

# HYBRIS

## REALITY IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT

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(Alpha – testing version. Beware – use at your own risk ; ) )

*As a child you had an imaginary friend – for sure! Everybody had one as a child. But your imaginary friends didn't left as soon as you'd become a teenager. They brought you gifts to your birthday, they showed you how to do things nobody else could do. Your parents worried. Your neighbours mandered about you being insane. Other people started to avoid you. They took you away, they locked you up in a padded cell. They gave you pills, they told you lies, hoping to make your friends go away. Physicians and psychiatrists furnished opinions about your schizophrenia.*

*They were all wrong...*

*...you were right.*

## Introduction

*The universe, as your limited perception allows you to see it, is nothing more than an illusion. Your wimpy human mind cannot cope with the truth – the true reality. You are in a doze, controlled by your subconsciousness. Loose yourself, recognize the truth, take a glimpse through the veil, become one of us.*

*Hybris* is a storytelling role-playing game. It's main premise is that reality, as we know it, is not what it seems. Reality is just an illusion created by our subconsciousness, to protect ourselves from the truth, being too much for our minds to handle. However, a few people doesn't seem to have this kind of protection. At some time in their life, something really weird happens, allowing them to lift the veil that darkens their perception and to see a little bit of truth: That reality is an evolutionary lie, with laws that can be bend and even broken with some training.

The players will take the roles of people like these. They are on a downwards spiral, trading inhuman power for parts of their humanity. The price to pay for might never meant to be in the hands of ordinary humans is to loose the sensation of being human itself. The more power they get, the more they will loose control over the only thing they know how to manipulate: Reality.

Storytelling in *Hybris* is mainly oriented after classical Greek drama play. Storyline design and plot manipulation tools were taken from this field, as were most of the concepts and terms of this game. Of course, this doesn't mean that a play of *Hybris* needs to follow the ways of ancient tragedies. Tragic stories can also be found in the

works of Shakespeare and even in the modern genre of Film Noir. If you just look around, you'll find ideas for tragic stories almost everywhere.

On the other hand, *Hybris* is specifically designed and by that somewhat constrained to decadence and corruption of the main characters. Protagonists in the stories created with *Hybris* are always in the dilemma to make a decision between their power and what it means to be a human. The power of the characters is defined as being somewhat supernatural without specifying the source of these. As their powers grow, the protagonists also weaken their links with reality and “normal” humanity. They become inhuman, sociopathic; Power has its price...

## A game of drama and tragedy

In many ways *Hybris* differs from other, more classical role-playing games. Characters are reduced to a few core values without defining their talents and skills exactly. As simple as character traits are defined, so are the conflict resolution rules. Three rules, representing normal conflict, supernatural powers and defense against these powers are all you'll need on the rule's side to play *Hybris*.

Far more important is to define who your character is and what's driving him. How do his powers manifest, how strong is he bound to reality? Why does he enter the story? How does he react to the dilemma presented?

You'll also have no need for a gamemaster in *Hybris*. Imagine telling a story hook like „Two men in dark trench coats enter the cemetery and they seem to have taken notice of you!“, with a player, being able to warp reality itself, just saying „There are no men.“ and with the rules telling you: He's absolutely right. Instead of a gamemaster, only some kind of referee is needed to make sure that all game rules are followed. If you play with a well-rehearsed group, even the referee may become obsolete.

To define the story without a gamemaster, players use *Choros* phases to define vital plot elements with prophetic tools. Although things defined by the *Choros* are fixed, actions of the story's characters are not, often allowing rather surprising options in the playing phases of the game.

## Gaming materials

*Hybris* only needs a few gaming materials. Each player needs some paper, a kind of character sheet works best, and some six-sided dice (*d6*). To maximise convenience, each player should possess about 20 dice, most preferably in two distinct designs. Sometimes, two instead of one character traits will be tested, with two dice designs allowing to do that in a single dice roll.

## Protagonists

The player characters, the term protagonists will be used

interchangeably from now on, are represented by relatively few traits. Far more important than these traits is the protagonist's conception. What defines the character? What are his strengths? What are his flaws? What are his inner conflicts? What are his goals? What made him seeing through the veil and developing his powers?

The character's concept should be given in form of a short summary, five or six sentences at best. If more than a single run of *Hybris* is planned, the character's concept should be rewritten from run to run to reflect the ongoing story.

## Concept

Of course you can write anything you want to define the concept of your character. Despite of this, some things are needed to be defined in any case. These are his goals (*Telos*), his kicker (*Katapeltes*), his way to bend reality (*Paradigma*) and his supernatural flaw of will (*Akrasia*).

## Telos

What's your final goal? What do you want to achieve with the power given to you? Becoming president of Swaziland? Flying to Mars? Ruining the life of your ex-lover? Saving the world from all evil? Ascending to Nirvana? Becoming Lucifer's holiday replacement? Or do you just want to get these voices out of your head?

## Katapeltes

Katapeltes, the Kicker, as defined by Ron Edwards in his intense roleplaying game *Sorcerer*, is what makes you enter the story. It is an significant event for the protagonist, changing a central aspect of his life and common habits. At the moment, the meaning of the event remains unclear, ready to reveal it's secrets through the course of the drama, but being a total mystery for the protagonist in the beginning.

Defining a good Katapeltes for your character is vital to the game. It defines not only his starting position, but also his reaction to certain situations and persons. It is also a good hook-up for joining all players together into a single group, or defining some of them as future allies and others as potential enemies.

## Paradigma

No human is able to bend reality by his will alone. If he ever tries to, he will immediately loose his link to reality, drifting away into the truth, whatever this is. To use his power, each protagonist needs a *Paradigma*, defining his way to use his powers and working as a kind of anchor in the pseudo-reality of his fellow men.

Feel free to choose anything you like as a *Paradigma* for your character, as long as it makes sense to yourself. Think big! Think weird! Although Magic, be it Hermetic, Caballistic, Satanic or Wiccan, represents a valid Paradigma,

you're not limited to this. Why not play a high priest of Quetzalcoatl, reborn into the modern world and having a direct link to his god? Or being a hacker with the conviction of being imprisoned into some kind of virtual reality which can be altered with appropriate programming skills? Maybe you're a super-villain from Beteigeuze, coming to earth together with his lizard-people friends to take over the world, just when time's right? You could also be a modern scientist who discovered the original works of Rabbi Loew and Dr. Frankenstein and is now working on the creation of perfect artificial life.

There are only two things you have to keep in mind when defining your *Paradigma*. The first one is that you cannot create an almighty *Paradigma*. Psionic powers creating volcanoes and burning foes to dust by sheer will shouldn't be allowed by any means. Either you create a *Paradigma* which allows you to do marvellous things, but also requires proper (and long) preparation of rituals or special tools (Ritual sorcery is a good example for this), or you can activate your powers with a simple thought, but the powers are limited in use and are restricted to yourself or your immediate surroundings (The classical superhero archetype). If any of your fellow players thinks that the *Paradigma* you defined is too powerful, you shouldn't discuss, but rework your *Paradigma* (Hey, you want to start playing the same evening, not next week!).

As you may already have noticed, your *Paradigma* is some kind of restriction of the things you may do with your powers. In some situations you may outdo yourself, warping things a way that cannot be explained by any means through your *Paradigma*. To be more exact this can done, but is very dangerous. Such situations are called *breaking the Paradigma* and are explained further in the rules section.

## Akrasia

Tightly bound to your *Paradigma* is your *Akrasia*, your fatal lack of will. Sometimes fortune will treat you bad, leaving you in situations where you might normally use your powers, but cannot through a special restriction which is described by your *Akrasia*.

If you are a summoner of demons, your *Akrasia* might be the lack of the proper incense. You are a hacker? What the heck is hacking without your beloved and tuned notebook? You are Superman? Here's your Kryptonite – with kind regards.

An active *Akrasia* has drastic effects on your warping of reality. You'll find more on this topic in the rules section.

## Traits

*God does not play dice? Actually, he even throws them where you couldn't see 'em at all!*

So you've defined your protagonist by creating a concept. Time to do your math. In this section you'll create the rule-based representation of your character by distributing dice to various character traits with each trait receiving at least 1

and a maximum of 10 dice.

## Physis and Psyche

Your *Physis* describes the physical prowess and the looks of your character. Good looking, sportive, fat, all things based on your body are given by your *Physis*. Likewise, *Psyche* measures your mental talents, your will, your charisma, your intelligence and knowledge.

Huh? Only two traits to describe a character? Okay, maybe you're one of those guys thinking that this is not enough. So start to think about the strengths and weaknesses of character. These can be noted together with each trait. You can take any strength or weakness you like. The only rule is that you have to counter each strength with a weakness and vice versa. Being a *martial artist like that Jet Li guy* and *as thick as two short planks* is totally legal (you may mix physical and mental strengths and weaknesses as you like), but taking *martial artist like that Jet Li guy* and *criminal genius like Dr. No* is not.

Okay, now for the crunchy part. You can divide 10 dice between *Physis* and *Psyche*, with each trait receiving at least one dice. If you take a strength, you'll receive two extra dice each time this strength applies in a conflict. Likewise, you'll lose 2 dice whenever a weakness applies. Oh, and yes, this means that you need to have at least 3 dice in a trait to take a weakness for it. In the same way taking a strength for a trait with 9 dice doesn't make sense, since you cannot throw more than 10 dice in a single dice roll. And what's even more unfair: If more than a strength applies in a proper situation, you still receive only two bonus dice. The good thing is that you can still use additional strengths to counter weaknesses which may also apply in that situation.

## Dogma and Pragma

Here's what you've waited for all the time. The *Dogma* and *Pragma* traits are used to describe your skill in warping reality. *Dogma* describes your classical world view (hey, surely you remember that you once were a normal human with brains an' stuff?). A high *Dogma* trait means that you have a substantial belief into reality, being certain that it cannot be changed out of the limiting borders of natural science. Your *Pragma* is the exactly the opposite of this: Reality is just an illusion that can be altered to trick the universe itself.

As before, you may distribute 10 dice between these two traits. In general, you should allocate at least 5 dice to your *Pragma* if you really want to know what you're doing. Your *Dogma* dice may annihilate any *Pragma* dice in the attempt to warp reality, so taking a high *Dogma* if you want to be a big mover and shaker doesn't seem to be a good idea. But there's another aspect to take care of. Often, your *Dogma* is your last chance to counter enemy reality alterations. And, in addition, the more *Pragma* dice you have, the more your link to reality is severed, so taking a high *Pragma* trait ain't a good idea either.

There's another issue with these two traits: They always add up to 10 dice, so if you gain another *Pragma* dice, you'll lose a *Dogma* dice at the same time. Of course, this also works the other way round. Take care, always wear your trans-dimensional crash helmet, good luck!

## Hybris

So here's another meta-trait you do not have to spend dice on. Your *Hybris* is coupled directly to your *Pragma* and represents your overestimation of your own capabilities. The higher your *Hybris* score gets, the more you've convinced yourself that reality is a lie and that humanity is nothing more than a bunch of stupid amoebas following silly rules dictated by what dumb humans call nature.

Tinkering around with reality will eventually increase your *Hybris* score. This in turn will increase your *Pragma* trait, and synchronously decrease your *Dogma* dice. If it ever happens that you lose your last *Dogma* dice, you're out. You'll leave reality forever, stepping through the veil and entering whatever lies behind it. If you're the Hare Krishna type o' guy, maybe this is exactly what you wanted. Even then, you're lost and damned from humanity's point of view.

So how *Hybris* points are measured? After defining the character's traits, you'll use the number of *Pragma* dice to determine your *Hybris* score. One dice equals a *Hybris* of one, two dice equal  $1+2 = 3$  *Hybris* points and so on. With a *Pragma* trait of 5 dice, you'll get a *Hybris* score of  $1+2+3+4+5 = 15$ .

Throughout the game, you'll accumulate more and more *Hybris* points. The tricky thing here is, as soon as you've collected enough points, you'll receive another *Pragma* dice. Lets assume you started with *Pragma* 5 which equals *Hybris* 15. After accumulating 6 additional points, you'll get another *Pragma* die, raising your *Pragma* to 6 (and dropping your *Dogma* to 4 respectively). After 7 additional points, you'll have to take another *Pragma* die and so on. Being a mathematical genius, you surely noticed that gaining 55 (which is  $10+9+8...$  got it?) *Hybris* points is a very bad thing, since it means that you'll lose your last *Dogma* die and have to leave the game! Come back soon! But lucky you, the same thing works also the other way round. If you ever lose enough *Hybris* points (which isn't easy), you may also gain back *Dogma* dice. If you have 15 *Hybris* points and lose a point, your *Dogma* will raise and your *Pragma* will drop since you need at least 15 points for five *Pragma* dice. Did I already tell you that it's damn hard to get rid of these nasty *Hybris* points? Okay, just asking...

## Systems

Like many other role-playing games, *Hybris* uses dice to determine the outcome of uncertain situations.

# Conflict

*Now that was fun! In a sick fucking no-fun-at-all way...*

So you're in a conflict. You need to convince somebody. You need to get into this building. Maybe you need to beat the hell out this guy in front of you.

In general, all you have to do is to roll all the dice associated with one of your traits and count the number of fives and sixes, which represent your *successes*. The more successes you earn, the better the outcome. Normally, one success is enough to generate a outcome in favour of your protagonist. One thing to keep in mind is that you must not throw more than 10 dice in any situation.

Sounds too simple? There's one hitch. Each roll is countered by another roll representing your opposition. And any successes earned by your opposition negate your successes, possibly even leaving you with a negative number of successes!

To define the outcome of such a contest, you just count the net number of successes and compare them to the following table. After that, you can describe the outcome of the conflict as you wish, as long as follow the remarks given in the table.

<b>Net successes</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
-5 or worse	Birdbrained idiot!. You're seriously hurt. Loose two dice of the trait you used for the remainder of the act!
-3 to -4	Ouch! That hurts!. You injured yourself, be it in a physical, mental or social manner. Loose two dice of the trait you used for the remainder of the scene.
-1 to -2	Okay, know-it-all! This was a miss. You didn't succeed. Loose one die of the trait you used for the remainder of the scene.
0	Nice try! You didn't achieve what you wanted, but you may try again without risk.
+1 to +2	Although not impressive, you get what you want.
+3 to +4	Hey, a real talent! You not only succeed with your plan, you also put a pretty good show.
+5 or better	Wow! Do what you want. Nothing more to say!

Keep in mind that conflict resolution usually does not deal with single actions! If you want to overcome someone, you just make a single roll. Likewise, getting into a building and robbing the safe is done by using a single roll. Actions are described by words, not rolls!

# Opposition

Lets give some words on opposition. First of all, opposition can mean almost anything. An antagonist, a high wall you need to climb, a stubborn car. You only need to know how much dice to roll for opposition in a conflict. I won't give detailed rules here, just another table that can be used as an advice. Normally, you'll just ask your fellow players "Hey, I want to do this and that, how much dice to roll?" and be assured they will agree on a certain number pretty fast, although you may not like the outcome. To ease your work and speed up things, the opposition should also be rolled by another player.

<b>Opposition</b>	<b>Opposition trait</b>
Now that's an easy one!	2
Certainly you would have the upper hand.	4
Okay, be a hero!	6
Okay, be a super-hero!	8
Just go on and loose your life!	10

Sometimes you might think that the opposition trait alone may not suffice. Feel free to develop antagonists using the character creation rules in such cases. The best point of time to do this is the Choros phase before each act.

## What trait to use?

Mundane situations use your *Psyche* and *Physis* traits (whatever seems most appropriate in the current situation). Any strengths and weaknesses matching the situation apply, as already mentioned above, possibly giving you some bonus dice or taking some of your trait dice away. Supernatural contests are handled by *Dogma* and *Pragma* rolls, further described below.

## No risk, no fun (optional rule)

This is an optional rule for all those people out there who love gambling. Instead of using all your trait dice in a single roll, you bet some of these dice. Your opponent does the same. The betted dice are also the only ones to be rolled. So why not bet all dice all the time? Simple thing. If you achieve less than zero net successes, you'll loose all betted dice for the remainder of the scene (Dice loss as given in the net successes table is ignored when using this rule).

## Dogma and Pragma in conflict

*Never touch a running universe...*

So want to alter reality. Okay then, we'll discuss the mechanisms needed for this in the following chapter.

## Pragma rolls

To tinker with reality, you need to do *Pragma* rolls. These rolls follow the conflict resolution rules given above, but differ in the definition of opposition. For successful usage of your *Pragma*, you need to overcome your subconscious beliefs in reality, represented by your *Dogma* trait. *Pragma* rolls involve dice from both traits, with each *Dogma* success negating one *Pragma* success. The number of net *Pragma* successes determines the degree of reality warping achieved by your character. In contrary to other conflicts, rolling more *Dogma* successes than *Pragma* successes has no negative consequences. You just didn't succeed in changing the fabric of reality and may not try exactly the same thing again in the remainder of the scene. If you didn't roll **any** *Pragma* success, you also lose one *Hybris* point. If you were successful with your attempt, your net successes do not only describe the amount of reality warping, but also add up to your *Hybris* score. This is especially dangerous if you're already having a high *Hybris* score.

What can you do with *Pragma* rolls? Almost anything you want, as long as you do not break your *Paradigma*. You can boost your *Physis* and *Psyche* traits by defining temporary strengths added to these traits for the remainder of the scene. In this case, each *Pragma* die translates into a bonus die for the chosen strength.

You can also use your successes to heal trait dice you lost in other conflicts. And of course, you can manipulate your surroundings. Just ask your fellow players about their opinion how much successes are needed for a specific effect. Igniting a candle through pure will should be able with a single success. Igniting a trash can will take two, igniting a car three, and burning a whole house down will use up four or even more successes.

## Breaking your Paradigma

Sometimes you'll have to break your *Paradigma* to achieve something desperately needed. You can do that, but you'll have to get twice as many successes as normal to achieve your goal. This also means that you'll collect twice as many *Hybris* points as opposed to "normal" warpings following your *Paradigma*. Versus any *Dogma* rolls made in an attempt to resist your warpings, only half of the successes count (If you normally would need 3 successes for your attempt, you need to achieve 6 successes for an effect, but *Dogma* rolls only need to accumulate 3 successes to neutralize your work).

## Dogma rolls

Similar to the above situation, you can also use your *Dogma* as a last line of defence versus supernatural powers. Warping reality is one thing. Making peoples subconsciousness allow these changes is something different. Every time something really weird is happening, breaking the rules of nature, bystanders may make *Dogma* rolls to counter these effects. The mechanics are equal to the ones described above, but

this time you need to get as much *Dogma* net successes as possible, with your *Pragma* dice negating *Dogma* successes. If you achieve at least one *Dogma* net success, you lose one *Hybris* point. If the successes of all bystanders (also take negative net successes into account) achieve more successes than the character who tried to warp reality, his attempt fails completely. The drawback on *Dogma* rolls is that if you roll more *Pragma* than *Dogma* successes, you will collect *Hybris* points as if you made a *Pragma* roll by yourself.

Enemy *Dogma* rolls can really break your neck. Whatever you try to achieve with your supernatural powers, always try to be as subtle as possible when doing your workings. *Dogma* rolls are only allowed if someone notices that reality is changing. Bending reality from behind the scenes usually is a good way to prevent any *Dogma* rolls in advance.

## Stories

In the last sections, we created characters and introduced the rules. Since *Hybris* is not a game of rules but a game of stories, tips for the creation of good stories are given in the following sections.

## The role of the gamemaster

In contrary to many other role-playing games, being the gamemaster isn't a full time job. Letting him create stories doesn't make sense in combination with protagonist who are able to alter reality. Instead, all players control a protagonist and are responsible for story creation. The role of the gamemaster is reduced to that of a referee, with his only assignment being to make sure that everybody abides the rules. Being the gamemaster is not much work in *Hybris*. Most time you'll just nod things through. You'll only intervene if someone's trying to do something absurd.

Since being a gamemaster isn't interesting at all, choosing a designated referee is not the optimal choice. Players should alternate in being the gamemaster, handing on this assignment to the next player at the beginning of each act.

What do you have to do when you're the gamemaster? First of all, play your character. As long as no rules are disobeyed, just proceed as a normal player. You should only intervene as a referee if any of the following situations occur:

- A player misjudges the traits of the protagonist, e.g. ignoring weaknesses and strengths or his *Paradigma* or *Akrasia*.
- Players generate opposition traits which seem to be far too high or too low for the current conflict.
- Players demand too many or too little *Pragma* successes for a specific reality warping effects.

Just to make sure you got this: As a gamemaster, you have absolutely no right to change the story! As long as no rules are broken, your gamemastering role is totally obsolete.

# Structuring and planning a story

Before starting a game of *Hybris*, players not only need to create characters, but also need to define and, even more important, to agree on some core elements of the story, namely *main theme*, *mood*, *acts* and *scenes*.

## Main theme

The first thing that you should check with everyone else is the main theme of the story. Think of the main theme as being a single sentence, if told someone who doesn't participate in the game, explains the whole purpose of the story. This is not the “*Prince Valiant slays the dragon, rescues the princess, and takes the throne, while killing all the bad guys*” stuff, but something that describes the inner conflicts of the protagonists. The relationships between the characters and their environment. The dilemma that puts the characters' minds and souls to the test.

Classical drama often uses contradictions as a main theme for tragedy or tragicomedy. Relationships of yourself and the world, humans and gods, guilt and atonement, character and fortune are typical main themes.

What all main themes have in common is driving the protagonists into a dilemma, a nightmare, in which every decision is a wrong one. This should also be true for *Hybris'* stories: I have the power to save the world, but do I also have the right to do so? I could use my iron grasp to rule the world, but doing so will catapult me out of reality. Should I addict to the powers within me, resulting in isolation from my fellow men?

## Mood

*Hybris* tells tragic stories. But that doesn't mean you have to be serious all the time. Protagonist, Antagonist, even upcoming scenes can be sorrowful, tragic, but also funny or even silly. Just do the things you like best. It's your game at last.

## Composition

*Hybris* stories are oriented after classical Greek drama play. This is especially true for the composition of these stories. Each story consists of about five acts, building up the story. Each act is composed in turn of several scenes. There is also a strict alternation of *Choros* appearances and actor performances. For *Hybris*, we assume that each act and within it each scene is introduced by the *Choros*, before lifting the curtain for the protagonists.

The only things you have to decide now is the number of scenes within each act. Using one scene per player usually works best.

## The five acts of classical drama

A classical drama always consists of five acts. Act I is described by the term *Exposition*, meaning that all main characters are introduced here. It isn't unusual that also some of the main conflicts are prepared in the first act.

Act II is called *Komplikation*. The story is driven forward, conflicts arise. There are many signs that the climax is on its way.

Climax itself is given in Act III, *Peripetie*. It is not the end of the story, nor does it solve all conflicts. Usually, something really bad happens to the characters in the *Peripetie*, resulting in a dilemma which cannot be solved easily.

Following the climax is Act IV, *Retardation*, allowing all people to calm down. Plot pacing is reduced, the protagonists seek shelter to find a solution for their dilemma.

Finally, you've the big bang, Act V, *Katastrophe*, describing the solution of the dilemma. This is primarily a matter of choice. You can have a happy end here, but could also allow a fatal ending for all protagonists. Or you can leave an open end, to return to the story in another drama play.

## Plot progression

After defining theme, mood and number of scenes per act, you are ready to start. Playing *Hybris* involves *Choros phases* and *actor phases*. *Choros* phases are used to define some things that should happen in the next act or scene. *Playing phases* work as usual. You play your character, introduce the current scenery and supporting actors and just see what's happening.

## Main rules

Some things should be kept in mind at all time to guarantee everybody is able to follow the plot. Never do something just because you want to. If you introduce King Steve in the current scene, this is legible as long as a courier has announced his arrival in one of the preceding scene. Persons, places and objects created out of nowhere should be avoided by any means. Also try to avoid introducing sub-plots or parallel stories. The main story should be highly linear in nature, with non-linearity only be allowed by using some tools described later on.

## Choros

*Choros* phases are a main tool in *Hybris'* story creation. They are subdivided into *Manteion*, some kind of oracle used at the beginning of each act, and *Promissi*, little teasers introducing each scene.

## Manteion

In the *Manteion* phase, each player has the chance to give an

outlook at the upcoming events of the following act. This is nothing complicated. Just think of those film trailers you see in cinema. Each player will describe a short glimpse at something he would like to see in the following act. What has been described is obliging, which means it must be incorporated into one of the scenes of the upcoming act. To make it easy, you can decide not to describe a certain situation, but feelings, emotions or other things which can be interpreted widely, allowing you a greater variability in the upcoming scenes.

## Promissi

As *Manteion* introduces each act, *Promissi* preludes each scene. In contrary to *Manteion*, *Promissi* are described only by one player (this is the main reason why you should have as many scenes as players in each act). The player just drops a statement of what should happen to or the group in the following scene. All things starting with "I'll be..." or "We will..." are alright, but saying something like "You will..." is not, since the player's protagonist needs to be involved personally in the following scene.

The player also decides which protagonists will be part of the upcoming scene. Players whose characters are not active in the next scene should take the roles of the supporting cast to avoid boredom at the gaming table.

## Tools of non-linearity

Although plot planning is done mainly in the *Choros* phases, players can also intervene at actor phases to introduce some non-linear elements to the main plot. The following sections describe four techniques that can be used. Each player is allowed to use each technique once per gaming session. All these techniques should be used to introduce new plot hooks or people to the story, not to give a player an edge over his fellow players.

### Teichoskopie

This is a looking-over-the-wall technique. Classic theatre often used it by adding a wall to the scenery hiding the incidents happening behind it. A single character is allowed to see over the wall and to describe what he sees.

### Errand

The errand technique calls a courier up to the current scene who'll announce an important message.

### Ekkyklema

The Ekkyklema is some kind of pictorial view of something happening at another place, maybe even at another point of time. It is a static scene, easy to follow and to interpret. As long as the Ekkyklema is present, all other things are frozen.

## Deus Ex Machina

This is Latin and called *apo mekhanes theos* in Greek. It describes the intervention of some higher power (or another character) to solve a unsolvable conflict. The appearance of the *deus ex machina* is often surprising, unmotivated, sometimes even illogical.

## Background

*Hybris* doesn't come with a predefined background. Although it is intended to be used for stories playing in our modern world, virtually every kind of background is possible, as long as all players agree on it. There is only one thing to keep in mind: Incorporate the premise of *Hybris*: Are you ready to trade your human existence for gaining supernatural power?

## Playing hints

Don't get into details, get into drama. *Hybris* isn't about simulating every aspect of a living world, it is about approaching the inner demons of the drama's protagonists. Describe what's going on in the heads of the characters. Feel free to alter the stage and the supporting cast to anything that helps you in achieving this. Do what you like, as long as it isn't too confusing for your fellow players.

If something is doubtful, make a roll. If it isn't, just decide in favour of the actual protagonist.

Don't try to discuss. Accept rejections and decisions of the other players. The only valid point of time for discussion is after play. This is not only valid for the clarification and usage of the rules, but even more so for decisions regarding story and drama.

There is no winner. Don't try to excel the others. *Hybris* is in particular no game where you play to buff up your character further and further. *Hybris* is about telling stories, not about building perfect characters. Trying to make your protagonist the wielder of universal power will only result in other player's ignoring you as a participant of their game, excluding your character from their scenes.

In the ideal case, the whole main cast of the story is represented by the player's characters. This especially means that usually not all player's represent the same group of interest. All participants of the story should have an interest in the major conflicts of the story, but with different outcomes in mind. At least one player needs to take the role of an opponent to the others if you don't want the story to become lame, lacking fleshed-out antagonists.

## Designer's notes

*Hybris* is inspired by a whole bunch of good role-playing games. Of course there are similarities to other independent

RPGs like *The Pool* by James V. West and *Sorcerer* by Ron Edwards. Also classic role-playing games provide an often remarkably similar background. *Kult*, *Unknown Armies* and *Mage: The Ascension* are only some of these.

If you wonder where all those funny citations are from, beside the ones created by myself, they were taken from Albert Einstein, Stephen W. Hawking and the game Max Payne 2. Surely you have the brains to find out who said what?