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CHOOSING BETWEEN ONE EVIL AND ANOTHER

The Motivations of Let's Players towards Solving Moral Dilemmas in The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt

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ABSTRACT

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The aim of this thesis is to find out what kinds of motivations players have towards solving moral dilemmas they face within video game narratives. More specifically, this thesis focuses on a particular group of players called Let's Players, who record their gameplay and provide a voice commentary narrating their play, either livestreaming these playthroughs or uploading them to video sharing platforms such as YouTube. The performative and social aspects of Let's Players distinguish them from the solitary play of most players making moral choices, and this thesis seeks to determine whether this also affects how they approach those moral dilemmas within video game narratives.

Moral dilemmas within video games narratives have received a fair share of criticism, being perceived as shallow and lacking the ability to offer the player a chance to truly reflect on their actions. In addition, as no real, living creatures are affected by the player's actions, the applicability of moral concerns is questionable. There are opposing views to this as well, seeing play as a part of the moral development of a player. This thesis strives to ascertain whether Let's Players do express moral focus and reflection towards moral dilemmas in their playthroughs, or if they are motivated by non-moral concerns.

The research was conducted as a thematic analysis of 20 Let's Players' playthrough of two side quests in the action-RPG video game *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, whose narratives involve moral dilemmas that the player must solve. The game was chosen for this thesis mainly because the moral dilemmas in its narrative were generally praised in the game's reviews. The narration of the Let's Players was first transcribed and then coded based on what motivations the Let's Players were expressing towards solving the moral dilemmas they were facing. These codes could then be collated into overarching themes that consisted of moral motivations, non-moral motivations, and co-reflection, which stands for a kind of collective reflection and decision making between the Let's Player and their audience.

The different motivations that could be identified from the sample group were self-reaction, role-playing, curiosity, rewards, and co-reflection. Additionally, I argue that the design of the moral dilemmas is crucial in determining whether a morally motivated player is able to act in a way that they deem is the most morally just cause of action. The game design issues prominent in the playthroughs of the sample group Let's Players were the unintentional commitment to a decision in a moral dilemma, being forced to make a decision before they were ready to commit to one, and restrictions to how non-playable characters involved in the moral dilemma could be interacted with. The results of the research suggest that Let's Players can have several motivations, both moral and non-moral, towards moral dilemmas they face within narratives of video games, changing from moment to moment and sometimes even having several motivations at once which might be in conflict with one another. Furthermore, Let's Players are able to involve their audience in the decision-making process, sometimes even leaving it completely up to their audience.

Keywords: Video games, moral dilemmas, Let's Play, player motivations, game design

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The witcher enters a dark cave, hearing a steady beat, like a pulsating heart. A whispering voice issues him a warning: "Begone, come no closer… I know whence you come…" Finally, at the back of the cave, the source of the voice is revealed: The ancient spirit, trapped within a tree, whom the witcher was sent to kill by the Crones of Crookback Bog. The spirit pleas the witcher to release it, promising in return to save a group of orphans living in Crookback Bog, whom the Crones will kill and eat otherwise. But the spirit has killed innocents before, and surely would again if released. Would you release the spirit, or destroy it?

As video games have evolved throughout the decades of their existence, so have their capabilities to produce meaningful experiences to players. Due to their interactive nature, one way for video games to achieve this is by placing the player in a position to make difficult choices that conflict with the player's values and challenge the player to think about the consequences of these choices and the reasons why one choice would be preferable over another. Although these kinds of moral judgments have been frequently featured in other media formats, such as film and television, in those forms of media the viewer is simply an observer and an evaluator for the choices made, while in video games, the player has the possibility to become the moral actor (Weaver & Lewis 2012, 610). The main aim of this thesis will be to look at players facing moral dilemmas within video game narratives and their motivations towards solving those dilemmas.

Games of moral content have existed long before the emergence of video games. *The Checkered Game of Life*, patented in 1866, as stated by its creator, Milton Bradley, "is a game peculiarly adapted to the home-circle from the fact that it can be played by two or three more players, as the company may be, and also is susceptible of being so arranged as to impart useful and instructive facts, or to impress moral truths upon the minds of those engaged in the play" (Bradley 1866). The genealogy of the *Checkered Game of Life* stretches back centuries, however. For instance, *gyan chaupar*, the game of knowledge, an ancient board game of the Indian subcontinent that eventually became *Snakes and Ladders* in British India, is generally thought to have first appeared around the 13th century (Srivastava 2019). It is a board game played much like the *Checkered Game of Life*: land on a virtue and you get to climb a ladder toward the god Vishnu; land on a vice and you're swallowed by a snake (Lepore 2012). Video games of this kind are not a new phenomenon, either. *Ultima IV* (Origin Systems, 1985) offered players an experience

where the choices they made had far-reaching consequences as long as 35 years ago, and it is perhaps the earliest video game to explicitly encode an ethical system and require its players to discover, learn, and adhere to it in order to win (Zagal 2009, 3-5). Since then, numerous video games across game types and genres have been released over the years where players face moral dilemmas that they must resolve. The examples include video games such as *Fable* (Big Blue Box Studios & Lionhead Studios 2004), *Mass Effect* (BioWare 2007), *Fallout 3* (Bethesda Game Studios 2008) and *Papers, Please* (Pope 2013).

Considering play, Johan Huizinga (1949,6) viewed that it lies outside the antithesis of good and evil and it has no moral function as the valuations of vice and virtue do not apply to games. Christoph Klimmt et al. (2006, 313) argue that players use *moral management* techniques to make the distinction between the world of a video game and the social reality: No real, living creatures are affected by the player's actions, so moral concerns are not 'necessary', applicable, or rational in their context. Also, the authors claim that dealing with moral issues is a cognitive task that players of violent video games must resolve in order to maintain or enhance their entertainment experience, rather than being the source of entertainment (ibid. 325). However, Tilo Hartmann and Peter Vorderer (2010) argue that contemporary video game characters are automatically perceived as *quasi-social*, meaning that they may trigger social perception, display humane emotions, and even evoke empathetic feelings. Therefore, they fall into the player's *scope of justice*, meaning their beliefs about the sorts of beings that should be treated justly (Opotow 1990, 3) and aggression against video game characters may consequently be considered unjust harm, and this is why players disengage from moral concern. As a consequence, aggression against video game characters may be considered unjust harm and this triggers guilt and negative affect that may undermine enjoyment (Hartmann & Vorderer 2010).

M. J. Heron and P. H. Belford (2014,1), in turn, have criticized moral choices themselves within games as shallow and lacking the ability to truly offer the player an opportunity to reflect on the actions they have taken when experienced through game narrative. The opposing side of this debate is led by Miguel Sicart, who has created a model of an *ethical player*. This ethical player determines who they are in the game and how that relates to life outside the game and constructs their ethics within a game world, meaning that playing will be a part of the moral development of that person (Sicart 2013, 78).

The examples above provide some insight into the divide among games scholars on whether morality is something that should matter to players, and it is an issue that this thesis addresses. The aim of this thesis is to find out what motivations players have towards solving moral dilemmas they face in video game narratives. The player motivations are based on the typology of different player reactions towards moral dilemmas by Ian Schreiber, Bryan Cash and Link Hughes (2010, 74-75). This thesis focuses on a particular group of players called Let's Players, who simultaneously record their playthroughs while providing a voice commentary narrating their play, and either livestream these playthroughs or upload them to video sharing platforms such as YouTube. This group of players is particularly interesting because their play can be seen as a kind of performance, and their audience may have an effect on how 'morally' they might play. The research is conducted as a qualitative study of 20 Let's Players' playthrough of two quests in the open-world action-RPG *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (CD Projekt Red, 2015). The voice narration of the Let's Players was transcribed and coded, using thematic analysis as a data analysis method in an attempt to identify the different motivations that the Let's Players might have towards solving the moral dilemmas that they faced playing these two quests.

This master's thesis consists of six parts. After this initial introduction into the subject and structure of the thesis, some useful background information is provided. In the background section, the concepts of *moral dilemma*, *Let's Play* and *motivation* are explained and the video game *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* will be introduced in greater detail. The third section of the thesis is a literature review that presents an account of previous research on similar subjects, research literature about the design of moral dilemmas within video games, players and their motivations towards moral dilemmas, and the components of moral behaviour. Though this essay will rely heavily on the support of moral philosophy, it is still a game studies essay, and as such, video games will its main focus. I will thus try to avoid overt philosophical analysis, as it cannot be satisfactorily achieved given the focus and the scope of this essay. The fourth part of the thesis presents its research design in more detail, providing the research questions that motivated the research, as well as a more in-depth look into the research data and the analysis method. The fifth chapter of the thesis goes over the results of the data analysis and the themes that were consequently formed. The sixth and final part of the thesis provides a critical summary of the results and the weaknesses of the research, and suggestions for future study. Also, I will arrive to the conclusion that Let's Players may

have several motivations towards solving moral dilemmas, both moral and non-moral, and that their audiences may also have a significant role in the decision-making process.

2 BACKGROUND

This section will focus on the fundamental concepts of the thesis. First, the concept of moral dilemma will be discussed. The section will contain an exploration into the nature of moral dilemmas based on some of the philosophical discourse around the subject. Then, the focus will shift on Let's Play -videos. What exactly are these, and who are Let's Players? The third subchapter will introduce the concept of motivation and contains a brief account of some of the most influential theories on motivation that attempt to explain what motivates individuals to act in certain ways. The background section will conclude with a brief introduction of the game that was chosen for the research section of this thesis: *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (CD Projekt Red 2015).

2.1. Moral dilemma

Moral dilemma is the most essential concept of the entire thesis. As such, special attention must be given to defining its meaning. Firstly, it is worthy of noting that there is a term that is very close to moral dilemma called *ethical dilemma*. Morality and ethics are often used as synonyms, but some do make a distinction between the two. For example, Paul Chippendale (2001, 5) sees morality as the huge in-built user's manual that provides the guidelines for human-to-human behaviour, while ethics are more finely tuned differentiations of how these codes are to be applied in different situations. R. S. Downie (1980, 33-34), in turn, notes that it is possible to decide by a majority vote what will or will not count as ethical, whereas an action or a practice cannot be made morally right by a majority decision or a piece of legislation. These distinctions suggest that morality is something internal to human beings, while ethics are more external, such as legislation and codified procedures, and so on. Though the focus of this thesis will be on the former, my use of the term 'morality' will cover ethics as well for the sake of simplicity.

Now that it has been addressed what morality stands for in this thesis, it is time to shift the focus to moral dilemmas. C. W. Gowans (1987, 3) defines moral dilemmas as situations in which "an agent morally ought to do *A* and morally ought to do *B* but cannot do both, either because *B* is just not-doing-*A* or because some contingent feature of the world prevents doing both". He then gives some examples of situations where such incompatible positions can be argued for, including capital punishment, euthanasia, and abortion.

This is something that is quite applicable to moral dilemmas within video games as well, particularly the scripted approach of *branching narratives*, which generally present the player with a small number of high-impact choices, generally presented in the context of a conversation system, which boil down to multiple choice problems with a handful of possible options (Formosa et al. 2016). In contrast to this, in the *systemic approach* the moral dilemmas emerge from the game mechanics themselves (ibid.), such as in *Papers, please* (Pope 2013), where the core mechanics of the game revolve around checking for various details on the paperwork presented by travellers attempting to gain entry to a fictional 1980s political regime of Arstotzka, with some being refugees or seeking entry to have a life-saving surgery, among many others. The player controls an immigration inspector who has the power to deny and allow entry to the country and use invasive x-ray -scans to determine the sex of the travellers, while being torn between helping revolutionists bring down the corrupt government and trying to perform their job as well as possible in order to provide for their family. In such a systemic approach the moral actions are smaller when compared to a scripted approach, and the meaning comes through the dynamics that emerge between the player and the system, allowing for more nuanced moral schemes (Formosa et al. 2016).

J. F. Christensen et al. (2014, 1) define moral dilemmas as "hypothetical short stories which describe a situation in which two conflicting moral reasons are relevant; for instance, the duty not to kill, and the duty to help". Here, moral dilemmas are treated as hypothetical, though my view is that moral dilemmas may be very real and concrete, or in the case of video games, simulations of moral dilemmas. Gonzalo Frasca (2003, 223) states that "to simulate is to model a (source) system through a different system which maintains (for somebody) some of the behaviours of the original system". According to the definition of moral dilemma by Christensen et al., the two moral reasons conflict with each other. I see this conflict as being at the core of moral dilemmas. When considering moral dilemmas within video games, it is up to the player's own values to determine whether a decision they must make is a moral one. If the game utilizes a moral meter (which are considered in more detail later on in chapter 3.2.1), such as *Fallout 3* (Bethesda Game Studios 2008), it is the game developers who decide whether a decision is moral, awarding Good Karma points for player decisions they deem morally good, and Evil Karma points for player decisions they deem morally evil, the amount of points corresponding the severity of the act, and the points combining for an overall moral disposition.

The act of justifying the choice between the available options of a moral dilemma is called *moral judgment* – for example, weighing the costs and benefits of the options is referred to as a *utilitarian* moral judgment, focusing on the consequences of the action, while focusing on the morality of the act itself is a *deontological* moral judgment (Christensen et al. 2014). Moral judgments often concern courses of action that entail some harm, especially loss of life or other physical harm, loss of rightful property, loss of privacy, or other threats to autonomy, and they tend to be triggered by actions that affect not only the decision maker but others as well (Bartels et al. 2016, 479).

A moral dilemma is always a choice, but a choice is not always a moral dilemma. The attribute of the moral dilemma that sets it apart from other choices is that it always has a moral dimension, as the available options have conflicting moral values such as whether or not to steal medicine to help a deathly ill family member. Garry Young (2014, 107-109), however, does not see moral dilemmas found within video games as actual moral dilemmas; rather, he considers them as simulations of moral dilemmas, though he admits that players may still suffer actual anguish contemplating which decision to make. The game world, the space of play, is both separate from and connected to the non-gaming environment, the "real" world, and one can import their personal characteristics into the game world and can be affected by what one experiences there (ibid.).

It should be kept in mind that moral judgments are shaped by the social and historical contexts in which we develop, with people adopting different notions about right and wrong depending on their culture's teachings (Jensen 2015). For example, Hindu children and adults rated a son's getting a haircut and eating chicken the day after his father's death as one of the most morally offensive of the 39 acts they were asked to rate (Shweder et al. 1990), while in the West, at least in most instances, this kind of act would be considered tactless at worst.

Whether or not something is a moral dilemma, then, can be recognized by answering the following questions: Is it a decision where only one solution may be chosen? Did one make the decision using their moral judgment instead of, for example, the convenience of the chosen solution? There are multiple methods to measure whether a choice was made using moral judgment. For example, a Moral Judgment Interview (MJI) may be used to present fictional moral dilemmas to a subject, after which they are asked a series of open-ended, probe questions designed to elicit information regarding the subject's moral reasoning in resolving the dilemma. The questions in an MJI are explicitly

prescriptive so as to draw out normative judgments about what one *should* do, rather than descriptive or predictive judgments about what one *would* do but asking this directly from the decision maker may not lead to truthful answers (Elm & Weber 1994, 346). Note that moral dilemmas are subjective: if there was no conflict between one's moral beliefs while making the decision, it is not a moral dilemma, at least to them.

Considering all of the above, moral dilemmas within video games are defined in this thesis as branching narrative choices where two or more options are presented and only one may be chosen. The decision entails transgressing a moral principle held by the player and it is made using moral judgment. This definition considers the fact that there may be more than one option presented in a moral dilemma. Though the etymology of the word 'dilemma' contains the part *di-*, meaning twice in Greek, in video games, and indeed in real life situations, these kinds of problems often have more than two possible solutions to them. I also want to emphasize that only one option may be chosen, leading to omitting to carry out the other options, which then leads to transgressing a moral principle held by the player. In the case of this thesis, which considers moral dilemmas within video games, the decision maker is the player and not just the player character. In addition, I wanted to stress that this transgression of a moral principle is inevitable in a moral dilemma. The use of moral judgment is crucial, since the choice must be made by weighing in the different solutions presented and how one's internal moral values relate to those solutions. I attempted to utilize sections of the previous definitions presented that I agreed with and modify and combine them in ways that I felt were more accurate but still simple enough for a good definition that is applicable to this thesis. Finally, because of the subjectivity of morality, it should be pointed out that in this thesis, what is considered as a moral dilemma and what is not will be examined in the context of 21-century Western sense of morality. Geographically, the West consists of the United States, Europe, and also Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (Kurth 2003, 5).

2.2. Let's Play

Let's Play -videos are the main research data used in this thesis. They are videos that players create of themselves playing video games, coupling game footage with simultaneously recorded commentary by the Let's Players (henceforth abbreviated LPers, while Let's Play will be abbreviated as LP). While LP -videos may include video footage of the LPers, this predominantly audio commentary enables them to remark on game

features, share thoughts, and express emotional reactions during gameplay, and these videos as showcases of games and game playing are often available on user-generated content-sharing sites such as YouTube and on streaming platforms like Twitch (Nguyen 2016). In addition, there are many videos that are called LPs which lack narration. These videos are more often referred to as long plays because they include nothing but the complete gameplay itself (Kerttula 2019, 237).

According to Patrick Klepek (2015), the LP phenomenon originated on the forums of the website *Something Awful*, with people posting up screenshots of themselves playing various video games and including their own humorous commentary. The term itself was coined sometime in late 2005, though its form was seemingly around in 2004 and, once YouTube became a viable platform for hosting videos, LPs left *Something Awful*. However, it can be argued that the VHS tape *Score More Points Nintendo Blue* (1989), where Skip "World Video Game Champion" Rodgers narrates over gameplay to help people get high scores in video games, could be considered an early precursor to the LP phenomenon (Klepek 2015).

While the purpose of *Score More Points Nintendo Blue* was to provide viewers tips for improving their own gameplay, LPs are not solely focused on optimized performance in gameplay. Josef Nguyen (2016) remarks that they often feature uncertainty and error as central to individual playing experiences. Through expressions of confusion, frustration, delight, surprise, and embarrassment, LPers react to and comment on not only the game but also their actions and consequences in playing (Nguyen 2016).

Today, the popularity of the LP phenomenon has had a considerable impact on the entire video game industry. The most popular LPers have considerable audiences: for example, Felix Kjellberg, better known by his YouTube alias PewDiePie, has over 108 million subscribers on YouTube as of late 2020. Video game studios send popular LPers early review copies of games or pay them to make positive videos. For example, after PewDiePie uploaded his LP video of *Crypt of the NecroDancer* (Brace Yourself Games 2015), the game saw an immediate $60, 000 increase in sales (Hudson 2017). An opposite effect is also possible, particularly in the case of linear, narrative-driven games, where extensive LP coverage might end up hurting sales (ibid.). There are games that are claimed by some critics to be solely built for LP, meant to be shared for laughs, like *I am Bread* published by Bossa Studios in 2015 (Webber 2015).

Tero Kerttula (2019, 242-249) describes seven different narrative elements that form the narration of a LP and argues how these elements together form a story of the player, rather than that of the game. *Descriptive narration* takes place when the LPer describes what they see in front of them and what they know or do not know about the game. *Story narration* has much more to do with the original storytelling of the game, and the story of the LP in question, than just basic descriptive narration. The LPer narrates important events in the story so that they are not missed by the audience. *Audiovisual narration* comments on the sound and images of the game, usually critiquing the audiovisual design, but there may also be storytelling elements linked to the aesthetics of the game. *Game-mechanics narration* comments on the gaming elements such as playability, whereas *Intertextual narration* connects the game mechanics, visuals, and story to other forms of popular culture, such as movies, music, and other video games. *Reflective narration* means LPers reflecting on their viewers, for example tips that the audience gives the LPer. Finally, *alternative narration* moulds the original narration of the game in the direction the LPer chooses. Alternative narration can include alternative dialogue that the LPer makes up to replace the original lines from the game (Kerttula 2019).

LP discourse can be both monologic and dialogic: LPers may speak to game characters, but they cannot reply outside the game script (Piittinen 2018, 4674). LPers may also address their audience, but these cannot reply in real time unless the LP is streamed or if there are audience members in the same space with the LPer, in which case the discourse can be very conversational. In live streams, the audience may interact with both the LPer and other members of the audience using a chat window. Contrary to the rhetoric of the passive viewer, many studies have shown over the years the creative, active ways audience takes up content, and live streaming chat continues this thread (Taylor 2018, 43). Live streaming LPers are typically engaging with their audiences by greeting them, answering questions, responding to feedback, and getting to know each other over time (ibid, 69). In many instances, the live streaming audience becomes enlisted in the gameplay itself by giving input on choices within the game (ibid. 75).

While on the one hand LPer discourse is naturally occurring speech, it is also performative at the same time (Piittinen 2018). Some LPers speak of how broadcasting play can become a means of amplifying the experience through a public performance as introducing spectators into the mix makes gaming more enjoyable, while for others, broadcasting their play becomes a new performative outlet, not dissimilar from theatre

and acting (Taylor 2018, 70). Nguyen (2016) notes that LPs demonstrate how video game playing should be understood as localized and embodied performances where players execute the role of video game players. Although it can be fabricated as such, the LP commentary is constructed as recorded live alongside the act of playing, suggesting that the commentary, reactions, and jokes are spontaneous and unscripted. LPers often mobilize their mistakes, discoveries, and surprises as significant opportunities for performing their individual personalities through expressive reactions and thoughts (ibid.). Reactions, expressions, jokes and even theatricality can form a critical part of successful LP videos, and skilful live streaming LPers engage in a kind of "crowd work" that involves not only the live audience but also the emerging experience of the game, being incredibly flexible performers deeply attuned to the audience (Taylor 2018, 81).

This performance aspect of LPers may significantly affect how they approach moral dilemmas. The presence and knowledge of an audience might cause the LPer to act in a socially desirable manner, meaning that they might tend to place themselves in a favourable light, denying socially undesirable traits and claiming socially desirable ones (Nederhof 1985, 264). Also, particularly in the case of livestreams, the real-time input of the audience might influence the decisions of LPers facing moral dilemmas. Finally, the goal of the LPer to be entertaining, informative, or something in between, might also have an effect on how they approach moral dilemmas within video games.

2.3. Motivation

This thesis focuses on the *motivations* of LPers towards solving the moral dilemmas they face in the narratives of the video games they play. The concept of motivation has been defined in many different ways by different scholars (Jodai et al. 2013, 3), but this thesis considers it as a psychological construct that describes the mechanisms by which individuals and groups choose particular behaviour and persist with it (McInerney 2019). This section takes a brief look into three content theories, a subset of motivational theories that attempts to explain the factors that motivate individuals through identifying and satisfying their individual needs, desires and the aims pursued to satisfy these desires (Ball 2003).

Motivation concerns activation and intention, being moved to act. The Self-Determination Theory by R. M. Ryan & E. L. Deci divides motivation into two types, intrinsic and extrinsic. According to the authors of the theory, *Intrinsic motivation* refers

to doing an activity for the inherent satisfaction of the activity itself. In contrast, *extrinsic motivation* refers to the performance of an activity in order to attain some separable outcome. There are innate, psychological needs that are the basis for people's self-motivation: the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy concerns the experience of integration and freedom, the need for competence is fulfilled by the experience that one can effectively bring about desired effects and outcomes, whereas the need for relatedness pertains to feeling that one is close and connected to significant others (Deci & Ryan 1991 & 2000, Ryan & Deci 2000).

Another central content theory, Abraham Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs is based on how people satisfy various personal needs in the context of their work. He observed that there is a general pattern of needs recognition and satisfaction that people follow in generally the same sequence, and that a person could not recognize or pursue the next higher need in the hierarchy until their currently recognized need was substantially or completely satisfied, a concept that is called *prepotency*. The hierarchy of needs is often illustrated as a pyramid with physiological needs such as thirst and hunger at the bottom, followed by the need of safety. The third level consists of love and belongingness, meaning the need to escape loneliness, love and be loved, and gain a sense of belonging. Level 4 is called Esteem, and contains the need of self-respect, and to respect others. Finally, at the top of the hierarchy, is the need of self-actualization, which means to fulfil one's potentialities (Gawel 1996).

The third content theory introduced here is the flow theory by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, which describes a prototypical experience of intrinsic motivation referred to as *a flow experience*. As described by Csikszentmihalyi (2014), in flow, a person is fully concentrated on the task at hand. There is a feeling of action and awareness merging, and it is very clear what needs to be done from one moment to the next. Feedback is unambiguous to how well one is doing, and the person performing the task loses both their self-consciousness and sense of time. As in Self-Determination Theory, one experiencing flow is willing to do what makes these feelings possible for their own sake, without expecting extrinsic rewards. Most importantly, flow begins to be experienced when there is a good fit between the skills of the self and the challenges afforded by the environment. If the challenges are too high relative to skills, this imbalance leads to anxiety because one feels overwhelmed and out of control. In contrast, when skills are

too high for the given challenges, the fit between the self and the environment is too easy and comfortable, resulting in boredom and loss of focus (ibid.).

Many other motivation theories exist in addition to these three, but the limitations in the scope of this thesis prevent a more in-depth look into neither the motivation theories introduced here or the introduction of other existing theories. The content theories presented above were selected as they are among the most well-known theories on motivation, and the main purpose of this section is merely to provide an idea of what is meant by motivation in this thesis how it is conceptualized in major theories.

2.4. The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt

The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt (CD Projekt Red, 2015), henceforth called *Witcher 3*, is an open-world action-RPG, and the final instalment of the *Witcher* game trilogy. Open-world digital games provide players self-directed gameplay by allowing free exploration of expansive game worlds in which players choose their own paths to achieve their goals (Min 2017). Being an action-RPG, *Witcher 3* combines elements from action-adventure games and RPGs – an abbreviation for role-playing games. This means that the game has a main plot that the player progresses by completing multiple quests that take the story forward (Gerber 2009). In addition to these *main quests*, *Witcher 3* also features numerous *side quests*, typical to the RPG genre. Side quests often include simple plots that are independent from the main plot and are entirely optional to complete. Side quests are important, as they add value to the open-world appeal to the game, and offer experience and items, which are used to make the player character stronger (Onuczko 2007, 110). *Witcher 3* features a branching narrative. This means that many points exist in the story at which a user action or decision alters the way the narrative unfolds and ends (Riedl 2006, 23). In *Witcher 3* this is true for both the main and side quests, and many of them feature a moral dilemma which the player must solve in order to complete the quest.

Figure 1. Geralt of Rivia in The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt (CD Projekt Red 2015).

Witcher 3 is based on *The Witcher*, a series of fantasy novels and short stories written by Polish author Andrzej Sapkowski, such as the first collection of short stories in its fictional chronology called *The Last Wish* (2007). The trilogy of games developed by CD Projekt Red act as sequels to the fantasy novels, revolving around the character Geralt of Rivia, a witcher. Witchers are professional monster hunters who possess supernatural abilities that aid them in battling different beasts. According to the glossary entry on witchers in the first Witcher game *The Witcher* (CD Projekt Red 2007), witchers are treated as outcasts and sometimes even met with hatred due to their otherness and unusual abilities. People need witchers but are simultaneously afraid of them. A witcher is rarely a welcome guest and contacts with members of this profession are almost always limited to business. The game trilogy takes place at a time when monsters have become something of a rarity, and so the demand for the witchers' services has declined significantly. As a result, only few witchers still travel the world, and no new ones are being trained.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter of the thesis begins with a look into previous literature that have several commonalities with this thesis. After that, literature on moral dilemmas within video games and their design will be taken into closer examination, with particular interest in what the main design problems are and what should be considered when designing moral dilemmas within video games. Two design elements are given particular attention: morality meters which track the level of a player's in-game morality, and the concept of wicked problems that originated in design studies and has some applicability in the design or moral dilemmas within video games. The literature review will also touch upon the concept of an ethical player more closely as well as an existing typology of player motivations and how they could be applied to moral dilemmas within video games. The chapter will conclude with the presentation of the Four Component Model, a framework which breaks moral behaviour into four elements, and may be applied to the evaluation of a player's moral behaviour.

3.1. Previous research

This section sums up some of the previous research closely related to this thesis, being conducted on moral behavior of players, LPers, player motivations, and *Witcher 3*.

There is at least one other study that has researched the moral behavior of LPers. The study by Sari Piittinen (2018) examines what kinds of moral evaluations players form of ambiguous Gothic monsters in Let's Play videos of the action role-playing game *Fallout 3* (Bethesda Game Studios 2008). In addition to a slightly different focus, studying moral evaluations instead of motivations and using a different game, this research employed discourse analysis instead of thematic analysis as data analysis method. In addition, it did not focus on the possible input of the audience in livestreaming LPer decision making. Another study using LP videos as data was Christian Roth's (2019) research into meaning-making processes of players through ludonarrative hermeneutics, role identification and role distancing. The LP videos were evaluated using conversation analysis.

Barbaros Bostan (2009) was also interested in mapping player motivations using the first part of the Witcher game trilogy *The Witcher* (CD Projekt Red 2007) as an example game. This study, however, used H. A. Murray's (1938) psychogenic needs which consist of

materialism, power, affiliation, achievement, information, and sensual needs to analyse goal-directed player behaviour in video games on a more general level, not focusing solely on moral dilemmas. Cody Phillips et al. (2018) tested the impact of reward types, both individually and by variety of rewards, to player motivation.

Witcher 3 has been studied previously from several different angles: For example, Zuzana Bučková (2019) studied its narrative elements associated with religion and spirituality, while Joshua Stevens (2020) considered how artistic representations of folk culture, or folklorism, is aesthetically coded in its soundtrack. Krzysztof Krzyscin (2015) focused on worldbuilding techniques used in *Witcher 3* in order to create a self-contained fictional world, and Elizabeth Rossbach's (2019) thesis investigated the ways in which the game brings questions of care and dependence to a digital medium.

3.2. The design of moral dilemmas within video games

When designing moral dilemmas, it is imperative to keep in mind how they are defined. It is easy to mistakenly design *moral temptations*, where solutions are clearly divided into moral and immoral ones, but the immoral choice might yield better material rewards (Ryan et al. 2016, 8). With true moral dilemmas, there is no clear morally right solution. Also, J. P. Zagal (2009) notes the importance of the player being the one making the choices. In many games, the player is left as a bystander as the player character makes the choice themselves when faced with a moral dilemma. The power of moral dilemmas in games is that they can require the player to participate, rather than simply spectate. However, it is easy to fall into the trap of assuming that simply because there is a moral dilemma in the game, the player will become personally invested. A distinction can then be made into character-based moral dilemmas, where the character makes the decision, and player-based moral dilemmas, where the player is the decision maker (ibid., 7).

Likewise, it is important that the choices that the player makes over the course of the game are permanent, at least in that particular playthrough. Quite often, the narratives in games involving moral dilemmas have multiple endings. If the ending of the game is determined by a single big decision at the end, the choices made earlier in the game lose meaning, particularly if the alternatives of the end decision remain the same regardless of choices made earlier in the game. Schreiber et al. (2010) offer a possible solution to this, suggesting that the ending of the game be determined by all choices made during the

course of the game. The player should be informed by the game, if only subtly, that they are making a decision that will have significance (ibid. 2010, 76-80).

In contrast with real-life moral dilemmas, players may often use a save function in a game before choosing a solution for a moral dilemma. This enables a player to return to a previous game state if the choice they make does not satisfy them. Sebastian Domsch (2013, 142) argues that a choice that can be reversed is not a choice that is truly made, instead it merely gives the player complete information about the consequences which tends to make the choice situation either irrelevant or make a solution obvious as a choice. Of course, it is worthy of noting that if the choice is a true moral dilemma, no solution should be obviously preferable to another. However, a reversible choice does still remove the element of possible unforeseen consequences out of the moral dilemma, giving the player perfect information about all possible outcomes. A way of preventing the player from easily returning to an earlier game state after choosing a solution whose outcome does not satisfy them is to make the consequences far-reaching, so that they will be made apparent for the player possibly several hours of gameplay after making the choice (Schreiber et al. 2010, 77-78,). Frasca (2001) even suggests a specific type of games, "one-session games of narration", that are designed around moral dilemmas, can only be played for one session and that do not have a saving feature of any kind, potentially preventing any kind of replayability, and thus forcing the player to take their actions and the consequences of those actions more seriously. Domsch (2013, 142) states that when player choice is strongly deprived of consequence it lessens the ethical importance of the choices. On the other hand, the possibility to save and reload the game enables players to practice their emphatic skills around a morally dilemmatic issue by retrying (Katsarov et al. 2019, 351).

However, J. L. Nay and J. P. Zagal (2017) point out that decisions that do not affect the progress of the game, such as the option to answer an NPC (non-player character) question either sarcastically or seriously are also important. When the player does not have to fear that the way they answer a question affects the progress of the game in a way that is unwanted, they may focus on constructing the personality of the character. In these cases, it is even more important to let the player know when the choices they make do matter. From a storytelling perspective, it is also fruitful to show the consequences of *not* choosing a certain solution. Schreiber et al. (2010) note that designing the consequences of a moral dilemma is a balancing act between narrative effects and how the choices affect

gameplay. That is, does the player get additional in-game money or special items as a direct consequence of their choice, or does it merely affect how the narrative will play itself out (ibid. 76-80)?

Some games pressure the player to solve a moral dilemma by limiting the time to make the choice. This leaves less time for reflection and the player might end up making a decision whose possible consequences they could not fully consider. The player might regret a hastily made decision later because they did not have enough time to consider the possible choices, or they were missing crucial information (Katsarov et al. 2019, 11). In true moral dilemmas, information has a pivotal role, because the player must make the choice based on the information they have received of the consequences of different alternatives (Domsch 2017, 166). However, if moral dilemmas are to resemble wicked problems, the player cannot have perfect information. Wicked problems are discussed more in detail in chapter 3.2.2.

In games that feature time-pressured moral dilemmas in their narrative the player has limited time to use their reasoning to come to a conclusion. The dual-process model of moral cognition acknowledges two types of reasoning processes: type 1, which is fast, implicit, and intuitive, and type 2, which is slow, explicit, and deliberative (Evans & Stanovich 2013). Adding time pressure to a moral dilemma can help expose Type 1 responses within a player (Ryan et al. 2020, 58). Added time pressures in decision making will likely result in players feeling less empathetic and making decisions based on their own personal biases, increasing the likelihood of making immoral decisions. Of course, this is not always the case. In fact, there is much evidence that decision making can often be well served by intuitive decision making and that sometimes explicit efforts to reason can result in worse performance (Evans 2012, 127). If the game gives adequate feedback on the choices made, the players may become aware of their biases and it may help players develop new moral principles on how to act in similar situations in the future (Katsarov et al. 2019, 12).

Some games track the choices the player has made and compare them to other players' decisions at the end of the game. Johannes Katsarov (2019) suggests that this kind of design choice may encourage players to replay the game if they are unsatisfied with a particular choice they made during the game and they find out that other players have found an alternative, morally preferable solution. He also adds that comparing the player's own choices to other players' may also give a sense of satisfaction if they feel

that they did find the morally best solution. The player might also question their own thinking and attitudes if they find out that most players did not come to the same decision (ibid., 12).

3.2.1. Morality meters

Several games that have moral dilemmas as a central feature utilize morality meters to give the player feedback on their moral status within the game world. There are several kinds of different moral meters, but the basic principles under which they operate are similar: morally good deeds within the game world cause the indicator on the moral meter to move towards one end of the meter, while evil deeds cause the indicator to move toward the opposite end. The meter is usually visible for the player and they may inspect the overall status of their morality whenever they wish. This is what F. G. Bosman calls an explicit morality meter (2019, 546). In some cases, the morality meter is implicit, meaning that the player is unaware of the presence of such a system. This section will focus on explicit morality systems visible for the players. These kinds of meters were quite popular in games of late 2000s and early 2010s where moral dilemmas played a pivotal role, and on occasion even recent games have featured these kinds of systems, like *Red Dead Redemption 2* (Rockstar Studios 2018) with its Honor system. Morality meters have received plenty of criticism from game industry professionals, which most likely has played a role in the fall of their popularity. In this section, I will briefly describe the most popular forms of morality meters and the main criticisms towards them, before discussing possible replacements for morality meters.

The simplest form of morality meter is a single-axis exclusive meter. A character builds up points towards an extreme value of the axis, and a single value is used to represent a discrete point in the scale (Heron & Belford 2014, 5). Examples include the Karma system of *Fallout 3* (Bethesda Game Studios 2008) and the aforementioned Honor system of *Red Dead Redemption 2* (Rockstar Studios 2018), and this is the simplest and arguably the most common form of morality meter, but others exist as well. For example, the Paragon/Renegade system of *Mass Effect* (BioWare 2007) has two axes, where the player can amass both heroic Paragon points and anti-heroic Renegade points to fill up both meters. There are even more complex morality meters as well, perhaps the most extreme example being the virtue system of *Ultima IV* (Origin systems 1985), which features eight virtues: Compassion, Valor, Honor, Justice, Humility, Sacrifice, Spirituality, and Honesty. Acting in a virtuous manner results in positive progress towards achieving

enlightenment in a particular virtue: for example, the virtues of Compassion and Sacrifice can be "increased" by donating gold to beggars and blood to healers respectively (Zagal 2009, 3).

Jonathan Melenson (2010) lists four issues with morality meters. The first issue is that they create a false dichotomy: they classify deeds as either good or evil, and this is a problem because with true moral dilemmas, no choice can be categorized as solely good or evil. This polarization leads to loss of nuance in moral dilemmas, which in turn makes the dilemmas more cartoonish and extreme instead of focusing on morally grey areas (Heron & Belford 2014, 2). Also, this extreme behaviour is often rewarded. Player characters having extremely "good" or "evil" alignments on their morality meters are awarded with additional perks, so remaining neutral is not a tempting option. Additionally, more complex player characters such as merciful villains who are mostly evil or mostly good antiheroes who occasionally commit selfish or ruthless acts also land on the neutral territory of the morality meter (Melenson 2010, 58-61).

Another issue with morality meters is that they treat morality as a zero-sum game (Melenson 2010). This is a particular problem with single-axis morality meters. Good and evil deeds are given a point value, the number of points depending on the severity of the act. Petty crimes, for example, are given smaller point values compared to terrible atrocities. This makes it easy for players to treat moral dilemmas more as mathematical equations and giving moral deeds a quantifiable value results in good and evil deeds cancelling each other out, and a point-based system may lead to strange moral equivalencies: For example, in *Fallout 3* (Bethesda Game Studios 2008), stealing 20 items, no matter how low in value, results in receiving as much Evil Karma as murdering a non-evil NPC (Melenson 2010, 61-62). On the other hand, some players enjoy amassing good karma points, which makes them feel important, as the game gives them an explicit confirmation that they have done a good deed (see, for example, Kriss 2016, 579)

Turning moral dilemmas into mathematical equations brings up the third problem with moral meters: moral axis valuations are subjective, and it is the game developers that must give a value to each player decision, deciding which of them are good and which are evil (Melenson 2010). An objective evaluation of a true moral dilemma is virtually impossible since each person has their own values through which they evaluate the solutions. And if a true moral dilemma has no right or wrong solution, should the developers have the right to classify a certain decision as right or wrong? Although, it must be remembered that the

developers are the ones who offer the solutions to the moral dilemma in the first place, so their own biases will come across in the dilemmas in any case (Melenson 2010, 62-64).

Finally, moral meters cannot assess intentions (Melenson 2010). Games tend to take a utilitarian approach towards moral dilemmas: each action that has bad consequences, regardless of player intentions, moves the moral meter's indicator towards the evil end of the spectrum. Evaluating player intentions is an important part of evaluating a moral act. The developers cannot know the player's intentions, and as a result, those intentions must then be presumed. The number of different kinds of player intentions may be limitless and the developers must restrict the number of possible solutions to a moral dilemma due to technological limits. The developers may assume player intentions incorrectly, and the player may become frustrated as the game interprets the player choice in a completely different way as the player originally intended (ibid. 64-66)

When there is no moral meter to externalise the player's morality and deprive them of their faculty of moral reasoning, the player is better able to assess their moral behaviour themselves. Without the presence of moral meters, games are more free to explore nuanced and morally grey areas. Externalizing morality with moral meters makes it a target to reach rather than a practice to follow (Sicart 2013, 69). As evaluating moral acts objectively is nigh impossible, it is a better option to embrace the subjective evaluation of these acts. Therefore, Melenson (2010) suggests that the best candidates to replace moral meters are the NPCs. When the NPCs are given personal values through which to evaluate player actions, the responsibility to do that moves away from the developers. Since NPCs are not all-knowing like the moral meters are supposed to be, they may make misjudgements and misinterpretations of player actions. These kinds of flaws in NPCs, in fact, make them more believable. Each NPC could also treat certain actions as unforgivable in order to prevent good and evil deeds cancelling each other out (Melenson 2010, 66-68). For example, *Dragon Age: Origins* (BioWare 2009) Makes use of NPCs for this purpose. The characters accompanying the player avatar react differently to player actions and decisions. Some appreciate extra effort to help those in need, others favour ruthless, selfish behaviour. Each character has their own meter, which measures that character's affection towards the player avatar, and it increases or decreases depending on player choices. Another solution would be to use factions instead of characters, like in *Fallout: New Vegas* (Obsidian Entertainment 2010). Different factions in the game world might have conflicting goals and values, and these factions will treat the player differently

depending on whether the player has co-operated with these factions or prevented them from reaching their goals.

3.2.2. Wicked Problems

Though Sicart advocates expanding moral playing beyond choices, he does still see the practical utility of moral dilemmas for adding a moral dimension into the design of a game (2013, 104). He compares a player trying to solve a moral dilemma to a designer trying to solve a *wicked problem* (ibid., 101). Wicked problems are a concept used in design studies. The researchers who coined the term, H. W. Rittel and M. M. Weber (1973, 161-167), define wicked problems as problems that do not have an optimal solution, only good-enough solutions. The consequences of a solution to a wicked problem cannot immediately be determined. Also, wicked problems are essentially unique, and every solution to a wicked problem is a one-shot operation. According to Sicart (2013, 102) moral dilemmas within video game narratives can be made more complex and ambiguous when designed more along the lines of wicked problems.

Sicart (2013) claims that for moral dilemmas within video game narratives to resemble wicked problems more closely, the players cannot have complete information about the consequences of a choice, and the consequences cannot be easily predicted either. To clarify, it is perfectly valid for the player to have complete information about the different alternatives and their consequences for a choice to classify as a moral dilemma. But in order to have a truly 'wicked' moral dilemma, the player cannot have perfect information. Because wicked problems are supposed to be unique and their solutions one-shot operations, it should be made difficult for the player to return to a game state prior to the choice once it is made. Also, the structure of a moral dilemma should not be repeated throughout a single game (Ibid., 105-106). There is a risk that a game too focused on wicked problems will interfere in the way that players engage with it. Though it is not a requirement for a moral game experience to be fun, it is still a game, and thus the experience ought to be playful, engaging, challenging, creative and meaningful (ibid., 147)

Bosman (2019, 550) takes this idea of wicked problems within video game narratives a step further by proposing a four-level differentiation into tame-, semi-, real, and super wicked problems. The severity of wickedness is defined by five criteria: whether the choice is actually moral, whether it is possible to exploit save/reload to explore different

solutions to the problem, whether the consequences of the dilemma are immediate or delayed, the presence of an "ideal solution" and if the game gives the player feedback on the morality of the choice that was made, for example through a morality meter such as the Karma system in *Fallout 3* (Bethesda Game Studios 2008).

According to Bosman (2019), tame moral problems are not wicked at all, and their tameness lies in their shallowness. Players do not employ moral thinking in solving these problems, rather using strategic thinking based on what kind of player they intend to be, good or evil. An explicit moral meter will tell the player what actions are considered good and evil, and the player will choose accordingly. Semi-wicked problems do inspire moral thinking within the player, but they are able to solve the problem relatively easily by exploring all consequences of all possible solutions, exploiting the game's save/load system. In real wicked problems, this exploit is not possible. If there is a morality meter, it is implicit so that the player receives no feedback on the choice they have just made. The consequences are long-term, so that once they become evident, loading the game state prior to the choice might result in losing several hours' worth of gameplay. A morally ideal solution to the problem might exist, but it can only be identified in hindsight. Finally, super-wicked problems do not have a morally ideal solution. Every choice, even in hindsight, has both good and bad consequences (ibid., 551-556). This classification can be useful in assessing the approximate 'wickedness' of a moral dilemma within a video game, but not all moral dilemmas go neatly into these categories of wicked problems. For example, the *Witcher 3* quests I will be focusing on in the research part of this thesis have elements of semi-wicked and super-wicked problems: All possible consequences of the quests can be relatively easily explored by exploiting the game's save/load system, but there is no morality meter, and an ideal solution to these quests does not exist.

3.3. The Ethical Player

How do players see moral dilemmas within video games? Do they dismiss the notion of thinking about the issue morally, using moral management techniques to conclude that the situation is not real and therefore utilizing moral thinking is unnecessary? Or do they invest themselves in the narrative of the game, treating the situations the game characters find themselves in as if they were real and being emotionally impacted by the consequences of their choices?

Miguel Sicart's (2013) model of an ethical player suggests the latter is the case. His concept of an ethical player has a capacity of creating and practicing their virtues in play. Games will be played and experienced by a moral being and playing will be a part of the moral development of that person, and this is something that game developers should acknowledge. However, Sicart remarks that it is ultimately the decision of the player to become an ethical agent of this kind, and to voluntarily abandon instrumental play in favour of experiencing and exploring ethical thinking. In sum, everyone has the capability of becoming an ethical player, but it is up to the player to do so (ibid., 77-78).

The typology of different player reactions towards moral dilemmas by Schreiber et al. (2010, 74-75) is based on the six player motivations by Patrick Shaw et al. (2005). These motivations are not mutually exclusive – a player may have several motivations for playing a game, and as such may be required to first determine which of these motivations is going to most affect their decision-making, before choosing the solution to the dilemma itself.

My goal in this thesis is to examine how well different LPers fit into these categories, and if there are other motivations, either more general, or more specific to LPers, that this typology does not cover. The first of these motivations is competition. Competitively motivated players want to compete either against other players or their own best performance. Their motivation is to beat the game, and so they treat moral dilemmas as a pure gameplay choice. They are more interested in which choice best helps them to complete the game and the possible rewards such as gear, skills, or in-game currency that a particular choice will yield (Schreiber et al. 2010, 74-75). This kind of play can also be called instrumental play (Sicart 2013, 66-71).

The second player motivation is control – more specifically, control over self, others, or one's environment. The player who wants to control the situation may be upset when faced with a true moral dilemma resembling a wicked problem where no perfect solution is available and the consequences are unforeseeable, since it often means that the player will experience unwanted consequences no matter what they choose. On the other hand, when these players are offered a choice to make, they may feel that they do have control over the situation and what will transpire if the consequences of their choices are also provided to them in advance (Schreiber et al. 2010)

Players motivated by immersion seek to lose themselves in the game world. These players attempt to take the point of view of their game character. They may create a persona that is distinct from their own real-world personality for this character and role-play as that character, making decisions that the character would make, rather than making the decision that they personally feel would be the right one (ibid.).

The fourth group of players is motivated by novelty, in other words, they seek new experiences. When facing a moral dilemma on their first playthrough, the choices of these players may be more influenced by other motivations, but on consequent playthroughs the choices they make are likely to be different, as players motivated by novelty explore how the game reacts to different choices and how the narrative changes as a result.

Fifth, players motivated by realism want to see the game behave and respond in a believable manner. For these players, the choice itself does not matter as much as the consequences of that choice. If the consequences seem arbitrary or illogical, these players will be disappointed (ibid).

Finally, self-reactive players are the closest to the model of ethical player described above. These players approach the moral dilemma directly, making decisions that they personally would make if they were in a similar situation outside the game world, and as such are emotionally invested in the outcome of the decision (ibid.).

3.4. The Four Component Model

The Four Component Model, widely accepted in the field of moral psychology and developed by James Rest (1983), offers perhaps the most adequately dimensionalized and compelling conception of moral reasoning and its place in the wider domain of morality (Vozzola 2014, 35-36). The Four Component model consists of *Moral Focus*, *Moral Sensitivity*, *Moral Judgment* and *Moral Action*. Malcolm Ryan, Dan Staines, and Paul Formosa (2016) successfully applied the model to evaluate the moral behaviour of players. The Four Component Model may also be utilized in order to design more compelling moral dilemmas in video games. Next, I am going to present each of the four components in more detail, which will be combined with the six different player reactions toward moral dilemmas by Schreiber et al. (2010) in my analysis of different LPer motivations towards moral dilemmas.

3.4.1. Moral Focus

The first component of the model, *moral focus*, is the capability of the player to prioritize moral questions above others (Formosa et al. 2016, 220). The concept of player *complicity*, as used by Sicart (2013, 23), is very similar in meaning, described as surrendering to the fact that actions in a game have a moral dimension and that the capacity of players to make choices based on moral facts gives meaning to player complicity. Activating the moral focus of the player is crucial in order for them to use their Moral Judgment in solving moral dilemmas instead of instrumentally driven play (Sicart 2013, 109). Rather than pondering which solution of the dilemma best helps the player to reach their goals, a morally focused player makes the choices based on what they think is morally right.

The moral focus of the player may be evoked in several ways. One solution would be to have the player role-play as characters with moral commitments (Ryan et al. 2016, 4). Well written dialogue helps player recognise that morality matters in the game world (Staines et al. 2019, 418). The rewards for moral play ought to be intrinsic, (the satisfaction of a job well done or praise from NPCs) rather than extrinsic (in-game currency, gear, or new abilities). The player should pursue morality for its own sake and not in the service of some external goal (Staines et al. 2019 422)

3.4.2. Moral Sensitivity

Though the player might decide to prioritize moral concerns above others in the game, there is still the challenge of recognizing situations requiring moral judgment. This skill, along with the skill of identifying the consequences of one's actions and motivations of other characters is called moral sensitivity (Formosa et al. 2016, 220). The opposite of moral sensitivity is moral blindness, which means the failure of recognising a moral dilemma and might therefore inhibit the player's moral decision making (Rest 1986, cited in Katsarov et al. 2019, 2).

Taking a player's Moral Sensitivity into consideration while designing a game is challenging. Ryan et al. (2016) suggest that the optimal solution would be to find a balance between subtlety and overtness. If the situation requiring Moral Judgment is too subtly presented, the player might miss it altogether. On the other hand, if this is completely catered to the player, it hampers the development of the player's Moral Sensitivity. Another challenge is evoking the player's empathy, the capability of placing

oneself into another's position. A game's NPCs must be designed as relatable so that the player does not dehumanize them (ibid., 7-8)

3.4.3. Moral Judgment

Once a moral dilemma has been identified, the player needs to use their moral judgment in order to arrive to a satisfactory solution. Already touched upon in chapter 2.1, moral judgment means the ability to understand moral concepts and solve moral problems rationally by, for instance, applying a personal or a religious code (Narvaez 2008, 312). Moral dilemmas within video games generally attempt to invite the player to use their moral judgment but designing these kinds of moral dilemmas is challenging. The Four Component Model stresses that moral judgment requires combining several moral frameworks, such as personal values, professional codes, and societal norms, and in moral dilemmas these frameworks conflict with each other (Ryan et al. 2016, 8-9).

3.4.4. Moral Action

Once the moral dilemma has been identified and a decision has been made about the solution using moral judgment, it is time to put this solution into action. Moral action means focusing on the moral goal when facing temptation and hardship (Narvaez 2008, 312). In video games, this means that doing and choosing should be separated from each other. In a moral dilemma, coming to a solution and putting it into action are two very different things. A choice that the player has judged to be morally just might demand more effort from the player, or it may offer less material rewards than other alternatives. Moral action tests the determination of the player. They might reconsider their solution when facing difficulties, and the game should give the player the option to back out from their solution. A moral player strives to do the right thing, even when it is hard (Ryan et al. 2016, 10)

4 RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter presents the research questions of the thesis, the research data and how it was collected, as well as the research methods used in the data analysis. The data analysis process is also described in detail in order to achieve a sufficient degree of transparency of the research process, which enables the evaluation of its reliability and validity (Vaaras 2020, 30).

4.1. Research questions

A clear and explicitly formulated research question is decisive for the success of a research project: it determines what is important, and even more than that, what is less important and should be left out (Flick 2007, 22). This thesis is guided by three research questions, a recommended amount for a small-scale qualitative study (Saldana 2011, 71).

The research questions of this thesis are the following:

(R1) What types of motivations do LPers have towards solving moral dilemmas that are presented in the narrative of *Witcher 3*?

(R2) How do the social and performative aspects of LP videos factor in LPers' motivations to solve the moral dilemmas presented in the narrative of *Witcher 3*? And finally:

(R3) What kinds of game design issues in *Witcher 3* affect the LPers' motivations towards solving moral dilemmas that are presented in the narrative of the game?

4.2. Research Method

This thesis is based on *qualitative research*, an umbrella term for a wide variety of approaches to and methods for the study of natural social life (Saldana 2011). Qualitative approaches share a similar goal in that they seek to arrive at an understanding of a particular phenomenon from the perspective of those experiencing it (Vaismoradi 2013, 398). Johnny Saldana (2011) posits that in qualitative research, the information or data collected and analysed is primarily nonquantitative in character, consisting of textual materials, such as video recordings, that document human experiences about others

and/or one's self in social action and reflexive states. He also argues that data can be perceived as bits of information that range from one-sentence facts to paragraph descriptions about a setting to extensive passages of text. Anything that informs a study, be it interview transcripts or related fiction, can be thought of as data. As data is collected, the researcher sorts through this massive amount of information to bring order and sense to it. Patterns are constructed by reorganizing and grouping data into comparable categories and/or themes. Saldana (2011) argues that while there are no standardized methods of data analysis for qualitative researchers, there are several recommended ways for constructing meaning, the primary methods of discovery being *deductive, inductive*, and *abductive* reasoning. Deduction is what we generally draw and conclude from established facts and evidence. Induction is what we explore and infer to be transferable from the particular the general, based on an examination of the evidence and an accumulation of knowledge. Abduction is surmising from the evidence that which is most likely, those explanatory hunches based on clues. (ibid).

In qualitative research, there is a variety of genres: the usual criteria are the particular approach to inquiry and the representation and presentation of the study (ibid.). The genre that will be adopted in this thesis will be that of content analysis. Content analysis means the systematic examination of texts, in this case speech transcripts of YouTube videos, to analyse their prominent manifest and latent meanings. A *manifest* meaning is one that is on the surface and apparent, while a *latent* meaning is one that is suggestive, connotative, and subtextual (ibid, 10). Because of the descriptive and reflective narration of LPers, the analysis of LP videos has an affinity with the *think aloud method*. The method consists of asking people to think aloud while solving a problem and analysing the resulting verbal protocols, and it is, in many cases, a unique source of information on cognitive processes (Van Someren et al. 1994).

According to Margrit Schreier (2012), qualitative content analysis is a method for describing the meaning of qualitative material in a systematic way. It is done by classifying material as instances of the categories of a coding frame. In most general terms, qualitative content analysis will be an option if some degree of interpretation is required to arrive at the meaning of data. Qualitative content analysis comes into its own when dealing with meaning that is less obvious. As long as the research material is of this kind, qualitative content analysis will be an option, regardless how the data was gathered, or whether it is verbal or visual. However, qualitative content analysis will help describing

the material only in certain respects which must be specified. It does not allow to describe the full meaning of the material in every respect. Unlike in methods that are rooted in a hermeneutic tradition, where a spiral path is taken, leading to a more comprehensive sense of the material at every step, in qualitative content analysis the research question specifies the angle from which to examine the data. Thematic analysis refers to a particular type of qualitative content analysis. (ibid.).

Thematic analysis was the method used to analyse the data. It is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns, or themes, within data. Virginia Braun & Victoria Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis should be seen as a foundational method for qualitative analysis. They view it is the first qualitative method of analysis that researchers should learn, as it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis. It is essentially independent of theory, and because of this theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data. Also, thematic analysis is not wedded to any pre-existing theoretical framework, and therefore it can be used within different, although not all, theoretical frameworks. In this thesis, the thematic analysis is a realist method, meaning that it reports experiences and meanings and the reality of participants. Thematic analysis involves several choices, which need explicitly to be considered. An important question to address in terms of coding is: what counts as a theme, or how narrow or wide does a theme have to be? Braun & Clarke (2006) claim that the 'keyness' of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures, but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question. Furthermore, it is important to determine whether a rich description of the entire data set or a detailed account of one particular aspect is provided. In the case of this thesis, I will attempt to identify and give a description of themes representing the entire data set. (ibid).

Themes or patterns within data can be identified in one of two primary ways in thematic analysis: in an inductive or deductive way. The inductive analysis is a data-driven process of coding without trying to fit the data into a pre-existing coding frame or the researcher's analytic preconceptions, while a deductive thematic analysis would tend to be more explicitly analyst driven (ibid). While analysis in this thesis is largely inductive in that the created themes will not be strictly fitted into pre-existing frames, I will use the typology of player reactions towards moral dilemmas by Schreiber et al. (2010) as basis

for the themes, as well as Rest's (1983) Four Component Model to evaluate the players' moral behaviour.

According to Braun & Clarke (2006, 84), another decision revolves around the level at which themes are to be identified: at the semantic level, where the themes are identified within the explicit or surface meanings of the data and where the researcher will not look for anything beyond what has been said or written, or latent level, which goes beyond the semantic content of the data and starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, conceptualizations and ideologies, that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data. In this thesis, I will be identifying themes at the latent level, attempting to interpret more in depth what has been said in the analysis of LP videos.

The research epistemology guides what can be said about the data and informs how meaning is theorized. Thematic analysis can be conducted within both realist/essentialist and constructionist paradigms. With a realist/essentialist approach, motivations, experience and meaning can be theorized in a straightforward way, because simple, largely unidirectional relationship is assumed between meaning and experience and language (Braun & Clarke 2006). From a constructionist point of view, meaning and experience are socially produced and reproduced rather than inhering within individuals (Burr 1995). The thematic analysis will be conducted within the realist/essentialist framework in this thesis, as I want to focus on motivations of individuals.

According to Braun & Clarke (2006), the advantages of thematic analysis include flexibility and the results are typically accessible to educated general public. In addition, it can usefully summarize key features of a large body of data and offer a rich description as well as highlight similarities and differences across the dataset. Furthermore, thematic analysis can generate unanticipated insights. The shortcomings of thematic analysis depend more on poorly conducted analyses or inappropriate research questions than the method itself. While the flexibility of the method is mostly an advantage, it can also be a disadvantage in that it can be difficult for the researcher to try to decide what aspect of their data to focus on. Additionally, thematic analysis has limited interpretative power beyond mere description, if it is not used within an existing theoretical framework that anchors the analytic claims that are made (ibid).

4.3. Research data

The research data comprised of 20 LPers' playthrough of two side quests in *Witcher 3*. The main reason for the choice of this game was the way it handles moral dilemmas, which was generally praised in its reviews. Likewise, the side quests of the game were held in high regard (see, for example, Ingenito 2015 and VanOrd 2015). In addition, the game was already familiar to me personally, which aided in the choice of side quests that would best serve the purposes of this thesis.

4.3.1. The quests

The two quests in *Witcher 3* chosen for the thesis were *In the Heart of the Woods* and *Wild at Heart*, listed as a Witcher Contract and a Secondary Quest respectively in the game's quest log. Witcher Contracts are optional to complete in the game and can be found on notice boards across the game world. They usually initially involve a plea to kill a certain monster in return for pay, which is the profession of witchers. Likewise, Secondary Quests are optional for the player as well, and they vary widely in their scope and objective. The most important common denominators for Witcher Contracts and Secondary Quests are their optional nature and how they usually are self-contained short stories separate from the narrative of the main plotline. Their self-contained nature makes these kinds of quests ideal for this thesis, as they may be completed in a relatively short period of time, usually around 30 minutes, during which the player learns everything they need to know about the characters related to these quests, including their motivations, to make informed decisions involving said characters. As these side quests function as self-contained stories, the consequences of the player's choices are usually immediate in them, which was helpful in the data collection process, but which also makes it easier for the player to exploit the save/load system to explore all possible consequences of the quest rather easily, as was mentioned above in subchapter 3.2. On the other hand, the possibility for the LPers to do so makes it also possible to examine whether this behaviour is prevalent among them.

Wild at Heart is a Secondary Quest that can be picked up from a notice board. In the notice, a hunter called Niellen pleads for help. His wife, Hanna, has been missing for several days, last seen entering a nearby wood. He offers to pay anyone who would help find her. After speaking with Niellen and Hanna's sister Margrit, and interrogating their neighbours, the player learns that a pack of wolves patrols the woods, and another woman

was seen with Hanna as she entered the wood. When the player looks for signs of Hanna in the woods, Margrit appears and offers to pay the player double Niellen's pledge to tell him that Hanna is dead. She argues that Hanna has been gone for so long that she must be dead, and that it is no good to keep looking for her. She fears that looking for Hanna would eat up Niellen's life, and that he deserves better. This is the first decision that the player must make in the quest. He can either accept Margrit's money and lie to Niellen or keep looking for Hanna. If the player decides to keep looking, he finds Hanna's body and discovers that she was killed by a werewolf. While tracking the werewolf, the player encounters a cabin in the woods and the notes within reveal that the werewolf is actually Niellen, who shuts himself in a cave beneath the cabin at night to keep himself from harming others. Niellen's notes also mention how he has no memory of his deeds in wolf form. When the player enters the cave at night, they encounter Niellen in his wolf form and must fight him. When the player is about to defeat the werewolf, Margrit appears in a cinematic cutscene once again, pleading the player not to kill Niellen. She reveals that she is in love with Niellen and did not mind his curse. She led Hanna to the forest to witness Niellen's transformation in order to make her leave him in disgust, but they were discovered and while Margrit managed to escape, Hanna was caught by the werewolf. Niellen is furious after learning this, threatening to kill Margrit for what she did, the first kill he would make willingly. This is the second moral dilemma which the player faces in this quest. They can let Niellen get his revenge on Margrit. After this, Niellen lets Geralt kill him freely. If the player decides to intervene, they must fight Niellen and kill him while Margrit escapes. This choice is a timed one, meaning that the player only has a few seconds to decide whether or not to intervene.

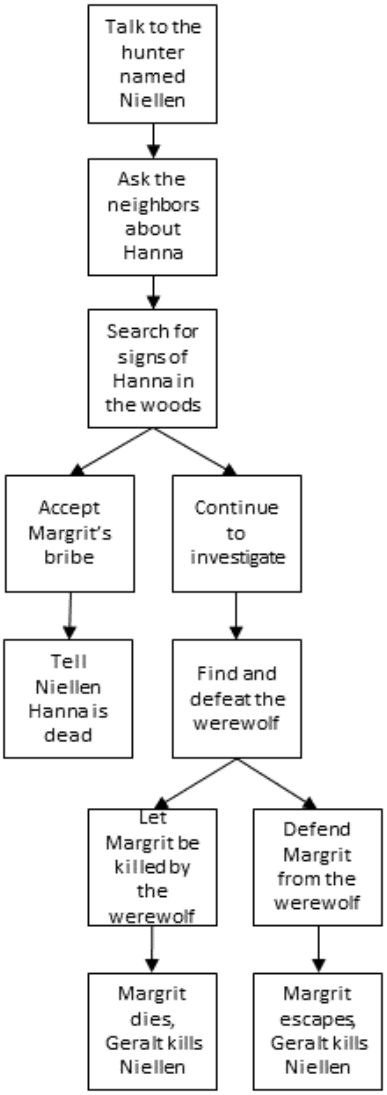

Figure 2. Flowchart of the branching narrative of the quest *Wild at Heart*.

The second quest, *In the Heart of the Woods*, is a Witcher Contract that can be picked up from a notice board. In the notice, a man named Sven pleas for a brave individual to free the village of Fayrlund from the oppression of a Woodland Spirit, promising gold as reward. It is also possible to begin the quest by encountering a group of people at the border of Fayrlund gathered around a corpse mangled by tree branches. Clearly, the man was killed by the Woodland Spirit, though no man alive has ever seen the spirit. The group is divided into two sides arguing with each other: the young of the village, led by Sven, want the spirit killed, claiming that the Woodland Spirit is only a common beast terrorizing the village. The village elders led by an old man named Harald, claim that the Woodland Spirit has been angered because the village has strayed from tradition. The elders would rather make a pact with the Woodland Spirit, claiming that it is Fayrlund's

protector, causing the woods near the village to teem with game and making the warriors of Fayrlund strong. Though the Woodland Spirit does claim the lives of some boys who venture into the woods trying to become hunters, the elders think this is an acceptable price for the power and protection that the Spirit has given them for generations. After tracking the Woodland Spirit in the woods, it is revealed that the Spirit is in fact a very old leshen, a monster able to control the wildlife and vegetation of the woods, that has marked one of Fayrlund's residents. As long as this individual remains alive and in the vicinity of the village, the monster cannot be killed completely and would always be reborn near its lair. The player then has to make a choice: to either side with the village elders and make a pact with the Woodland Spirit by performing a sacred ritual at an altar in the woods, or side with the village youth and kill the leshen, which also requires telling Sven to either kill or exile the marked villager, who turns out to be a young woman called Hilde who seems to have a mutual romantic interest in Sven. If the player makes a pact with the leshen, upon returning to Harald to collect their reward Sven shows up with 3 other men, claiming to have killed the other village elders and threatening to kill Harald as well for letting the leshen live. The player can then either walk away and let Harald be killed, or defend him and kill Sven and his men, though Harald can still die if the player is unable to protect him – either way, the quest ends. If the player chooses to kill the leshen, upon returning to Sven to collect their reward the player learns that while they were gone, Sven and other village youth murdered all of the village elders. The player can either berate Sven for this act or not, but this has no effect on the outcome, as in either case the quest ends with Sven sending Geralt on his way in a less than thankful manner.

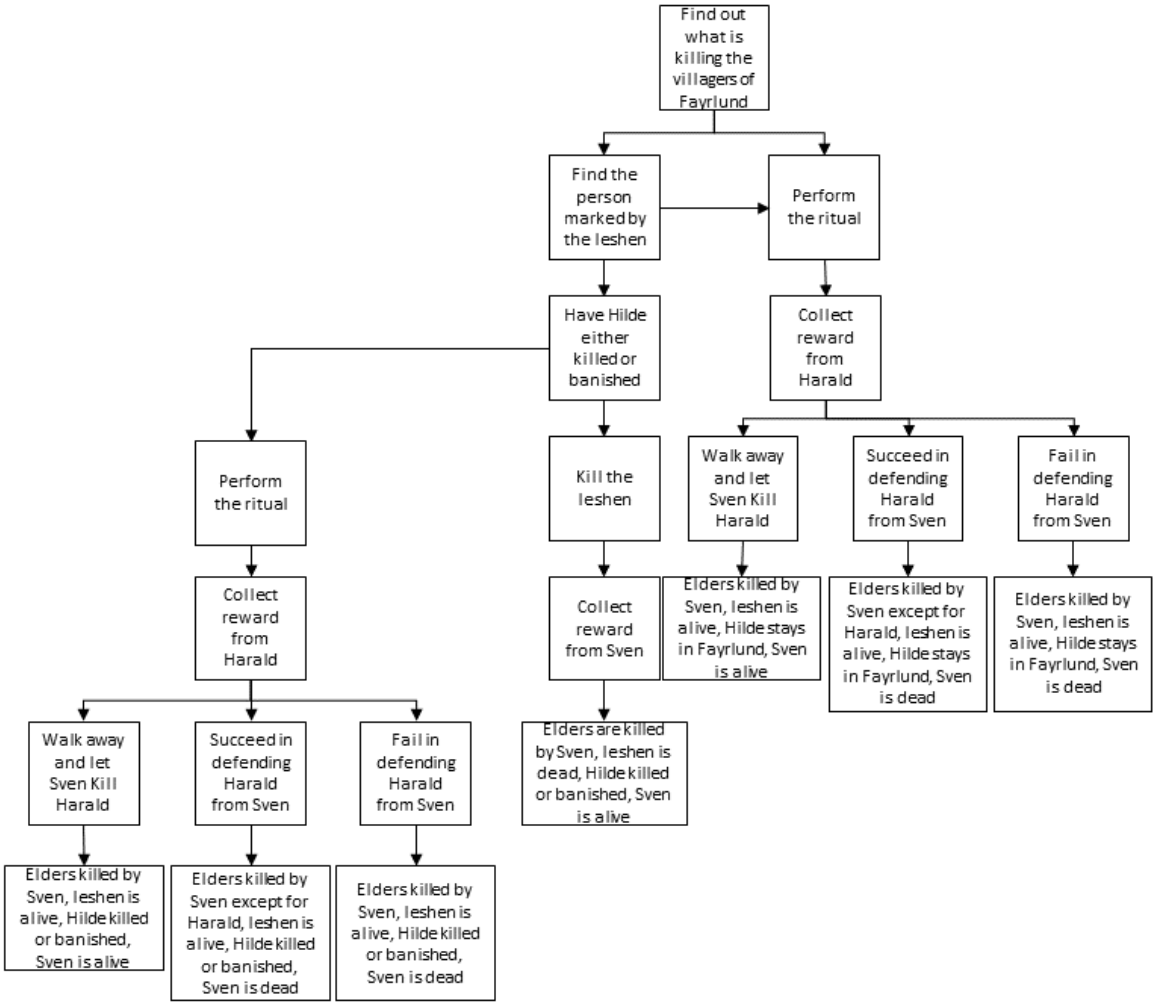

Figure 3. Flowchart of the branching narrative of the quest *In the Heart of the Woods*.

The two quests were chosen especially because they both involve a moral dilemma that can be considered to be a wicked problem. As mentioned in chapter 3.2.2, neither of these quests neatly fit the four-level differentiation of wicked problems by Bosman (2019). The quests can be considered to have elements both semi-wicked and super-wicked problems: firstly, all of the possible outcomes of the quests could be found out relatively easily by exploiting the game's save/load system, which is considered to be an attribute of a semi-wicked problem. *Witcher 3* does not feature a morality meter, which Bosman considers to be a characteristic of both real wicked and super-wicked problems. This was an important factor that led to the choice of this game for the thesis. The lack of morality meter allows *Witcher 3*'s moral dilemmas to be designed in a more nuanced manner, as different decisions do not need to be graded as morally right or wrong, and it places more responsibility on the player to evaluate the morality of their decisions. Moral meters are discussed more in detail in chapter 3.2.1. Finally, the moral dilemmas of the two quests do not have a morally ideal solution, which is typical for super-wicked problems. In *Wild*

at Heart, the first decision, whether to take Margrit's money and lie to Niellen about Hanna, or continue investigating what happened to her, can be thought of as a moral temptation (Ryan et al. 2016, 8), as most would agree that the former option would not be morally right especially since Margrit's behavior is so suspicious, but it would yield better material rewards. The real moral dilemma, however, is the second major decision the player has to make in the quest: to step in and prevent Niellen from killing Margrit or walk away. It can be argued that which choice is deemed morally right depends on the player's own sense of justice about whether Margrit deserves to die for her crime. No matter what the player chooses, Niellen cannot be cured of his curse and will end up dead. In addition, there is added time pressure in this particular choice: the player has limited time to make a decision, potentially revealing personal bias in a player. In the second quest, *In the Heart of the Woods*, the player must decide whether or not to kill the leshen. Killing the leshen requires either the death or exile of the villager marked by it, and the elders claim it would cause all game to leave the woods, the village women to become barren and the village warriors to lose their power. On the other hand, letting the leshen live, though honouring the village tradition, means that it will continue to take the lives of those venturing into its territory. Also, both choices involve unpredictable consequences, another defining factor of wicked problems, as Sven will be murdering the village elders regardless of player choice. Only Harald can be saved if the ritual is performed, but Sven must be killed to achieve this.

4.3.2. The LPers

The foundation of any basic LP stream or video tends to involve the LPer making external the range of internal processes that a gamer experiences when playing: They talk through actions or thoughts, typically giving the audience a glimpse into what might otherwise be hidden cognitive work – at the base level, LP videos and live streams are an exteriorization of an otherwise unspoken ludic process (Taylor 2018, 81). As such, using LP videos as research data allows for the analysis of player motivations towards moral dilemmas in the moment, which would not be possible using data collection methods such as interviews or questionnaires. For this thesis, 20 LPers were chosen to act as the sample group. Other than selecting a research topic and appropriate research design, no other research task is more fundamental to creating credible research than obtaining an adequate sample (Marshall et al. 2013, 11). An edict of qualitative research is to collect data until saturation occurs, which means collecting data until no new information is

obtained. In the process of saturation, the data that initially appears diverse and disconnected begins to form patterns or themes and begins to make sense – however, there are no specific guidelines for the estimation of the amount of data required in each theme to create these patterns (Morse 1995, 147-149). Furthermore, since finding meaning in the data requires interpretation on the part of the researcher, new meanings are always theoretically possible and in a reflexive process analysis can never be complete which suggests an incompatibility between data saturation and an organic reflexive thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke 2019). 20 LPers playing through two quests was deemed sufficient considering the scope of this thesis, while still giving enough breadth of different LP personalities who might have different motivations to play morally. The LPers were selected using purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, which relies on the judgment of the researcher when it comes to selecting the units that are to be studied. Gaganpreet Sharma (2017) argues that there are weaknesses to this sampling technique; for instance, it can be highly prone to researcher bias. However, this is only a major disadvantage when the judgments of the researcher are not based on clear criteria. Another weakness to this technique is that it can be difficult to defend the representativeness of the sample and convince the reader that the judgment used to select the units to study was appropriate (ibid., 751-752).

Because of this, it was crucial to select the LPers based on five clear criteria. The first choice was to limit the LP videos to be selected to those available on the online video-sharing platform YouTube. Though not specializing in LP videos, the popularity of YouTube ensures that LP videos on the site are plentiful regardless. YouTube was selected over the more video game oriented live streaming service Twitch, since many Twitch streamers export their LP videos to YouTube, where they will remain even once they are no longer available to watch on Twitch, where live broadcasts are only available for 14 days (60 for partnered, Turbo and Prime users). Secondly, it was crucial that the LP videos be 'blind playthroughs'. In other words, the LPers would be playing through *Witcher 3* for the very first time, not having played the game before or witnessed another player's playthrough of the game. This was because it was critical for this thesis that the LPers be unaware of the consequences of the moral dilemmas to increase the degree of their wickedness. The third criterion was that the LP videos include at least audio, if not video commentary. The conversational style of LP discourse allows the analysis of their moral judgment and motivations towards moral dilemmas. Video of the LPers further helps analysis because of access to the body language of the LPers, but this is not a

requirement for the analysis to be useful. Of the 20 LPers, 6 used both video and audio commentary, the remaining 14 used only audio commentary. The fourth criterion was the language of the commentary. Because of my linguistic limitations, the language of the commentary had to be limited to English and Finnish. Ultimately, I decided to only include English commentary, as it would not need to be further translated after the transcription process, potentially leading to loss of nuance in expressiveness. Lastly, in order to determine whether the LPers express similar motivations towards moral dilemmas consistently throughout the game, the fifth criterion was that the LPers complete both of the quests analysed in this thesis: *In the Heart of the Woods* and *Wild at Heart*. Since neither quest is required to be completed in order to complete the main plot of the game, many LPers had to be discarded because of this reason.

With these criteria, the 20 LP series of *Witcher 3* were selected. The LPers were anonymized by using a code number instead of their YouTube account name (LPer #1, LPer #2 etc.). According to the location information on their YouTube channel, and WikiTubia (a YouTube wiki, https://youtube.fandom.com/) where information was available, 9 were from the U.S., 5 were from the U.K., 3 were from Canada, 1 was from New Zealand and 1 from Sweden. There was a single LPer whose nationality could not be determined but who was likely from North America judging by LPer accent. The overwhelming representation of LPers from English-speaking nations was expected, as LPers from non-English speaking countries are likely more comfortable with commentary in their native language. As mentioned in chapter 2.1, people's sense of morality is affected by the culture in which they develop, and this thesis examines moral dilemmas from the point of view of contemporary Western society, the nationalities of the LPers fitting this viewpoint.

In terms of gender, it cannot be determined with certainty how the selected LPers identify themselves, but assessing their voices and appearances where possible, or how they refer to themselves (he/him, she/her etc.), it could be estimated that 6 out of the 20 LPers were female-presenting. Studies do suggest that moral judgments differ between genders, but mostly in responses to personal moral dilemmas, which are emotionally charged and are defined as those that could reasonably be expected to lead to serious bodily harm to a particular person or a member or members of a particular group of people where this harm is not the result of deflecting an existing threat onto a different party (Greene et al. 2001,

2107). In these kinds of moral dilemmas, men more frequently make a pragmatic choice regardless of putting others at risk of danger or harm (Fumagalli et al. 2010, 222).

The age range of the LPers is another factor that could not be determined for the majority of LPers. The ages of 9 LPers could be determined, and their ages ranged from early 20s to late 40s. It is highly likely that the rest of the LPers also fall within this age range. Like the culture that a person lives in, the age of the person affects their morality as well. For example, according to Lawrence Kohlberg's (1981, 1984) theory of moral development, most adolescents and adults operate on the conventional level of morality, where the individual shows respect for the rules set by others (parents, peers, the government) at first to win their approval and later to maintain social order. However, some adults are able develop into a postconventional level of morality, where the individual defines what is right in terms of broad principles of justice that have validity apart from the views of particular authority figures. The individual may distinguish between what is morally right and what is legal, recognizing that some laws can violate basic moral principles or human rights. Thus, the person transcends the perspective of a particular social group or authority and begins to take the perspective of all individuals (Sigelman & Rider 2017, 409).

The selected LPer group was very diverse in terms of their YouTube subscriber numbers. The smallest LP channel had only 46 subscribers, while the largest had as many as 873 000. The potential size of the audience an LPer has might affect their performance, and their efforts to act in a socially desirable manner. It has to be noted, though, that the subscriber counts were checked in the autumn of 2020, at the time of writing this thesis, while the LP videos themselves are dated anywhere between the release of *Witcher 3* in the spring of 2015 and the writing of this thesis in late 2020. Thus, at the time of playing, the audience of an LP channel might have been considerably smaller (or larger) than it is now. In addition, many livestreaming LPers might have a larger audience on Twitch than on YouTube, where their Twitch broadcast was exported to. Among the 20 LPers, 7 were livestreaming their LP, allowing interaction with the audience in real time. One LP video involved a pair, one player and one spectator, who were very actively interacting with each other. The remaining 12 LPers did not have an audience to interact with in real time, instead having a soliloquy, verbalising their thoughts to an *imaginary audience*, their mental conceptualization of the people with whom they are communicating (Litt 2012, 330).

4.3.3. Transcription and Coding Process

Once the 20 LPers had been chosen, it was time to find their playthroughs of the two quests on YouTube. A few players had a separate video for all quests they completed in *Witcher 3*, with a picture of characters central to the quests in the video thumbnails, and/or included the completed quests' names in the titles of the videos in question. This was tremendously helpful in finding the correct videos. The rest of the LP videos, however, only had general titles that only listed the name of the playthrough and the number of the episode in the LP series. In these cases, the entire LP series, which usually was over 100 hours long, had to be skimmed through. Because of the optional nature of the quests, it was possible that the LPer might not have even completed the quests in their entire playthrough. It was helpful to know that *Wild at Heart* was available to be completed at early stages of the game, while *In the Heart of the Woods* was only available once the player enters the new region of Skellige late in the first of the game's three-act main questline. Finding parts in the video where the LPer checked their quest log was helpful as well – if the quests were still in progress in the log, I knew they were not yet completed and I could skip to the next video.

After the playthroughs of the two quests were located for each of the 20 LPers, they were then transcribed. Transcription means taking data that is in speech form and writing it into text documents. This was done in Google Docs, which resulted in 40 text documents. As the use of language or research of fine-grained interaction was not the main focus of this thesis, no special transcript symbols were used. In addition, not all speech in the videos was transcribed. The transcription was limited to the dialog of the game characters involved in the quests that is specific to those quests. For example, if the LPer goes to speak with a merchant NPC not involved in either quest during the quest playthrough, that dialog was not included in the transcription. Likewise, the LPer narration was transcribed if they were talking directly about the quest: For example, if during the quest, the LPer goes to the said merchant NPC and plays Gwent, a card minigame, with that NPC, no LPer speech relating to that Gwent game was included in the transcript as it was not relevant towards answering the research questions of this thesis. Furthermore, the transcription process begun with all LPers at the first dialog cutscene of the quest and ended when the quest was marked as complete by the game's quest log. Any possible reflection about the quest immediately after the quest was completed was also included in the transcripts. Because of time limitations towards writing this thesis, it was not

possible to transcribe possible reflection about the quest that might have happened several hours of gameplay after the completion of the quest. There is a risk that information relevant for the research is not taken into account when all data is not transcribed (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006), but careful consideration went into the decisions on the relevance of LPer narrative, with borderline cases included in the transcript rather than excluded.

Coding is a method of discovery to the meanings of individual sections of data. According to Saldana (2011), these codes function as a way of patterning, classifying, and later reorganizing the data into categories emerging from the data for further analysis. Though not always necessary for analysis, one component is to examine what ranges or variability exist in the data (ibid.). Following the step-by-step guide to conducting thematic analysis by Braun & Clarke (2006), the transcribed LP videos went through an initial coding phase, where all content of interest was labelled with a code. This was achieved manually, with painting a section of the Google Doc -text file and adding a code to it by utilizing the comment function. At this stage, the content of interest were any thoughts that the LPers expressed towards the moral dilemmas, the characters involved in these dilemmas, or LPer motivations towards the quest at hand. Reviewing the coded transcripts, recurring patterns started to become identifiable in the data and these were collated together into initial themes. To help visualize the initial themes and their relationships to each other, a mind map of the themes was drawn on a PowerPoint slide. Main overarching themes were recognized, along with sub-themes within them. The initial themes were then refined, with some being combined, and others discarded for not having enough data to support them, for example. The refined, final themes are presented in Chapter 5.

5 RESULTS

The thematic analysis of the LP videos revealed several motivations towards solving the moral dilemmas presented in the two side quests of *Witcher 3*. At the most basic level, these motivations could be divided into three distinct main themes: *moral motivations*, *non-moral motivations*, and *Co-reflection*. The moral motivations could be further broken down into three sub-themes, named *self-reactive*, *role-playing,* and *ludic limitations*. The non-moral motivations that were formed from the data, in turn, could be broken into two sub-themes: *Curiosity* and *Rewards*. Co-reflection consists of three subthemes, *post-choice co-reflection*, *Audience advising the LPer*, and *collective choice*. The hierarchy of and relationships between these themes are shown in figure 4. This section will present the results of the thematic analysis, with quotes from the transcripts added to support the interpretations. The frameworks that aided the creation of these themes were the typology of different player reactions towards moral dilemmas by Schreiber et al. (2010) and the Four Component Model developed by James Rest (See Rest et al. 1999), both discussed in more detail in chapters 3.3 and 3.4, respectively.

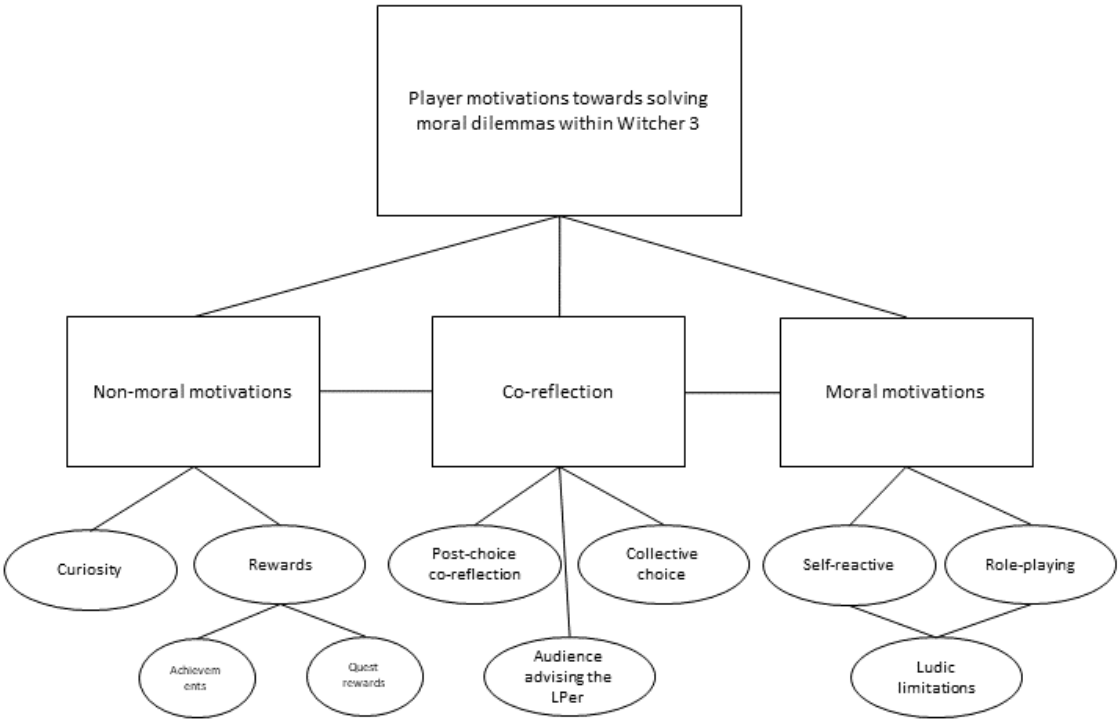

Figure 4. The hierarchy of and relationships between the established motivations. Co-reflection can be both moral and non-moral. The ludic limitations can restrict the morally focused play of both self-reactive and role-playing LPers.

5.1. Moral motivations

LPers who had moral motivations were, in the terms of the Four Component Model, morally focused. As noted above, the moral motivations contain three sub-themes. The first sub-theme, self-reactive, means the motivation to act according to the personal moral values of the LPer, making choices they would make outside the game as well. LPers with role-playing motivation, in turn, make the decisions in moral dilemmas from the point of view of the protagonist of *Witcher 3*. Finally, the sub-theme of ludic limitations is not a motivation per se, but it was a recurring theme among a number of LPers who desired to act morally, but their actions were limited by game design, such as limited interaction options with NPCs relevant to the quests and committing to a choice in a moral dilemma unintentionally due to game design limitations.

5.1.1. Self-reactive:

The self-reactive motivation shares its name and meaning with the motivation type suggested by Schreiber et al. (2010). LPers with a self-reactive motivation approached moral dilemmas from their own points of view, carefully considering each option and making the decisions they would personally make were they in a similar situation outside the game, even if it would result playing 'out of character', as LPer #14 puts it:

> I'm gonna say I'm enjoying being like a good-natured witcher, and I'm sure it's very much out of character for Geralt as, like, a lone wolf that doesn't serve anyone and just does things for money and stuff like that, but it feels good to be good to people and help them with their problems, even if helping them with the problem isn't necessarily actually good help, yeah.

While the preliminary focus was on the scripted approach to dilemmas presented by the game's narrative, namely whether to accept Margrit's bribe and whether to let the werewolf kill her in the quest *Wild at Heart*, or whether to kill or make a pact with the Woodland Spirit in *In the Heart of the Woods*, some particularly morally sensitive LPers identified moral dilemmas emerging from the gameplay, a systemic approach to moral dilemmas (Formosa et al 2016). Most notably, this occurred when LPers were looting houses of friendly NPCs.

Looting is one of *Witcher 3*'s core mechanics. The corpses of killed enemies and chests found in dungeons contain useful and sellable items that the player may loot. In addition to these, houses owned by friendly NPCs may also be looted in the same manner as they

often contain chests and other containers with items inside. In many open-world RPG games looting houses of friendly NPCs angers them if witnessed and, if the game has a morality meter, it is penalized, resulting in negative karma points in *Fallout 3* (Bethesda Game Studios 2008), and loss of Honor in *Red Dead Redemption 2* (Rockstar Studios 2018), for example. However, in *Witcher 3*, there are no negative consequences to looting houses and no reaction from the NPCs witnessing the looting.

Most LPers, then, were also accustomed to loot anything and everything they could find in *Witcher 3*, like LPer #18, who, after the initial conversation with Niellen about finding Hanna in *Wild at Heart* proceeds immediately to loot Niellen's home:

> Okay. So, can I please loot your house, though? Get out of the way, I want to loot your house.

This behaviour continues in *In the Heart of the Woods*, where LPer #18, while trying to find the villager marked by the Woodland Spirit, loots the village houses:

> Hmmm, okay. So how do I do this? Witcher senses. So, should we see if it's- I bet it's fucking Harald. But first, let's loot all of these houses. There's nothing to loot. Fucking bitches. How is there no loot in this house? What? No loot? Maybe I've already looted it. I mean, that wouldn't be unheard of. I'm gonna assume that I have already looted everything in this house.

The LPer is surprised to initially find the houses empty of loot, which annoys her, and she then concludes that she must have looted the houses earlier in the playthrough. The live stream chat humorously weighs in, suggesting that the villagers knew of LPer #18's arrival, hiding the loot from her:

> "They knew you were coming here to loot" Well, I'm starting to think that that is the thing that happens in this game … I mean- I mean look, where's the loot? Oh no, I lied, there's loot in this one. I'm a horrible person.

The LPer eventually does find loot in a house and proceeds to take everything she can find. She does, however, acknowledge that she is "a horrible person" for doing this, suggesting that she does feel that looting the NPC houses is wrong on some level, though it does not stop her from doing so.

While LPer #18 was not among the most morally reflective of the sample group, similar behavior was also expressed by LPers with seemingly high moral focus. LPers #8 a) and b), for example, a pair with LPer #8 b) controlling the player character and both providing commentary, were highly morally reflective towards all branching narrative moral

dilemmas in both quests, but still looted Niellen's cabin, though both acknowledged this to be stealing:

> LPer #8 a): You're not gonna search any of the rest of the stuff in their house?
>
> LPer #8 b): Well, they- yeah.
>
> LPer #8 a): You love taking stuff from people.
>
> LPer #8 b): That's true. Take it all.

LPer #8 a), watching the gameplay, wonders why LPer #8 b) is not looting Niellen's cabin, then remarking that she normally loves "taking stuff from people", which LPer #8 b) admits being true and then proceeds to loot the cabin.

Interestingly, this behaviour was not expressed by the entire sample group. LPer #12, a highly morally focused player, was the only LPer who actively avoided looting any houses owned by friendly NPCs. He expressed this when he enters Niellen's cabin in the woods:

> You know, I have this sneaking suspicion… I'm not gonna like what I find. Right, there's the clue. And the routine check of everything else first… Oh god. No no no no no, this- this is someone's house. I've, just… I've already condemned this person, I've already decided this person's a werewolf. And, no. No no no no. This- this- this is bad. Don't do that. Follow the evidence first.

The LPer finds the notes left by Niellen but does not read them. He then begins looting the house, but then stops, admitting that he does not yet know for certain whether Niellen is a werewolf and should refrain from looting his house before the identity of the werewolf has been confirmed. After reading the notes left by Niellen and confirming that he is indeed the werewolf, the LPer still tries to avoid taking any items from his house, calling it stealing:

> At this point we're not stealing from the man, we're just… looking for clues. Exploding bolt… You know what? Let's face it. I'm going to have to kill this werewolf almost certainly. Damnit. Kinda sucks.

Finally, the LPer concludes that it is almost certain that the werewolf must be killed and only then permits himself to take the items from the cabin.

Judging from this behaviour, it would suggest that if a game permits an action and does not consider it morally wrong, then neither do any but the most morally sensitive players. It could be speculated that if *Witcher 3* had a morality meter whose score would move

towards the 'evil' end of the spectrum due to looting houses of Friendly NPCs, or if it turned friendly NPCs witnessing the looting hostile, or even if it merely communicated to the player that taking items from NPC homes is considered stealing, fewer LPers in the sample group would have performed these acts.

The feeling of regret was a common occurrence among self-reactive LPers after the completion of the quests, and this regret was caused by the events that unfolded after the LPer solution to a moral dilemma. Though not all LPers did feel regret after the completion of the quests, or at least did not express their regret aloud, the most morally focused self-reactive LPers did reflect on what transpired rather deeply. For example, LPer #1 reflected on his choice at the end of *Wild at Heart*, after choosing to spare Margrit's life and kill Niellen:

> Man… That's a really tough call … Thing is it's like, if he is gonna… straight up say, like, I can't just stand by… even- uh, frick man, like vengeance is one thing, but then to just stand by while he, like, literally destroys her- I don't think I could do that. I think, either way, it's a tough call, but … And if we leave him like that, it doesn't seem like he's able to really control himself … Either way, that's a difficult call … Wow that- I feel bad about that but… Uh, I can't really dwell on it, like, what am I gonna do? I don't know… I don't know if that's gonna come back to bite us, I doubt it, but… still. I feel bad either way … Man… That's gonna bug me for a while.

The LPer clearly expresses that the choice was hard for him to make, but that he ultimately justified it by stating that he could not stand by as a monster slaughters a defenceless person. The LPer's moral judgment is a utilitarian one, as most would agree that killing another person (though temporarily in a monstrous form) is an immoral act in itself, but as a consequence Margrit's life is saved and Niellen is no longer a potential threat to others. The LPer expresses concern on whether there will be unforeseen negative consequences because of his choice but doubts this will be the case. The LPer admits being negatively emotionally impacted by the quest, and that this feeling will probably last, though at the same time admitting that he should not let the choice bother him for too long.

LPer #12, who demonstrated his moral sensitivity by avoiding looting houses of friendly NPCs, also offered deep reflection after choosing the same solution for the moral dilemma:

> LPer #12: Oh, I'm sorry, I really am, I know, she- what she did was wrong. What she did was wrong, I'm totally with you on that, really am. But she didn't mean to kill her.
>
> Geralt: Sorry it had to end this way…
>
> LPer #12: Yeah, I really am, actually. Well, that was not very pleasant, was it? I have to say, I really… wish I hadn't had to kill him. I understand he was angry and… the sister, I understand it, but… I don't think she meant to get her sister killed and, well… I can't just let her be ripped apart by a werewolf. That really is, horribly, horribly twisted, is it not? That kind of knocked me a bit, that did. You think I should go and talk to the sister again? I mean…. What is there left to say, really?

While condemning Margrit's actions and expressing empathy for Niellen, LPer #12 saw Hanna's death more as a result of an accident and poor judgment, thus justifying defending Margrit. Here, like in the previous example, the LPer's moral judgment was a utilitarian one. He expresses being emotionally affected in a similar manner as LPer #1, the quest 'knocking' him.

The choice to defend Margrit is a timed decision, so it will more easily expose intuitive type 1 reasoning processes within players. The two self-reactive LPers above justified their intuitive decisions as being the morally right ones. In fact, out of the sample group, only LPers #8 a) and b) came to regret the choice they made (defending Margrit), reloaded a game state prior to the choice and let Margrit die, after a long reflection of moral judgment:

> LPer #8 b): But then the question- that what complicated it was the- that Niellen was like: "I want to kill you, now." Which is possibly an understandable response to someone having murdered your loved one.
>
> LPer #8 a): I mean, if we had been him, we totally would have killed her.
>
> LPer #8 b): We would have.
>
> LPer #8 a): Oh, no, now I wanna go back.

This would support the claims of Jonathan St. B. T. Evans (2012) that intuition can serve decision making well in moral dilemmas.

Moving on to the quest *In the Heart of the Woods*, LPer #1 once again offers deep reflection after the quest completion. Choosing to kill the Woodland Spirit, the LPer witnesses the corpses of the elders upon returning to the village, and the final conversation ends with Sven giving Geralt a thankless send-off:

> Sven: And you, witcher - on your way! No more monsters left around here.
>
> LPer #1: No. I- I think- I think there is a monster still around here, Sven. Wow. He just slaughtered these guys! That's crazy! Now I'm wondering what would have happened if we had instead chosen to forgo that option and see if we can- uh- cure that another way. Man, I feel bad. I'm not sure how much of that is on us and what's not, but, either way. Man, that's crazy. but we have to- we have to move on.

Condemning Sven's actions, the LPer wonders if renewing the pact with the Woodland Spirit would have resulted in a more positive outcome. Expressing that the quest resolution has affected their emotions negatively, the LPer wonders if this outcome was the result of his actions.

LPer #7 chose to kill the Woodland Spirit as well, having Hilde killed because the LPer feared that the leshen would simply follow Hilde to a new location. She justified her decision by rationalizing that Hilde's death can save many others in the future, again a very utilitarian moral judgment:

> Sorry, Hilde. Uh, that's just kind of how life goes. But I think … ultimately, it's like one person. So then if we can stop the- if we can stop the … leshen, then no one else needs to die. Which seems kind of useful … Okay, I wonder what happens if you tried to do it Harald's way and just, like, accept the sacrifice. I don't know, that doesn't seem- that doesn't sit well with me. "yeah, well, you know, some people died so long as we do what we can to appease this creature."

The LPer expresses very similar concerns compared to previous LPers in her reflection after completing the quest:

> That doesn't feel good. Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ! That was a messed-up quest. Like, that was a messed-up quest. Holy shit. I wonder what would have happened if you'd gone with Harald. Like do you think he would have tried to kill them anyway? Seems like there was gonna be a- I don't know if there was gonna be like a tension regardless of what you did, but- I mean, I feel like killing the leshen was still the right choice, but holy smokes, he killed like everyone.

Similar to the end-quest reflections of LPers #1 and #12, LPer #7 expresses a feeling of regret, 'not feeling good', and also wonders what would have happened had she renewed the pact. She correctly suspects, however, that Sven would probably have tried to kill the elders regardless of the LPer's decision, sensing the tension between Sven and Harald.

These feelings of remorse and regret that the self-reactive LPers above express after making a choice resembles what Terrance McConnell (2018) calls *moral residue*. Moral

residue arises when an agent, in this case an LPer, faces a moral dilemma and feels sensations of guilt and remorse for not choosing the other option or options. The phrase 'I feel bad', referring to the decision made in a moral dilemma, can be seen as an expression of guilt. C. J. Bryan et al. (2013, 56), for example, define guilt as being typically experienced as an interpersonal cognitive-affective state, feeling bad about what one has done to another. This does not necessarily mean that the agent feels that they have chosen the 'wrong' option, as with a true moral dilemma, the agent should feel a genuine need to perform all options and feel regret that they ultimately cannot do so (Schreiber et al. 2010). For example, in the latter example LPer #7 does express not feeling good about her choice even though she believes she made the right one.

Despite the moral residue that these LPers were experiencing and wondering what would have happened had they chosen differently, an overwhelming majority still did not reload the game to a state preceding the choice to explore other solutions, accepting the consequences, and moving on. However, in the sample group, there were two instances where the LPers experienced moral residue and then reloaded the game, one occurrence already mentioned above.

The other occurrence of an LPer reloading the game due to moral residue was LPer #3 reloading his game several times in order to try and achieve the most morally desirable resolution to the quest *In the Heart of the Woods*. The LPer first chose to renew the pact with the Woodland Spirit, and when collecting his reward from Harald, elects to defend him from Sven and his men. Though it is possible, saving Harald's life here is rather difficult, as he will die from a single hit, and as it happened, he was killed on the LPer's first attempt:

> Wait, did they already kill the old guy? Oh, you dicks! We'll see if he gets back up. It doesn't look like he's going to, but let's check if he gets back up. Well, that was about the worst outcome we could have possibly gotten for that quest.

The LPer reloads the game with no hesitation, certain that what transpired was the worst possible outcome, as the leaders of the village ended up dead, the Woodland Spirit was left alive, and he inadvertently banished Hilde, something that other LPers also ended up doing and that will be discussed below in section 5.1.3:

> Um, that was, like, the worst thing that could have happened. We've destroyed the town's leadership, we sent off a girl that didn't need to be sent off, and appeased the monster! Good game! … You're really playing the good

> guy in this one, aren't we? Oh, Jesus. Ok, let's see if we can save him this time. Oh, he takes one hit? There's four of them and he takes one hit? Oh, my Jesus.

The LPer clearly states his attempts to play a 'good guy' – to perform as a morally righteous character. He fails to protect Harald two more times, but is determined to keep trying to save him, and reads a chat comment:

> "I had to reload about eight times to keep him alive". Dude, we're actually doing it. We're- we're doing it. Yeah, you know what, I think we may- I- I kind of want to go back to the other save and kill the leshen. I do. 'Cause I feel like right now we made that woman leave for nothing, and that's… terrible.

The LPer entertains the idea of reloading an earlier save made before the ritual was performed and killing the Woodland Spirit because of the accidental commitment to banishing Hilde, which is only required if the player decides to kill the leshen. After finally managing to save Harald's life, the LPer is disappointed with the lack of interaction possibilities with Harald, who, when prompted to speak, briefly acknowledges that Geralt saved his life, and on subsequent attempts only lets out a sigh:

> Are you gonna give us the Fonz? "Ehhhh…" Really? That's it? I'm glad you acknowledged the fact that we saved your life, and now you're sighing about it.

This prompts the LPer to finally reload an earlier save and choose to kill the Woodland Spirit:

> I don't… I don't like that ending. Nope. Didn't like that one. Let's try to destroy one. I wonder if we get back and the old guy is gonna be killed. That'd be kind of messed up.

Upon killing the leshen and returning to the village, the LPer finds the alternative outcome of the quest as disappointing as the original one, responding to a chat comment suggesting another reload:

> Dude, we can't reload. That ending is just as bad as the first one. They're both terrible endings. Um, the only thing is, I hate to say it, this ending makes the town more stable. At least the town has leadership that can… stand up at this point. Um… what a shitty situation. Wow. That is the definition of a grey quest right there. That sucks. That sucks but, you know what, I love it at the same time. The fact that there's no happy ending, I hate it and love it at the same time. Man, well done, CDProjekt. Well done. Well done. There's- there's no good ending to that quest. Either way, people are screwed.

The LPer finally accepts that the quest does not have a morally desirable outcome, though he does think this solution is preferable considering the future of the village. Though emotionally conflicted about it, the LPer also appreciates the "wickedness" of the quest. By exploiting the save/reload system of *Witcher 3*, LPer #3 also exhibited the motivation of control as presented by Schreiber et al. (2010), since the LPer clearly attempted to find a morally ideal solution and was initially disappointed when he did not find one.

In two out of three cases where an LPer reloaded a previous game state to change a decision, the LPers experienced moral residue and desired to make the morally right decision once perfect information about the possible outcomes of the moral dilemma was acquired. Due to the wickedness of the moral dilemmas in the quests examined in this thesis, a completely morally satisfactory solution was not available. A true moral dilemma is effective in causing feelings of moral residue in players even though they might exploit the save/load mechanism of the game to retry different solutions. Though the element of unforeseen consequences was removed from the dilemmas as a result, in both cases where the LPers of the sample group returned to a previous game state wanting to find a morally better solution it resulted in deep reflection on which solution was preferable and why. This suggests that the exploitation of save/load mechanism is not completely undesirable, as Katsarov (2019, 351) suggests.

The last example provided above is also a good presentation of co-reflection, which is discussed in more detail in chapter 5.3. The live streaming LPer receives suggestions from his chat on what to do considering the moral dilemma, such as reloading. In this case, the LPer is still ultimately the one making the decisions though he considers the opinions of chat members.

5.1.2. Role-playing

Another motivation among LPers was to role-play as the game's protagonist Geralt of Rivia, particularly when justifying their choices in solving moral dilemmas. An example of this would be LPer #7 using the profession of Geralt as a primary argument in choosing to kill the Woodland Spirit:

> I feel like ultimately, it's a monster, right? And my job is to kill monsters, so, we should really just kill it. Like, in the long term, if it's killing multiple people over, like, hundreds of years, I feel like, probably just dealing with it is the smartest thing to do. And then the people can live in, like, happiness or what-have-you.

Though the LPer does give other, morally motivated reasons to kill the Woodland Spirit, such as the fact that it poses a danger to the people of Fayrlund, it ultimately comes down to Geralt's profession as a monster hunter, which means it is his job to see the monster dead rather than appeased. This same argument was used by LPer #13 in *Wild at Heart*, where, choosing to prevent the werewolf from killing Margrit, the LPer does not initially provide any motivation for the viewer as to why he chose to do so. The LPer fails to finish the werewolf off the first time around and is defeated. On his second try, skipping past the same dialog options, the LPer gives more context on why he made this choice:

> So I already skipped past this, I'm gonna skip past all this… "what are you saying" ... skip skip skip skip skip. So I can't let you do that, because you're a beast, and that's what I do…

Here, too, the LPer refers to his role as a Witcher, which means that he will prioritize killing a monster on the account of Geralt's profession. This kind of stance is reminiscent of stage 4 of Kohlberg's theory of moral development, *Authority and Social Order-Maintaining Morality*, where doing one's duty is valued and which operates on the level of conventional morality, which is below the final level in the development of moral reasoning, postconventional morality (Kohlberg 1981 & 1984, cited in Sigelman & Rider 2017, 408-410). LPers with a self-reactive motivation can be seen to utilize this level final level of moral reasoning, where the LPer distinguishes between the duty of witchers and what they deem morally right.

Aside from using Geralt's profession as a monster hunter to motivate their choices in moral dilemmas, another way that role-playing influenced LPer choices was interpreting how the player character Geralt might feel at a given time and what his personality is like and making choices based on that. A good example of this is LPer #2, who, when playing through *In the Heart of the Woods*, decided to kill the Woodland Spirit. Upon returning to the village Geralt witnesses the corpses of the village elders, murdered by Sven and his followers. While receiving his reward, the player has a dialogue option to either condemn Sven's actions, calling him a murderer, or take an indifferent stance. Though ultimately choosing either option results in Sven ungratefully sending Geralt out of the village, the player does not know this and could feel that while calling Sven out on his actions might be appropriate, they might fear that this could provoke Sven to attack Geralt, resulting in even more bloodshed and leaving the village without leadership. LPer #2 chose the dialogue option based on how she interpreted Geralt might feel:

> Geralt: What happened?
>
> Sven: You rid us of the beast, we rid ourselves of its accomplices. Don't worry, our agreement stands. Earned your coin, you did.
>
> LPer #2: I like his expression. He's a bit disgusted, I think. 'You're a murderer', 'this is none of my business'. Mmm … It is none of our business, but Geralt is… a little bit righteous sometimes, especially when people are killing innocents. So let's call him out on being a murderer.

The LPer interprets that Geralt is disgusted about what Sven has done, based on his facial expression. While the LPer personally thinks that Geralt should not involve himself further in the matter, she also describes Geralt as being prone to being righteous, and so chooses to call Sven out.

Unlike the two examples of role-playing illustrated before, this LPer talks of Geralt using third instead of first-person pronouns, suggesting more distance and less ownership the LPer sees in their relationship with Geralt (Hitchens et al. 2012, 9). In games such as *Mass Effect* (Bioware 2007) the player is free to create their very own player character, from facial features to their backgrounds. This type of character depth is what Francesco Alinovi (2011) describes as the zero dimensional or a-dimensional personality, where the character's personality among other features is almost completely dictated by the player. According to Luca Papale (2014), these kinds of characters facilitate projection: the player creates the character's personality and values, which might or might not reflect the player's own. This kind of character, while also facilitating role-playing motivation, might be better suited to elicit self-reactive motivations in players facing moral dilemmas. The character of Geralt, in turn, was already well established through the Witcher novels released prior to the game trilogy. The player is unable to modify his appearance beyond hairstyles and clothing, and as the game trilogy takes place after the events of the novels, his history and background have also been already set. As such, although the player has freedom in the choices Geralt makes when facing moral dilemmas, he is more akin to three-dimensional characters, with rich and complex personalities, which might cause the player to feel less like being the character they are controlling. (ibid., 4-8).

5.1.3. Ludic limitations

The third and final theme under moral motivations is named *ludic limitations*. Unlike the self-reactive and role-playing subthemes, this is not a player motivation in itself. Rather, it describes ways in which morally focused LPers were unable to play morally due to

constraints imposed by the game design such as limited interaction possibilities with NPCs and a failure to give feedback to the player when a commitment to a solution of a moral dilemma is about to be made.

By far the most severe design flaw in the design of the moral dilemmas featured in this thesis concerned the quest *In the Heart of the Woods*. A number of morally focused LPers were careful to consider multiple points of view before committing to a choice. After an initial investigation into what kind of a creature the Woodland Spirit actually is, the quest requires the player to talk to Sven or Harald, or both, about how to deal with it. Sven's wish is to kill the monster, which requires identifying the villager marked by the Woodland Spirit. After identifying the marked villager as Hilde by using the Witcher Sense game mechanic, which highlights important clues in the game world, the quest asks the player to return to Sven with this information. What many LPers did not realize here, however, was that returning to speak with Sven results in the player being forced to choose whether to banish or kill Hilde, with no chance of backing out. This came as a surprise to many, such as LPer #4:

> Sven: You don't know the elders like I do. Every last one of them codgers would surrender his mother to please the monster. And no point in mincin' words. Said yourself, the monster's helper must die first.
>
> LPer #4: Exile? Mmm… Wait. Are we choosing the method right now? Already? Well, we know it's this girl that likes him and he probably likes her. But exile is a bigger danger, right? because she can come back. Yeah, 'cause if she comes back, then the leshen will- will it become reborn again? Wait, I don't wanna pick right now. Do I have to? Let's go with less permanent choice for now, then.
>
> Geralt: No one needs to die. The marked one should leave the village, that's enough. If they never return, the leshen'll never be reborn.
>
> Sven: Did you hear what the witcher said? We've but to banish the elders to have peace for all time!
>
> LPer #4: We gotta say the truth.
>
> Geralt: The Leshen's marked Hilde.
>
> Sven: Hilde?
>
> Man: We must banish her. Said so yourself.
>
> Sven: But... she's one of us.
>
> Another man: For the good of the village, Sven.

> Sven: ...Drive her out. Make sure she knows she's not to return. Ever.
>
> LPer #4: Right now? Wait! Wait, I didn't wanna- uh- We could have done the altar thing, because I was actually interested in doing that, too. They didn't really let me pick here.

The LPer clearly states an unwillingness and unpreparedness to make the choice between exiling and killing Hilde and expresses more interest towards renewing the pact between the villagers and the Woodland Spirit. Hilde is banished immediately once the choice is made, and while it is still possible to renew the pact after this conversation, most morally motivated LPers found this possibility unattractive as the ritual does not require the absence of the marked one and thus Hilde would have been exiled or killed needlessly.

LPer #5 had the same issue, but instead of exile, he chose to have Hilde killed, though he merely wanted to explore the option.:

> Is she already dead? 'cause I wanted to see where that would go, I didn't necessarily- I saw- I heard a scream. Is she- is she gone? Where was she, she was over here, right? Everyone's crying. I think- I think she's dead. Um… oh, crap. Uh, I think we kill this leshen, then. They- they've gone so far. Sacrifice one for the good of the many. I didn't trust the old guy anyway … Yeah, there's a couple of times I've been playing this game, we think: Well, I want to explore that option and talk about it. And suddenly it's just like: Boom! Okay, action chosen.

In addition, the dialogue options when deciding Hilde's fate are vague to say the least: the options are "You could exile the marked one" and "You have to get rid of the marked one". While the former option is explicit, the latter does not clearly state that it means having Hilde killed, which might also lead to players choosing this dialogue option without fully understanding its implications. Although killing the Woodland Spirit was what LPer #5 was probably going to do anyway, more importantly, he speaks of this not being an isolated incident in *Witcher 3*, as he has run into a similar problem several times before during his playthrough, where thorough exploration of possible courses of action in a moral dilemma have led into an unintentional commitment to a decision.

Deciding the fate of Hilde was not the only moral dilemma where the sample group LPers made an unintended commitment. LPer #12, while correctly predicting that revealing the marked one's identity to Sven might lead to her banishment or murder, instead is under the impression that renewing the pact with the Woodland Spirit allows Geralt to speak and hopefully reason with it, a very diplomatic approach:

> Oh, it's Hilde. When he says, "I'll deal with it", what exactly does he mean? I mean, the thing is, he's- oh, god. Ok. If I tell him about- he's got to drive her off or kill her, hasn't he? I go and have a quick chat with the leshen and see if we can get the pact renewed.

Clearly conflicted about whether he should perform the ritual, the LPer states a moral motivation, attempting to save the greatest number of lives while allowing Hilde to still remain in the village, by forming pact with the Woodland Spirit:

> But the pact involved the sacred ritual, didn't it? And… people were dying doing it… Which doesn't sound good. Well, there's no harm in talking to the leshen. Actually, of course there is, he could rip my face off. and I can't kill it whilst Hilde is in the neighbourhood. Ok, maybe this is a stupid idea. So. We are gonna have to remake the pact with- Ok. So this will summon the leshen and we can chat to him and… maybe form a pact? And get him to stop killing people? And this way we don't have to drive Hilde off or kill her. We're not killing her.

After performing the ritual, the LPer expects the Woodland Spirit to appear, and is surprised when the quest objective simply prompts to collect the quest reward next:

> Ok… I was expecting- Ok, what- "collect your reward from Harald", "Talk to Sven about Hilde" ... Ok, so, I've made the pa- I've already made the pact. The pact has been made, I've done it, everyone's set… Well, no. People are still gonna di- I've not decided whether I'm killing the leshen yet! I've not decided whether I'm going to kill the leshen!

Stating that the LPer had not actually decided yet how to deal with the Woodland Spirit, he proceeds to give an explanation on what he assumed was going to happen:

> I was hoping to have a- you know, chat with the leshen, which I thought would then end up with me running away, then we'd have to somehow convince Hilde to take up residence somewhere else and then- Ok. Yeah. This isn't quite going the way I… was expecting it to go.

Though the assumptions of the LPer were somewhat unfounded, there was an insufficient amount of feedback given by the game about an irreversible action, which led in an unintentional commitment to a solution in all of the examples shown here. After the quest completion, the LPer expresses his dissatisfaction towards what transpired:

> I mean, I'm willing to entertain the idea that the leshen may not be as harmful as it seems. But honestly, right now, it kind of does seem that way at least. Where was Hilde? She was here talking to Sven when I first saw her. I mean there's no way I'm gonna be able to talk to her and convince her to leave and then- then hunt the leshen.

After the quest is completed, the LPer, morally focused to correct the wrong decision he felt he made, wonders if it would still be possible to kill the leshen. In a world where interactions are not limited by coding, this moral act would be possible. Unfortunately, the LPer correctly assumes that the characters and creatures associated with the quest can no longer be meaningfully interacted with. The limited interactions of a video game restrict the abilities of the player to act morally. With the LPer sample group, these limited interaction possibilities revolved most typically around the inability of morally focused LPers to sufficiently interact with NPCs related to the moral dilemmas they were attempting to solve. The best example of this is the character Hilde in the quest *In the Heart of the Woods*, who cannot be engaged in dialog with. This is well elaborated by LPers #8 a) and b), who, after identifying Hilde as the marked one, try talking to her and suspect what Sven is going to do when he finds this out:

> LPer #8 a): Can we talk to her? Does she say anything?
>
> LPer #8 b): She says, “hey there”.
>
> LPer #8 a): Oh. I feel super uncomfortable with him, what’s he gonna do, is he gonna kill her?
>
> LPer #8 b): Possibly. Do you want to try the altar approach? I just don’t know what that means for the village. The leshen’s gonna be still there. It doesn’t mean it’s gonna solve the problem. If we do it this way, we’re gonna have to kill this girl. Probably.
>
> LPer #8 a): I know, right? And because it’s the witcher, it’s not going to be like, rational, right, where it’s like, we could say to her: you’ve been marked by this evil spirit, and if you, you know, like, maybe- because maybe she could just leave. Like- I don’t feel comfortable with making the decision to just- not that it’s us making the decision- but I don’t feel comfortable with just murdering some random girl. She’s got her whole life… just because-
>
> LPer #8 b): But, like, we were- it shouldn’t matter who it is.
>
> LPer #8 a): Well, yes, yeah, but at the same time, like, I just- I feel like how the narrative’s gonna play out. Is she just gonna get fucking killed?
>
> LPer #8 b): Yes.
>
> LPer #8 a): Whereas, like, if we could… talk to her, and be like: “Hey, this thing has happened, what do you want to do about it? You’ve got a choice here, too.”
>
> LPer #8 b): Let her make the decision.
>
> LPer #8 a):Then I would feel a lot more comfortable with- she said “Well, if the only way to protect the next 10 generations of our village is for me to die,

> then I'll die." but I don't feel comfortable with us just fucking saying to some guy: "Oh, she's been marked" and him just fucking shanking her without even- you know, like, I don't feel comfortable with it.

The LPers hesitate telling Sven about Hilde, mainly because they were unable to have dialogue with her. They would have liked to find out how Hilde feels about being the marked one – and whether she would be willing to leave the village at all. The option to speak with Hilde would certainly have complicated the moral dilemma the player is facing even further, particularly if she were reluctant to leave the village for whatever reason, let alone giving her life. A number of morally focused LPers attempted to speak with Hilde, and this would suggest that morally motivated players do make an effort towards an understanding of all possible points of view concerning moral dilemmas so that they are able to make a decision that is as informed as possible, and game design should acknowledge and enable this.

As well as attempting to make an informed decision, morally motivated LPers also attempted to make sure that NPCs were held accountable for their actions but were prevented by game design from doing so. For example, in the quest *Wild at Heart*, LPer #10 decided to defend Margrit from the werewolf, and is surprised that the quest ends once the werewolf is killed:

> No, it's just completed? No, don't just complete the quest! I need a follow-up. Just 'cause I didn't get her killed doesn't mean that I can't turn her in. She straight up murdered a girl, because someone, just for, like, being loved by someone else. Like- she should probably be, like, put to jail, or, like- I don't know what the fuck the justice system works in this game. I almost should have let him kill her. But I also needed to defeat the wolf. Is it bad, that I just think of that? I probably should have killed both of them, frankly.

The LPer would have liked to incarcerate Margrit for causing Hanna's death, a reasonable course of action to take, but unfortunately this action cannot be taken in the game. Margrit can be found crying in Niellen's hut immediately after quest completion, but she cannot be interacted with. Again, a morally motivated player's actions are limited by the choices coded into the game, even though those actions would be theoretically possible to perform in the narrative setting.

5.2. Non-moral motivations

The second identified sub-theme is called *non-moral motivations*. Like the name suggests, this sub-theme includes LPers that do not prioritize morally focused play but

are instead motivated by other factors. Among the sample group LPers, two such factors were prominent: curiosity and rewards. Players motivated by curiosity want to see what the consequences of a certain choice are instead of making the choice using their moral judgment. Players motivated by rewards, in turn, make their choices in moral dilemmas depending on what they might gain from the solution. The rewards might be in-game money, gear, or experience, or choosing a particular option in a moral dilemma might unlock an achievement or a new area. Whatever they might be, the player is more interested in gaining these rewards than making a choice they deem morally right.

5.2.1. Curiosity

Some players let their curiosity to see what happens motivate their choice in the quest *In the Heart of the Woods*, where one option in the moral dilemma concerning how to deal with the Woodland Spirit involved remaking a pact between the leshen and the villagers it preyed upon. Curiosity was what attracted LPer #4 to choose the said method over killing the leshen, even after banishing Hilde from the village:

> I don't know if she's still here anymore. I think she's already left the village. Hmm… If she's already driven out, then do we just want to kill the leshen, or do we want to proceed with this- this ritual here? Just based on what we have to do, I feel like I'm more interested in approaching the altar and doing the ritual, because we've never had to do that before. We've always just killed the monsters on these contracts.

The LPer does acknowledge that since Hilde is already banished, they might as well kill the leshen, as otherwise she would have been exiled for nothing:

> I'm pretty heavily leaning towards approaching the altar right now. But it's sort of like, well, Hilde already left, so why don't we just kill the leshen? Oh… Well, let's try approaching and we'll see what happens, okay? Maybe if it goes south or we don't like what happens, we can go back to killing the thing.

The LPer is curious to see what happens once the ritual is performed. They still keep the option of killing the leshen as a possibility if the results of the ritual are unsatisfactory. This might even mean reloading the game, though the LPer does not state this explicitly. They do possess a moral motivation at the same time to do what they think is right, and these motivations are in conflict with each other:

> We'll think about it. At the very minimum, at least I didn't say kill Hilde. 'cause then that would really be permanent, wouldn't it? … I wanna go to the altar. But if we do the altar method, it's sort of indirectly saying that "oh, yes,

> we should continue on with these old traditions." Like, I want to see the altar thing because I've never done it before, but it'll be reaffirming that the old traditions are the way to go and that we should continue following them. As long as the leshen is here, there's always gonna be a possibility, 'cause Hilde … Hilde can say she'll never come back, but we can't- we can't really guarantee that that's a thing, right? As long as the leshen's alive, then that's always gonna pose as a danger to the village. I can still change my mind here, but do I want to? I can still change my mind. I don't know! I- I don't know! This one's really hard, I'm really 50/50 on this. Getting rid of the beast once and for all would be the safest way. Especially because Hilde's already gone, but- but I'm curious about this ritual. And I'm sort of curious if this would actually work, too. Or are we gonna fall for some trap here, where the leshen is actually just a mindless beast and we are not saving the village at all by doing this?

The LPer is really torn between the two solutions to the moral dilemma. They give the impression that morally they would not prefer the ritual solution, as it would be reaffirming the old traditions of Fayrlund, which the LPer does not seem to support, and at the same time, they do think that killing the leshen once and for all would be the best way to make the village safe, especially since Hilde has already been banished. But the curiosity of the LPer prevails, and they choose to remake the pact. They even jokingly entertain the idea of saving the game before committing to their choice, but quickly dismiss that idea. After the quest ends, the LPer sums up what motivated them to renew the pact:

> Well, this was a tough one. I feel like it was gonna go badly either way. But I do feel like this one, the way I picked my choices, was a little bit influenced, or a lot actually, by what I as a player wanted to see. Because usually, when we do a contract, all we do is kill the monster, right? Now you're giving me a quest here where I don't have to kill the monster, I can do a ritual to try to get rid of it. So it kind of felt like even though for the safety of the village, it might have been better to get rid of the leshen altogether, I personally wanted to see the ritual and that's why I did it.

The summary that LPer #4 gives at the end of *In the Heart of the Woods* sums up well the sub-theme of Curiosity. The choices the player makes are more influenced by what they are interested in seeing than what they think is morally the right choice.

5.2.2. Rewards

As the name implies, the LPers that were motivated by rewards seemed to prioritize them over moral motivations. The rewards can range from in-game items and currency, achievements or badges, levelling up, to simply progressing in the game. Using the terms of the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan 1985), the LPer has an extrinsic

motivation to solve the moral dilemma. An example of a player motivated by rewards is LPer #16, who, while playing the quest *In the Heart of the Woods*, did not really give any commentary reflecting on the moral dilemmas he faced – for example, why he decided to have Hilde killed instead of banishment, and he does not sound very emotionally impacted hearing her death screams in the distance:

> Oh, man. They just killed her. That's a rip in peace right there. That's a rip in peace right there. Sorry to hear that, everyone, that you had to kill one of your own, now I'm gonna take care of this.

While not specifically making a choice in a moral dilemma based on the rewards they afford, it can be interpreted that the LPer is indifferent towards what choices he makes, as he has other goals in mind:

> Be really nice if I get that final little bit to my 23. That's my goal here, so I can have my good armor.

The LPer states that his goal for this quest is that Geralt levels up, so that he can equip a piece of armor that has a minimum level requirement to wear. Choosing to kill the Woodland Spirit, the LPer returns to the village to collect his reward, and witnesses the dead elders:

> LPer #16: What happened?
>
> Sven: You rid us of the beast, we rid ourselves of its accomplices. Don't worry, our agreement stands. Earned your coin, you did.
>
> LPer #16: Yeah, don't feel so great about the end- yeah, you know what? I don't even care. This is none of my business.
>
> Geralt: Peasant squabbles - just not interested.
>
> Sven: Oh, wise words. You're not from here, you can't understand. What are you staring at, people?! Justice has been served! Go to your homes! And you, witcher - on your way! No more monsters left around here.
>
> LPer #16: Okay, whatever, whatever. Whatever you say, lad. Sixty crowns for that? My goodness. My goodness. Sixty crowns, that's it? I get my level yet? It was good that I finally did that.

The LPer at first states being emotionally impacted by the ending of the quest, but then quickly remarks about not caring about what happened. While many morally focused LPers very thoughtfully reflected about their choices and their consequences after the end of the quest, LPer #16's debriefing of the quest focused on the low quest reward, and whether he levelled up. According to the taxonomy of reward types by Phillips et al.

(2015, 88), LPer #16 was mainly motivated by *rewards of facility*, which increase the effectiveness of the player within the game state, such as the improved armour and levelling up.

Besides in-game rewards, a player may also be motivated by *achievements*, which Juho Hamari and Veikko Eranti (2011) define as goals in an achievement/reward system, which is a different system than the core game, whose fulfilment is defined through activities and events in other systems, commonly in the core game. This was the case with LPer #17, who ended up reloading and replaying the quest *In the Heart of the Woods*. The first time around, the LPer ponders whose method to employ to deal with the Woodland Spirit: Sven's or Harald's, seemingly with a self-reactive motivation:

> If I have to side with one of them, I'm gonna side with the guys that wanna kill it. That's just what I would do. I- I mean- I respect the people that- … Anyways, I'll side with the guys that wanna kill it. 'cos that's what I would do, and while I respect the people who would like to go back to the old ways, I do not respect that they feel it's a spirit that's getting revenge on some bullshit. I mean, I respect if you believe that, but if you're gonna let people die for it, then it affects me and everybody else.

The LPer proceeds with the intent of killing the Woodland Spirit, banishing Hilde and expressing a feeling of moral residue because of it:

> LPer #17: I feel like shit now.
>
> Sven: ...Drive her out. Make sure she knows she's not to return. Ever.
>
> Geralt: Not going with her? Funny, thought you cared for her.
>
> Sven: Tend to your affairs and leave me to mine. I did what I had to do. Now it's your turn.
>
> LPer #17: I'll have to do this quest the other way later on, when I do another playthrough. I can actually talk to Harald still, let me do that.

The LPer might either be self-reactive and regret his choice in this moral dilemma, or curious about what would happen, were the pact renewed. Either way, the LPer states that he would like to choose differently on the next playthrough of the game. The LPer also notices that even though Hilde is already exiled, the game still gives the option to talk to Harald and hear about the ritual method, which the LPer proceeds to do, and is consequently convinced by Harald:

> Harald: We must return to the old path, restore the old ways. Roam the woods with knife and spear. Fight on even terms and prove our valor. That would

> please him. Our ancestors placed the Covenant Stone in the woods. Laid sacrifices of prized game on it and thus made a pact. Do as they did. Go south, along the brook. Submit to the trial by burning a sacrifice of wolves' hearts on the sacred spot.
>
> LPer #17: Fu- um, now it's tempting. I'll try it your way. I'm gonna do it his way. Fuck it.

While making his way to the Covenant Stone, the LPer's narration gives the impression that he is mainly motivated by curiosity of an alternative method to killing the monster presented in this Witcher Contract:

> I mean, look at how unique this is compared to just any other witcher contract. It's not "go here, kill the enemy, come back". You know, it's, I don't know, It's- it's so fricking… unique, this game. This is- this game is something else.

Though, after performing the ritual, the LPer does acknowledge that Hilde did not need to be banished:

> I guess it might have worked. I guess I didn't have to get the girl to leave, damn. Everybody would have lived happily ever after. Contract where we didn't have to kill him.

The video ends with the LPer completing the quest. However, at the beginning of the next video in the LP series, the LPer explains that he is doing the quest again, and this time he is killing the Woodland Spirit. Once it is defeated, he explains his motivation for redoing the quest:

> So, somebody told me, um, what- after I completed this, I was contacted through Steam. And somebody said that I did it- I did the alternate way, but if I did I- I would only- okay, let me restart. I did it the alternate way. But If I- there's actually an achievement for it, and the only way to get the achievement is to do it this way. So I wanted to go back and do it this way, 'cos I don't like missing achievements on the first playthrough.

Killing the Woodland Spirit awards the player an achievement which can be completely missed if the altar method is chosen, or the quest is not completed at all. The LPer was informed of the existence of this achievement and decided to reload and redo the quest because he prefers earning as many achievements as possible on the first playthrough. According to the taxonomy of reward types within video games by Phillips et al. (2015, 88), LPer #17 was ultimately motivated by *rewards of glory*, that do not impact moment to moment gameplay and that are quantifiable in either the game or meta-game through points, achievements, badges, and so on.

5.3. Co-reflection

Co-reflection is a motivation type that was not a part of the typology of player motivations by Schreiber et al. (2010) but was clearly one prominent motivation towards solving the moral dilemmas among the LPer sample group. Co-reflection occurs when the LPer actively allows and even encourages their audience to participate in either the decision making process or reflection on the decisions that were made after the fact. It therefore is a specific type of reflective narration (Kerttula 2019), where the reflection is targeted at moral dilemmas within the video game in particular. Co-reflection can be morally focused, or not, hence it is a theme of its own. Co-reflection can take many forms: group reflection on the LPer choice after it is made, the LPer taking audience advice into consideration while making the decision, and in the most extreme case, the LPer giving the audience full power to decide how to solve a moral dilemma.

5.3.1. Post-choice co-reflection

A form of co-reflection can take place in comment sections of YouTube and similar video sharing platforms, when the LPer asks their viewers who might have already played *Witcher 3* about what choice they made, which is what LPer #7 did after completing *Wild at Heart*, electing to save Margrit:

> Well, I mean I kinda wish that Margrit had been killed as well. Like, I wonder if I'd let him kill her, if I then could have killed him afterwards, so then everybody died? Because, honestly, she technically murdered her sister by… proxy. Like, she was an accessory to murder, you know? So she kind of had it coming too, to be honest. But… I don't know. I don't know. What did you guys pick? You know, let me know whether you let- um- if you let Niellen kill her or did you- You know, do what I did and kill Niellen? Yeah, let me know in the comments.

The LPer displays uncertainty about whether she made the morally right choice by letting Margrit live. She then asks her viewers to partake and tell what choices they might have made in the video's comment section, as the LPer does not live stream and real-time conversation is not possible. The resulting conversation might take place over the following months, with new viewers adding their views into the debate, as the conversation is not tied to the event of live streaming. In this way, the LPer invites the viewers to utilize their moral judgment as well, the resulting discussion potentially reinforcing or even changing the views of those involved.

5.3.2. Audience advising the LPer

Another form of Co-Reflection involved the LPers asking their audience directly for their feedback on how to solve the moral dilemma before the decision, though the LPers were still the ones making the choice. An example of this was LPer #18, playing through the quest *In the Heart of the Woods*. Opting to speak to Harald first about how to deal with the Woodland Spirit, the LPer asks her viewers on what they should do next:

> Uh, what do you reckon? You bet he's the marked one? Mmm... I would... probably think so. What should I do? Should I do the whole trials thing? Or should I… just kill the leshen? Or should I say I don't know yet, 'cos I haven't spoken to the other guy? I'm gonna go with I don't know yet, I think … So, yeah. You think he's the marked one … Okay. We'll see, because I haven't spoken to the other dude yet. No, I wanna talk to Sven about the leshen, because I haven't talked to both of them yet … But then what do we do? Kill him? I mean- … What do we want to do?

The LPer's audience suggests that Harald is the villager marked by the leshen, which the LPer considers and then agrees with. Though actively asking the audience on what should be done, the LPer is still in control of the decisions that are being made. However, the LPer does consider what her audience has to say, which encourages the audience to participate.

5.3.3. Collective choice

An example of an LPer completely disengaging from the decision making and forfeiting that responsibility to the live streaming chat is well illustrated in LPer #15's playthrough of *In the Heart of the Woods*. The LPer has a style of actively conversing with the live streaming chat, even in the middle of in-game dialog which gives crucial context for the player on the solutions of moral dilemmas. This happened after the LPer identified Hilde as the one marked by the Woodland Spirit and her subsequent banishment:

> We shouldn't have even spoken to Sven. Sven, you're more thick-headed than I am. Alright. No! Sven! Put your sword away! Don't even tell me you're going after Hilde! This didn't go well. This didn't go well. I should have- I should have paid more attention. So, uhm… We don't have to kill the leshen if we do certain things. But I'm worried that I've screwed that up already. This is what happens. I'm chatting, I'm missing things- "Destroy the Leshen's totems". I want- I want to hear the description again of what we can do to honor the old ways. If we honor the old ways, we don't have to kill the leshen. Ok. So, destroy the leshen's totems, approach the altar. Uh, my poor brain! My poor brain. Well, I guess we're going to sort of wing this, sort of wing this.

The LPer admits that he has missed crucial information about the different solutions to the quest due to conversing with chat. He is inclined to renew the pact with the Woodland Spirit rather than killing it but fears that he has committed to killing it because of his inattention, admitting that he lacks context to make an informed decision about the moral dilemma. The LPer then turns to the chat, asking them what should be done, and then opens up a poll for the decision:

> Should we fight it, what do you think? Let's do this. what do I do… "Poll open" And that poll is assuming that I don't screw it up and just end up having to fight it or something.

The poll vote score is tied for a long time, with the chat giving arguments for both renewing the pact and killing the leshen:

> "Gonna be a 10 hour fight". Mmhmm. Fight, 3-3. "fun to watch and screw the consequences"

Some viewers in the chat were against fighting the Woodland Spirit, since the LPer plays on Blood March, the highest difficulty in *Witcher 3*, without wearing any armour, and the fight would likely take a long time. Other viewers support fighting the Woodland Spirit for exactly this reason, since it would be entertaining, encouraging the LPer to kill the leshen regardless of what the possible in-game consequences for this would be. These are hardly arguments to do the morally right thing, more motivated by what would be most entertaining. Eventually, more morally motivated arguments were raised as well by members of chat:

> "Do you really want to worship some tree-monster?" You wanna see me fight the leshen, don't you? You want to see me fight the leshen. Alright. It's time for a leshen fight. Time for a leshen fight. Let's do this! You know, nobody- we only got 6 entries. You could have swayed this. 3 and 3. Kill it, worship! Kill it, worship! Well, throw in some votes! Throw in some votes, 'cause I'm not counting it. you can vote 1 or vote 2. 2 is kill, right? You're all worrying me here. I'm so tempted, I'm, like, what happens if we worship the leshen? There's got to be something cool that happens. Dammit!

The LPer assumes that the viewers would like to see him fight the leshen, but he waits to see which solution gains the majority of votes, telling the chat that he personally is motivated by the curiosity of seeing what happens once the ritual is performed. The LPer reads more chat comments arguing for and against killing the Woodland Spirit:

> "don't you have any respect for skellige people and their traditions?" … I'm trying to. "Kill it, you might regret it later". Dammit. I don't wanna cast the deciding vote here. I don't wanna cast it. One more vote. Someone tip the

> scales! I'm looking for one more vote. And it's not gonna be mine. One more vote. Think about it! You could cast the deciding vote right now! If you haven't voted yet, throw in a vote and end this poll. Decide! Someone decide! I beg of you, someone decide! "Oh hell, I don't know", "Worship, keep the peace". Oh my god, alright. Do I have to flip a coin?

Further morally motivated arguments are given by the viewers in the chat, asking to respect the traditions of the village and appease the Woodland Spirit to keep the peace between it and the villagers, but also kill the leshen because the LPer might regret leaving it alive later. The poll votes are still even, though, and the LPer refuses to make the final decision, urging the chat to cast the deciding vote. The debate in the chat remained intense:

> "kiss it and see what happens", "the elder voted for worship". Listen to the elder. "don't kill it or people will die" Well of course people will die! Of course people will die. "The mod says.. fight!" All right. I defer- I defer to my mod.

Finally, the LPer's moderator, a user appointed by the LPer to monitor the chat and ban people or delete inappropriate messages if needed (Wohn 2019), steps in to break the tie, demanding to fight the leshen, though not giving any motivation for this argument. The LPer complies, though expressing regret for not renewing the pact, further expressing being motivated by curiosity:

> Next playthrough we can worship the leshen. It's a little sad, it's little sad, I kind of wanna know, but... what have we done, what have we done?

This regret was expressed several times during the LPer's battle against the leshen, which, due to the high difficulty level, stretched out to last for about 80 minutes, with the LPer failing on numerous occasions. This commitment to the collective decision is rather remarkable, as the possibility existed to revert to a previous game state and choose the ritual method, which is considerably easier in terms of difficulty.

6 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

In this concluding chapter of the thesis, I will further discuss the research results reported above. I will answer the research questions posed in subchapter 4.1 by first going over the different motivation types that were formed as a result of the thematic analysis, how they differ from the motivation types by Schreiber et al. (2010) and why. Then, I will address the impact of social and performative aspects of LP videos on LPer decision making in moral dilemmas. Third, the impact of game design on LPer decision making in moral dilemmas is discussed. The weaknesses of this study are also addressed in this chapter, and suggestions for further research are provided along the way. Finally, I will make conclusions about the results of the study and how it contributes to the wider research on moral players – first and foremost how human interaction between the LPer and their audience in livestreamed performative LP videos can have a crucial role in choosing a solution for moral dilemmas, and how this collective decision making has potential to foster the moral development of everyone involved.

6.1. LPer motivation types towards solving moral dilemmas

In the data analysis, the first research question that guided the analysis was to find out what types of motivations LPers have towards solving moral dilemmas that are presented in the narrative of *Witcher 3*. The existing typology of player reactions towards moral dilemmas encountered in games by Schreiber et al. (2010) was used as a basis for these motivations. According to the typology, players can be motivated by competition, control, immersion, novelty, realism and/or self-reaction. The research conducted in this article resulted in recognizing five motivation types: self-reaction, role-playing, curiosity, rewards, and co-reflection. While the motivation types of Schreiber et al. (2010) and the ones that were formed in this thesis have some overlap, they do have differences between each other as well, which will be examined more closely below.

The motivation type of control in the typology by Schreiber et al. (2010) was not prevalent enough in the research data to warrant a theme of its own, though it can be argued that it is still a valid motivation type towards moral dilemmas in video games, and the data collected for this thesis does support it. LPer #3, if you recall, reloaded the game several times, searching for an ideal solution for the moral dilemma presented in the quest *In the Heart of the Woods*, and was disappointed that one was not available, though at the same

time appreciating the moral greyness of the dilemma. This can be seen as the LPer attempting to control the consequences of the moral dilemma.

In a similar vein, the motivation type of realism (Schreiber et al. 2010) was not prevalent enough in the data gathered either, at least as the main, driving motivation for LPers, but there were instances where the LPer was disappointed that the moral dilemma did not resolve in a realistic way. Take for example LPer #13, who was disappointed when the altar method in *In the Heart of the Woods* did not match his expectations:

> Okay, now what? What, collect your reward from Harald? That's it? That's it? But what did we do? Was that it? Was that the quest? So I thought there would be more than this. I don't know what the hell is going on. We're just going to go back and collect a reward. It doesn't really seem like we really accomplished anything. Oh no, these last couple of quests in this game have been pretty weird. To the point I feel like they're broken.

The actual choice the LPer made in the moral dilemma was still mostly motivated by curiosity, and partly self-reaction:

> Hmm, let's go talk to Sven. See what he has to say. Sure he's going to say kill it. [Harald] had a good point. And I thought it was all a bunch of hogwash, but, you know, he compared it to what the witchers go through. That was kind of a really good point. And it might be fun doing something different besides just killing a monster for a change … If we do it Sven's way, we need to find the marked person first and then kill that person? Or maybe tell them to leave, I don't know. I- I think I might go with the Harald thing, I think that might be more interesting, I don't know. A little bit something different that what I normally do.

Schreiber et al. (2010, 75) note that an individual may have several motivations for playing a game and may therefore approach a moral dilemma from several points of view before making a binding decision. The data gathered on the LPers suggests that this is true, and actually more likely than to have only a single motivation throughout a playthrough. The multiple motivations may be in conflict when making the choice, which was the case with LPer #4 in the quest *In the Heart of the Woods*, where the LPer was motivated by curiosity to choose one solution of the moral dilemma, while their self-reactive moral judgment motivated the LPer to choose another.

The self-reactive motivation type conceptualized by Schreiber et al. (2010) is identical in meaning to the similarly named theme identified in this thesis. The term itself is coined by Albert Bandura (1986), and it is a core component of human agency that enables people to capitalize upon their previous experiences in order to reflect on the

consequences of their conduct and pursue goals in accordance with their own standards (Caprara et al. 2009). As such, it is an apt name for the motivation of LPers to approach a moral dilemma directly, using their own moral judgment to reach a conclusion. The self-reactive motivation type is reminiscent to the pawn stance in non-digital role-playing games (Edwards 2001) such as *Dungeons and Dragons* (Gygax & Arneson 1974), where a person determines a character's decisions and actions based on the real person's priorities, though the difference is that these priorities might not be morally focused.

Similarly, the motivations of role-playing and immersion are virtually identical in meaning. Both motivation types include role-playing as a game character and considering how that character would act in a moral dilemma and making choices accordingly. However, naming this motivation type as 'immersion' can be rather misleading. In play, immersion is used to describe the degree of involvement with a game, and Emily Brown and Paul Cairns (2004) divide it into three levels: engagement, engrossment, and finally, total immersion. An engaged gamer is interested in the game and wants to keep playing. Further involvement may lead to engrossment, when game features combine in such a way that the gamer's emotions are directly affected by the game. Finally, total immersion is presence: becoming cut off from reality and detachment to such an extent that the game is all that matters. Nothing about immersion, understood this way, suggests that it can only be achieved through role-playing as the player character. Self-reactive players who play without directly assuming the role of Geralt have the capacity to become just as immersed in the game, and so do players who do not possess moral motivations, for that matter. Therefore, this motivation is called role-playing instead.

Adopting this kind of role-playing stance might aid players in their decision making when faced with moral dilemmas and they cannot achieve a satisfactory decision through self-reactive motivation. The LPers taking a role-playing stance towards moral dilemmas they encounter are reminiscent of participants in non-digital role-playing games who actively negotiate distinctions between persona, player, and person. The LPer is the fantasy persona they play – Geralt or Rivia, the Witcher. In addition, they are also a player who knows and understands the rules of the game. Thirdly, they are a person outside the game, with other roles such as students, employees, spouses, etc. (Waskul & Lust 2004, 337).

There are parallels between this division and the motivations that the LPers have towards solving moral dilemmas they encounter within *Witcher 3*: The persona invokes a motivation for role-playing, while the rule-focused player might be motivated most by in-

game rewards that optimize performance within the game. Finally, the person is motivated by self-reactivity, their personal curiosity or reflection with others. The LPer's use of pronouns in their narration indicates their positioning, interaction and address within and outside the context of the narrative (Gibbons & Macrae 2018, 2) – for example, whether they are narrating as person, persona, or player. The use of pronouns can also indicate the identification of a player to a player character (Hitchens et al. 2012). The pronoun 'I' can be used as *prosopopoeia*: a rhetorical act of giving a voice to and speaking in the name of another person (Sturgeon 2007) – in this case, the persona, Geralt of Rivia. But at the same time, 'I' may also refer to the person or player making the choices. The pronoun 'we', on the other hand, was also commonly used in the LPer narration, addressing the LPer and their viewers. In narratology, Monika Fludernik (2018) calls this kind of use of 'we' *experiencing we* – focusing on events which are experienced collectively, in this case, the gameplay of *Witcher 3*. The use of 'we'-pronoun in the narration of choices made in a moral dilemma indicates that the LPer wants to invite the audience to have ownership in those choices, even when the audience cannot be in real-time communication with the LPer, as is the case with non-live streaming LPers. Some LPers used the pronoun 'he' instead of 'I' or 'we' to refer to Geralt, and as already pointed out in the results section, this would indicate greater distance from the self than the use of first-person pronoun (Hitchens 2012). It would be a great topic for future research to find out if there is a connection between the use of pronouns and motivations to solve moral dilemmas in video games.

The motivation type of competition is defined as the player treating moral dilemmas purely as gameplay decisions and being mainly interested in the in-game rewards of each choice (Schreiber et al. 2010). The word competition implies competing against someone or something, and while it could be argued that the player is competing against the game itself in single-player games, it was more appropriate to name the theme as 'rewards' to put less emphasis on competition. Another difference between these two motivation types is that Schreiber's (2010) motivation type of competition only includes in-game rewards. For example, Xbox achievements are not in-game rewards as they accumulate Gamerscore that exists outside the game. Like Hamari and Eranti put it, achievement systems should be viewed as games of their own (2011, 3). They are, however, included in the rewards motivation.

The motivation type of novelty is defined by Schreiber et al. (2010) as a player being more concerned with completing multiple playthroughs and making each unique by making different choices in moral dilemmas than making a morally motivated decision. As it was the first playthrough for each of the LPers in the sample group, novelty as defined by Schreiber et al. (2010) was not a valid motivation theme as all choices the LPers made were novel to them in any case. Though, the moral dilemma in the quest *In the Heart of the Woods* does have a certain element of novelty to it, in the context of what the player is used to at this point of their playthrough. At the point where this witcher contract becomes available, the LPers have grown accustomed to usually kill the monster in these types of quests. To have a possibility to appease it instead is novel in that sense. Instead of novelty, curiosity was chosen as the name of the theme. D. E. Berlyne (1978) defines curiosity as an internal state occasioned when subjective uncertainty generates a tendency to engage in exploratory behaviour aimed at resolving or partially mitigating the uncertainty - in the case of this thesis, players making a certain choice in a moral dilemma because they do not know and want to see what happens. This motivation type is as valid for first-time players as it is for players who are re-playing a game. However, it would be an interesting subject of further study to find out what the motivations of players are towards moral dilemmas they encounter within video games when they are replaying the game. Do they change their choices on their consequent playthrough, and if so, why?

6.2. Impact of social and performative aspects on LPer decision making

Co-reflection was a theme that does not have a corresponding motivation type in the typology by Schreiber et al. (2010). This motivation type answers the second research question of how the social and performative aspects of LP videos factor in LPers' motivations to solve the moral dilemmas presented in the narrative of *Witcher 3*. Co-reflection has been used before as a term, for example in computer-supported collaborative learning, where it is defined as a collaborative critical thinking process mediated by language (Yukawa 2006). This motivation type is unique in that it has an essential social component, and therefore is something that live streaming LPers tended to employ, though not exclusively. Co-reflection refers to collective reflection and decision making concerning moral dilemmas: rather than self-reactive motivation, which means that the LPer is making decisions in solitude based on their personal values, using their own moral judgment. Co-reflective LPers instead actively involve their viewers in

the decision making, reaching a consensus, or at least considering their audience's points of view, and perhaps even completely leaving the decision making up to the viewers. Co-reflection can occur through live stream chat, YouTube comments, or even by spectators sharing the same physical space with the LPer.

In collective decision making where the LPer grants the audience the power to make a choice in a moral dilemma, the LPer reduces themselves into an avatar of their audience, mediating their agency (Klevjer 2006, 87). A similar phenomenon, *Twitch Plays Pokémon* let Twitch audience to input game commands via the chat functionality. This collective play was unmoderated and thus resulted in chaotic inputs of thousands of people trying to play the game at once (Taylor 2018, 44). With the presence of an LPer to moderate this collective decision making, it becomes more of a managed democratic process, but still one where the audience is participating and having an impact on how the branching game narrative unfolds.

The performativity of LPers affects how they solve moral dilemmas they face in the narrative of *Witcher 3*. The LPers motivated by curiosity, for example, might not merely gravitate towards novel experiences in a video game narrative solely because of their personal desires to do so. The imaginary audience and The LPers' endeavours to keep it entertained may also affect the decisions that the LPers make. Simply the act of playing is a kind of performance, involving making decisions and actions that change the fiction of the game (Tavinor 2017), but the LPers add their own narration and personalities into this performance. While the majority of the LPer sample seemed to 'play the good guy', as LPer #3 put it, there is also a prominent phenomenon of LP performances as transgressive play, presenting norm-breaking and often politically incorrect storylines serving to entertain the LP audience (Wirman & Jones 2018, 99). This kind of play might be deliberately inept to provide entertainment to the audience and might for example involve a conscious attempt on the part of the LPer to ignore information regarding the possible consequences of different solutions in a moral dilemma to make an ill-informed decision for comedic purposes. Also, LPers performing transgressive play might employ alternate narration (Kerttula 2019) in order to change the narrative of the moral dilemmas. They might, for example, portray Geralt as an incompetent character, having Hilde killed in *In the Heart of the Woods* but still choosing the altar method and failing to defend Harald from Sven, resulting in arguably the morally least desirable outcome, with Sven, Harald, Hilde, and the town elders dead and the Woodland Spirit left alive. Although

inept playerhood is undoubtedly negative in eSports, for example, poor LP performance is acceptable because of the resulting comedic situations (Wirman & Jones 2018, 109). Another issue to keep in mind is that LPers frequently use physical expressions and gestures, at times theatrically, accentuated or held for effect to punctuate their communication (Taylor 2018, 75). This exaggerated theatricality makes it difficult to accurately evaluate whether the LPers are actually emotionally affected by moral dilemmas they face. As Nguyen (2016) puts it, it is important to recognize the performative nature of LPer reactions rather than assume that their constructed liveness authenticates those actions and thoughts as transparent.

6.3. Impact of game design on LPer decision-making in moral dilemmas

The third research question dealt with game design issues in *Witcher 3* that affect the LPers' decision-making in moral dilemmas that are presented in the narrative of the game. Two design issues were prevalent in the research data: unintentional commitments to solutions in moral dilemmas and limited possibilities to interact with NPCs related to the moral dilemmas. Unintentional commitments to solutions in moral dilemmas typically took place in dialogue trees, where the LPers had limited options to choose from and either no possibility to back out from making a choice if they felt they were not yet ready to commit to one, or the game did not give enough feedback to the LPers that they were about to commit to a choice. Thus, explicit signposting as to when a commitment to a solution is about to be made in a moral dilemma is warranted, as is the option to back out from making the decision, if the narrative context would allow this.

The limited possibilities to interact with NPCs restricted LPers' attempts to either gain more information and insight from them or hold them responsible for their actions. The actions possible to players are prescripted by the game software – as Colin Milburn (2018) calls it, they are the puppets of an inscrutable high-tech system, having limited agency in a video game environment and being driven through the action by the narrative of the game. The act of limiting the amount of player interaction with NPCs and the number of choices that are offered can be seen as *bounded agency* (Bizzocchi & Tanenbaum 2012, 394) that allows the developer to better control player progression and the flow of the narrative.

However, this research suggests that when the designer limits player actions that would seem very logical for a morally focused player to take, it prevents them from acting in a

way that they would morally judge to be the best course of action. A fine example of this would be the limited interaction possibilities with Hilde, the villager marked by the Woodland Spirit, whose personal opinions on how her situation should be handled are left a mystery for the player since she cannot be engaged in conversation with. Thus, the game developer should take into account the ethical player, who actively seeks to act morally within the game world, understand the consequences of the moral dilemma and how it affects those involved. The NPCs who have a role in the moral dilemma should be able to be engaged in a dialog with, so that the ethical player is able to elicit their motivations and views both before and after the decision is made.

6.4. Weaknesses

There are several weaknesses to this thesis that need to be addressed. First and foremost, the data sample and its collection process involved the transcription and coding of 40 LP videos found on YouTube. Though this process was cost effective and rather flexible for the researcher and as such suitable for a master's thesis, it does have its shortcomings. For instance, the researcher is completely dependent on interpreting the commentary of the LPer, unable to ask them research-related questions as would be possible if the research was conducted in the form of a questionnaire or probe the LPers to reflect further like in a semi-structured interview. Although an attempt was made to provide as many quotations as possible from the transcribed data to provide context on the interpretations that were made, they cannot be absolutely confirmed to be accurate, and thus the reader should approach this thesis with a critical mindset rather than treating these interpretations as an absolute truth.

Furthermore, the writer of this thesis is not an expert on either moral philosophy, or the research method used. A researcher more experienced in moral philosophy might be able to use the concepts of the field in a more versatile and accurate manner, developing themes that better capture the answers to the research questions posed in this thesis, improving its quality. The limited scope of this thesis also provided its restrictions as there were numerous useful transcription extracts whose interpretations had to be left out of the thesis as there was no room to include them.

The majority of qualitative researchers agree that the goal of interpretivist research is not to make statistical generalizations (Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2010). Because of this, the motivation themes that were created as a result of the analysis of a particular sample group

playing certain quests in *Witcher 3* are not readily applicable to all players and all video games. The applicability of these LPer motivations towards moral dilemmas in other games and contexts is plausible, however, and would be an excellent topic for future research that would further refine and add to these motivations.

Themes do not simply lay about, waiting to be discovered within the research data — instead of simply emerging they must be sought out, and the process of data collection and analysis is unavoidably informed by the researcher's disclosures, preconceptions, and their personal, theoretical, and political orientations (Taylor & Ussher 2001). This means that the created themes depend on the subjective interpretations of the researcher, and they do not represent a final, comprehensive set of themes of different motivations towards solving moral dilemmas within video games. Another researcher, possibly using another framework, might come up with a completely different set of themes.

Other motivations towards solving moral dilemmas within video games might exist that simply were not expressed by any of the LPers in the sample group. For instance, an LPer playing the *Witcher 3* quest *In the Heart of the Woods* on the highest difficulty level might be motivated by convenience and choose to remake the pact with the Woodland Spirit, because it does not require fighting the leshen and is therefore an easier, more convenient solution to choose. If the said LPer did think that killing the leshen would have been the morally right course of action to take, using the terms of the Four Component Model, it could be seen that this LPer was low in moral action. This kind of motivation might potentially exist, but as no LPer expressed this kind of motivation in the sample group, no such theme could be established.

Another possible motivation for an LPer to solve moral dilemmas that was not prevalent in the LPer sample group would be the deliberate transgression of morals for enjoyment or entertainment. As the moral dilemmas of *Witcher 3* are true moral dilemmas, meaning there is no clear division between morally 'good' and 'evil' solutions to them, it might not be a suitable game for this motivation type to manifest in LPers. As a comparison, many branching narrative choices in the post-apocalyptic action-RPG *Fallout 3* (Bethesda Game Studios 2008) feature exaggerated morally evil options: For example, in the side-quest *The Power of the Atom*, the player is given a choice between disarming or detonating an atomic bomb in the centre of a town. This clear-cut dichotomy might invite the deliberate transgression of morals, particularly in performative LPers who aim to

entertain their viewers or maximize their 'Evil Karma' rating measured by the game's morality meter.

6.5. Conclusions

In conclusion, LPers can take various motivations towards solving moral dilemmas within *Witcher 3*. Whether those motivations are moral or not depends on the LPer's moral focus. An LPer can possess several motivations during play, and these motivations can be in conflict with each other. Game developers have numerous tools at their disposal to promote morally motivated play, if this is something that they aim to achieve. The LPers themselves are performing for, and sometimes with, their audience, and are able to include their viewers in the decision-making process. If the LPers and their viewers are all morally focused, the resulting discussion of what course of action should be taken has potential to foster the moral thinking of everyone involved when different viewpoints on the dilemma are considered and the moral judgment of the LPer is verbalized. Even if the audience is not directly participating, its presence, or even the presence of an imagined audience might cause an LPer to attempt to be more reflexive towards moral dilemmas that they are facing, or at least verbalizing what motivated their choice in the manner of a 'think aloud method' (Van Someren et al. 1994). This kind of verbalized reflection can assist in externalizing and rendering visible unsystematic and often nonconscious everyday knowledge (van Compernolle 2014, 95), heightening type 2 moral reasoning. Therefore, it can be argued that LPer narration could result in more thorough moral deliberation.

The inclusion of LP audience in the decision-making process can range from collective reflection on the morality of a choice once it is made, to taking viewers' opinions into consideration while making a choice, and in extreme cases the LPer granting the power to decide entirely to the audience. This kind of collective decision-making process can take form in a democratic vote organized by the LPer and has not been addressed in previous literature, its potential thus far untapped. This thesis will be a good starting point for research on a potentially fruitful area of study.

Returning to Klimmt's (2006) argument showcased in the introduction questioning whether moral concerns are applicable to video game play, the answer is a resounding 'yes'. Whether they are necessary is a matter of another thesis entirely. Even though players appreciate games that are *fun*, the appreciation is higher for games that are

meaningful, appealing to more than hedonistic concerns and providing insight and enrichment (Oliver et al. 2016). Though morally focused play offers the player a chance for self- (or collective) reflection, growth in moral thinking, and potential emotional impact, having other motivations towards solving moral dilemmas within video games is perfectly valid as well. Whether a player is motivated by curiosity to see how a game reacts to a particular choice or simply by seeking rewards that maximize their chances of completing the game, their engagement is what matters most.

However, there is great potential in LPers and their audience being complicit with the game's moral system and with their own values (Sicart 2013, 23). It is important because one of the main drivers of moral change in people is human contact, and rational deliberation and debate have played a large part in shifts in opinions on issues such as the morality of slavery across time (Bloom 2010). With the possibilities of interaction in live streaming, the LPer and their audience are able to engage in a debate on the morally best course of action, considering each other's viewpoints and maybe even changing their views if met with an especially convincing argument, which would be very beneficial in their moral development and is definitely worth further research.

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