

Analysis of Mechanics

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Title: The Talos Principle

Released: 2014

Author: Croteam (game studio) / Devolver Digital (publisher)

Primary Genre: first-person spatial-reasoning puzzle

Secondary Genre: philosophical text adventure

Style: realistic with, sci-fi objects

Analysis

The primary genre of The Talos Principle PC game, which was made by Croteam and released in 2014, is puzzle. The player follows the main storyline and advances in playthrough by completing puzzles in each level. The order of puzzles is not determined, though, as the player is able to choose the next puzzle, which they want to try, in the main lobby. The game restricts access to advanced puzzles, which feature more complex game mechanics, but there is always a choice between numerous directions and the player is allowed to walk away from the puzzle being currently solved at any time. During my playthrough, I have even noticed the game itself (or rather the entity figuring in the story) encouraging me to come back to a certain puzzle later, after spending a longer time in it without progress made, which I evaluate as a smart design choice, as it improves playability a lot for players who get stuck and do not notice the game becoming boring.

The secondary genre is somehow omnipresent in the whole gameplay — it could be even argued that it is the main genre of this game — and that is philosophical text decision-based adventure. Across the whole world in which the plot takes place, there are available computer terminals with philosophical reflections on human history and existence. Later in the playthrough, an entity which the player can interact with appears. The interaction is bound to the terminal, where it is possible to choose between various answers in dialogue. The story is apparently written so that it is structured as a decision tree with branches and unifying points in the drama, which is delivered across the whole game. The decisions which player makes have a few consequences in the physical aspect of the game world, if any, yet the gameplay is affected by them immensely as players process moral dilemmas undertaken in their subconsciousness.

The visual of the game is hyper-realistic, considering the technology used and the resources developers had. In comparison to present-day games, The Talos Principle does not look as impressive, but it is clear that authors wanted players to feel a direct connection to human history and environment, incorporating ruins of ancient buildings, plausible lightning and genuine physics model help that significantly. The tendency to approach reality is also obvious from the following title, The Talos Principle II, which was made in Unreal Engine 5 and is even closer to a hyper-realistic appearance. This all except a bunch of sci-fi devices utilised in puzzles; however, even such unrealistic equipment looks convincing.

To conclude, we could consider players' needs as a result of two desires. The first one is the desire to order things and keep them organised. This need is satisfied by the puzzle aspect of gameplay. The puzzles are there, and the player can be sure there is a right solution. The only thing left is to find it and complete each level to move forward. This part of the game is well-balanced. Personally, I would welcome more complex levels overall. However, the question of whether this would actually make me enjoy the game more remains unanswered. The second desire is the longing for exploration and a higher understanding of the world as such; by this, I mean existence itself. The game gratifies this by offering refined philosophical questions from which players can derive deeper insight into reality. These two aspects work well together. Even the style eases sinking into the world of wisdom. The music induces a spiritual atmosphere of a distinct schools of thought, or rather, a belief systems, which arose in human history.