Homework #2 Dark Souls Affordance Cues

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From Software showed a grate mastery of the proper use of affordance cues in Dark Souls. The use of affordance cues in the game is quite numerus, and so subtle that I never really noticed most of them until I looked at what was influencing some of my unconscious decisions while playing.

The most obvious and prolific use of affordance cues is in all of the small and plentiful details in the level designs. These have a very wide range of subtlety, from a large quantity of chard and blackened bodies on a bridge to whether or not the small chain on the side of a chest is riveted to the ground or broken. Each of these subtle details gives the player insight into the possible dangers in the world around them as well as implicit elements of the story of each location in the game, but only if they pay attention and give them a moment’s thought. For instance the bodies on the bridge is a warning about the fire drake that will ambush you while the presents of a broken chain on a chest indicates that it is a mimic and will try to eat you if you try to open it. These subtle hints reward the observant players as well as giving other players a foreboding that something might happen adding to the atmosphere.

A much more subtle but most influential use of affordance cues in Dark Souls is that of the lighting. Both the major and minor sources of light in the game are placed in such a way as to guide you thru the drastically different and quite large levels on a fairly straightforward path. The light always attracts you, whether it is the setting sun over Anor Lando drawing you towards the cathedral, the faint glow of stones and souls showing you a possible path thru the pitch blackness of the Tomb of the Giants, or the comforting glow of a bonfire inviting you to rest. Each of the lighting sources enhances the ambiance of the environment it is in while also drawing the player thru the game “like a moth to a flame”. This type of implicitly directing the player gives them a since of freedom that they cannot experience if the level was more confined and linear but produces very similar results in the path that they take.

There are several other aspects of Dark Souls that incorporates affordance cues such as the enemy design, attacks, and NPC behavers. Dark Souls have one of the best implementations of affordance cues I have encountered.