



Logosphere Beta 0.5a

The Logos

The Pluriverse

and Reality Itself

Philosophers who concern themselves with such things tell the following story about the origins of existence.

In the moment before Creation, there was the Word. And the Word was meaningless for there was no one to read it. And so the Reader was born at the moment of Creation, and the Reader gave meaning to the Word.

But the Reader pined for another with whom to share the meaning of the Word, and so in the moment following Creation was born a second Reader. And this Reader, too, gave meaning to the Word.

But this Reader gave the Word a meaning different from the first, and from this difference sprung other Words, other Meanings, other Readers, until the Pluriverse was formed, in all its languages and symbols.

But you've got more important things on your mind. You've got bills to pay and a world to protect, even if it doesn't quite realize it needs protecting.

1.

What's the

Logosphere?

In short, the Logosphere (also known as the Pluriverse) is everything there is and, possibly, everything there could be. It encompasses the world we know as well as the worlds of fiction and fancy. Until recently, the Logosphere was only a theory bandied about in the more esoteric journals of occult studies and parapsychology, but that all changed with the first documented Venn Sector in the Sudan in 1995. The brief appearance of a dinosaur-filled "lost world" in Africa made headlines around the world, and led to widespread acceptance of the concept the Logosphere and its impingement onto our reality.

VENN SECTORS

Venn Sectors are places where one world, or Paradigm, overlaps with another, creating an area where neither reality fully holds sway. These areas have been primarily documented on Baseline Earth, as this is where the majority of researchers are located, but there is some evidence to suggest that they occur just as frequently in other Paradigms.

PARADIGMS

By its strict definition, every world in the Logosphere is a Paradigm – a separate plane of existence governed by rules that are distinct from any other. In common parlance, however, the term Paradigm refers to any world other than Baseline Earth, simply because most people on Baseline Earth don't recognize that they're living by a set of rules the

way they see people doing in other realities; it's just the way things are. More information on Paradigms can be found in Chapter 4, Worlds.

BASELINE EARTH

Baseline Earth is the Earth we know and love, or at least it was up until the appearance of the first Venn Sector. It is the default base of operations assumed in this book, and is home to the Fourth Branch.

THE FOURTH BRANCH

The Fourth Branch is a paragovernmental agency that oversees the exploration of the Logosphere and works to keep Venn Sectors from causing too much panic on Baseline Earth. More information on the Fourth Branch can be found in the Organizations chapter.

2.

Character Creation

Creating a player character in Logosphere is a five step process. It is by no means required that these steps be followed in the order provided, but for simplicity the steps will be numbered as follows.

1. Determine the character's home Paradigm. This can be one of the described Paradigms included in this book, or it can be a new one created by the GM and player in partnership. The character's home Paradigm will help determine his personality and may affect the traits he begins with.
2. Purchase primary characteristics. Characters have six primary characteristics: Strength, Endurance, Agility, Education, Observation, and Willpower. Each primary characteristic starts at 10, which is human average. The PCs have 50 points to divide amongst these six characteristics; should they be so inclined, they can also lower a characteristic below 10 to raise another characteristic, on a 1-for-1 basis. No characteristic can be reduced below 5 or exceed 25 for a PC at this point.
3. Determine Hit Points and Combat Value. Starting Hit Points are equal to a character's Endurance plus his Willpower, divided by two, while his Combat Value is equal to one half of the sum of his Agility and Observation. Hit Points represent how much damage a character can take, while Combat Value is used to determine combat skills of all sorts, both offensive and defensive.

4. Select skills. Skills are determined by the player in conjunction with the GM. The player has 15 points to divide amongst as many skills as they wish.
5. Select Traits. Each player, in conjunction with the GM, creates four traits for his character. Traits are freeform descriptors that may provide the character with a bonus in certain situations, or with an item or ability not otherwise available. Traits that grant situational bonuses should grant a bonus of +4. Additionally, every character has a fifth trait: their Home Paradigm.

Example Character Creation.

John is going to be playing in a new game of Logosphere, and decides that he wants to play someone from Baseline Earth because he finds it easiest to identify with. He thinks for a moment, and comes up with a concept – Jack Brass, a former college football player who just never got on in the professional ranks. In keeping with this concept, he decides that the majority of his points will go into the three physical characteristics, putting Strength, Agility, and Endurance all at 20. On the mental side, John sees his character as strong-willed but not overly well-read or attentive, so he puts eight points into Willpower, and divides the remaining twelve evenly into Education and Observation. He then calculate's Big Jack's Hit Points and Combat Value: as Jack has an Endurance of 20 and a Willpower of 18, he has a total of $[(20+18)/2=19]$ Hit Points, while his Combat Value is equal to $[(20+16)/2=18]$.

Moving on to skills, John puts two ranks into American Football; he considered putting more in, but decided that Jack was a good but not great player in college, and it's been a few years since he played competitively. He also puts three ranks each into Firearms, Intimidation, and Brawling – he sees Jack's role with Fourth Branch as

the “muscle” and wants him to be suited to it. He's now spent 11 of his total 15 skill points and has a pretty good idea of where he's going. He spreads his remaining four points amongst Driving, Computers, Interrogation and, reluctantly, Paperwork. Big Jack never wanted to be a pencil pusher, but even the most action-oriented protagonist still has to file the occasional field report.

Turning to traits next, John ponders a bit. He knows that he wants Jack to be a Baseline Earther, so that takes care of his Home Paradigm. For his other traits, he consults with the GM and writes down Handsome, Cool Under Pressure, No-Nonsense, and Tough as Nails. John's now gotten all of the mechanical bits down on the page, and has a good idea of what his character is like off the page, as well.

OPTIONAL RULE: TRAIT DRAFTING

With the optional Trait Drafting rule, each player creates five traits, which are then placed into a list. Each player draws a tile to determine the order in which they will select a trait; for the first selection round, this is done in alphabetical order. The players then repeat the selection process in reverse order, then once more in alphabetical order, and finally a second time in reverse. This generation method is not for everyone – it will result in characters who may not be exactly what the players envisioned, but it can also generate some interesting combinations that players may not have thought of themselves.

SKILLS AND SKILL USAGE

Unlike most role-playing games, Logosphere doesn't use dice for determining success or failure. Instead it uses tiles with letters and values on them, such as you might find with in a game of Scrabble.

If a character has no ranks in a skill, they can attempt to use it untrained, but can play only one tile, adding it to one half the value of

his relevant characteristic (as specified when defining the skill.) The effect of skill ranks is detailed on the following chart.

Skill Rank	Effect on Skill Use
0 points	One tile may be added to the value of the relevant characteristic.
1 point	Any number of tiles may be added onto the value of the relevant characteristic.
2 points	Tiles added onto the value of the relevant characteristic plus four.
3 points	Tiles added onto the value of the relevant characteristic plus eight.
4 points	Tiles added onto the value of the relevant characteristic plus twelve.
5 points	Tiles added onto the value of the relevant characteristic plus sixteen.

Relevant characteristics are generally determined by the GM and player in conjunction. Any combat skills do not use one of the six Primary Characteristics, but instead rely on the Combat Value, representing the mixture of physical prowess and awareness required to be a good combatant.

To accomplish a task, you first declare what you intend to do, then you draw enough tiles to bring your hand up to a total of seven. You can spend these tiles on actions, such as punching a gangster in the

face, jumping out of a moving car, or trying to crack the encryption on a Top Secret government file. You can spend as many of these tiles as you have in your hand on any given action (unless you are untrained), but you can't redraw until the start of your next turn – meaning that if you spend all of your tiles trying to punch that gangster, you won't be able to get out of the way when he decides to do the same to you.

If the tiles you play form a word that is related to what you are attempting to accomplish, the total value of the tiles is doubled. Note that for this to apply you must play only the tiles that make up the word. You cannot play the letters W, O, R, D, X, and S in a duel and get the bonus. This means that it may sometimes be more worthwhile to play tiles that don't form than to play tiles that do.

Static vs. Variable Target Numbers: Accomplishing a task requires meeting or exceeding a Target Number. Depending on the situation, this Target Number may be either static or variable. Static Target Numbers are appropriate when the difficulty is more or less unchanging – generally involving inanimate objects, intellectual puzzles, or anything else where it is not being actively contested; variable Target Numbers come into play when the character is being opposed – combat, games of skill, and public debates are all examples of situations where a variable Target Number would apply. Regardless of the type of Target Number, one thing remains constant: the participants should not know what the number is before playing his tiles.

For static challenges, this is simple enough – the GM should simply not tell the player what number he is trying to beat. For variable challenges, on the other hand, each participant should play their tiles face down until the action is to be resolved; thus the players will not know what number they are trying to attain and, if she is participating, neither will the GM.

Example Skill Usage.

Sarah is attempting to cook a fancy dinner for a visiting diplomat. Unfortunately, as she's been a bit busy fending off intelligent pterodactyls and keeping up to date on the latest developments in nuclear physics, she hasn't had the chance to put any points into Cooking. Not wanting to take a chance on poisoning the politico and causing an international incident, she plays the highest value tile in her hand and hopes that the total of 15 can beat the Target Number.

Later on, Sarah is puzzling over an experiment in her lab. With an Education of 18 and 4 ranks in Nuclear Physics, she has a total of 30 before she even plays a single tile.

HOW HARD IS IT?

Here are sample Target Numbers to use as a guideline when running a game. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list by any means.

Example Situation	Target Number
Untrained individual can accomplish easily (tie shoelaces, kick a man when he's down.)	6
Trained individual can accomplish easily (drive down street in ideal conditions, fire gun at unmoving man-sized target.)	12
Trained individual can accomplish with some effort (drive down street in steady rainfall, file income tax.)	15

Example Situation	Target Number
Trained individual can accomplish with substantial effort or luck (drive through torrential rains, climb cliff.)	18
Well-trained individual can accomplish with substantial effort (fly a passenger jet, perform surgery.)	25
Highly-trained expert can accomplish with substantial effort or concentration (perform battlefield surgery.)	30
The sort of thing people tell stories about (shoot a hole in a coin in mid-air, catch flies with chopsticks.)	50

3.

Combat

Sadly, in the world of Logosphere as in our own world, conflicts all too often devolve into violence. In light of this, more detail is required to handle combat than most other skill checks.

If all participants are aware of the impending combat, they draw their hands up to seven tiles. They then play tiles, face down, to determine initiative. This is the one time when tiles are not drawn back up to 7 at the start of the turn; the first turn of combat is assumed to start for everyone simultaneously, and thus the hand is not drawn back up to seven until the start of the next turn.

Once initiative has been determined, the participants determine what their course of action will be. A combatant will decide what skill he is going to use to attack his foe, and then play as many tiles as he wishes face down; the defender then has the option to use any combat skills he may have to try to counter the attack, playing a number of tiles from his hand as well. Once both attacker and defender have had the opportunity to play tiles, they must determine who is successful by comparing the totals. If the attacker scores higher than the defender, he is successful; if not, the attack fails.

If the attack is successful, base damage is equal to one point of damage for a successful hit, plus one additional point for every multiple of your target's HP by which you exceeded the target To Hit number. HP values lower than 1 are treated as 1 for the purposes of this calculation.

Example Combat.

Martin wants to hit Weasel in the nose. He gets a total of 35 on his attack, exceeding Weasel's defensive number by 9. Weasel has 4 hit points left, and so Martin has succeeded by a multiple of 2, meaning he does an extra two points of damage, for three total.

Note that this means that, with each successful damaging attack, the amount of damage you take will quite likely go up – not unlike a professional boxer being slowly worn down by repeated jabs and body blows.

Weapons alter the amount of damage through weapon multipliers: a club has a weapon modifier of 1-3; a knife a multiplier of 1-6; a pistol has a multiplier of 2-12; and a rifle a multiplier of 2-16. These multipliers are added on after the base damage is determined. A combatant trained in the use of the weapon they are wielding can always choose to inflict only one point in damage, ignoring any multipliers and foregoing the possibility of additional base damage, but this must be declared before the attacker plays his tiles. This represents pulling a punch, carefully targetting a shot, etc. An untrained attacker cannot choose to do less damage in this fashion – thus he is more likely to injure his target more seriously than he had intended to.

INJURY, UNCONSCIOUSNESS, AND DEATH

A character with 0 hit points or fewer is unconscious (or deactivated, dissipated, or otherwise unable to function, as appropriate for the character.) For a character to die, one of the following situations must occur:

1. The attacker must intend to kill the target *and* must reduce him to 0 hit points or below (in the event that the damage was not inflicted by an attacker – such as during a natural disaster – the GM should use her judgement); or

2. The character must take damage equal to his maximum hit points *after* having already been reduced to 0 hit points by a previous attack.

The rules of certain Paradigms may alter this; for instance, in a Paradigm following the rules of a Saturday morning cartoon, death from violence may be almost impossible.

GETTING BETTER.

An unconscious character can regain consciousness after a number of minutes equal to $5 +$ the number of hit points below zero they are. To accomplish this, the character make an untrained Endurance check (that is, Endurance plus one tile) against a target number equal to the total number of hit points they have lost. If this is successful, the character regains consciousness and returns to 1 hit point; if it is unsuccessful, the character remains unconscious until revived by an external force.

To bring a character out of unconsciousness, another character must use the First Aid or other medical skill to beat a target number equal to twice the total number of hit points the character has lost. This can be attempted once per hour

Once a character is conscious, he heals hit points at a rate of 1 point per day if engaging in normal activity (this does not include combat or other strenuous activities player characters often get up to), 2 points per day if doing nothing but resting. This can be doubled if under the care of a physician who succeeds in beating a target number equal to the total number of hit points lost by the character. Characters cannot treat themselves in this manner, for obvious reasons.

4.

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Worlds

While the vast majority of Paradigms that have been discovered correspond to various forms of entertainment – Soap Operas, Jacobean Tragedies, Pro Wrestling, Kabuki Theatre, and so on – others follow rules that have no direct analog. Some people who have studied Venn Sectors speculate that these seemingly variant Paradigms correspond to forms of entertainment from other civilizations – possibly on other planets, or perhaps in other Paradigms themselves. This has brought up the somewhat unsettling possibility that our Baseline Earth could very well be a Paradigm itself, shadowing the creative impulses of some other world.

When a character is in their home Paradigm, they find that reality greatly encourages them to follow the rules that govern it, granting them a bonus of +4 to skill checks for actions that are in accordance with its rules but penalizing them an equivalent amount for skill checks counter to them. Characters outside of their home Paradigm are not governed by their rules, and natives from other Paradigms are not subject to any restrictions from the world in which they find themselves.

Oddly, Baseline Earth does not appear to have any such effect on its natives – but it is possible that the rules are so ingrained in the minds of the scientists who study this phenomenon that they cannot perceive it.

What follows are two sample Paradigms. Gamesmasters are encouraged to develop further Paradigms and Venn Sectors for their

campaign.

THE CITY-STATE OF PRALDOW

The City-State of Praldow is swathed in perpetual night. Vampires run corporations and frequent nightclubs, while werewolves and other shapeshifters hold running turf wars with one another and with the vampires. Humans struggle against the oppressive darkness, their spirits broken. Angst and decadence are de rigueur, with rage and self-loathing lurking just below the surface.

The Paradigm of the City-State of Praldow is one of the most powerful ever discovered; its tropes are such that anyone who spends an extended period of time there is liable to succumb to the negative energies that suffuse the world.

Rule Set: Non-humans must operate in secrecy; power is dehumanizing.

FRANCISCO BAY

There are a million stories in Francisco Bay, and each of them is told in black and white. Hard-drinking PIs take on cases for leggy dames, while gangsters smuggle priceless artifacts and cops on the take look the other way.

Although the Paradigm of Francisco Bay is named after its most prominent city, it encompasses an entire planet seemingly modeled on Hammett novels and Bogart films. Characters in the Paradigm could just as easily find themselves drinking whiskey beneath struggling ceiling fans in a tropical dive bar as tailing a woman across the Golden Gate Bridge.

Rule Set: No deal is sacred; nobody is clean.

5.

Organizations

As Baseline Earth appears to be the sole Paradigm aware of the existence and nature of the Logosphere, the majority of organizations to be encountered in travelling across it are based there. However, there are many other organizations that wield at least as much power and influence within their own Paradigm.

THE FOURTH BRANCH

The Fourth Branch is a paragovernmental agency that oversees the exploration of the Logosphere and works to keep Venn Sectors from causing too much panic on Baseline Earth. The typical denizen of Baseline Earth is aware of Venn Sectors and Paradigms in much the way that the typical North American or Western European is aware of tsunamis and typhoons – they know they exist, and have perhaps seen them on television, but they don't really pay them much attention in their daily lives. It's the responsibility of agents of the Fourth Branch to keep it this way.

Agents of the Fourth Branch are known as protagonists and are drawn from different Paradigms as well as Baseline Earth itself. Protagonists are generally sent on missions in teams of four to six, but depending on the situation more or fewer agents can be assigned to a given case.

For obvious reasons, when protagonists are performing a mission in a Paradigm away from Baseline Earth, they are expected to maintain complete secrecy – most Paradigms are unaware of their nature as such, and exposure to them of the concepts of the Logosphere, Venn

Sectors, and other realities could have untold consequences. To help maintain this secrecy, protagonists on official Fourth Branch business are given highly advanced esotechnological cloaks that cause whatever the clothing the wearer has on to automatically appear to be appropriate attire for the Paradigm. It also grants the wearer a limited ability to fly, but this is to be used only as a last resort for emergency extraction, as in most (but not all) Paradigms flight is not an accepted means of personal transport. As with much of the gear available to Fourth Branch operatives, the exact nature and origin of this esotechnology is kept secret.

When investigating Venn Sectors, the issue of whether or not this level of secrecy is required is generally left up to the officer responsible for the mission briefing, with the field leader having authority to make exceptions should the situation warrant.

In addition to their cloaks, protagonists have access to a variety of unique equipment dubbed "esotechnology" for its esoteric origins. This includes communication equipment capable of transmitting between Paradigms and teaching devices that can teach a protagonist a new language in a matter of hours.



THE PSYCHIC CIRCLE

While the Fourth Branch operates with the tacit approval of numerous international governments, the Psychic Circle is a private

organization that enjoys no such arrangements. Members of the Wheel, nicknamed “spokes”, operate on two levels: the public face of the Psychic Wheel is a network of psychic advisory hotlines, tarot and palm readers, and motivational speakers, while behind the scenes they work to bring the Paradigms into conjunction with Baseline Earth.

The members of the Psychic Circle believe that the Paradigms, rather than being actual separate universes, are manifestations of humanity's collective subconscious, and they hope that bringing the Paradigms into alignment with Baseline Earth will unify the human spirit and usher in a new age of peace and enlightenment as a result.

This belief often brings them into conflict with the Fourth Branch, who have no interest in allowing any Paradigms to merge with Baseline Earth. As Venn Sectors appear to be transient in nature and no means has yet been found to render one permanent, the Psychic Circle has so far been frustrated in their goals, but they continue to research Paradigms in the hopes of learning more about both the Logosphere and the nature of the human psyche.

THE DIET OF WYRMS

The Diet of Wyrms is the ruling body of the City-State of Praldow, composed entirely of elder vampires, or wyrms. While they have not yet discovered the exact nature of the Logosphere, they have a measure of occult knowledge and a vast influence over all aspects of life in their Paradigm. If they were ever to discover the existence of the Logosphere and a way to travel across it, they would no doubt attempt to expand their dominion throughout the myriad other worlds.

Members of the Diet of Wyrms have recently contacted the Seelie and Unseelie Courts for the first time in centuries, and with their interaction with this alternate plane of existence the possibility of the vampire elders discovering the Pluriverse has increased dramatically.

6.

Character Sheet

CHARACTER NAME _____ PLAYER NAME _____

STRENGTH _____

EDUCATION _____

AGILITY _____

OBSERVATION _____

ENDURANCE _____

WILLPOWER _____

HIT POINTS _____

COMBAT VALUE _____

TRAITS

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

SKILL NAME

RANK

TOTAL
