

# NON-PLAYER TYPES

WHY PEOPLE DON'T PLAY YOUR GAME

**GAMELAB 13, BARCELONA**

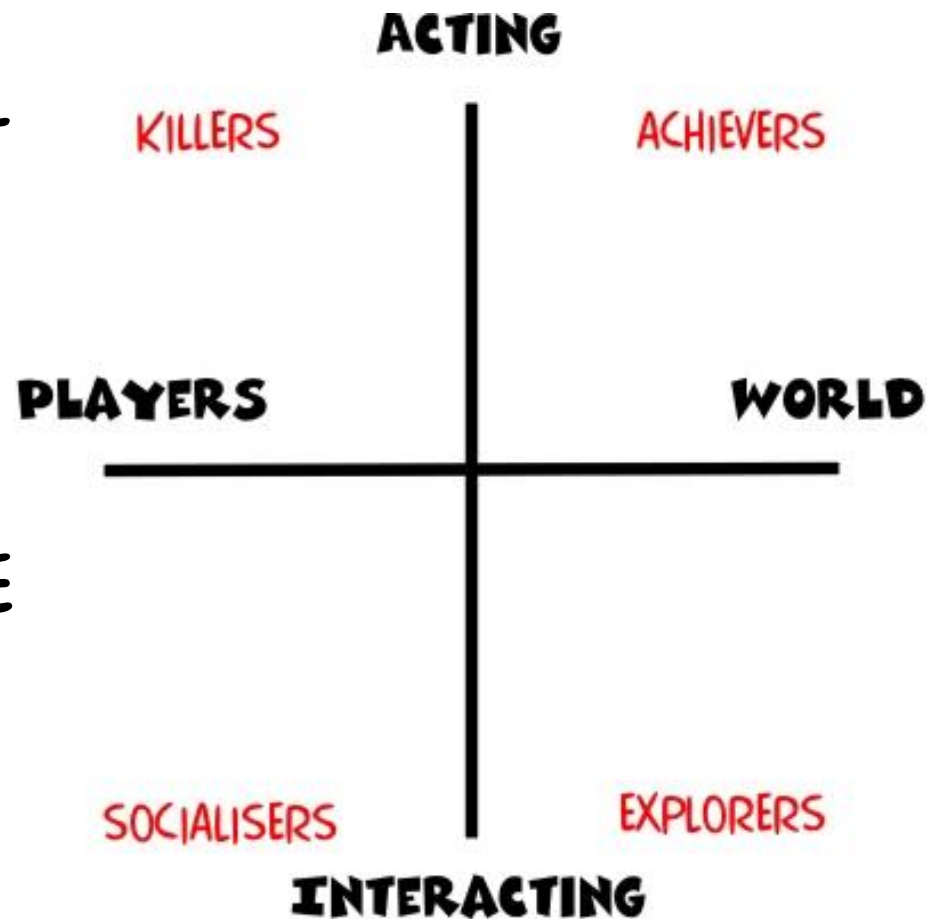
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## INTRODUCTION

- BACK IN THE 1990S, I DEVELOPED THE **PLAYER TYPES** MODEL
- IT EXPLAINS WHAT PLAYERS FIND **FUN**
  - IN MMOS...
- ADDRESS **ALL** THE **QUADRANTS** FOR A **STABLE, LONG-LIVED GAME**



## INSULAR

- THIS MODEL IS **INSULAR**, THOUGH
- IT TELLS YOU WHY PEOPLE **DO** PLAY, BUT NOT WHY THEY **DON'T**
  - WHICH IS OFTEN MORE **USEFUL**
- SO, **THAT'S** WHAT I'M GOING TO TALK ABOUT TODAY: **TYPES OF NON-PLAYERS**
  - OR **NON-PLAYER TYPES**
- YOU'RE THE **FIRST** PEOPLE I'VE **DESCRIBED** THIS TO, SO FEEL FREE TO **SHOOT ME DOWN** IN **FLAMES** AFTERWARDS

QUIET SUNDAY

- HERE'S AN OPERA SINGER



## OBVIOUS

- THERE ARE SOME VERY **OBVIOUS** REASONS WHY AN INDIVIDUAL MAY **NOT** PLAY A GAME
  - THEY'VE NEVER **HEARD** OF IT
  - THEY DON'T OWN THE RIGHT **HARDWARE**
  - THEY DON'T HAVE THE **TIME**
  - THEY DON'T LIKE THE **GENRE**
  - THEY DON'T LIKE THE **GRAPHICS**
  - IT'S AGAINST THEIR **RELIGION**
  - THEY PREFER TO READ **BOOKS** OR WATCH **MOVIES**
  - LOTS MORE...
- ASSUME **NO** SUCH EXTERNAL FACTORS APPLY...

## WHY STOP?

- IN FACT, SUPPOSE SOMEONE **IS** PLAYING YOUR GAME BUT THEN **STOPS** PLAYING
- **WHY** MIGHT THEY STOP? SOME POSSIBILITIES...
  - 1) THEY **FINISHED** IT
  - 2) A **BETTER GAME** CAME ALONG
  - 3) IT WAS TOO **EASY**
  - 4) IT WAS TOO **HARD**
  - 5) THEY COULDN'T **ENGAGE** WITH IT
  - 6) IT HAD TOO MANY **FLAWS** IN THEIR VIEW
- LET'S **LOOK** AT THESE A LITTLE **CLOSER**

## CLOSER LOOK

- 1) IF THEY **FINISHED** THE GAME, FAIR ENOUGH
  - LIKEWISE IF THEY DROPPED **DEAD**
- 2) IF A **BETTER** GAME CAME ALONG, WELL WHAT **MAKES** IT BETTER?
  - ASSUMING NOT AN **EXTERNAL** REASON SUCH AS ITS BEING BASED ON THEIR FAVOURITE **TV SHOW**
- WELL, BETTERNESS IS RELATED TO WHY PEOPLE **DO** PLAY, NOT WHY THEY **DON'T**
- ITS JUST THE **OTHER** POSITION **RESTATED**
  - PLAYER TYPE THEORY EXPLAINS IT FOR MMORPGS...

## DIFFICULTY

- 3)/4) IF A GAME IS TOO EASY/HARD, IT MISSES THE **SWEET SPOT** OF THE GAME'S **CHALLENGE** VERSUS THE PLAYER'S **SKILL**
- THE GAME IS ASKING EITHER TOO **MUCH** OR TOO **LITTLE** OF YOU
- YOU WON'T **PARTICIPATE** UNLESS THE BALANCE IS **RIGHT** (FOR **YOU**)





## ENGAGEMENT

- 5) BEING UNABLE TO **ENGAGE** WITH A GAME MEANS YOU CAN'T ENTER ITS **MAGIC CIRCLE**
- YOU LOOK AT IT **OBJECTIVELY** BUT CAN'T MAKE THE JUMP TO DO SO **SUBJECTIVELY**
- BASICALLY, YOU DON'T **UNDERSTAND** IT
- THIS **ISN'T** THE SAME AS WHEN A GAME IS TOO **CHALLENGING** OR TOO **COMPLEX**
- IT'S MORE THAT YOU CAN'T **WORK OUT** WHAT THE GAME **MEANS**
  - IT'S **INACCESSIBLE** TO YOU

## ACCESSIBILITY

- **INACCESSIBLE** ART SPEAKS OVER YOUR HEAD
  - YOU CAN'T GET A **HANDLE** ON IT



- *LADY APART*, PAUL KLEE



- *SNOOPY*, CHARLES M SCHULZ

## FLAWS

- 6) IF A PLAYER FEELS A GAME HAS **FLAWS**, IT CAN BE FOR ONE OF **TWO** REASONS
- FIRSTLY, IT MAY BE **BUGGY**, WHICH WILL **REMINDE** PLAYERS THEY'RE IN A GAME
  - ABANDONING IT IS, THEREFORE, REASONABLE
- SECONDLY, IT MAY BE **BUG-FREE** BUT THE PLAYER KEEPS SEEING WAYS TO **IMPROVE** IT
- IN THIS SECOND CASE, THE PLAYER ENGAGES WITH THE GAME **SO MUCH** THAT THEY THINK OF IT OBJECTIVELY **INSTEAD** OF SUBJECTIVELY

## UNDERSTANDING

- POINTS 5) AND 6) CONCERN THE **SAME** THING:
- WHETHER OR NOT YOU **UNDERSTAND** WHAT THE GAME IS **SAYING** TO YOU
- IN POINT 5), THE GAME IS TOO **DEEP** FOR YOU TO **GRASP** WHAT IT'S SAYING
- IN POINT 6), IT'S TOO **SHALLOW** FOR WHAT IT SAYS TO BE **INTERESTING**
- AS WITH EASY/DIFFICULT, THERE'S A **SWEET SPOT** WHERE THE GAME'S **DEPTH** MATCHES THE PLAYER'S **INSIGHT**

## REFLECTION

- THIS TIME, THE **PLAYER** IS ASKING THE **GAME** FOR **CONTENT** AND IS ANSWERED WITH EITHER TOO **MUCH** OR TOO **LITTLE**
- TOO MUCH MAKES IT **INACCESSIBLE**; TOO LITTLE, **TRIVIAL**
- YOU WON'T **PARTICIPATE** UNLESS THE BALANCE IS **RIGHT** (FOR **YOU**)



## ENCHANTED CITY

- HERE'S A ROCK



## DIALOGUE

- WHAT WE HAVE HERE IS A **DIALOGUE**
  - 1) THE GAME **ASKS** THE PLAYER TO DO SOMETHING
  - 2) THE PLAYER **ANSWERS** BY DOING IT
  - 3) IN SO DOING, THE PLAYER **ASKS** THE GAME A QUESTION
  - 4) THE GAME **ANSWERS** BY PROVIDING ANOTHER SLIVER/CHUNK OF CONTENT
  - 5) IN SO DOING, BACK TO STEP 1)
- THIS CAN HAPPEN AT **MULTIPLE** LEVELS
  - THE LOWEST ONE HAS A NAME: THE **CORE LOOP**

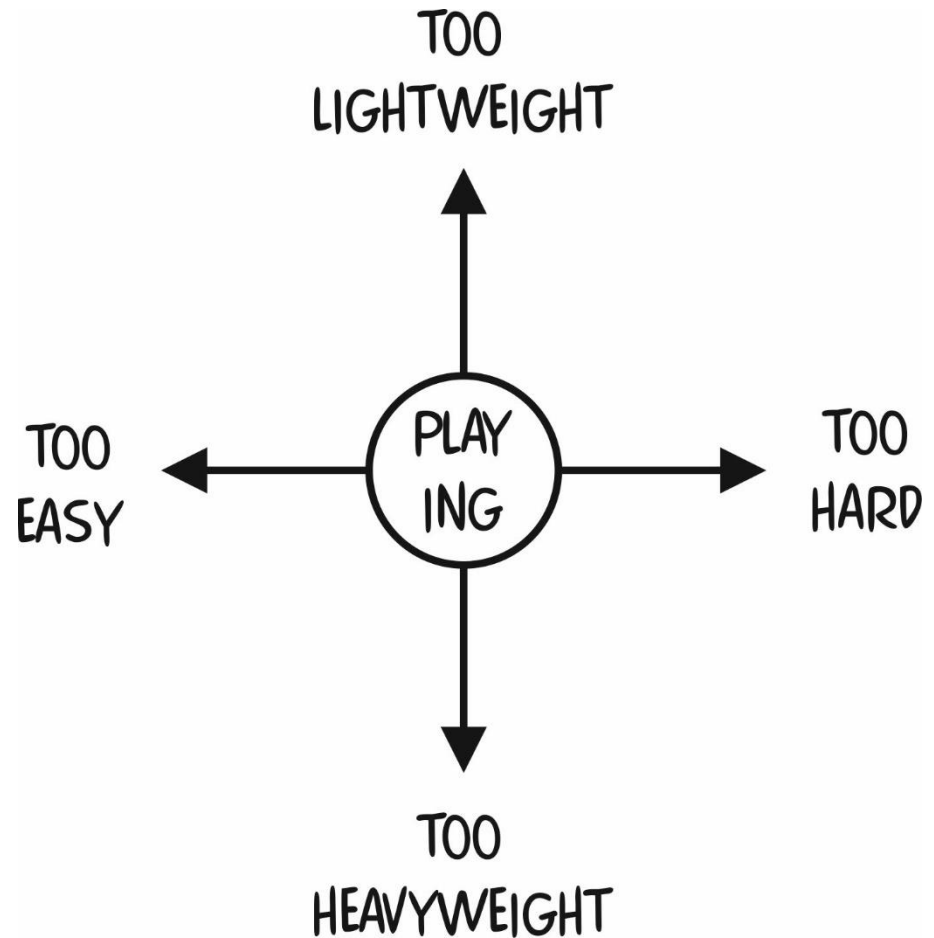
## ORTHOGONAL

- IT'S WORTH CHECKING THAT THESE CONCEPTS ARE **ORTHOGONAL**
- ONE IS ACTIVE, TO DO WITH **OUTPUT**
  - YOU CAN **TRY** TO **USE** YOUR PLAYING SKILL
- ONE IS PASSIVE, TO DO WITH **INPUT**
  - YOU **CAN'T** TRY **NOT** TO USE YOUR INSIGHT
- THESE ARE CLEARLY **INDEPENDENT** OF EACH OTHER AND THEREFORE **ARE** ORTHOGONAL
  - IF A GAME IS TOO **HARD**, THIS ISN'T **BECAUSE** YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND IT



## AXIS BY AXIS

- JUST A MOMENT, WE HAVE TWO **AXES** HERE!
- THAT MEANS WE CAN DRAW A **GRAPH!**



- I **LOVE** GRAPHS!

## QUADRANTS

- HOW SHOULD WE **LABEL** THE QUADRANTS?
- WELL IT'S A LITTLE **DANGEROUS** TO DO SO BECAUSE THIS IS **GAME-BY-GAME**
- IN PLAYER TYPES, IF YOU'RE AN **ACHIEVER** THEN YOU'RE AN ACHIEVER FOR A **LONG** TIME
- IN **NON-PLAYER** TYPES, YOU MAY NOT LIKE **THIS** GAME BECAUSE IT'S TOO SHALLOW BUT **THAT** ONE BECAUSE IT'S TOO DIFFICULT
- IT MAY BE MORE **USEFUL** TO LOOK AT THEIR PARTICULAR **GRIEVANCES**

IN/OUT/SLEEP

- HERE'S A BABY



## TOP RIGHT

- A GAME THAT'S TOO **HARD** AND TOO **SHALLOW** MEANS YOU **KNOW** WHAT IT'S **SAYING** AND IT'S **FRUSTRATING** TO PLAY
  - FOR ME, THAT WOULD BE *PONG* AND *SPACE INVADERS*
- A GAME THAT IS **INTERESTING** BUT YOU CAN'T **BEAT** IT WOULD BE NEAR THE **X** AXIS
  - FLEET BATTLES IN THE *MASTER OF ORION 2* REWRITE
- A GAME THAT PUTS UP A **FIGHT** BUT HAS **LITTLE DEPTH** WOULD BE NEAR THE **Y** AXIS
  - *TETRIS*, *CANDY CRUSH SAGA*, *BRAIN AGE*, ...

## BOTTOM RIGHT

- A GAME THAT'S TOO **HARD** AND TOO **DEEP** WILL BE FULL OF **UNFATHOMABLE** EXPERIENCES AND **SNAIL-PACED** PROGRESS
  - FOR ME, *STARCRAFT* AND *EVE ONLINE* GO HERE
- A GAME THAT'S SEEMS TO HANG TOGETHER BUT YOU'RE **USELESS** AT IS NEARER THE **✖** AXIS
  - *UNDERTALE*, *CASTLEVANIA*, *ASSASSIN'S CREED*, ...
- A GAME YOU CAN **PLAY** BUT WHICH MAKES LITTLE **SENSE** IS NEARER THE **⚓** AXIS
  - *CHESS*, *GO*, *CIVILIZATION VI*, *DOTA 2*, ...

MEANWHILE, IN 1968

- OOH! IT'S A ZOMBIE



## BOTTOM LEFT

- A GAME THAT'S **EASY** TO PLAY BUT TOO **DEEP** TO COMPREHEND FULLY WILL SEEM **CAPRICIOUS AND INSCRUTABLE**
  - *ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION* RUINED BY DDA
- A GAME THAT PRESENTS **CONTENT** BUT OFFERS LITTLE **CHALLENGE** IS NEARER THE **X** AXIS
  - *CITYVILLE, DEAR ESTHER, SLOT MACHINES, ...*
- A GAME WITH ACHIEVABLE **GOALS** DELIVERED BY OPAQUE **SYSTEMS** IS NEARER THE **Y** AXIS
  - *M:TG, HANABI, FOOTBALL MANAGER, ...*

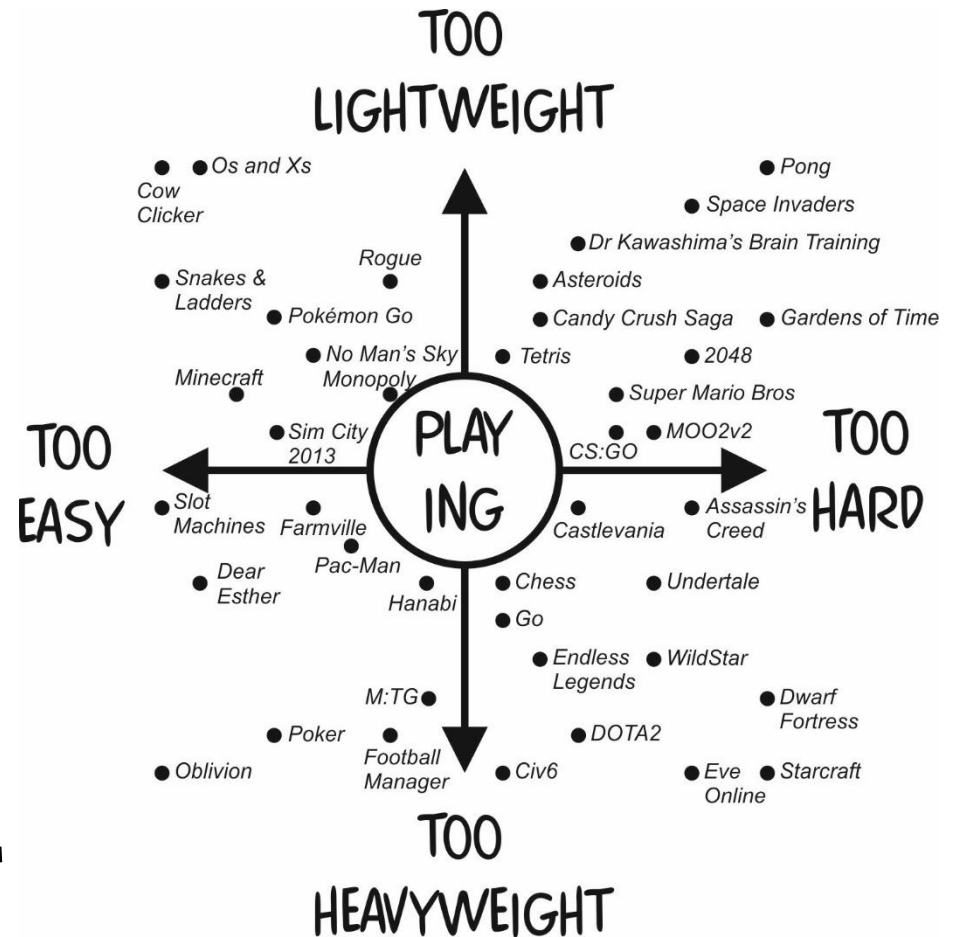
## TOP LEFT

- A GAME WITH LITTLE **MEANING** AND FEW **OBSTACLES** TO OVERCOME WILL SEEM **TEDIOUS** AND **POINTLESS**
  - COW CLICKER, OS AND XS, SNAKES & LADDERS, ...
- A **BORING** GAME WITH MORE **SUBSTANCE** WILL BE NEARER THE **X** AXIS
  - SIM CITY 2013, MINECRAFT, ...
- A GAME YOU FULLY **UNDERSTAND** WHICH OFFERS **RESISTANCE** IS NEARER THE **Y** AXIS
  - ROGUE, MONOPOLY, RISK, ...



## EXAMPLE

- THIS IS WHAT THE GRAPH LOOKS LIKE FOR **ME**:



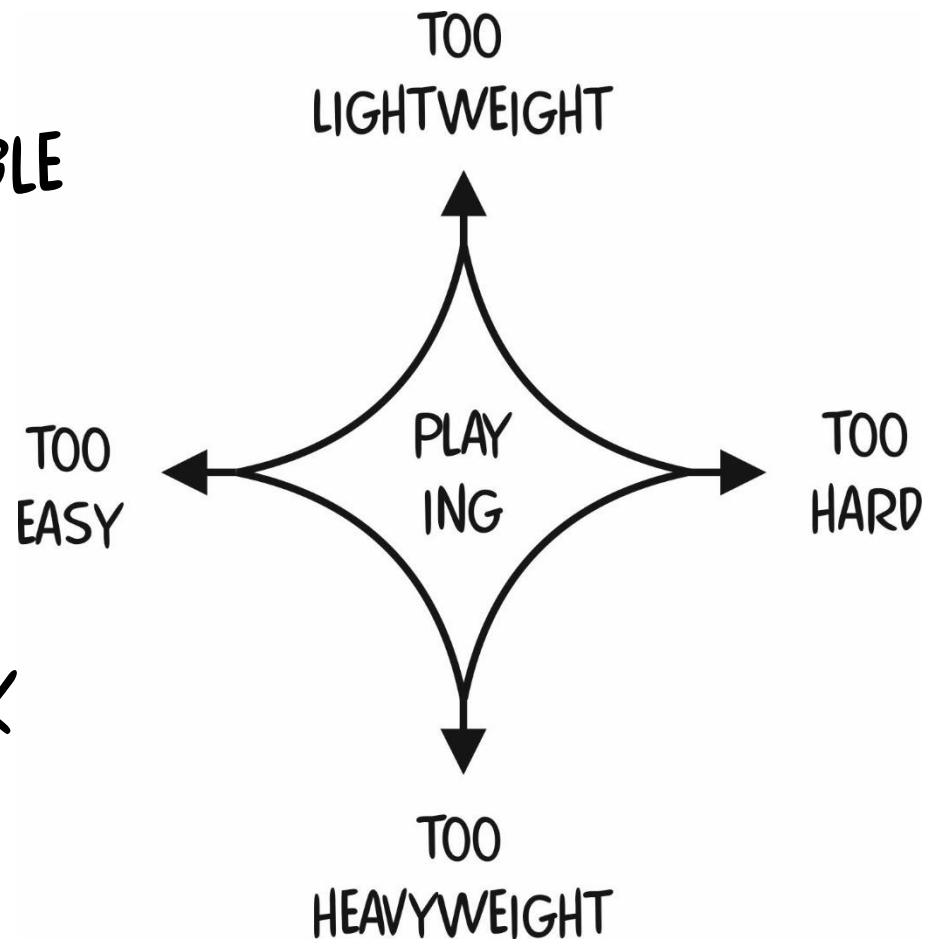
- **YOURS** WILL LOOK **DIFFERENT**  
– SO WILL MINE AS MY SKILLS AND INSIGHT CHANGE

## EXIT

- SO, PLAYERS WILL **LEAVE** GAMES THAT HAVE:
  - TR: MEANINGLESS, UNNECESSARY OBSTACLES
    - LIKE ROCKS
  - BR: INARTICULATE, FRUSTRATING DEMANDS
    - LIKE BABIES
  - BL: STRAIGHTFORWARD, PRETENTIOUS NONSENSE
    - LIKE OPERA
  - TL: VACUOUS ACTIONS FOR VACUOUS REASONS
    - LIKE ZOMBIES
- EASY RECALL: ROCK BABES & OPERA ZOMBIES

## PULL

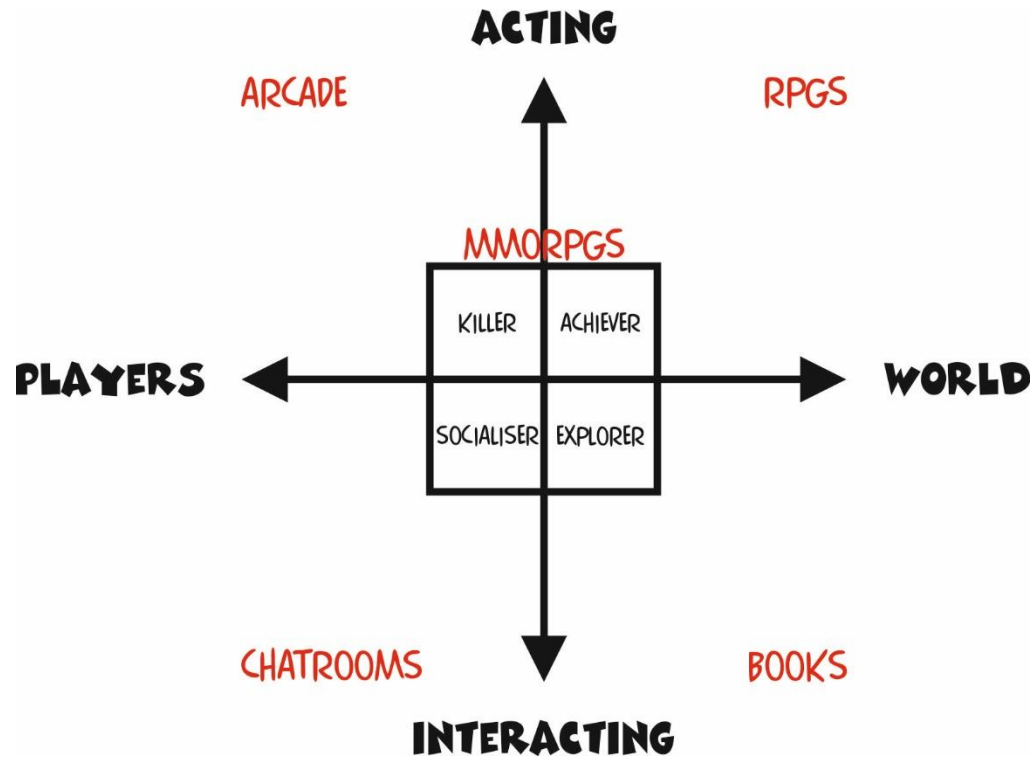
- THE **PULL** OF EACH AXIS IS QUITE **STRONG**
- PEOPLE MAY **PUT UP** WITH UNSUITABLE GAMEPLAY IF IT'S MEANINGFUL
  - AND VICE VERSA
- THE GRAPH COULD **THEREFORE** LOOK MORE LIKE **THIS**



## EXTRAPOLATION

- IN MY ORIGINAL PLAYER TYPES **PAPER**, I **EXTRAPOLATED** THE TYPES
- WHAT WOULD **HAPPEN** IF YOU MOVED TOO **FAR** IN ONE **DIRECTION**?
  - SAY, TOWARDS **ACTING ON THE WORLD**
- THE **PLAYERS** WITH THAT ORIENTATION WOULD STILL **LIKE** WHAT THEY SAW
  - BUT IT **WOULDN'T** BE AN **MMORPG**
- THE **OTHER** PLAYERS WOULD **STOP** PLAYING AND ALL DYNAMIC **COHESION** WOULD BE LOST

## PLAYERS PLAYING

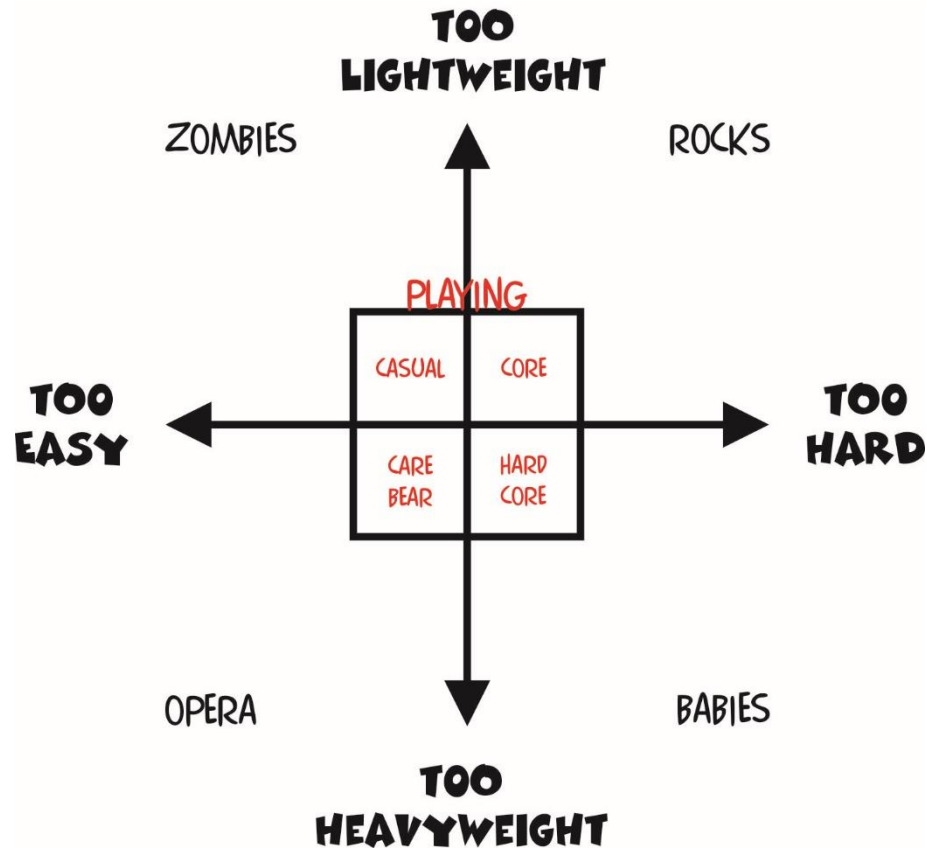


- THE FOCUS CHANGES FROM **PLAYERS** TO WHAT THEY (DON'T) **PLAY**

## INTERPOLATION

- WE CAN DO A **SIMILAR** TRICK WITH **NON-PLAYER** TYPES
  - LOOK AT WHAT PLAYERS LIKE **BEFORE** THE GAME PUSHES THEM **TOO FAR**
- THIS CHANGES THE FOCUS TO THE **PLAYERS** FROM WHAT THEY (DON'T) **PLAY**
- IT TURNS OUT YOU ALREADY **KNOW** WHAT THESE PLAYER TYPES **ARE** BECAUSE THEY'VE GOT ESTABLISHED **NAMES** IN THE INDUSTRY
  - ANY GUESSES?

## PLAYING PLAYERS



- I'M **ALREADY** REGRETTING THOSE QUADRANT NAMES...

## SKIP THIS SLIDE

- **CASUAL** GAMERS LIKE GAMES THAT AREN'T VERY **DEEP** AND ARE **EASY** TO PLAY
- **CARE BEAR** GAMERS LIKE GAMES THAT HAVE **DEPTH** BUT AREN'T VERY **CHALLENGING**
- **CORE** GAMERS LIKE MORE **DIFFICULT** GAMES BUT AREN'T INTERESTED IN THE **MESSAGE**
- **HARD CORE** GAMERS LIKE FULL-ON, DEMANDING **GAMEPLAY** THAT HAS EMOTIONAL OR INTELLECTUAL **SUBSTANCE**
- AS I SAID, YOU **KNEW** ALL THAT **ANYWAY...**



## USE OR USELESS

- THIS IS ALL WELL AND GOOD, BUT IS IT ANY ACTUAL **USE**?
- OK, SO THIS IS THE POINT AT WHICH ACADEMICS START USING WORDS SUCH AS "**LENS**" AND "**FRAMEWORK**"
- I'M JUST GOING TO SAY **I DON'T KNOW**
- I GUESS WE **COULD** TRY IT OUT, THOUGH...
- LET'S **SEE** IF WE CAN USE IT TO **SAY** SOMETHING ABOUT THE **FREE-TO-PLAY** (MICROTRANSACTIONS) REVENUE MODEL

## BASIC RULES

- PLAYERS **WON'T** PAY TO MAKE A GAME **MORE** CHALLENGING, BECAUSE THEY CAN MAKE IT MORE CHALLENGING ON THEIR **OWN**
- PLAYERS **MIGHT** PAY TO MAKE A GAME **LESS** CHALLENGING **IF** THEY LIKE EASY GAMES
- PLAYERS **MIGHT** PAY TO MAKE A GAME **MORE** ACCESSIBLE **IF** THEY LIKE DEEP GAMES
- PLAYERS **WON'T** PAY TO MAKE A GAME **LESS** ACCESSIBLE, BECAUSE WHO LIKES BEING **PATRONISED?**

## RESULT

- **APPLYING** THESE RULES:
  - **CARE BEAR** GAMERS WILL PAY TO **REMOVE** CHALLENGES OR FOR **RICHER** CONTENT
  - **HARD CORE** GAMERS WILL PAY FOR **RICHER** CONTENT
  - **CASUAL** GAMERS WILL PAY TO **REMOVE** CHALLENGES
  - **CORE** GAMERS WON'T PAY FOR **ANYTHING**
- **ASSESSMENT:** F2P IS **RISKY** FOR GAMES THAT APPEAL TO THOSE WHO LIKE **TRICKY** BUT **SHALLOW** GAMEPLAY

## CONCLUSION

- BY LOOKING AT WHAT **STOPS** PLAYERS PLAYING, WE CAN **EXPLAIN** IN A FORMAL MANNER SOME CONCEPTS WE ALREADY **KNEW**
- WE CAN **APPLY** THE RESULTING THEORY, BUT IT MAY MERELY ADD THE **WEIGHT** OF THEORY TO EXISTING, WELL-TRIED **HEURISTICS**
- THE **DIALOGUE** PART **COULD** ACTUALLY **HELP** ACADEMICS TEACH THIS STUFF
- I EXPECT TO BE **SHOT DOWN** IN **FLAMES** NOW!