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Lake of Despair – Thomas Örn Karlsson

Lies for the “Greater Good” – The Story of *Horizon Zero Dawn*

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Abstract | Since the advent of mass media, governments and academics have researched ways to manipulate information received by the general public. Reasons for this have ranged from propaganda to altruism, and debates have raged as to whether people have a ‘right’ to the truth and to the ethical implications of lying. This article investigates the way that lying for supposedly altruistic reasons is used in the narrative of the video game *Horizon Zero Dawn* (Guerrilla Games, 2017). *Horizon Zero Dawn* is the story of a young girl named Aloy who lives in a post-apocalyptic world in which humans were decimated by the robots they had created hundreds of years before. This article analyses the way in which, within the narrative, governments and corporations implemented their plan to ensure humanity’s survival, and their justifications to lie to the general public about the lengths this plan would go to. This article examines how their justification for lying usurped the robots’ claim to inherit the Earth and the ethics behind it.

Keywords | video games; *Horizon Zero Dawn*; ethics; posthuman; propaganda; alternative facts.



Resumo | Desde o advento dos meios de comunicação em massa, os governos e os académicos têm investigado formas de manipular a informação recebida pelo público em geral. As razões destas investigações vão desde a propaganda até ao altruísmo, e os debates continuam sobre se as pessoas terão ou não “direito” à verdade e sobre as implicações éticas de mentir. Este artigo discorre sobre o modo como se usa a mentira por razões supostamente altruístas na narrativa do jogo de vídeo *Horizon Zero Dawn* (Guerrilla Games, 2017). *Horizon Zero Dawn* é a história de uma jovem rapariga chamada Aloy, que vive num mundo pós-apocalíptico, no qual os humanos foram dizimados por robôs que eles próprios criaram centenas de anos antes. Este artigo analisa a forma como, dentro da narrativa, governos e empresas implementaram o seu plano para assegurar a sobrevivência da humanidade e as suas justificações para mentir ao público em geral sobre o ponto a que estes planos chegariam. Este estudo explora ainda as formas como as suas justificações para mentir usurparam as reivindicações dos robôs para herdar a Terra, e a ética por detrás dessas mentiras.

Palavras-Chave | videojogos; *Horizon Zero Dawn*; ética; pós-humano; propaganda; factos alternativos.



Introduction

Horizon Zero Dawn (shortened to *Horizon*, from herein) is a role-playing video game released in 2017 by Guerrilla Games. The game was critically well received due to its graphics, storyline and open-world elements, and as of February 2018 has sold over 7 million copies (VGA247.com 2018). The story of *Horizon* is set in the 31st Century with gameplay focusing on a young girl named Aloy, a member of a tribe called the Nora. The world of *Horizon* is tribalistic with little technology or modern medicine though we find out very quickly that it was not always this way. Travelling through the narrative, the player discovers that in the years between 2031-2066 society had been technologically advanced and robots and automation had been widespread (horizonzerodawnwikia.com 2018a). The collapse of society was caused by a set of robots, manufactured by Faro Automated Solutions (FAS), which failed to respond to protocols, and thus began to serve itself. These robots became known as the “Faro Plague” and possessed the ability to convert biomatter into fuel, meaning that they could power themselves indefinitely. They began to strip the whole planet of its resources and over 15 months caused the extinction of all life on Earth before going into long term hibernation (Guerrilla Games, 2017).

What is intriguing about this story, which is also the basis for this article, is that the general public were not aware that the final 15 months of life on Earth were in

fact their last. The public were never aware that the governments and carefully selected scientists knew that the Faro Plague could not be stopped. The government were in fact planning for a re-introduction of humanity hundreds of years later rather than saving those currently alive. During the game's main questlines, the player discovers that Ted Faro (owner of FAS) had created the military robots that would become the Faro Plague. He created the robots with encryption protocols that could not be brute-forced and without a back door (a way for the original programmer to reset any malfunctions). Expert scientist, Elisabet Sobeck, realised that there was no way to shut the robots down before they extinguished life on Earth and instead initiated Project Zero Dawn. For Sobeck, all the resources should be mobilized to create GAIA, a massive computer system which had two major goals. GAIA would first code-break the Faro Swarm (this would take over 100 years after humans had gone extinct) and then terraform Earth back to a state where human life (and others) could be re-introduced (horizondawn.wikia.com 2018b). However, to buy time for the work on GAIA to be completed, a secondary military operation (Operation Enduring Victory) was implemented. The public were only told that they had to join the military to hold back the robots until Project Zero Dawn could be "completed". They were manipulated into thinking that Project Zero Dawn was many things, including a super weapon, and that there was indeed a chance for their survival (horizonzerodawn.wikia.com, 2018c).

This article analyses the way the government and corporations in the game manipulated the mass media using "alternative facts" to make sure that the public would not find out that they were going to die. This article looks at the ethical implications of lying for the "greater good", which in this instance was pretending that humanity would survive. In this sense, I will argue that lying in *Horizon* was unjustified and stopped people from being able to make their own choices when it came to how they wanted to die. It will be argued here that lying just to ensure humanity's survival was unethical and, in order to do so, I will follow humanist philosophy and postmodern theories.

Lies and Propaganda in *Horizon Zero Dawn*

The act of lying and its consequences has been debated by philosophers for centuries, with some deeming all lying as bad, some viewing white lies or half-truths

as acceptable, and others discussing lies for the “greater good”. Emmanuel Kant argued that lying is always wrong because “a lie always harms another, if not some other particular man, still it harms mankind generally, for it vitiates the source of the law itself” (Kant 281). Kant and other pre-modern scholars, such as Aquinas (1485), often see lying as an absolute. Bauer argued that even broken promises could be construed as lies in absolutist terms and thus morally wrong:

Any act that is strictly in accordance with one’s inclinations is also a violation of human autonomy (i.e. The freedom to act in accordance with the moral law), and for this reason such acts damage the dignity of the moral agent. (91)

Later scholars, however, argued that life is often more nuanced and having monolithic virtues is often unworkable, as Langton observes “it is an old dilemma: Having an ideal you want to live by, and an ideal you want to seek and preserve” (292).

In many scenarios lying can be argued as “justified” by utilitarians in particular. In the medical profession this has been debated in regards to patient care; most physicians use a “consequential method of reasoning rather than a principle-based method, professionals find situations in which telling the truth may not be in the best interest of those involved” (Everett 333). Psychological studies have investigated the concept of prosocial lying, whereby the lie is for someone else’s benefit, Lupoli, Jampol and Oveis (2017) comment on this phenomenon:

Prosocial lying is ethically ambiguous. On the one hand, lying violates the principle of honesty.... Yet, these lies differ in their intention from selfish lies, or those which are told to benefit oneself. (1028)

In the medical field, in particular, “alternative facts” in medical trials are not surrounded by the political rhetoric which could be considered as a form of lying, prosocial or otherwise. Mascherbauer (2017) notes how some clinical trials use “alternative facts” when it comes to how treatments work in different trials to test the results of small data sets. For Mascherbauer, the testing of “alternative facts” in medicine is not to do with lying, as drugs can have different outcomes in different circumstances so it is not pushing a political agenda; “These trials were testing ‘alternative facts’, and falsified previously established ‘facts’. So what is wrong about ‘alternative facts’ or the search for them? Nothing, after all” (223). However, in

political discourse this is often not the case and it has been argued that “alternative facts” represented in the media to disseminate certain ideologies to the public are “framed largely by appeals to emotion that are disconnected from the details of policy, and by the adherence to talking points that often ignore the facts” (Mann 573).

Studies have shown that when people are asked about their most important moral value, the most frequent response is honesty (Graham, Meindl, Koleva, Iyer, & Johnson 2015). As “alternative facts” as argued by Mann from political debates often ignore facts, it can be construed as dishonesty. This may explain why many dystopian films such as *Soylent Green* (Fleischer, 1973), *Children of Men* (Cuarón, 2006), *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982) all have lies in the central narrative with governments or powerful corporations being the ones deceiving the public. For *Horizon* as well, lies and propaganda are central to the storyline.

Although definitions can vary, many scholars note that a component of democracy is a well-informed public: “if people are pervasively misinformed, chances are that societal decisions will be suboptimal” (Lewandowsky, Ecker & Cook 355). The first apparent way that FAS (in conjunction with global governments) makes sure that the public are not well informed in *Horizon* is by wilfully suppressing information that would be in the public interest; a PR employee at FAS notes that a video of the Faro Plague swarm converting dolphins into bio-fuel was problematic for them:

Our suppression team has scrubbed it from 43 networks, but it’s still propagating, so it’s only a matter of time before it goes viral. A prepared statement feels grossly insufficient. Any suggestions? This one’s a real stinker. (Guerrilla Games, 2017)

Lewandowsky, Ecker & Cook (2013) have argued that suppression of facts in the media has led to conspiratorial discourses. This causes an issue in that “the mere exposure to conspiratorial discourse, even if the conspiratorial claims are dismissed, makes people less likely to accept official information” (355). Although suppression of facts could be argued as not lying (in that it is not explicitly said) it can still be argued as deceitful and can be construed as acting in “bad faith”. Bauer argues that “acting in bad faith...is equivalent to perfidy, which I have defined as *a false invitation to enter into a condition of mutual trust, intentionally contrived and communicated by either a lie or another act of duplicity*” (78). In this sense, suppressing facts can then be defined as an act of duplicity and therefore a lie.

The second way in which lies propagate in the *Horizon* narrative is within the “alternative facts” released to the public. For Street, in discussing the Iraq War, ideology of reporting can create “alternative facts” in that we don’t see the media as “covering the war, but as being used to create support for the US government’s military strategy” (Street 45). In the case of the game, a datapoint by an unknown soldier produces a good illustration of what Street mentions:

Just Got Back: Just got back. Ho Chi Minh’s gone. Barely got out. Two-thirds of the brigade didn’t... And then the verts lift off, and we come under fire not from bots but a Vietnamese battery! CO called it friendly fire but that’s crap, they were just pissed because we were bugging out and they couldn’t. Oh my god. And now we’re back in the USA and the CO is calling it a “qualified success” because we delayed the bots by several days and time is what Zero Dawn needs. Said we’d have a new mission tomorrow. Oh my god. (Guerrilla Games, 2017)

These “alternative facts” as presented by Operation Enduring Victory can also be attributed to Bauer’s perspective on Newman’s theory of *aequivocatio*, in which statements put out by the military in *Horizon* state “some truth while realising that the hearer will likely draw an illogical or untrue conclusion” (Bauer 139). This is demonstrated in many datapoints the player can find throughout the game such as a press release to the public from Ted Faro:

I can promise you, can absolutely assure you, is that I am already devoting every possible resource towards reaching... a speedy conclusion to this issue. So when you hear the bad talk about us, against this company, in the days, maybe weeks to come... just bear in mind that we will get past this... that a day's coming when none of this will matter. (Guerrilla Games, 2017)

The player knows at this point in the narrative that Faro was aware that the Faro Plague swarm was unstoppable and would cause an extinction event. However, the way this press release is framed to the public means that they would come to the “untrue conclusion” that the swarm will be fixed; that is the reason it will not matter what people think of FAS and why “a day’s coming when none of this will matter” (Guerrilla Game, 2017). The interesting part of the *Horizon* narrative is that the player knows that these manipulations largely worked; humanity fought the Faro Plague to the very last man with many still believing that Project Zero Dawn would save them.

Still, this creates an interesting ethical issue: should humanity have been kept in the dark about the fact that they were all going to die?

The Right to Die with the Ones You Love

Now that we have looked at the ways in which the “alternative facts” told throughout the *Horizon* narrative were used to manipulate the populous, it is important to analyse the ethics of these manipulations, namely the “right to the truth”; whether the lies told were just or whether the world’s population in *Horizon* had the “right to the truth” no matter whether Project Zero Dawn worked or not.

Although the previous section of this article identified the manipulation of facts by the media and government agencies in *Horizon* as unethical, according to several different theorists, the “right to the truth” is considered differently to the ethics of lying in general. This is because for early philosophers the “right to the truth” was not considered a requirement to whether someone was being lied to. In medical scenarios, some professionals would argue that “the real issue is not whether the truth should be told but whether there is a way of telling it responsibly” (Everett 333). For Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant and other absolutists it was not worth considering whether people had a “right to the truth” and whether that made a lie worse because a lie was morally wrong no matter what. Kant went to the extreme when it came to the “Murderer At The Door” example:

If by telling a lie you have prevented murder, you have made yourself legally responsible for all the consequences; but if you have held rigorously to the truth, public justice can lay no hand on you, whatever the unforeseen consequences may be. (Kant 281)

As the quotation above expresses, Kant viewed a lie as morally wrong even if it meant that someone would be harmed by it. Later philosophers criticised this notion. For instance, Bauer notes that philosopher Constant criticised Kant and suggested “that the proper definition of a lie be a falsehood told to someone who has the right to the truth” (106). Bauer argued that Constant was correct to argue that in the “Murderer At The Door” example, the murderer does not have the “right to the truth” because their intentions are morally wrong. Therefore logically it is proper and just to lie to the murderer about the whereabouts of their would-be victim. Leading on from

this logic then for the narrative in *Horizon*, Operation Enduring Victory knew that they were sending soldiers to their death and so their intentions could be argued as morally wrong even if they felt they were lying for the “right” reasons.

Bauer addresses the concerns that a “right to the truth” makes “it possible for falsehoods to be excused by simply providing a plausible justification based on the situation.” (106). For Bauer, it is Spinoza who reveals what is the most ethical approach in terms of the “right to the truth” as he explains:

He resolves the tension between what might appear to be two completing absolutes: the fundamental inclination to preserve one’s existence, and the imperative never to act in bad faith. In the end, he shows that the principle of acting in good faith rather than the principle of self-preservation is most elemental to human freedom. (88)

This differs from a utilitarian view in which Smart states that:

If it were known to be true, as a question of fact, that measures which caused misery and death to tens of millions today *would* result in saving from greater misery and from death hundreds of millions in the future, and if this were the only way in which it could be done, then it *would* be right to cause these necessary atrocities... One would have to be *very sure* that future generations would be saved still greater misery before one embarked on such a tyrannical programme. (318-319)

As the characters in *Horizon* know for a fact that humanity will cease to exist in the following 15 months and there is nothing they can do about it (apart from planning for humanity to begin again in the next millennia), they could be excused for deploying a utilitarian viewpoint. Nonetheless, there is always an argument to be made that “we have a duty to act in an ethically correct way towards existing persons, not a duty to increase the beneficiaries of our ethical conduct” (Palazzi 1074). Although Elisabet Sobeck and other scientists believed that Project Zero Dawn would end up working in the future, there was no guarantee that it would. Consequently, their ethics were being projected onto future generations who may not have even existed. This example of lying could be considered a form of prosocial lie, these are lies which are told with the “intention of benefiting others in some way” (Lupoli, Jampol & Oveis 1026). But end results can never be guaranteed and “although those who tell prosocial lies have good intentions, these lies can have harmful effects on others...What complicates matters, however, is that prosocial lying may not necessarily be the most beneficial action to

take when considering targets” interests. (Lupoli, Jampol & Oveis 1028). Within *Horizon*, there are datapoints which can be suggested to support the argument that lying about Project Zero Dawn, and the fact that the war is winnable, does not benefit the “target’s interest”:

FROM: Roshana Guliyev
TO: Sgt. Guliyev
SUBJECT: Please reply!
STATUS: Rejected

Ames... I don’t even know if you’re alive anymore. The mails I get from you, they say they’re from you, but they don’t sound... They sound... recycled. Phrases put together. And you don’t say anything about the news I pass on! The containment zone, the re-breathers, the rioting, 1Earth--what happened in the Dallas Bubble, Ames, that wasn’t the robots! They won’t even give me a straight answer when I demand to know if you’re still alive! They just say if your messages keep coming, then... you’re still... “operational.” It’s not fair, Ames. It’s not fair that you won’t be with me when the lights go out. I love you. (Guerrilla Games, 2017)

Within the game, the player can find many instances of similar military propaganda with the intent of increasing participation and acceptance of military action. This form of prosocial lying has its benefits for the orchestrators of Operation Enduring Victory as it kept soldiers in their posts and volunteers coming to fight. This is a tactic in real life military propaganda with Leslie noting that prosocial lying means that “he is held to his post by fictitious bonds which he has come to regard as real”. He feels he ‘must’ support his comrade instead of leaving him to face the enemy alone” (163):

Corporal Sarai: ...I got the recall alert. Read them up on a turbine, in the smell of cooking ozone. They covered every angle – better pay, amnesty for any combine wars you’d fought in, guaranteed citizenship... We should have thought “OK, what’s the catch?” But what we did think was “I guess we’re better than the bots after all.” Big talk from Herres about pride and duty – smart guy. He was right. I’d been proud to be a U.S. soldier. I jumped at the chance to be one again. And look what I landed in. (Guerrilla Games, 2017)

Soldiers and volunteers for Operation Enduring Victory may have been promised material goods but were also swayed by nationalist and prosocial propaganda. There is a more sinister reason why, in *Horizon*, the “right to the truth” was withheld, and not just to keep the troops spirits up. Fukuyama has noted that “it has been widely

understood among philosophers that the family stands as the major obstacle to the achievement of social justice. People, as kin selection theory suggests, tend to love their families and relatives out of proportion to their objective worth” (98). Although not explicitly stated within the game, it can be assumed that many soldiers in Operation Enduring Victory would not have participated if not for their wish to save their families. This is clear for a soldier named Grant, for instance:

FROM: Grant Rowe

TO: Mom

SUBJECT: [No subject]

Dear Mom,

I heard some guys jabbering about a breakthrough on the Atlantic today. Said southern Jersey, Philly, northern Delaware is just... gone, NYC nearly surrounded. My CO won't confirm or deny, and since we stopped using augs I can't check the feeds, but everyone's talking about it, and all I know is, if it's true, Vineland was right in the middle of it... and that means you were in the middle of it... in which case I'm writing to a goddamn ghost like a goddamn fool. Ah, screw this. Screw enduring victory and zero dawn and everyone and everything else. Honourable service, my ass. I should've stayed home so you didn't have to die alone.

Grant (Guerrilla Games, 2017)

In a study by Everett et al. (2010) they found that medically “patients prefer physician to lie to insurance company but do not want to be deceived about their own care.” (Everett et al. 333). Therefore, this article would argue that the population would have a “right to the truth” when it comes to their own demise.

Blessed Are the [Robots], for They Will Inherit the Earth

The extinction of humanity narratives that have become popular in recent years such as *I am Legend* (Lawrence, 2007), *The Road* (Hillcoat, 2009), *The Walking Dead* (Darabont, 2010) all have something in common: they all push a humanist trope that humans “deserve” to carry on living. But in the case of *Horizon*, lying via “alternative facts” is required to ensure that humanity survives in the distant future via gestation and cloning. Lying ensures that before the extinction event humanity does not get autonomy for their final days.

Although there is little academic literature on the ethics of extinction events, Dietrich argues that it is not *if* but *when* humanity goes extinct: “Not only will humans become extinct eventually, but given how devastating we are to the planet, and how

entrenched our behaviour is, an argument can be made that we *ought* to extinguish ourselves – and soon” (57). This is an opposed view to what Leslie argues in *The End of The World: The Science and Ethics of Human Extinction*, “[if] there existed no living things, the materialization of a good world of people would itself be a good development” (291). The problem is that humans are not always good. One of the main reasons why Dietrich would argue that humanity should become extinct, after creating robots to take our place, is that:

On the best available theory we possess, four very serious social ills – child abuse, sexism, rape and racism- are due to our evolutionary heritage... So let us build a race of machines...which implement only what is good about humanity, which do not feel any evolutionary tug to commit certain evils, and which can let the rest of the world live. (61)

In *Horizon*, we know from information gleaned during quests and in the open-world gameplay that *Horizon* society was in the position to create robots that passed the Turing Test¹. They however banned the creation of such robots (called the Turing Act) after an AI called VAST SILVER gained sentience and “escaped” its programming. For Littmann, the Turing Test is an incomplete and biased way to consider whether a being is “alive” or not: “our conclusions as to which things think and which things don’t shouldn’t be based on a double standard that favors biological beings like us” (11). This idea is raised in *Horizon* by those who criticise the Turing Act: “The time has come to ask the hard questions about what it means to be human in a post-biological world. Turing and its supporters are on the wrong side of history” (Guerrilla Games, 2017). It could be argued that the *Horizon* world is anti-robot in a way that puts humanity in a hierarchy above other (artificial) lifeforms. From a posthuman/postmodern account then is it still right to lie to make sure the Faro Plague swarm is defeated?

This question has been debated in regards to the *Terminator* (Cameron, 1984) franchise by Yuen in his essay “What’s so terrible about judgment day?” (2009). Within the franchise the imperative for humans is to stop Skynet of becoming self-aware and then starting a nuclear holocaust that kills off most of humanity. Yuen argues, however, that the fact that Skynet becomes self-aware means that it should

¹ According to Britannica Online the Turing Test is an experiment to determine whether a machine can demonstrate human intelligence or not. The standard set up tests whether the machine can be mistaken for a human when in conversation with an actual human.

have the right to defend itself, “refusing to give Skynet this right would mean that the rule of self-defense does not apply to all persons, and we would be denying Skynet respect, violating both formulations of the categorical imperative” (166). Yuen contends that, from a utilitarian standpoint, it could then be argued that allowing Skynet to become self-aware (thus causing judgment day), instead of killing the scientist who creates what will eventually become Skynet, “actually maximizes interest satisfaction in the long term” (169). This is because if our moral obligation as a utilitarian is to minimize suffering, and if we consider Skynet as another form of life, then we should allow it to “win”; there are millions more robots than humans that will benefit from humanity ceasing to exist. Within *Horizon*, this point can be argued as well in that the Faro Plague has shown it has awareness and has begun to serve itself.

Within the game’s narrative it is argued here that lying to the public just to try to guarantee a new humanity being created and surviving in the future is unethical as it stops a post-biological life from having a chance to live. In real-life this is something that will need far more analysis as we cannot be sure of the when and where (or indeed the consequences) of human extinction events. Machine ethics is a developing field for this very reason because as Littman notes, “The computers we build in the real world are growing more complex every year, so we’ll eventually have to decide at what point, if any, they become people, with whatever rights and duties that may entail” (8).

Conclusion

What makes the analysis of “alternative facts” as lies in *Horizon* important is that the game narrative raises two ethical points which can be related to real-life situations, the right to the truth and the ethics of lying to favour human beings over other species. This article does not take the absolutist stance of viewing lies as always being wrong. However, the evidence of harm within the game leads to the conclusion that the lies told to keep humanity in the dark about their impending death make the lies unethical rather than prosocial or altruistic; when it comes to stopping families being together when death is inevitable this article argues that they have a right to the truth.

This paper has also argued that extinction of the human race would have been an ethical and positive outcome for the robots in *Horizon*. Anderson (2008) has argued that people's understanding of ethics when it comes to robotics is humanist and therefore flawed (478). Anderson argues that often people will refer to Isaac Asimov's "three laws of robotics" when talking about programming ethics into machines. The three laws are primarily to guarantee the safety of humans, in that a robot must obey them and not do them any harm, only protecting its own existence if a human is not injured in the process (477). These laws are problematic for Anderson in that they make the robot a "slave to human beings" rather than following its own ethical principles (478). In *Horizon* then, it can be argued that the Faro Plague is only instilling the ethics that humans would force upon the robots; that humans are there to obey and not do the Faro Plague harm, and humans should not preserve their own existence because the Faro Plague requires them to be turned into bio-fuel.

This study has also argued that within *Horizon* we are able to debate how lies have changed the landscape and ethics of the game world. This is in part because we are able to know the exact consequences of the actions taken in the narrative. Thus, we have been able to analyse which "alternative facts" were used in game because we could find datapoints in gameplay which would reveal the truth of the matter. In this sense, this essay has also shown how the developers of *Horizon* have used the language and ideology present in real-life media manipulation. However, a major problem in dealing with lies and "alternative facts" in modern terms is that philosophy has not yet caught up with modern technology, as Smart explains: "Could Jeremy Bentham or Karl Marx (to take two very different political theorists) have foreseen the atom bomb? Could they have foreseen automation? Can we foresee the technology of the next century?" (319). For Lewandowsky, Ecker & Cook (2017), an issue with modern technology is that we have gone into an era of post-truth where people can pick and choose which "truths" they want to hear. They note that "the flexibility and fractionation offered by social media has allowed people to choose their favoured 'echo chamber' in which most available information conforms to pre-existing attitudes and biases" (359).

It is also not entirely unsurprising that the governments in *Horizon* chose to take away the right of the citizens to select how they die; in Western countries, such as the USA and the UK, there has been a growing right-to-die movement, primarily concerned with hospice patients having the "right to make their own decisions

regarding the amount of medical care they want and the circumstances and timing of their death” (McCormick 119). However, across the globe only Belgium, Columbia, Luxembourg, Canada and the Netherlands allow for active human euthanasia (bbc.co.uk 2015). This is despite polls across differing nations suggesting that residents support people’s right to choose when they die, such as a poll in the USA in 2016 which suggested that more than 84% of people supported the notion of “right to die” (McCormick 119). *Horizon*’s narrative is simply perpetuating a real-world scenario for many people around the globe, the fact that government institutions have already decided that citizens do not have autonomy over the circumstances of their death, whether this is theoretically ethical or not.

In conclusion, a study on elderly residents who were told that they were dying had damaging effects on their psyche with one patient choosing to starve himself to death before his terminal illness killed him (Meyer 1997). Meyer notes that in cases where patients are not told their terminal diagnosis, they often live longer than expected and so the “right to know” can be tricky to deliberate. The narrative of *Horizon* however is very clear that all humanity will die by a specific point, there was no hope for reprieve. The psychological impact on people from knowing the truth (and whether they would kill themselves before the Faro Plague got to them) would therefore be inconsequential; there would be no one left to mourn or deal with social or economic consequences of people being told they were going to die. The manipulation of the public in *Horizon* via “alternative facts” ensured that humans were not given a choice about their last days. This is why it has been argued here that “alternative facts” in media should be examined in philosophy scholarship as a form of lying. Therefore, “alternative facts” should be considered differently philosophically than its less harmful counterpart in the medical institutions where uses of “alternative facts” are for testing hypotheses rather than manipulation for ideological pursuits.



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