'** which I propose to discuss and exemplify in the proposed workshop has analogies with the concept of **'building'** as an academic practice in the connotation introduced by the American scholar Davis Baird in his 2004 book *Things Knowledge: A Philosophy of Scientific Instruments*. According to Baird's view, **'building'** – doing, constructing as a heuristic practice – offers an opportunity “to correct the discursive and linguistic bias of the humanities. According to this view, we should be open to communicating scholarship through artifacts, whether digital or not. It implies that print is, indeed, ill-equipped to deal with entire classes of knowledge that are presumably germane to humanistic inquiry.” (Ramsay and Rockwell in Gold, 2012, 78)

Baird's notion of 'building' has also evident affinities with the more recent idea of **'carpentry'** explained by Bogost in his 2012 book *Alien Phenomenology*. Blending the perspectives of Graham Harman and Alphonso Lingis, Bogost defined **'carpentry'** as the **“practice of constructing artifacts as a philosophical practice” which “entails making things that explain how things make their world.”** (Bogost, 2012, 93)

From this perspective, focused on practically crafting philosophical artifacts, I would be thrilled to organize a workshop in which people like myself in the 'philosopher and game designer Venn overlap' discuss and practically exemplify instances of their work in terms of their philosophical inspiration, aspirations, and methods of expressing themselves and shape their vision in the digital medium.

REFERENCES:

Bogost, Ian. 2012. *Alien Phenomenology, or What it's Like to Be a Thing*. Minneapolis (MN): University of Minnesota Press.

Gold, Matthew K. (edited by). 2012. *Debates in the Digital Humanities*. Minneapolis (MN): The University of Minnesota Press.

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Ihde, Don. 1986. *Experimental Phenomenology: An Introduction*. Albany (NY): State University of New York Press.