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Creating Utopian or Dystopian Worlds in Digital Games

MIŁOSZ MARKOCKI

Introduction

For centuries people have been fascinated with the idea of an ideal society. Many thinkers and philosophers have been coming up with new ideas either to improve their societies or to propose visions of what in their opinion would be an ideal community. The creation of visions of ideal societies required a counterbalance image of a society to better highlight what makes a society or a country good or bad. Depictions of an ideal social structure—“a better place, or time, a portrait of a happy society” (Claeys 2010: 15)—are usually referred to as utopias whereas the opposite—“a fictional portrayal of a society in which evil, or negative social and political developments, have the upper hand” (Claeys 2010: 107)—are dystopias; however, both have inspired great number of works of fiction in different mediums. In the spirit of Nick Montfort’s work *Twisty Little Passages: An Approach to Interactive Fiction*, in this chapter digital games will be treated similarly to literature—books, films and digital games are all considered as works of fiction (Montfort 2005: 1-35). Representations of utopian and dystopian societies can be found in a variety of literary works, film and digital games. Every medium operates in a unique manner, resulting in different relations between a piece of work and a consumer in the case of each medium. Digital games, in particular, enable players to experience the idea of both utopian and dystopian societies in various ways. Therefore, this chapter focuses on two digital ga-

mes—*Civilization: Call to Power* (Activision 1999), and *Black & White* (Lionhead Studios 2001)—that enable the players to create their own utopias and dystopias within the gameworld.

Utopia and Dystopia

One of the first proposals of the ideal society recorded in writing is Plato's *Republic*¹, in which he divided citizens of the imaginary country into four classes "golden", "silver", "bronze", and "iron". Each class had specific duties and privileges and all of the citizens' work was set to benefit the society as a whole. The country in the *Republic* is not an ideal place; it is not separated from other countries and societies and therefore it can wage wars. Moreover, Plato includes instructions on how depicted society should wage wars. The solution is to hire mercenaries from country's more aggressive neighbours, in order to make warlike people of surrounding republics kill each other so only peaceful are left (Plato: 2014). Plato's vision of the country is not ideal but evidently it is a proposal of a better, more peaceful, and just society, with potential to make the world a better place.

The proposition of an ideal society, which later has become the term that is associated with this idea, was presented by Sir Thomas More in 1516 in his book *De optimo reipublicæ*, where More describes a fictional society inhabiting an island in the Atlantic Ocean that was supposed to be an ideal society, at least ideal in the context of 16th century Europe (More: 2015). Nowadays understanding of a utopia is heavily influenced by More's work—it is considered as an imagined community or country characterised by highly desirable qualities which allows to form a perfect society (Sargent 1994). Principles that are common for most works describing utopian societies are economic equality, justice and the government that is supposed to take care of its citizens (Sargent 2010: 44). Methods of the government and the structure of the society are based on ideology and intentions of the utopia's creator. Lyman Tower Sargent in the book *Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction* specifies a substantial number of possible utopias in fiction, including: "socialist, capitalist, monarchical, democratic, anarchist, ecological, feminist, patriarchal, egalitarian, hierarchical, racist, left-

¹ Although it is important to mention that even if Plato's work tends to be regarded as the first example of the vision of ideal or better society, many scholars argue that the first work depicting an utopian society is More's *De optimo reipublicæ* (Claeys 2010: 3-5).

wing, right-wing, reformist, free love, nuclear family, extended family, gay, lesbian, and many more” (Sargent 2010: 21). A good example of a utopian society which should deserve close attention as inspired by a specific ideology is the ecological utopia (or so-called ecotopia), in which the society strives to relate better to nature. This utopia focuses on rejecting the modern Western way of life, and its machines and technology that wreak havoc on nature, in order to return to simpler and more nature-friendly way of life (Kirk 2007: 86). A very important consequence of introducing utopia to cultural discourse is that it not only describes real or imagined communities and their attempts to create ideal societies in real-life or in fiction but it also results in creating many different utopia-related concepts which express decidedly ominous or tragic visions.

Interestingly enough, there are many different terms used by scholars to describe a “bad” society. One of them is “cacotopia”—the term proposed by Jeremy Bentham in his work *Plan of Parliamentary Reform, in the Form of a Catechism, with Reasons for Each Article* in 1818, where he defines utopia as the best form of government and cacotopia as the opposite (Bentham 2003). Even though the term “dystopia” became more popular and it is currently more widely used, the term “cacotopia” is also in use by scholars who argue that it is not an exact synonym for dystopia, as it is the case with the term “anti-utopia”. For example, Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent argues that there is a distinction between various terms that are considered as synonyms of dystopia. That is why Claeys and Sargent propose to define a dystopia as a society that is much worse than the contemporary society, whereas an anti-utopia would be a direct criticism of utopia and the values it represents (Claeys and Sargent 1999). As a result, “dystopia” terms a society in which a government often uses force and fear to maintain order and keep citizens in their place. Many works of fiction, especially the ones that are set in the future, depict futuristic societies as dystopian ones—with the well-known, notable examples of George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*. Many narratives depict dystopias as countries or nations run by totalitarian governments which dehumanize its citizens; often the world is in a difficult situation as a result of some kind of an environmental disaster or a destructive war that brought about a significant decline in society (Moylan 2000: xi-xv). In many genres and subgenres of fiction authors use various representations of dystopian worlds or societies in order to emphasise a complexity of issues related to society, religion, or politics, as well as broader problems such as ethics, science, or environment—to name only a few—in the contemporary, real-life

world. Quite often those stories are considered as warnings against being reluctant to address mentioned issues—since idleness or refusal to change might lead to turning the real world into a dystopia-like reality.

There is an uncanny relation between utopias and dystopias in works of fiction. Very often both utopias and dystopias are based on similar, or even the same, ideals and the main difference lies in political and social execution of these. In utopias the way in which ideas are implemented is beneficial and positive for citizens of a given society, but in their dystopian counterpart the way to the “perfect” state is very often brutal, unpleasant, and quite negative for the citizens. Furthermore, in representations of dystopias in fiction the ruling class or the government are described as brutal, unjust, and indifferent to the problems of the common citizens. Because of that, very often many depicted dystopian societies and worlds in works of fiction (especially in digital games) are characterised by protagonists who act against the government or take part in some kind of resistance movement that tries to change the society and overthrow the “evil” government (Donawerth 2003: 29-46).

Utopias and Dystopias Across Media

The main goal of this section is not to characterise in detail the wide variety of utopias and dystopias in literature, cinema, and digital games, but to present a few examples to highlight the main differences in the way the audiences of these mediums can interact with various visions of utopias and dystopias. In the case of books three examples were already mentioned (*The Republic*, *De optimo reipublicæ*, and *Brave New World*); however, there is one novel which deserves particular attention, as the reader is provided there not with one vision of ideal society, but with two possible scenarios. *Woman on the Edge of Time*, written by Marge Piercy in 1976, offers visions of alternative futures: one utopian, wherein many political, environmental, social and racial problems have been solved, and one dystopian, wherein a wealthy elite lives on space platforms and rule over the rest of the population with the use of drugs and surgical operations that let them control the minds of others. This novel is a very interesting example of a u-/dystopian text—as far as the literary medium is considered—mainly because it is uncommon to include two opposing depictions of future society.

Another interesting trend in regard to fictional representations of utopias and dystopias can be observed in film production. Popular or mainstream films largely tend to depict dystopian societies—even when at first certain communities or nations

seem to be utopian, in the end this impression turns out to be only a facade and in reality they are dystopian visions of society. What is more, utopias achieved by future societies are limited to certain aspects, or not accessible to everyone. *Gattaca* from 1997 directed by Andrew Niccol can serve as an exemplification of such vision of a society in the “near future”. The genetic technology in the film is much more advanced and allows people to design their children down to very specific detail—creating, from the genetic point of view, ideal humans. Genetically engineered people are considered “better” and discrimination of genetically non-modified people is widely accepted. However, it is not clearly stated whether *Gattaca* depicts a dystopian or utopian society and the film does not present any decisive answer; instead, it provides many arguments for and against such society allowing its viewers to draw their own conclusion. Although the most common depiction of future societies in cinema is unambiguously dystopian, filmmakers often use a popular formula for the presentation of a futuristic society that on the surface looks like a utopian one, but the outsider or even someone from this society is able to discover the “dark secret” of the system which leads to a change of the perception of this society from utopian to dystopian. Such change of perspective on a seemingly utopian society can be observed in 1976 film *Logan’s Run*, directed by Michael Anderson. The society in the film is settled in an advanced city that is run and controlled by computers, allowing people to live untroubled lives in a hedonistic way. Their only responsibility is to submit themselves to a ritual of renewal at the age of thirty (twenty-one in the book that the film was inspired by), in which their bodies are transferred into energy so they can be born again. In the chain of events Logan 5, the main hero, discovers that the ritual of renewal is a lie and it is just a tool used to maintain a stable population of the city. Computers calculated the maximum population of the city that can be maintained and they decided that all people must be killed at the age of thirty to make room for newly born citizens. Logan 5, so as the protagonists of the majority of dystopian narratives, ultimately rebels against the system and changes the society (Anderson 1976).

Digital games, on the other hand, have at their disposal distinctly different tools to depict and create visions of utopias and dystopias. Many game developers choose the same path as film directors—creating digital dystopian or utopian worlds in the middle of which players start their game (e.g. the *Fallout* series or *Dishonored*). The most distinctive feature of digital games is that they offer possibility to not only observe created worlds, but also interact with it and in some cases change it to some

degree, while in the case of other mediums—books and films—their readers and viewers can only observe visions of utopian or dystopian societies. In most games where players enter a pre-existing world they have zero influence on how the game-world became a dystopian world—an example of this is *Dishonored* (Arkane Studios 2012). In this game players start off in an already established world, with cities, government, social rules and technology. Players also do not create their own character but control a man called Corvo, whose life, worldview and morality were formed by and are a part of the gameworld. Often players cannot even change the gameworld in any significant way; however, there are games in which players begin in a dystopian world where they are the driving force that brings order and stabilization to the world, at least in some extent, like in the *Fallout* series (Interplay Entertainment, Black Isle Studios, Micro Forté, Bethesda Game Studios, Obsidian Entertainment 1997-2015). This type of games just throws their players into a dystopian world and the players' objective is mainly to survive or fight for a "better" tomorrow, fulfilling the characteristic theme for dystopian works of fiction—a hero fights system or government, or in some cases the gameworld itself, to bring change and lessen the suffering of its people, like in the game *Wolfenstein: The New Order* (Bethesda 2014).

Yet, there are also games that allow their players to create their own utopian or dystopian world or society. In such games the players do not start in an already existing dystopian or utopian world, it is their task to guide the gameworld towards one or the other. The players are provided by the game system with tools necessary to shape the world around them, to let them create a dystopian or utopian world. The aforementioned examples—Activision's *Civilization: Call to Power* from 1999 and Lionhead Studios' *Black & White* from 2001—enable their players to shape their own dystopia or utopia. The games above are to be analysed in detail to highlight mechanics and elements of the game systems that enable players to experiment with, and create (as far as game systems allow), various possibilities of utopian and dystopian worlds. In the context of studying the depictions of utopias and dystopias in works of fiction it is also important to highlight that the game mechanics of digital games can be used not only for experiments in worldbuilding of a utopian or dystopian vision of a world, but—in case of the two aforementioned games—also to create a utopian or dystopian narrative. As many game studies scholars argue, for many digital games narrative and story are very important elements of experiencing the game (Simons 2007) or that it is truly hard (especially in the case of such complex games as *Civilization: Call to Power* and *Black & White*) to analyse only the mechanics

or the story of a digital game without mentioning the other aspect in some degree (Consalvo 2012: 117-139). Even if the narrative is created in those two digital games differently than in literature or cinema, still by using game mechanics to form the gameworld into a utopia or dystopia the players, by playing the game and making decisions, do not “merely play” or “use game mechanics” to build a certain version of the gameworld, but also they “tell” a “story” of how certain utopian or dystopian world came to be. That is why it is impossible to analyse specific game mechanics of *Civilization: Call to Power* and *Black & White* in detail in the context of creating a utopian or dystopian gameworld without putting those mechanics in the context of the gameworlds themselves.

Civilization: Call to Power

Civilization: Call to Power (hereinafter *Call to Power*) is a 4X game developed by Activision as a successor to the *Civilization* series by Sid Meier. Activision added a number of new mechanics to the game in pursuit to differentiate it from Sid Meier’s *Civilization* series. The term “4X” was created by Alan Emrich and is used as the name for a type of strategy-based games in which players control a country or a nation and their main goal is to “eXplore, eXpand, eXploit, and eXterminate” (Emrich 1993), focusing on maintaining and managing the nation’s economy and politics. Nowadays, the term is used to describe all of the games with similar scope (managing a country or a nation) and design (specific camera view, turn-based gameplay, etc.). Although in such games the economic and technological development and the option to wage wars have significant effect on the outcome of the game, there is a possibility to win the game in a non-military way, what is crucial—this can be observed in the case of “diplomatic” or “cultural” victories in Sid Meier’s *Civilization* series. For every gameplay of *Call to Power* a specific world is created and the players can manipulate many aspects of that world (through options concerning the age of the planet, humidity of the climate etc.) during the creation stage of the new game. Therefore, every game is conducted in a separated and isolated world that players can influence in many various ways, shaping the gameworld (to a certain degree) to their liking. In the context of creating utopian or dystopian worlds in the game the most important mechanics added to *Call to Power* include the pollution mechanics and the mechanics of government types that players can choose for their civilisation during the game.

In the game, after reaching the age of Industrial Revolution, any kind of production in cities creates a certain amount of pollution—including the case of dropping a nuclear bomb on an enemy. As a tool for players that would enable them to create a dystopian world, pollution works on two different levels. One is local, influencing specific cities or only the player's civilisation, while the other one is global and influences the whole gameworld. If players ignore the problem of pollution and it reaches certain levels, the tiles around the city with high pollution output start to turn black and the population of the city will be unable to use those tiles. This can lead to food and happiness problems and, in consequence, to riots; in some extreme cases players can even lose control over an overpolluted city. This situation may lead to problems with happiness in other cities owned by the player, and eventually whole nation can plunge into chaos, or even a civil war. Such scenario creates the local scale dystopia, as the player's country becomes a land of chaos and disorder and in most cases the only way for the player to bring order is to subjugate their own citizens by use of force and the military. In very rare extreme cases the chain reaction of unhappiness and riots can lead to a situation in which the player loses control over owned cities, effectively losing the game.

Large-scale pollution can influence the whole gameworld. The game system distinguishes between local and global level of pollution—the former one is related to specific cities' emissions, while the latter is a combined level of pollution emitted by all civilisations in the particular game. When the global pollution reaches critical levels, the game informs the player about global natural disaster and event that has two possible outcomes: either the icecaps melt and most of the landmass in the gameworld is flooded by water and all the cities near the sea are destroyed or the temperature rises so high that almost all the land tiles turn into a desert—or a polluted wasteland—making them uninhabitable. Therefore, by manipulating the global pollution levels, the player can create a post-apocalyptic dystopian world. In one case triggering the event that covers almost whole world with water and in other case by turning the whole world into a desolated desert.

In some cases, the melted icecaps event can cause players to automatically lose the game if all of their cities were near the coastline. On the other hand, some players may use the natural disaster mechanic as a part of their strategy. During the world creation, players can choose to play in a world with high sea level or in a world consisting of many small islands. In both scenarios triggering the natural disaster that melts icecaps and raises the sea level will almost assure the destruction of all the land

mass along with the cities. However, *Call to Power* allows its players to reach certain level of technological development that enables them to build cities under water or in orbit. Therefore when players manage to achieve a certain technological level they can build at least one underwater or orbital city, then they can trigger the event by dropping a number of nuclear bombs on other players and destroy everything in the world except the mentioned naturally protected cities. This way players can purposefully strive to create a devastated dystopian world as a mean to defeat their enemies and win the game.

The other mechanic available to players that allows creation of utopian or dystopian world in *Call to Power* is the mechanic of government types, which is also tied closely with the mechanics of pollution. By choosing, especially in the late gameplay, a specific government type, the players can not only influence the situation in their own nation, but also in the whole gameworld. In this context the most significant government types are communism and ecotopia.

In the game the government types are showed in a rather simplistic way that highlights mainly those characteristics that are important from the point of view of the game mechanics. Nonetheless developers wanted the characteristic of every government type (at least the historic ones) to reflect the historical facts (as much as game mechanics allow). Communism is a government type characterised by very high productivity and strong military. Nations that choose communism tend to have poor economy, but are very efficient in waging war. Communism is described in the game as a truly totalitarian government. Fascism is another totalitarian form of government that keeps a close eye on its populace. It may inspire a great loyalty among citizens, which helps such nation to maintain a big army without worrying about unhappiness among its citizens. Fascist nations are also characterised by high production, but have weak economies and slow growth of populace and science. Both government types can be used by the players to create a version of a totalitarian dystopian country.

Ecotopia, on the other hand, is an example of a utopian type of government that focuses on finding balance between technological progress and taking care of environment and nature. The underlying idea of ecotopia is that humanity should strive for ecologically harmonious way of life. Despite what the name might suggest, the ecotopian nations will gladly go to war with any nation that produces vast amounts of pollution. Another rather utopian government type is technocracy, which puts the science and technology above all others. As the name suggests, nations adopting this

type of government have high pace of scientific research, high production, strong economy and its citizens are loyal. However, there is even more advanced type of government, characterised by its peacefulness—virtual democracy. This type of government can be distinguished by its strong economy, effective scientific research, and approach to environmental issues—considering them a very serious threat. All of these three government types have many elements associated with various visions of utopian societies, and the players can use them to create a utopia on a level of their nation.

Players can also combine the government system and the pollution mechanic to create dystopian or utopian worlds in *Call to Power*. Every type of government has its bonuses and drawbacks. The government systems provide the players with modifiers to pollution emission and allow access to technologies and wonders that can influence the global level of pollution. So by choosing a specific government, players can greatly influence the global level of pollution to shape the gameworld into an ecological utopia or a post-apocalyptic dystopia. In the context of pollution, the most important governments are communism and ecotopia—mainly because communism has a very high production bonus at the cost of increase in pollution emission by three hundredth percent; also this type of government makes it easy for players to build and maintain substantial nuclear arsenal that can be used to increase the global pollution level in the game. Ecotopia, on the other hand, grants players an access to buildings and wonders that lower pollution level not only in the players' nations but also globally. A prime example of creating a utopian gameworld while playing as ecotopia is the “Gaia Controller” wonder. It is a special building that is available to civilisations that have chosen ecotopia as the government type. Wonders, as in any other *Civilization*-like game, can influence the whole nation as well as the whole gameworld. In the case of “Gaia Controller” it eliminates all of the pollution in the gameworld. After building this wonder, players effectively create an ecologically utopian world in which there is no pollution and the impact that the industry has on nature is greatly diminished.

In the context of creating a utopian or dystopian world in *Call to Power*, the government system has one important limitation. It can be used by players to create, for example, a utopian society, but only on a local level of their nation. Players have no possibility of influencing other nations in the game to change their government types. Only few wonders in the game can influence the gameworld globally, most of

them provide various bonuses only to its builders. Thus players can use the government system or build various wonders to create utopian society limited to their own nation. To be able to influence the gameworld globally, and achieve a utopian world, they need to use both systems (like in the example described above).

Civilization: Call to Power is a representative example of a digital game that gives its players an opportunity to create a utopian or dystopian world within the game. The possibility to influence not only certain nations but also the whole gameworld itself comes from the specific characteristics of *Call to Power* being a 4X game. There is another game that allows its players to create a utopian or dystopian society, although on a smaller scale. Right in the spirit of More's *De optimo reipublicæ*, the next described digital game's action takes place on an island in the middle of the ocean and players can influence inhabitants' lives in various ways to create a utopian paradise island or a dystopian living hell—the game is called *Black & White*.

Black & White

The game *Black & White* was developed by Lionhead Studios in 2001. Players are gods who control a number of villages across several islands. Each level of the game is a different island which means that players have control over only one island at a time. *Black & White* features a number of creatures from which players can choose one. The creature can be raised and taught by players to help them convert neutral or hostile people to worship the players' god. Players can choose whether they want to be a good god or an evil one—every action taken by the player influences followers' view of a god. Also players can influence the personality of their creature (god's familiar) and train it to do things that are either benevolent or cruel. One of the most important aspects of the game mechanics is that the god's personality system and the creature's one are separate, so there is a possibility for players to play as a good god with evil familiar, as well as the other way round. There are distinctive visual and sound cues highlighting the "morality" of players' gods and their creatures.

In the context of creating a utopian or dystopian world (island) in *Black & White*, one of the games mechanics is particularly important. It is called "area of influence" (or simply influence). It is an area of an island that is under direct influence of the player. Inside this area the player can cast miracles, move objects and help to build structures—in short, take any available action in the game system. Players can expand their influence area either by helping their villages to grow—in consequence,

gain more worshippers and power—or by converting remaining villages that are not worshipping any god or are under the influence of another god. The only way for players to shape the whole world into their liking is to extend their influence over the island. Once it is achieved they can do whatever they want with inhabitants and various objects on the island. Even though the game allows players to manipulate every object in the game, there are some things that players (even though they are gods) cannot do in the gameworld—namely they cannot modify the terrain on the island. Players can move enormous boulders, move and replant whole woods from one part of the island to another, yet they cannot change its landscape. Meaning that they are unable to level down mountains or raise land to form hills or change the course of waterways.

In *Black & White* players play as gods, and gods' power is measured by the number and devotion of their followers. Players can choose one of two ways in which they interact with people living on an island. By helping villagers with their everyday struggles they can convince inhabitants to believe in them, for example, players can cast miracles, such as providing extra wood or summoning rain on the fields so the crops can grow. On the other hand, players can cast rain of fire on a village to force people to worship them or send their creature to destroy a village, forcing people to worship them. Players can choose to act in a specific way and in most cases train their creature accordingly, in order to become good or evil. When players decide to play an evil god, they can create a gameworld that resembles living hell for their followers and create a variation of dystopian world. As suggested by the game's name itself (i.e. *Black & White*), the indicated visual cues amplify this vision of horrible dystopian world. The evil god's temple is dark with many spikes and bats flying around. Furthermore, instead of regular cursor—resembling a normal human hand—there is a red and wrinkly hand with long, sharp nails. What is more, players' avatar that is being developed into an evil creature is characterised by its special appearance. It is of dark colour and has aggressive and mean features. On the other hand, players which decide to play a good god can help their followers and provide them with everything they may need. In consequence, to win love and admiration of followers, players effectively create a utopian gameworld. This vision is also enhanced by visual cues as the temple of a good god is portrayed using a white smooth tower around with white doves flying around. In this case, the cursor is a smooth and gentle hand, and the creature is white, peaceful and not threatening.

Furthermore, another mechanic of the game can be used by its players to become an evil or good god and, in consequence, help to create a utopian or dystopian world. In order to cast miracles, players need power which they normally gain when their followers pray to them; however, players can get additional power through sacrifice, but they can sacrifice only animate beings, namely trees, animals and humans. Those who decide to sacrifice their followers (human sacrifice gives the biggest amount of power) are considered an evil god. The same relation goes for players' creatures which can be taught to eat specific things like grain, animals or humans. Creatures of players that choose not to teach their familiars to abstain from eating people or training them to devour humans on purpose are considered evil, which leads to a change in their rendering.

The aforementioned mechanics significantly influence the gameplay of players in the context of creating a dystopian world in the game. In *Black & White* players compete against other gods, so the main goal of the game is to win said competition. In order to do that, players need power (the main source of which is, as it was mentioned earlier, prayers of players' followers). Because the developers made the game a competitive one and they tied the only source of power to followers, many players feel more compelled to play as good gods, train their creatures accordingly and, in consequence, create a utopian world. Gamers playing as evil gods sacrifice their followers to gain more power, but also they are compelled to summon destructive forces, by casting lightnings or fireballs, and unleash them on villages to force inhabitants to worship them and to train their creatures to eat humans. All of those actions are characteristic of an evil god and the rules of a dystopian world, but because of the aforementioned mechanics of the game they are dangerous for players and can jeopardise their chances of winning. Killing followers to gain more power, feeding them to creatures or converting them by force may prove disastrous for players. Playing an evil god and creating a dystopian world in the game puts players' main resource (manpower) in danger and lack of cautiousness might cost them the game. Indeed, training a creature to feed solely on humans and building a village only for purpose of breeding more people so a creature has abundant food source fit ideally into the dystopian imagery. However, this strategy, from the perspective of the game mechanics, is very difficult to maintain and also wasteful. So even though *Black & White* offers its players the choice of way in which they want to play—either to be good or bad deity, still the game mechanics make creating a utopian world much easier and rewarding than a dystopian one.

Conclusion

Most of media representations, because of their characteristics, can only present a certain version of a utopia or dystopia and describe it to the readers or viewers, who cannot change or influence it—they can only admire it or be horrified by it. In the case of digital games the situation is much more complex. The audience of games—players—are not only able to admire or abhor the vision of utopian or dystopian society created by game developers, but also—because of the specifics of digital games as medium—experience it more profoundly and, in the case of some titles, influence a gameworld itself. This paper presented two examples of digital games in which players can go much further in experiencing utopian or dystopian worlds, which is not possible in any other media. In those games the players are allowed to actually create their own (as far as systems and mechanics of those games allow) utopian or dystopian worlds or societies. Furthermore, *Civilization: Call to Power* and *Black & White* are not the only digital games featuring this particular theme—there are other examples of digital games (e.g. the *Populous* series or the *Dungeon Keeper* series) that enable players to create various virtual worlds in accordance with ideas underlying utopias or dystopias. The main goal of this chapter was to demonstrate, making use of provided examples, that in comparison with other media, games present their audience, i.e. the players, with decidedly different tools to experience and experiment with the idea of utopian or dystopian worlds.

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