

Not to choose: *designing ethical gameplay*

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We you will not be
exposed to today:

Obscure greek/german
philosophers.

Obscure greek/german words.

Obscure models describing
videogames.



The next 45 minutes

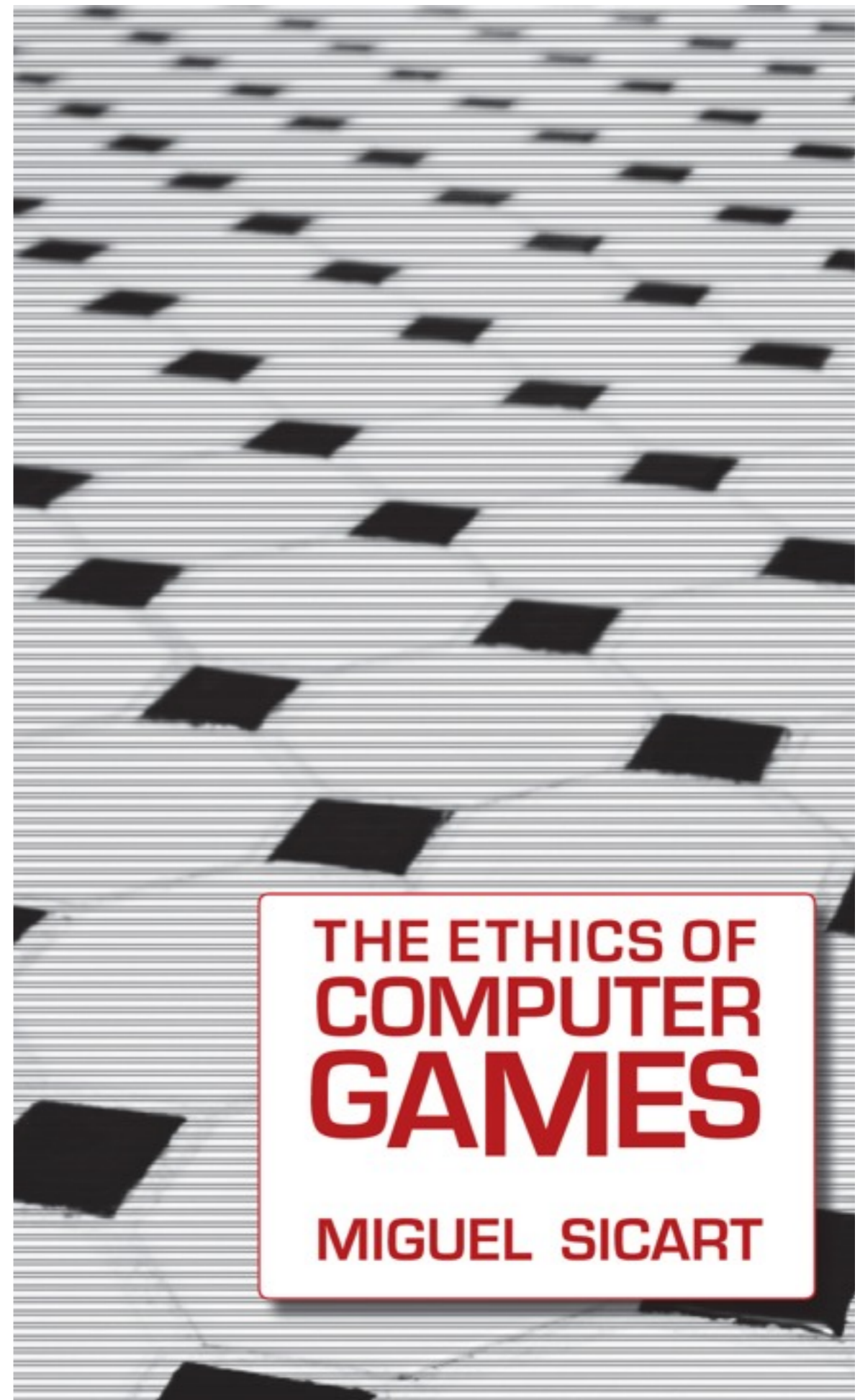
- About me - something I know about.
- A shocking confession.
- How games are made - from a theoretical perspective.
- Ethical gameplay, or why should we care.
- A technique, and some examples.
- Conclusions, end of the world as we know it.

About Miguel

Assistant professor, IT
University of Copenhagen

Wrote a book, *The Ethics of
Computer Games* (MIT Press)

Working on the sequel,
teaching game design.



A confession

Plush Toys

The secret of ethical gameplay design can be found in the way these toys are made.



Toys and Affordances

- Affordances, according to design theory, are **action possibilities readily perceived by an actor.**
- Good design “tells us” how to interact with an object by, among other things, cleverly designed affordances.
- Toys tell us how to *play* by means of **ludic affordances.**



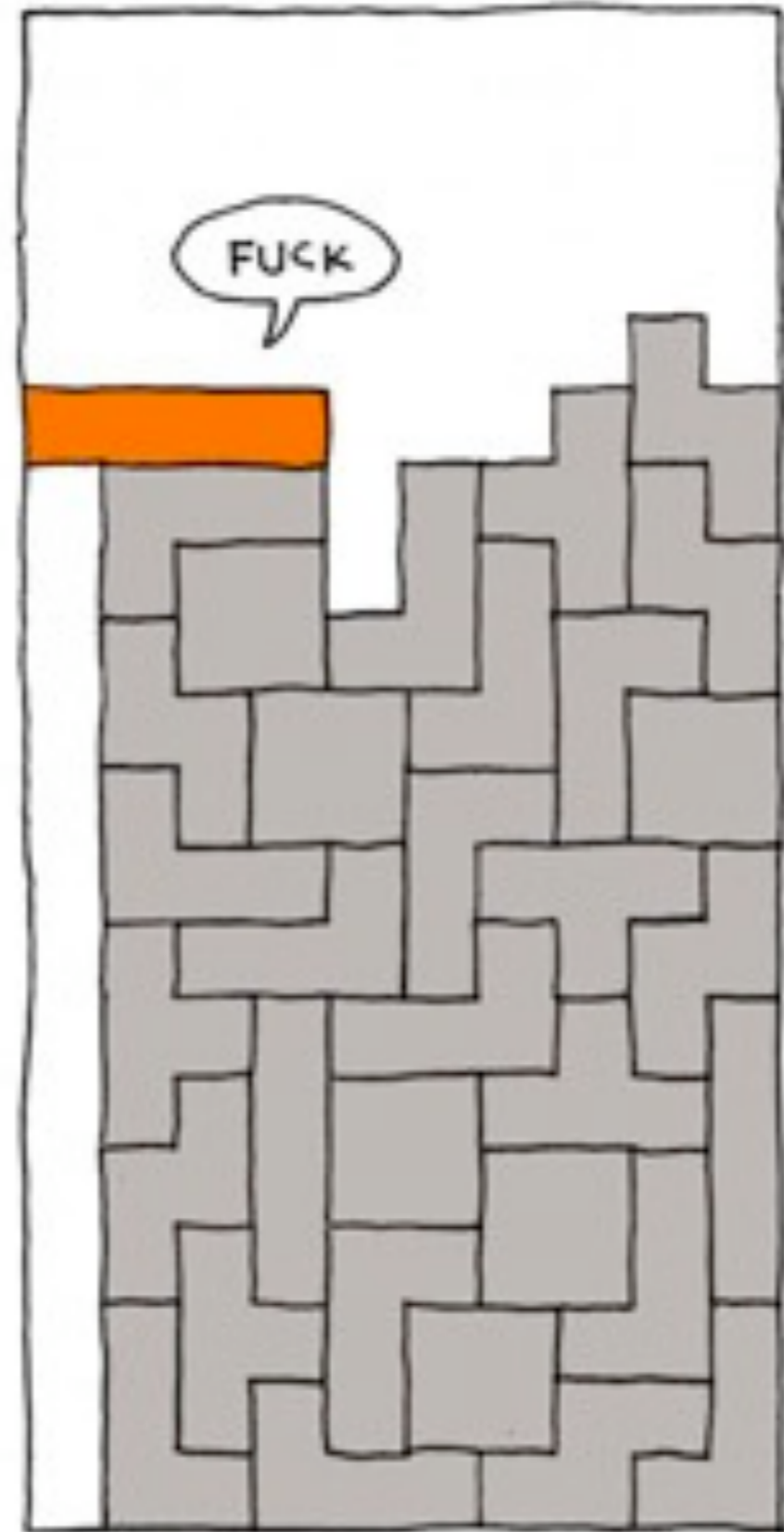
What are games?

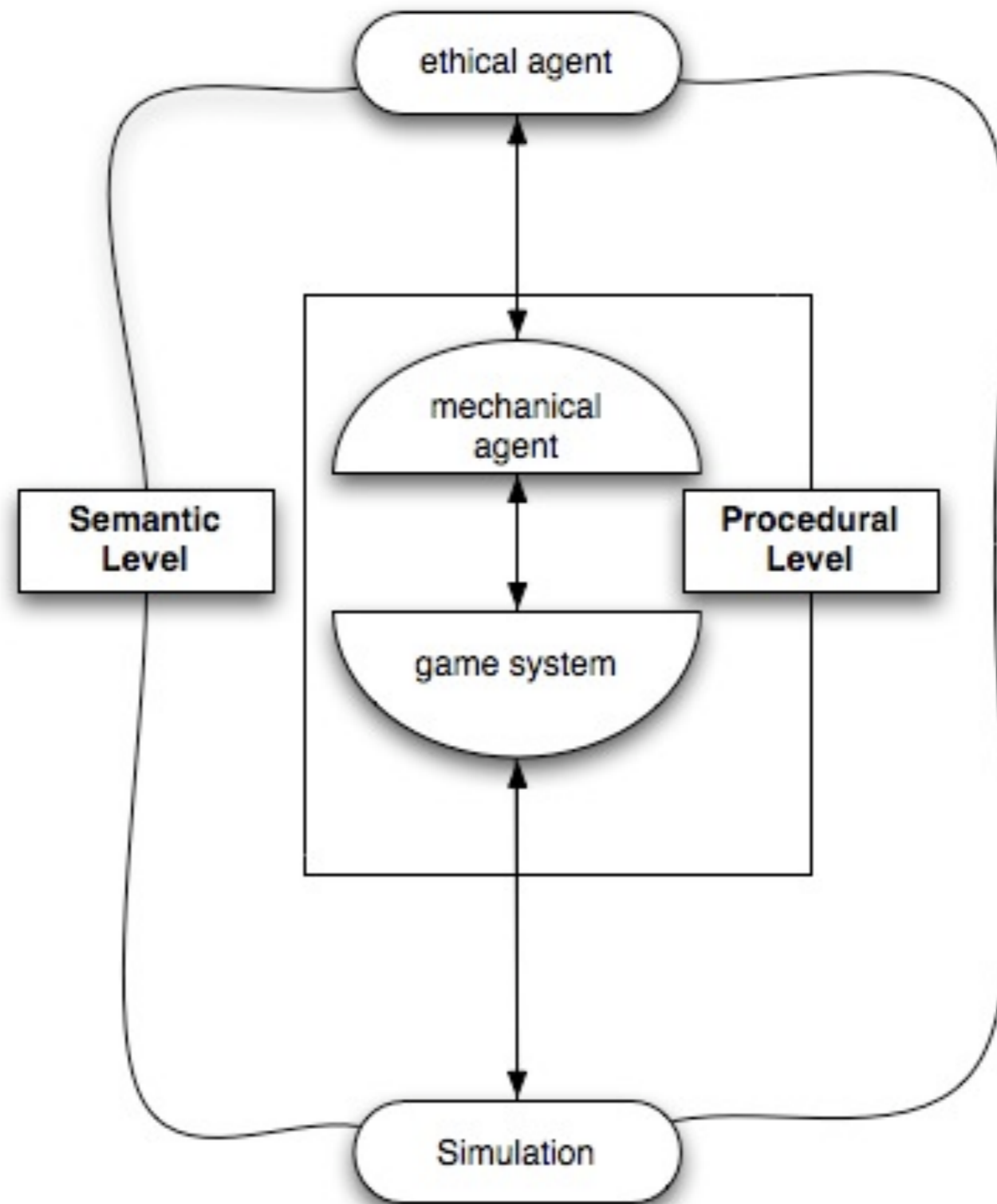
Half-Real, Cybertexts, and other forms of studies ...

The question of games are has
been addressed many times.

The following is based on actual
~~events~~ theories.

And yes, I lied.





A Model

to save the world!

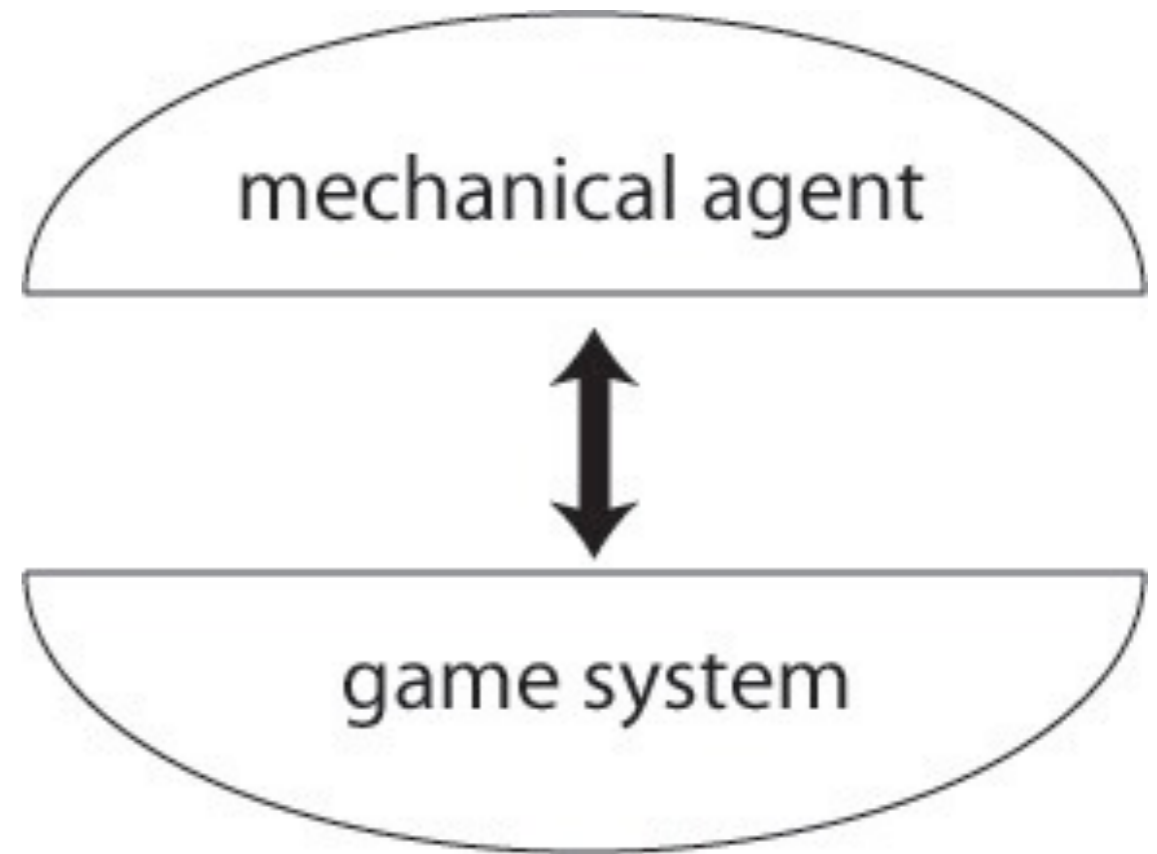
Procedural Level

Rules

Mechanics

Systems

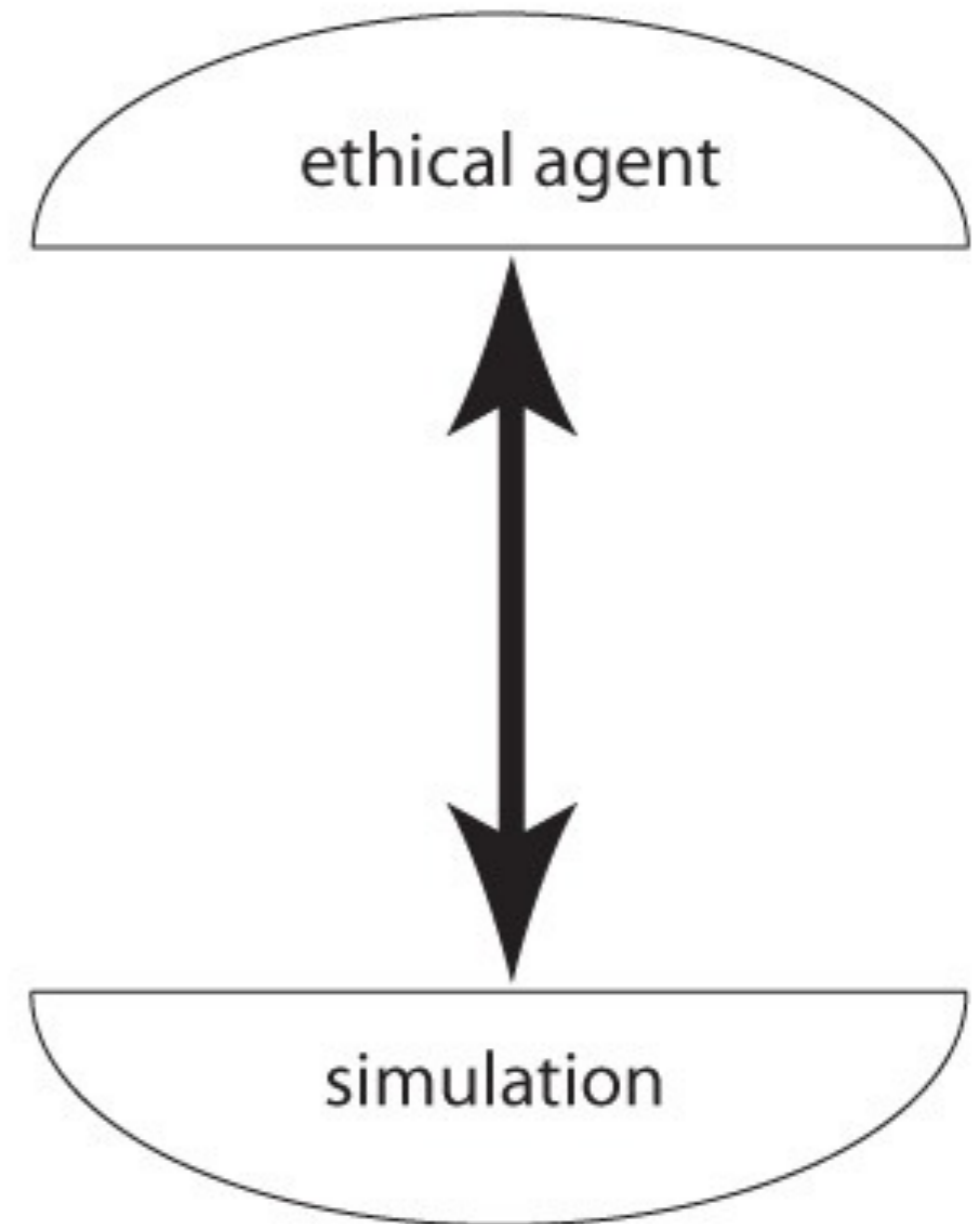
Leads to strategies



- In the procedural level, the mechanical agent develops strategies.
- No need for cultural / contextual knowledge to succeed.
- Understanding the rules and systems is enough.

Semantic Level

Metaphors that communicate the procedural level.
Culture-based.



- The semantic level communicates rules by means of metaphors.
- Metaphors are culturally based.
- They combine with the procedural domain to generate a set of meanings understandable by the ethical agent.

Some examples

Procedural and ethics



Semantics and ethics





Ethical interactions

play, and something else

In common: Ethical Gameplay

Ethical Gameplay

Playing a game in which choices and strategies are developed according to the player's interpretation of her values for this game.



But how does it work?

Interfaces



Cognitive Friction

Ethical Cognitive Dissonance



Shadow of the Colossus

big and hairy

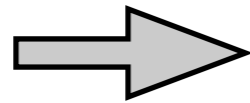
Shadow of the Colossus

it's all in the player's mind



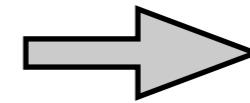
hero

identification



victory

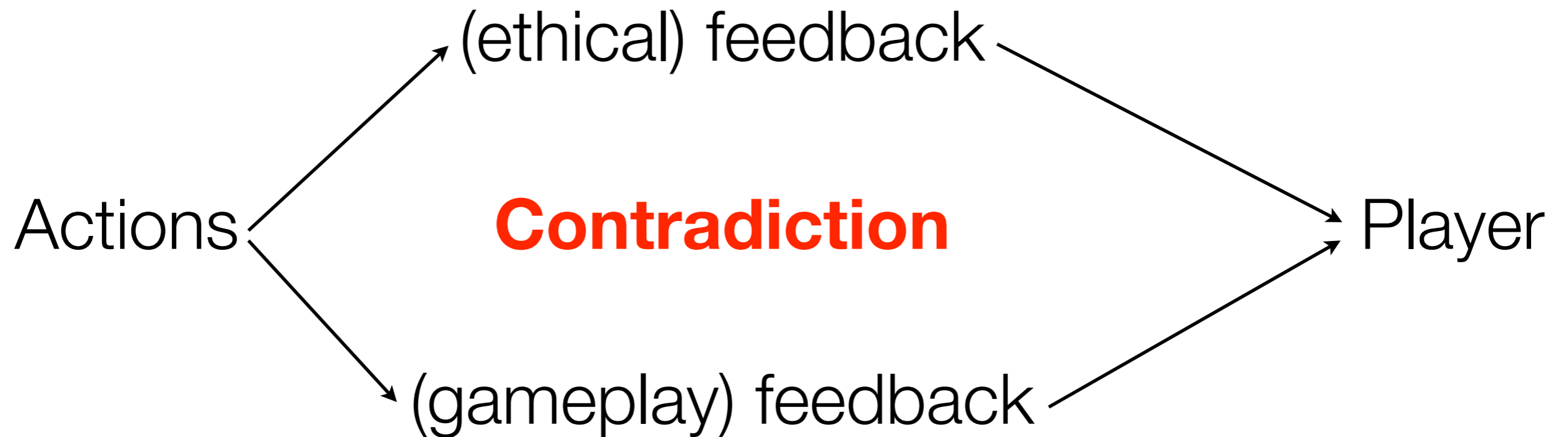
convention



defeat

(contradictory)
information

Ethical Cognitive Dissonance applied



Understanding Ethical Cognitive Dissonance

- Ethical Cognitive Dissonance operates as a manipulation of the connection between the semantic and the procedural, what constitutes the *core* of (computer) games.
- Players play *by their own values*, interpreting the feedback from the semantic and procedural domains.
- Players develop strategies based on these values.
- ECD is a **design method** - a source for inspiring, challenging and evaluating game design.



Where to apply it?

Authorial narrative

Call of Duty 4



Gameworld

Fallout 3



Character design

Grand Theft Auto IV

Game System + Authorial
Narrative

Braid

The future



Asymmetric social games

one procedural domain,
multiple semantic layers



Ethical Artificial Agents

no more skynet

- Ethical Gameplay is a true next-generation game design challenge.
- It is time now to push these boundaries, *our* boundaries.



BOOM

900.576.00

70x170 cm
(27 1/2x66 7/8")

9 kg / 21 lbs

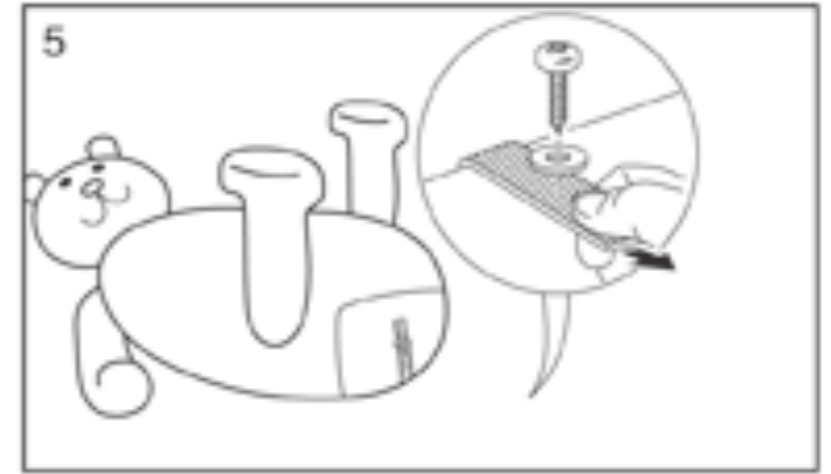
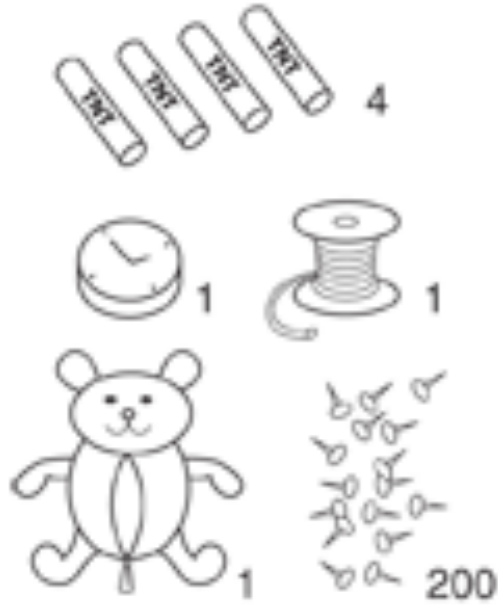
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Design and Quality
IKEA of Sweden



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Thanks!

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