

Artist Statement

For the algorithm project, I chose to do a simulation of the doors to heaven, in which you “play God” and decide whether to let people into heaven, or send them to hell. However, there are a limited number of spots in heaven and once they are filled the game ends. As the one deciding, you are aware the limit exists, but not what it is. The purpose of this game is to force the player to wrestle with right versus wrong. Each of the characters you encounter are morally flawed to some degree, just like every person on earth, including the person sitting in front of the screen playing. Whether the “good” outweighs the “bad” and whether their actions are morally justifiable or not, is up to the player.

In the process of creating this game, I was confronted with the difficulty of simplifying human life into a few sentences, and with making characters that would be difficult to categorize. Though I felt excited about the concept, it honestly felt very complicated to create the game itself. To create characters with moral ambiguity, I had to create situations that were upsetting and triggering. Without challenging scenarios, I felt the game would not have the same power and effect. I wanted the player to feel stuck and uncomfortable deciding where to send each character.

Partially (somewhat unintentionally) this game ended up being a criticism for how some religious people think about heaven and hell, and their actions in life as adding up to something greater. As I myself have been raised religious, it felt personal for me to wrestle with this. “Playing God” or deciding the value of a person’s life (hopefully) makes you as the player feel guilty. There is no “right answer” as to where to send each character. At the end (if you reach that point), when you confront the exact numbers of how many people you sent where, your judgements are displayed to you numerically. This confrontation should cause you to question the judgements we make about others, ultimately giving us a deeper appreciation for the complexity of human action.

P.S. I plan to develop my game aesthetically, but the coding proved to be far more challenging than I expected so I ran out of time.