Big Model For Dummies

Di Roberto Grassi
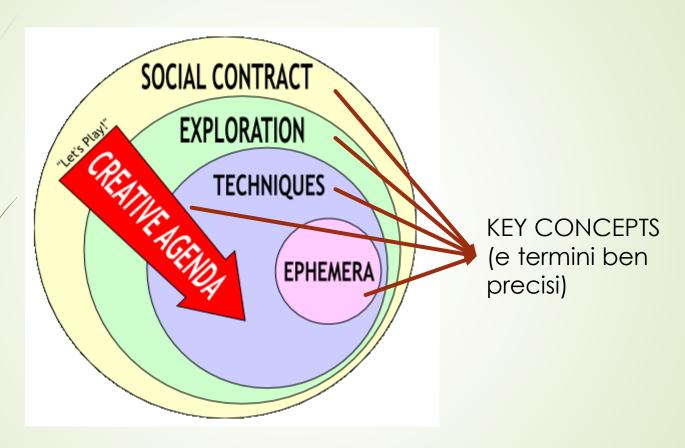
Overview

Big Model for Dummies

Big Model: cosa è

- **A description of role-playing procedures as embedded in the social interactions and creative priorities of the participants**. Each internal "box," "layer," or "skin" of the model is considered to be an expression of the box(es) containing it. See the discussion in Narrativism: Story Now and The big model - this is it.

- I spent a hell of a lot of time on-line discussing some ideas about role-playing. Back in the early 1990s, I was interested in some stuff about the quantification of characters and actions, and especially in stuff about consequences for stories and for players. **I was impressed by something called the Threefold, and starting talking about it and other things at a site called the Gaming Outpost in 1999. The discussions continued from 2001 through 2012 at the Forge** (link to your left), now closed.

- **We left the Threefold behind and constructed something I took to calling the Big Model, the name referring to the essential point that we decided everything about role-playing was a subset of the social circumstances among the people at the table**, not due to any silly pun you might perceive in the name, although I'll wear that shoe if it fits.

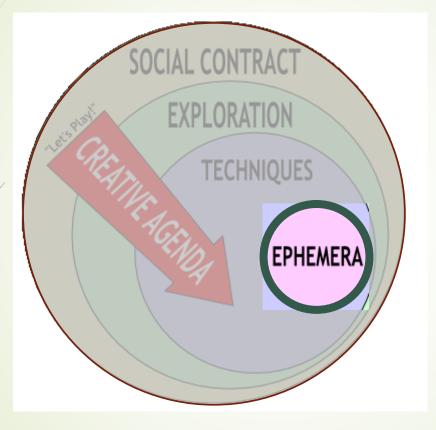http://big-model.info/wiki/The_Big_Model

The Big Model

SOCIAL CONTRACT

"Let's Play!"

CREATIVE AGENDA

EXPLORATION

TECHNIQUES

EPHEMERA

KEY CONCEPTS (e termini ben precisi)

http://big-model.info/wiki/Main_Page

Key Components Ephemera

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Ephemera

Moment- to- moment or sentence- to- sentence actions and statements during play. Combinations of Ephemera often construct Techniques. Changes in Stance represent one example of an Ephemeral aspect of play.

All the little stuff you do while you play. It's what people would see, or maybe figure out, if they were watching.

Some involve usage: you're rolling dice. Well, to do this, you need to see what the dice say. Do you grab them, hold them up to your eye, and read them to everyone? Do you leave them on the table to display the result? Or what? These little details can add up to some major differences in play.

Some involve mental processing: did you say what the character did with or without mentioning what he or she was thinking? Or, do you say "I" or "he" or "my guy" - and assuming that you probably do all three, when for each?
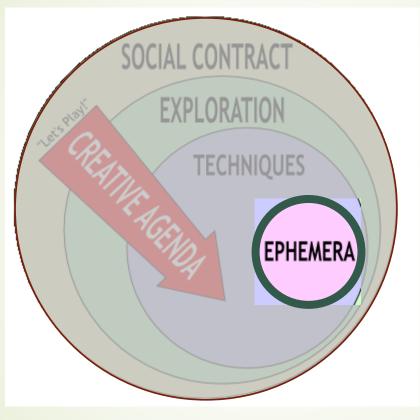
Some manipulate different aspects of the fiction: what happens to a character, what the character does, what the effects are. Shifting around these perspectives happens fast.

Some are merely habits: do you stack your dice? Do you doodle?

Some are teeny-tiny subroutines of the mechanics: do you shove four black tokens into the center of the table? Do you tick off lost hit points with hashmarks, or use a clicky counter device?

Some are all about talking: who gets to say what happens when you roll a critical hit? Who gets to say anything about what just got said?

Type of Ephemera: Narration

Something just happened. Did it work? How much? Fast enough? Where is everyone involved, now? Are you hurt? Tired?
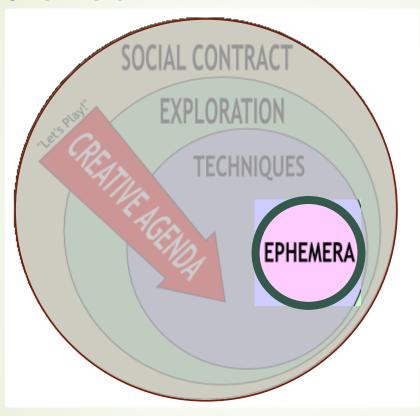
No matter what system you're using, stuff happens in play. When that stuff involves doing something, then someone eventually describes it and says how it turns out. That's narration.

Don't mix it up with the ordinary idea of talking, which is going on all the time. I'm talking about when actions are taken, and we want to know how they turn out. When someone describes it (with or without any various mechanics being involved), that's narration.

Also, some games are really vague about who gets to do this, relative to somebody carrying out a resolution mechanic, and some are really specific. Knowing how narration relates to **IIEE** is a big part of understanding a game's **Resolution** methods. Obviously it's tied directly to Effect (the last "E"), but Effect is not always procedurally separate from the other things depending on the game.

See also **Authority** because Narration Authority is one of the four types.

Type of Ephemera: Stance

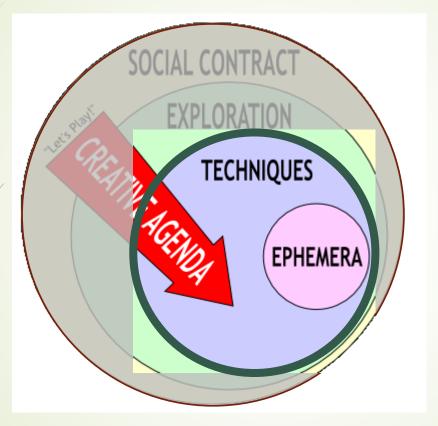**The cognitive position of a person to a fictional character**.

Author Stance: The person playing a character determines the character's decisions and actions based on the person's priorities, independently of the character's knowledge and perceptions. Author Stance may or may not include a retroactive "motivation" of the character to perform the actions. When it lacks this feature, it is called Pawn Stance.

Actor: The person playing a character determines the character's decisions and actions using only knowledge and perceptions that the character would have. This stance does not necessarily include identifying with the character and feeling what he or she "feels," nor does it require in-character dialogue. See Stance.

Director Stance The person playing a character determines aspects of the environment relative to the character in some fashion, entirely separately from the character's knowledge or ability to influence events. Therefore the player has not only determined the character's actions, but the context, timing, and spatial circumstances of those actions, or even features of the world separate from the characters. Director Stance is often confused with narration of an in-game event, but the two concepts are not necessarily related.

Key Components Techniques

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Techniques

Specific procedures of play which, when employed together, are sufficient to introduce fictional characters, places, or events into the Shared Imagined Space. Many different Techniques may be used, in different games, to establish the same sorts of events. A given Technique is composed of a group of Ephemera which are employed together. Taken in their entirety for a given instance of role-playing, **Techniques comprise System**

Techniques all together compose the System, and every Technique is in practice expressed by a bunch of Ephemera.

Also, any particular event in play is usually a bundle of Techniques, not just one.

Preparation techniques
- Organizing a specific game and group
- Steps prior to play: **Genre expectations**, One-Sheet
- Steps during the first meeting
- Steps during initial play itself

Character construction techniques
- Effectiveness / Resource / Positioning
- Fixed / List / Open
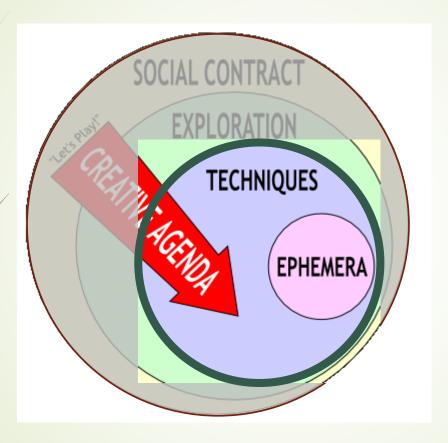- The class issue

Play organization techniques

Global in-play techniques
- Endgame
- Epilogue

Situational in-play techniques
- **Scene framing**
- Mechanics cues
- Resolution
- Consequences
- **Murk**

Techniques

Murk
Playing without well-understood Techniques for Scene Framing and IIEE, one of the features of Zilchplay and often associated with Dysfunctional versions.

Scene Framing
A GM-task in which many possible Techniques are used to establish when a sequence of imaginary events begins and ends, what characters are involved, and where it takes place. Analogous to a "cut" in film editing which skips fictional time and/or changes location. A necessary feature of System; when poorly understood and managed, a primary source of Murk.

IIEE
How actions and events in the Shared Imagined Space are resolved in terms of
1. real-world announcement and
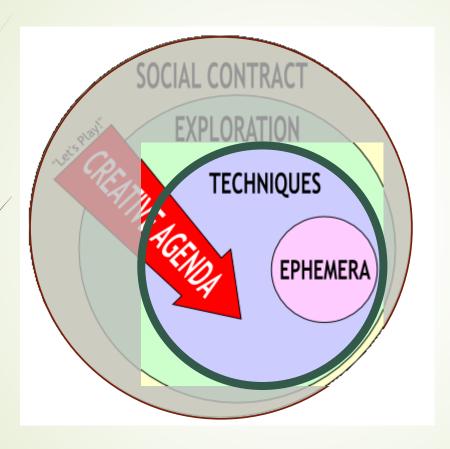2. imaginary order of occurrence.

Task Resolution
A Technique in which the Resolution mechanisms of play focus on within-game cause, in linear in-game time, in terms of whether the acting character is competent to perform a task. Contrast with Conflict resolution.

Conflict Resolution
A Technique in which the mechanisms of play focus on conflicts of interest, rather than on the component tasks within that conflict. When using this Technique, inanimate objects are conceived to have "interests" at odds with the character, if necessary. Contrast with Task resolution.

Techniques

Content authority - over what we're calling back-story, e.g. what the dread necromancer did all those centuries ago, whether Sam is a KGB mole, or which NPC is boinking whom. This includes preparing such information at any point as well as revealing it in play.
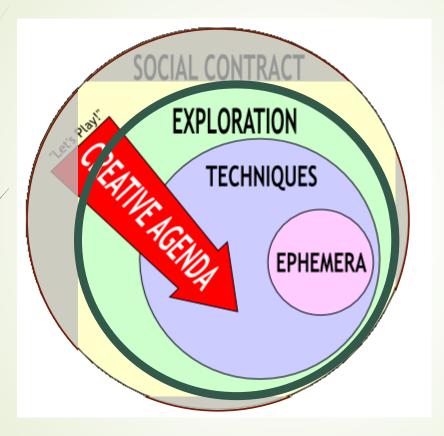
Plot authority - over crux-points in the knowledge base at the table - now is the time for a revelation! - typically, revealing content, although notice it can apply to player-characters' material as well as GM material - and look out, because within this authority lies the remarkable pitfall of wanting (for instances) revelations and reactions to apply precisely to players as they do to characters.

Situational authority - over who's there, what's going on - scene framing would be the most relevant and obvious technique-example, or phrases like "That's when I show up!" from a player.

Narrational authority - saying how it happens, what happens - I'm suggesting here that this is best understood as a feature of resolution (including the entirety of IIEE), and not to mistake it for describing what the castle looks like, for instance; I also suggest it's far more shared in application than most role-players realize.

Key Components Exploration

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Exploration

A good way to look at it is that Exploration is the medium of the activity, like canvas and paints and visual reception are the medium of painting.

A given group uses its own unique blend or composition for the components of Exploration, just like a painter uses his or her own set of paints and other physical things. **See also Shared Imagined Space, which emphasizes the communicative process at work and in practice is the same thing**.

Situation occurs when **Character**(s) are in some specific location and moment in the **Setting**
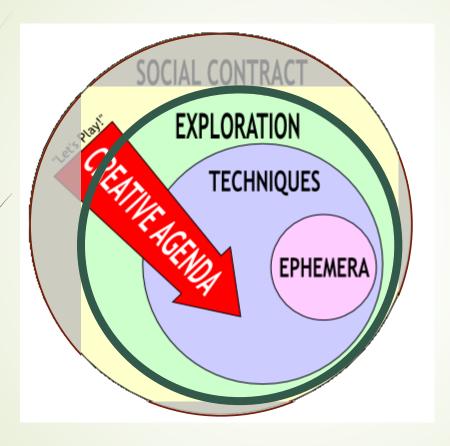
System is used to make the Situation change; in a given instance of play, it contains a whole bunch of specific Techniques.

Ephemera are the moment-to-moment, on-and-off practical realities of the Techniques, whether cognitive, verbal, or manipulating objects.

Color makes anything and everything about this more vivid and therefore more easy to imagine and share among everyone.

The imagination of fictional events, established through communicating among one another. Exploration includes five Components: Character, Setting, Situation, System, and Color. See also **Shared Imagined Space (a near or total synonym)**.

Shared Imagined Space

The fictional content of play as it is established among participants through role-playing interactions.

It's whatever is spoken aloud during a role-playing session and heard by the others present, which is then available for use and treated as a touchstone for what anyone may say next. "Imagined" is intended as the participle, not as an adjective, to connote the verbal and communicative qualities of the term. We share this content in order to imagine what is going on.
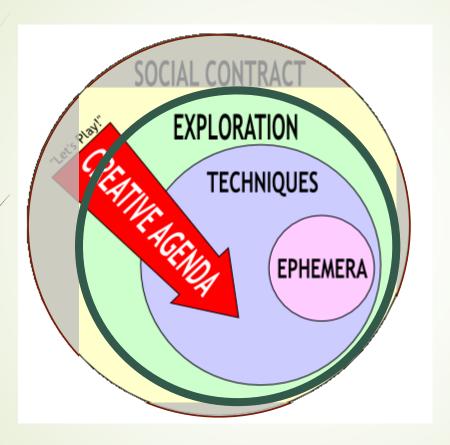
We all individually imagine (characters in settings, facing situations, having events happen, all very colorful). We communicate about this constantly in the understanding that each of our individual "experiences" are to be consistent with everyone else's. **The extent to which we succeed is measured by how satisfying it is to continue the activity for whatever designated period, and that it doesn't break up due to misunderstandings and dissatisfaction**.

Shared Imagined Space (SIS) is a near or total synonym for Exploration and in practice, seems to have replaced it as the primary term.

The term "Transcript" as a summary of the SIS after play didn't catch on. People typically speak of "the fiction" or even just "what happened."

Exploration

Character
A fictional person or entity which may perform actions in the imaginary situation. One of the Components of Exploration.

Setting
Elements described about a fictitious game world including period, locations, cultures, historical events, and characters, usually at a large scale relative to the presence of the player-characters. A Component of Exploration.

Situation
Dynamic interaction between specific characters and small-scale setting elements; Situations are divided into scenes. A component of Exploration, considered to be the "central node" linking Character and Setting, and which changes according to System. See also Kicker, Bang, and Challenge.
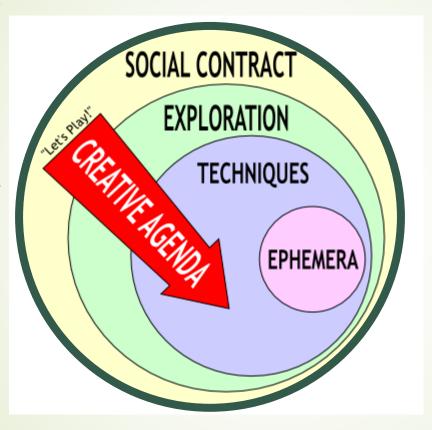
System
The means by which imaginary events are established during play, including character creation, resolution of imaginary events, reward procedures, and more. It may be considered to introduce fictional time into the Shared Imagined Space. See also the Lumpley Principle.

Color
Imagined details about any or all of System, Character, Setting, or Situation, added in such a way that does not change aspects of action or resolution in the imagined scene. One of the Components of Exploration.

Key Components Social Contract

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Social Contract

All interactions and relationships among the role-playing group, including emotional connections, logistic arrangements, and expectations. **All role-playing is a subset of the Social Contract.**
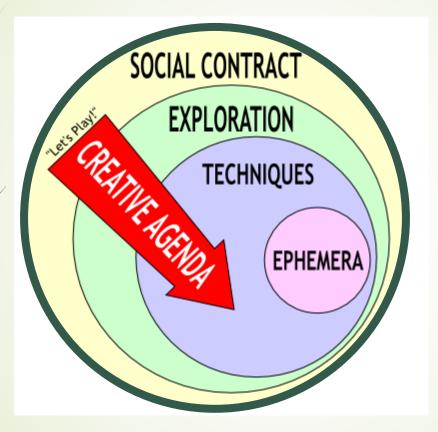
Like or not, you're role-playing with other people. That means schedules, coordination, maybe travel ... basically, dealing with each other in all the ways that humans do. It's not just logistics, but emotions too. Someone likes someone else, or doesn't like them, a lot. One person doesn't like to be teased; another loves it. Bob and Diane are a couple, and James is crushed out on Diane. I could go on.

Play this game - but people sometimes don't want to play this game, preferring another or perhaps not even really interested in role-playing **... with these people** - but people sometimes confound mere membership in a subculture with sufficient reason or investment in genuine social commitment to one another personally ... **to have a good time -** but people are sometimes more invested in negative social outcomes such as bullying, marginalizing, identity confirmation, and dominance games.

Dysfunction
A failure of Reward. **It typically arises from a toxic Social Contract** or violations against a decent one, Agenda Clash, and the Murk. It often looks like it's composed of rules disputes, but typically, such disputes are symptoms of one or more these larger problems.

Social Contract

All interactions and relationships among the role-playing group, including emotional connections, logistic arrangements, and expectations. **All role-playing is a subset of the Social Contract.**

No one gets hurt
This is when a group plays within the comfort zones of everyone at the table, regarding emotionally significant content.
Often associated with paying attention to one another's Lines, specifically to keep from crossing them.
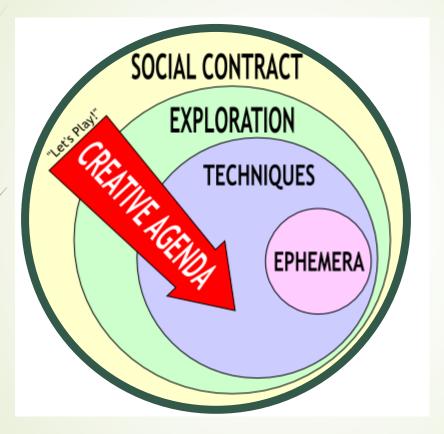
I Will Not Abandon You
This is when a group plays in full knowledge that personally disturbing or otherwise emotionally significant content may arise, and that no one at the table will necessarily soften its impact to protect anyone else.
Playing with this in action isn't necessarily associated with specific Lines or Veils, but in practice it tends to push at either or both.

Key Components Creative Agenda

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Creative Agenda

The aesthetic priorities and any matters of imaginative interest regarding role-playing. Three distinct Creative Agendas are currently recognized: Step On Up (Gamist), The Right to Dream (Simulationist), and Story Now (Narrativist).
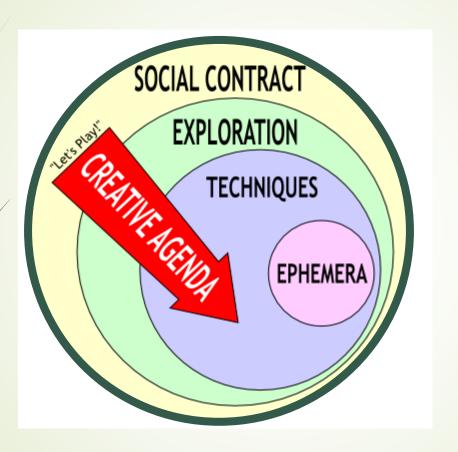
Why you play?

What it's more important to you in this game you are playing right now at this table with these people? If you would have to choose (and you will have to) between different priorities during the game... are you sure that everybody at the table has the same priorities that you have?

Are you really playing the same game? The game you are playing can really be the same, if your "playing it well" is another player's "playing it wrong"?

"We love pigs."

- Some of them love to kill, butcher, and roast pigs, and then fall to a joyous meal accompanied by side dishes and intoxicating beverages.
- Some of them love to purchase and trade entertaining representations of pigs, whether china-glazed statuettes or photography or whatever.
- Some of them love to house, breed, and raise pigs, habituating them to humans and distributing them to like-minded people as pets

Creative Agenda

Step on Up
Social assessment of personal strategy and guts among the participants in the face of risk. One of the three currently-recognized Creative Agendas. As a top priority of role-playing, the defining feature of Gamist play.

Story Now
Commitment to Addressing (producing, heightening, and resolving) Premise through play itself. The epiphenomenal outcome for the Transcript from such play is almost always a Story. One of the three currently-recognized Creative Agendas. Formerly called Narrativist play.

The Right to Dream
Commitment to the imagined events of play, specifically their in-game causes and pre-established thematic elements. One of the three currently-recognized Creative Agendas. As a top priority for role-playing, the defining feature of Simulationist play.