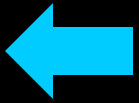
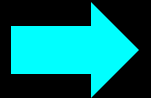


LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

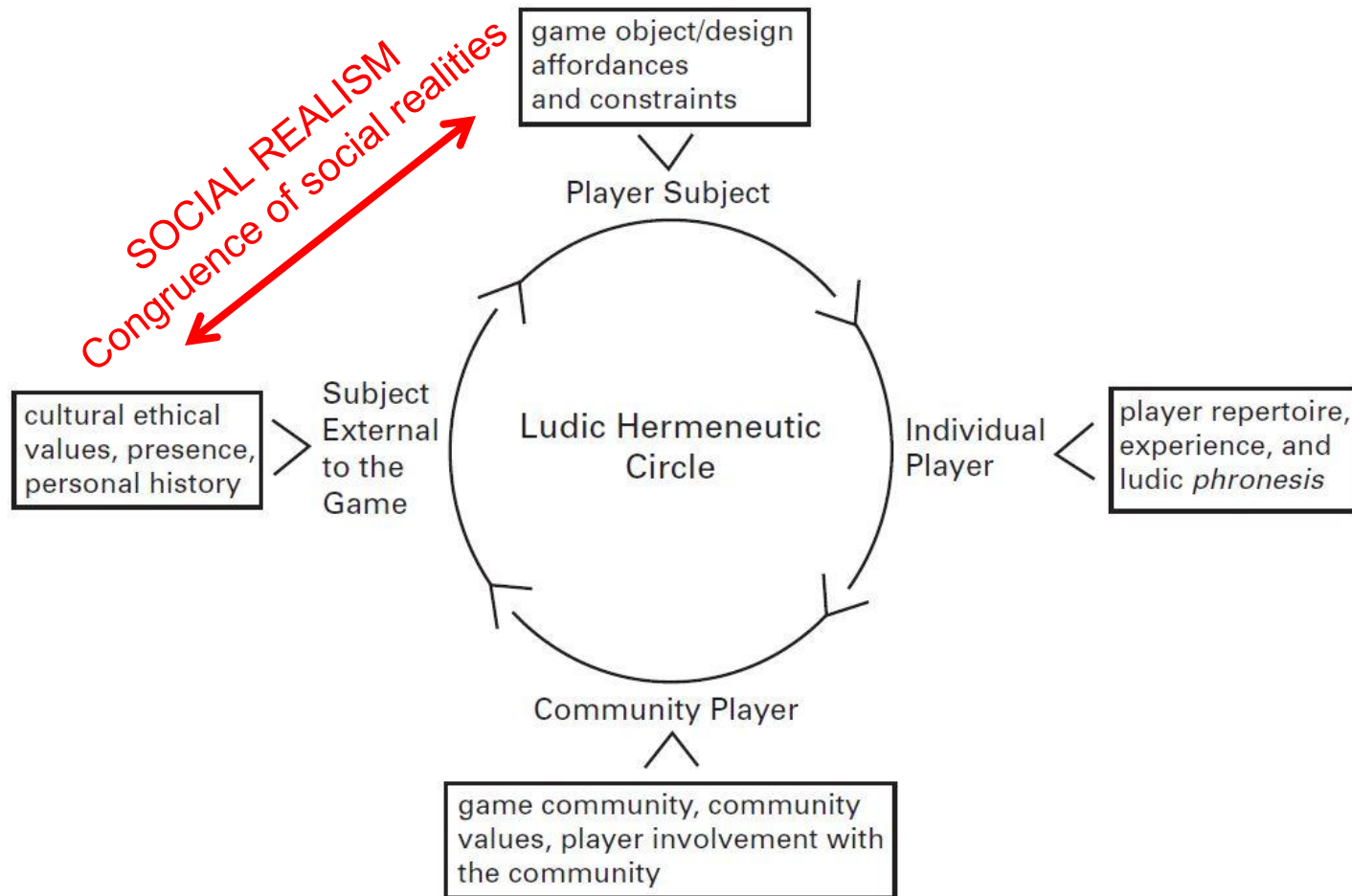


Braid as Technology of Reflection
Galloway's Social Realism



Undertale
Games and Technoculture

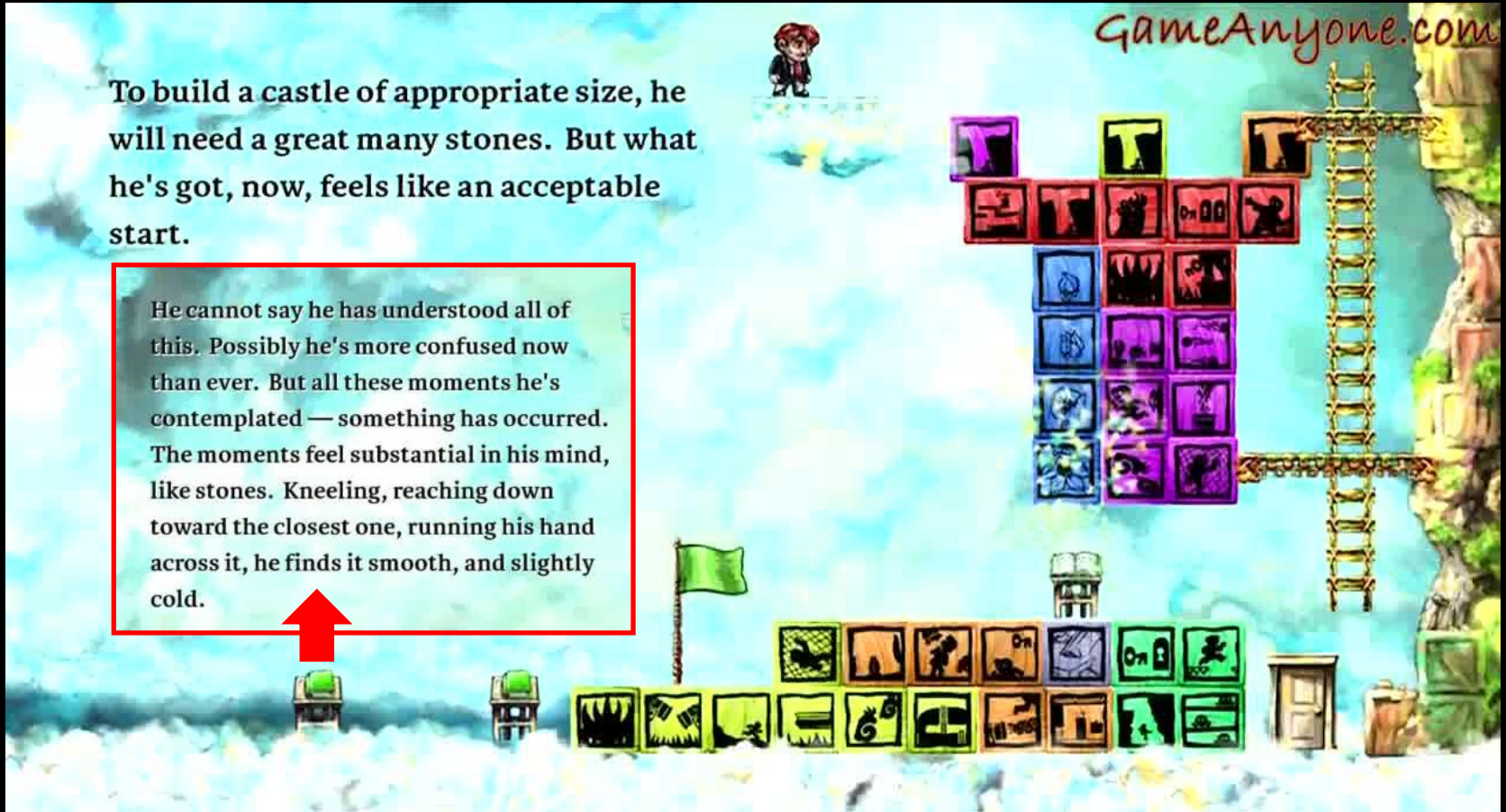
SICART'S LUDIC CIRCLE



A FIGURE OF REFLECTION

To build a castle of appropriate size, he will need a great many stones. But what he's got, now, feels like an acceptable start.

He cannot say he has understood all of this. Possibly he's more confused now than ever. But all these moments he's contemplated — something has occurred. The moments feel substantial in his mind, like stones. Kneeling, reaching down toward the closest one, running his hand across it, he finds it smooth, and slightly cold.



Learning from experience / A new foundation

PEDERCINI: COMPUTERS-CAPITALISM-GAMES

COMPUTER GAMES ARE
THE AESTHETIC FORM OF
RATIONALIZATION

Dominant Technology

computer (rationalization of information)

Dominant Social Structure

corporate capitalism (“rationalization” of labor)

THE PROBLEM(S) OF VIDEOGAMES

FORCES INFLUENCING ART OF VIDEOGAMES

1. “Actionism”: assumption games are about *doing*
2. Dominant game design culture/“best practices”
3. “Gamer”-centric reception culture/discourse
4. **Tendencies of the computer medium**
(calculation, quantification, economization, etc.)
5. Economic context: consumerism / digital feudalism

PEDERCINI: AN ART OF GAMES AS RESISTANCE

The *forces above arbitrarily limit videogames to being merely the “aesthetic form of rationalization.”* “Good game design” becomes an extension or aestheticized form of the given political economy (and all its inequities!)

HACKING THE ACCOUNTING MACHINE

HEGEMONY OF “EFFICIENCY” AND “CONTROL”

1. “Cybernetic Bias”: “from the eyes of a computing machine everything is mathematically defined and susceptible to rational calculation”
2. “Nonfunctional core mechanics” = unnecessary cost and “confuse players”
3. Dominant ergodic modes: solving, clearing, managing, upgrading, collecting, estimating
4. Demands for “hyper efficiency of movement in clockwork environments”

Critical game design is about slowly “hacking an accounting machine into an expressive machine”

GAZZARD: REWARDS OF SPACE AND TIME

A TYPOLOGY OF REWARDS

1. Rewards of Glory
2. Rewards of Sustenance
3. Rewards of Access
4. Rewards of Facility

Spatial Rewards: exploration/environment

Other conceptions of rewards?

A TYPOLOGY OF PUNISHMENTS

1. Energy Punishment
2. Life Punishment
3. Game Termination Punishment
4. Setback Punishment

One Night in *Skyrim* Makes a Strong Man Crumble

A great game's great big problem

By Tom Bissell on November 29, 2011 [PRINT](#)



COURTESY OF BETHESDA SOFTWORKS



Review *Skyrim*? You may as well try reviewing last month. "It started out strong, but by the end I was definitely ready for it to be over. Some great things went down, along with some stuff that kind of blew. I nevertheless recommend last

TED Ideas worth spreading



Math Curriculum Makeover

BISSELL ON TES5 *SKYRIM*

MEYER ON TEACHING MATH

COMMON ROOT: PROBLEMS WITH INFORMATION DESIGN

“THROAT OF THE WORLD” INDEED



≈20MIN DIALOGUE WITH PAARTHURNAX ON NORD HISTORY

BISSELL ON LORE

THE “LORE DUMP”

“being buttonholed by a loquacious elf inexplicably determined to tell you all about a magic tree”

EXPOSITORY LORE, BAD. *IMPLIED* LORE, GOOD.

Basically,

EL \approx listening & reading

IL \approx aesthetics & cinematics

(Cf. Henry Jenkins on “environmental storytelling”)

THE BEE IN BISSELL'S GREAT HELM

EXPOSITORY LORE IS DISRUPTIVE

≠ “Dramatically Effective”

≠ “Emotionally Interesting”

RELATED OBSERVATIONS ON EL

- ✓ Often “incurably dorky”
- ✓ Patrick Stewart’s voice acting can’t save it
- ✓ Even lore enthusiasts admit to skipping it often
- ✓ *Designers provide means for players to skip it*



BISSELL MAKES A GOOD POINT, BUT...

THE **BIGGER** PROBLEM

LORE IS NOT *USED* IN QUEST DESIGN

That is to say, game designers do not see player comprehension of lore (expository OR implied) as a serious resource in gameplay generally, and even less in questing.

PROBLEM IS ACTUALLY QUEST DESIGN

WHY INTERPRET LORE?

If the meanings are translated into objectives and understanding is managed automatically, no wonder listening to/reading it (much less reasoning about, synthesizing, or reflecting on it) seems pointless and conversion to implied lore appears to be the only way out.

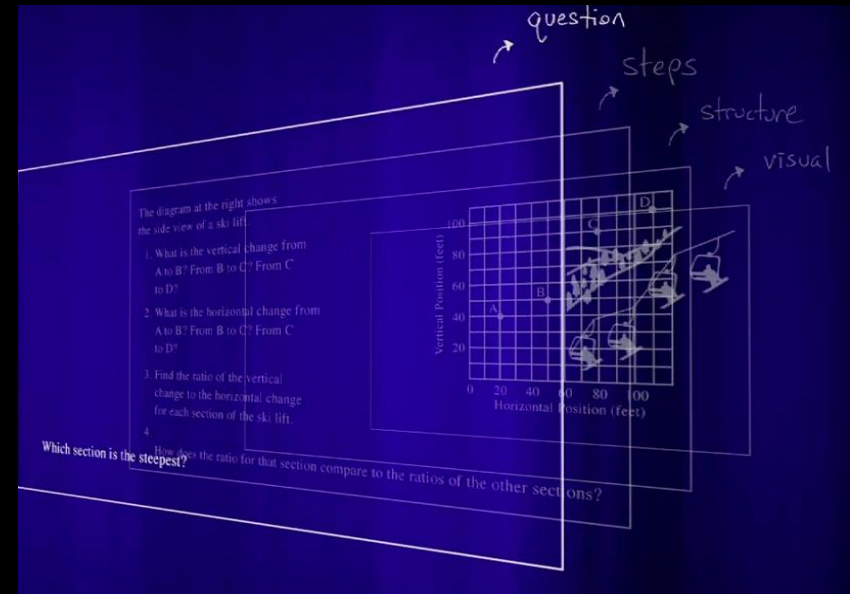
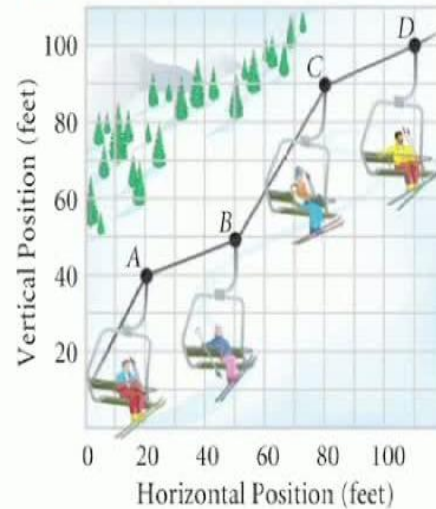
MEYER ON MATH PROBLEM DESIGN

FORMULAIC ACTION ON INFORMATION VS. *INQUIRY*

Investigation Exploring Rate of Change

The diagram at the right shows the side view of a ski lift.

1. What is the vertical change from A to B ? From B to C ? From C to D ?
2. What is the horizontal change from A to B ? From B to C ? From C to D ?
3. Find the ratio of the vertical change to the horizontal change for each section of the ski lift.



(remind you of the Lore Dump?)

IMPLIED LORE vs. IMPLIED QUESTS

IMPLIED LORE DESIGN IS A POSSIBLE FIX

If we assume, with Bissell, that gameplay is essentially about action, then lore can at best function as an enhancement (“it’s about immersion!”)

IMPLIED QUEST DESIGN IS MORE INTERESTING (AND CHALLENGING)

Or, we can place inquiry at the center of quest design, wherein *lore serves an essential, mediating function of action.*