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Miguel Sicart

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BEYOND CHOICES



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Miguel Sicart : Beyond Choices: The Design of Ethical Gameplay (MIT Press) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Beyond Choices: The Design of Ethical Gameplay (MIT Press):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. good blend of theory and anecdotesBy Daniel J. LiddleI appreciated that there was philosophical theory integrated into the book, but that the theories were grounded in anecdotes about his personal experiences with games. I also liked his overall ethos, especially his self-defeat at ethical game design.

How computer games can be designed to create ethically relevant experiences for players. Today's blockbuster video games -- and their never-ending sequels, sagas, and reboots -- provide plenty of excitement in high-resolution but for the most part fail to engage a player's moral imagination. In *Beyond Choices*, Miguel Sicart calls for a new generation of video and computer games that are ethically relevant by design. In the 1970s, mainstream films -- including *The Godfather*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Raging Bull*, and *Taxi Driver* -- filled theaters but also treated their audiences as thinking beings. Why can't mainstream video games have the same moral and aesthetic impact? Sicart argues that it is time for games to claim their place in the cultural landscape as vehicles for ethical reflection. Sicart looks at games in many manifestations: toys, analog games, computer and video games, interactive fictions, commercial entertainments, and independent releases. Drawing on philosophy, design theory, literary studies, aesthetics, and interviews with game developers, Sicart provides a systematic account of how games can be designed to challenge and enrich our moral lives. After discussing such topics as definition of ethical gameplay and the structure of the game as a designed object, Sicart offers a theory of the design of ethical game play. He also analyzes the ethical aspects of game play in a number of current games, including *Spec Ops: The Line*, *Beautiful Escape: Dungeoneer*, *Fallout New Vegas*, and *Anna Anthropy's Dys4ia*. Games are designed to evoke specific emotions; games that engage players ethically, Sicart argues, enable us to explore and express our values through play.

Ethics in video games can be approached from many angles, from analysis of cheating strategies, to the political perspective inherent in game mechanics, to the inclusion of dodgy narrative subject matter, to social concerns about faux violence. This book is an effort to bring these conversations away from private chats and conference coffee conversations, and make them accessible to all those fascinated with the subject of what games are and what they might become. (Harvey Smith, Co-Creative Director, Arkane Studios) In *Beyond Choices*, Miguel Sicart casts light not only on designing games that pose moral choices for players, but more generally on techniques that can be used to foster subtext -- meaning beyond the surface -- in games of all kinds. Designers -- at least those interested in creating something more than a reskin -- will find it of compelling interest. (Greg Costikyan, game designer; author of *Uncertainty in Games*) Sicart makes a compelling argument for his theory that, if taken to heart by game designers, will make a more interesting game landscape in the future. Any designer looking to make their game stand out as art or any game enthusiast interested in learning more about video game design and their potential to help us explore and express our values as human beings should read this book. (First Monday) About the Author Miguel Sicart is Associate Professor at the Center for Computer Games Research at the IT University of Copenhagen. He is the author of *The Ethics of Computer Games* (MIT Press).