

# Table of Contents

- Imagine**..... 1482
- Cline Gaming**..... 1482
  - Two Player Cline Games..... 1483
  - Multiplayer Cline Games ..... 1483
  - The Cline Environment ..... 1483
- The Cosmic Cline** ..... 1484
  - Public Position Pages..... 1484
  - Turn Periods..... 1484
  - Victory Resolution ..... 1484

*“Wheel in the sky keeps on turning  
Where will I be tomorrow?  
Wheel in the sky keeps me yearning”  
– Journey, “Wheel in the Sky” (1978)*

**Imagine:** A group of players sitting around a table playing Stellar Conquest (or you can substitute your favorite two-player or multi-player Napoleonic, WWI, WWII, WWIII, Railroad, Economic, Civilization or Space Wargame, or even just imagine a Chess game...); however – rather than each player playing, ‘owning,’ and exercising exclusive control over a single position in the game – each player on their turn is allowed to move the pieces of whichever side they like, and resolve battles, and discuss options with other players, such that the course and outcome of the game becomes a group effort at – for example – playing out the ‘perfect game,’ or perhaps playing an alternative history or non-traditional strategy, or testing a hypothesis, or creating the best story, rather than the traditional game where players exclusively control and play individual positions for victory or defeat.

There is another way to play...the sideways view of gaming.

**Cline Gaming:** The word “cline” (n.) primarily means a gradual change in the appearance and physiological characteristics of a species over a geographical area in response to environmental changes; the word has also been adapted to meteorology. Cline gaming changes the ‘appearance’ of a traditional board game (or computer game, online or PBEM game that plays like a traditional board game) by subtly shifting the player’s perspective of the game, thus changing the playing environment. It is in part, what you do when you play a multi-player game solitaire.

In ‘cline gaming,’ each player does not exclusively play a position in the game, as is traditional, and victory or loss for each player is not determined by how well the player plays their position. Rather, the players in a ‘cline game’ are position-less, and may on their turn play or be called upon, to play any position in the game. The rules of the traditional game being used for the ‘cline game’ and victory or defeat for the positions within the game, remain unchanged, i.e. it is still the same species of game, it just looks and plays different when played as a ‘cline game.’

- ✓ Cline gaming is about group problem solving in gaming, but it is not the same as cooperative games in that the group does not work together against a game-mechanically created opposition that is designed to eventually overwhelm the group if they do not solve the problem. Rather, ‘cline gaming’ is a form of competitive gaming where the group decision making plays each position based on a neutral decision making process. Dice rolls and card draws insure that enough randomness remains to keep it interesting; so it is not like using group decision making to play the perfect chess game.
- ✓ Board games such as Union Pacific (1999) instituted an idea similar to cline gaming in that the current majority shareholder of each railroad controls play of the railroad during its turn; shareholder control can change turn to turn as players jostle to control and promote their most profitable railroad investments. The board game Imperial (2006) strangely re-implemented this system into late 19<sup>th</sup> century international relations in Europe in sort of a capitalist/industrialist illuminati mechanic. Such games are not truly ‘position-less’ however; they have instead divorced the god-view player-

position from the game-board positions to simulate the manipulative relationship between wealthy business magnates and the lives of companies they control.

It is probably possible to ‘cline’ any game format that has players and positions. For example, it is possible to ‘cline’ a RPG if, rather than each player playing a Player Character (PC), the players take turns playing different characters (including NPCs who make ‘cameo’ appearances in the adventure or campaign) at different points in the game. A GM would still be needed to control the flow of the action, but in the ‘cline’ RPG setting the distinctions of PC and NPC blur and/or disappear and there is possibly less stress on the GM. At least, it should be fun to try.

- Two Player Cline Games: Two player games, especially the traditional historical battle or tactical games, are probably the most difficult to ‘cline,’ but I believe the first rule in adapting most two player games is that an odd number of players must play in the ‘cline’ game so that the same player on their turn will not play the same position twice; that is, an odd number of players forces players to play alternate positions on each of their turns.
  - ✓ Another way to think of ‘cline gaming’ is perhaps ‘multi-player solitaire’: It is what you’d be doing if you played the game solitaire, except that you don’t exercise exclusive control over both sides and don’t have to pretend to forget the location and strength of the other side’s pieces in a fog-of-war type game, like a block game.
- Multiplayer Cline Games: Multiplayer games are naturally easier to ‘cline’ (notice how easily the noun becomes a verb in English?). Many multiplayer games feature cards that players keep hidden; when adapted to the cline game format, either the cards must be face up, or any player must be able to look at the hidden cards when they play the position on their turn.
  - ✓ The easiest way is to make sure there are either more or less players than positions in the game, so that, if the game requires that the positions play in a particular order, the same player will not play the same position each time their turn to play comes around.
  - ✓ Another possible way to ‘cline’ a multiplayer game is to randomize the order in which the positions (or players) play their turns (some games already have mechanisms that change the order in which positions take turns, such as bidding, drawing, and so forth). However, no player should take two turns in a row or play the same position twice in a row, so for example, names could be drawn from a cup for each turn, and then set aside until the cup is empty, then replaced to start over again.
- The Cline Environment: Cline games are not about winning or losing. The ‘cline’ game concept separates players from positions. In most games, players ‘win’ the game by exclusively playing their position to victory. *Positions win victories*, i.e. many rules contain phrases such as, “the first position to reach X victory points, wins the game,” “when the cards are exhausted, count the chits, and the position (or player) with the least number of chits wins,” “the Germans win if ...,” “if at the end of X turns, the British have not captured X, the Americans win...”

The cline game is about group discussion, experimentation, objective neutrality, creating a story, intellectual honesty, and intellectual adventure, achieved by divorcing players from positions so that players do not have a direct stake (or emotional attachment) to any particular position. It’s about being a player in a game rather than a player position or a position. Players in a cline game may still compete, and have competing theories as to what one side or an-

other must do, however, such competition is less direct, than if they were playing the positions in the game. To the extent that groups feel that there must be a player who wins a cline game, such ways can be devised.

- ✓ For example, certain convention formats may require that an event have a winner; thus if a convention ever allowed a cline game to be run as an event, there may be such a requirement. Additionally, many players at conventions won't play in an event unless they can 'win' plaques, points, whatever, or gain toward an overall game rating in their favorite game or toward an overall win at the convention. Cline games will not be suitable for those formats or players.

**The Cosmic Cline:** Gestalt Genesis-Day Million, a multiplayer game which emphasizes control of realities and expanded perspectives, is easily suited to 'cline' play with only a couple of minor changes.

- **Public Position Pages:** All position information must be public so that all players can see them. Thanks to tabbed browsing, it will now be easier for players to view multiple position pages at once.
- **Turn Periods:** In the cline version of the game, individual players rather than positions will have periods of three days in which to submit their Actions. Because the cline game focuses on players rather than positions, potentially less players may play in a cline version of Gestalt Genesis-Day Million because the idea of team-play positions will be eliminated in this format. During each player's turn period, the player may submit Actions for any position (doing all of the things the player would be able to do if they were playing the position), with the necessary restriction that a position may not have more than one turn per week and all positions must have a turn at least once in a two week or month time period. This may force some players to submit Actions for positions that have not had a turn for awhile. Additionally, players should avoid submitting Actions for the same position two turns in a row.
- **Victory Resolution:** The GGDM cline game, like the normal game, ends when players want the game to end, when the game has run its course, when players are tired of the game, or when they quit participating. Victory Resolution may still occur at the end of the game for positions, however, as positions are now divorced from players, final victory for positions is academic in this format, and players will not receive Laurels or Victory Points (or alternatively, it could be agreed that all players receive one of each for playing in the game). Players may still vote for and receive Player Honors and have Honors recorded on the scores page for the players in a cline game. Conceivably, like the honors and awards handed out annually by the media and entertainment industries, additional categories of honors could be added, *ad infinitum*, and awarded by the players of the cline game, such that everyone gets a pat on the back at the end of the game.

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*"I climb atop a spiral stair  
An Oracle confronts me there  
He leads me on light years away  
Through astral nights, galactic days..."*

– Rush, 2112 (1976)

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