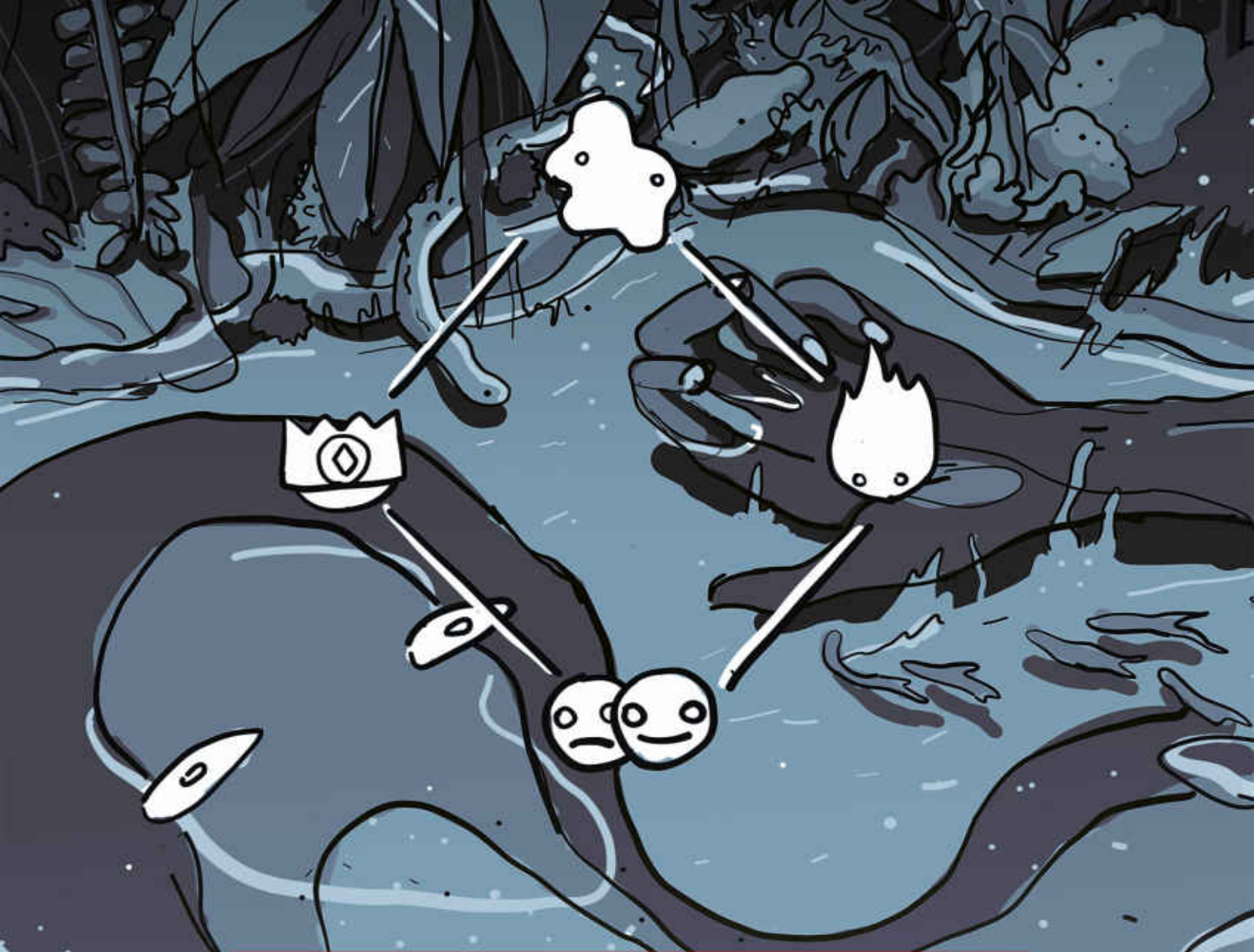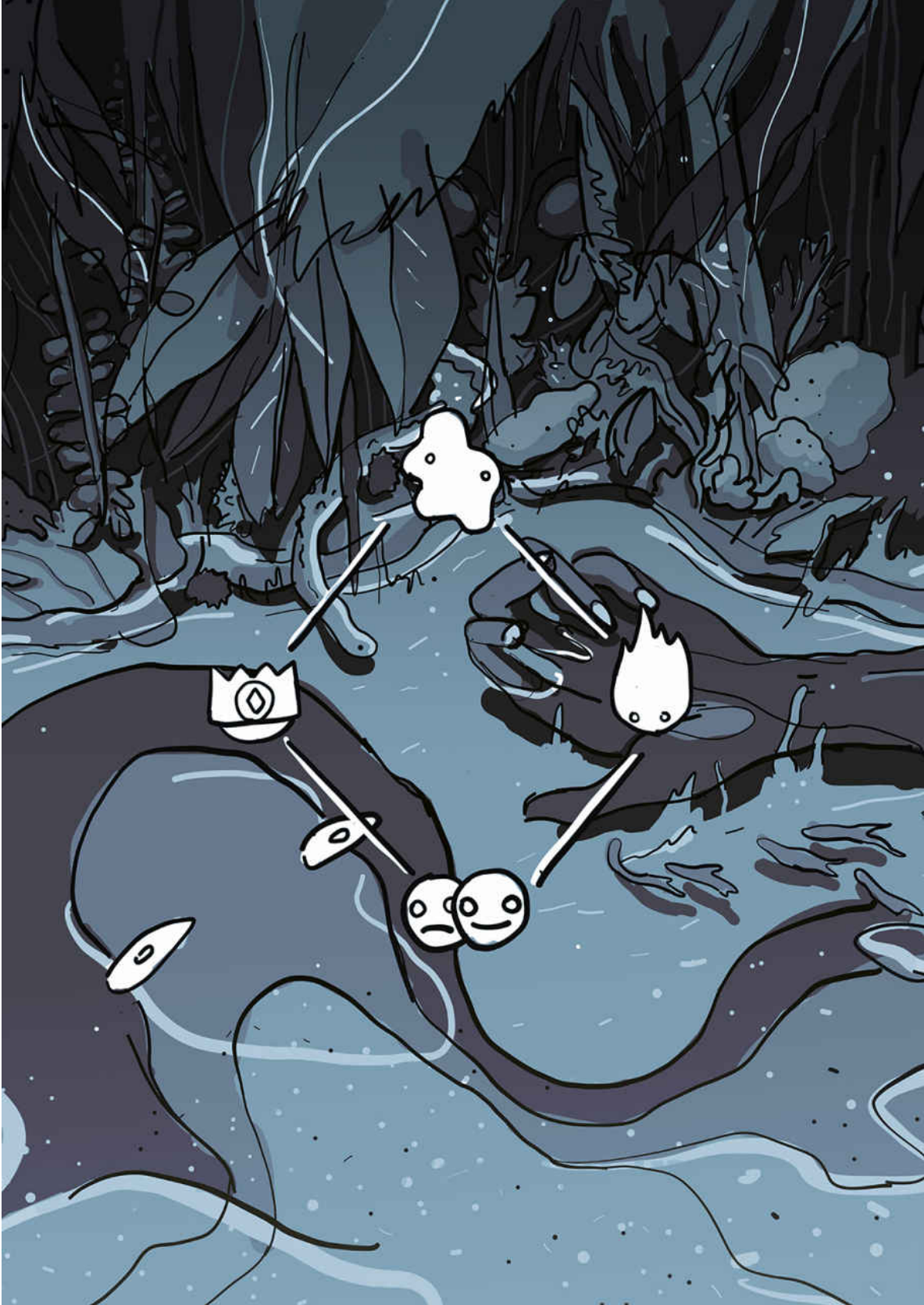# EMISSARY'S GUIDE TO WORLDING

IAN CHENG

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EMISSARY'S
GUIDE TO
WORLDING

BY

IAN CHENG

EMISSARY'S GUIDE TO WORLDING
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CREDITS

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PREFACE

This book refines ideas originally presented in *Emissaries Guide To Worlding* (2018), published by Serpentine Galleries and Koenig Books, with support by Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo. That book was a crucial starting point in understanding the larger psychological dynamics at work during the making of the *Emissaries* trilogy of simulations. Many thanks to Veronica So, Ben Vickers, Rebecca Lewin, Joseph Constable, Hans Ulrich Obrist, and Serpentine Galleries for their encouragement and help realizing that book.

This expanded version, *Emissary's Guide To Worlding*, came from a feeling that the subject of Worlding deserves a usable playbook, beyond a behind-the-scenes study of the *Emissaries* simulations. It formalizes Worlding as a practice for broader application, delves into a more detailed model of human creativity, and suggests strategies for successfully creating Worlds. Many thanks to Veronica So and Nick Sung for shaping these ideas with me. Many thanks to Andrea Lissoni, Andrea Bellini, and the Biennial of Moving Image 2018 for supporting this iteration.

This is not a book about worldbuilding, or how to make your fantasy novel more credible. It's a book about Worlding. It's about re-enchanting our complex times by creating futures you can believe in, over and over again. This book outlines a path for making Worlds that can cross the threshold of imagination into aliveness – Worlds that can perpetuate drama and flourish even after its creator has exited.

Worlding requires an exploration into the psychology of the artist. This book deals with identifying and channeling four different patterns of creative problem solving inside oneself I call 'masks,' who each in turn battle for creative control. The updated book title advocates for a deeper

understanding of the role of the most unpracticed of these masks: the Emissary. I'm still getting to know the Emissary myself and learning how to work with it. Sometimes it asks me to devote my life to its ideas. It projects forward futures I believe in but can't imagine finding the time or energy to realize. It exhausts me. But after engaging with the Emissary for three years, I see how it has created a new home for my other masks to do their work with curiosity and certainty of purpose. I see now that it is the addition of the Emissary to the creative process that makes it possible for art to be a fertile answer to the question of how to survive and thrive in our complex times.

As the creator of a few fledgling Worlds, I'm in the strange position of knowing just enough about Worlding to see life excitedly in its terms, and not knowing nearly enough to realize the extent of my cluelessness. What follows are principles and observations about Worlds and Worlding that have helped me metabolize my experiences so far, and have oriented me toward a new paradigm of imaginative fitness as I embark on my next projects. I've approached the writing of this ebook as an iterative process, like software, with updates to come as I digest and improve upon it. I will keep a version history here:

Emissaries Guide To Worlding, version 0.9, April 23, 2018.

- Concept of four masks.

Emissary's Guide To Worlding, version 1.0, Nov 4, 2018.

- Formal definition of World, Worlding, Aliveness, Autonomy.
- Deep dive into the four masks and their dynamics.
- Highlighting of the Emissary as key addition to the creative process.
- Pragmatic strategies for Worlding.
- Revised illustrations and figures.
- Rewritten to be agnostic to *Emissaries*.
- Refactored title to reflect Emissary mask's importance.

This book uses World (uppercase W) to refer to the artificially constructed art form that is the subject of this book. The rare use of world (lowercase w)

refers to its common understanding: the general greater Reality we are subsumed in.

INTRODUCTION

From an early age, my mom would take me movie hopping on weekends at the megaplex cinema in the San Fernando Valley. She would buy us matinée tickets for the first show in the morning and we'd hop into four or five different movies until dinner. The transition between theater rooms always made me anxious. I was afraid we'd get caught sneaking into the next movie and have to endure the shame of being kicked out. But my mom savored this game. She would instruct me to go to the restroom, remove an outer layer and mess up my hair. I'd come out to see her transformed in glasses, a tied-up bun, wearing a jacket. On our journey to the next theater room, she would risk asking an usher for directions with played urgency, or take her time browsing snacks at the concession stand. I'd nag her to keep moving. A wave of relief would come over me every time we made it inside the next theater and sank into our seats. We had beaten the odds, enough to play again. The movies themselves, whatever their content, were a zone of stability before the next hop between theaters.

Later, when my parents were between jobs, they would buy a lotto ticket every Sunday with the same six lucky numbers. For them, the California Lottery was just a little game to satisfy a superstitious itch, not an actual answer to employment. My dad did the math: the odds of winning were 300 million to one. Smaller than getting struck by lightning three times in your life. I'd ask myself, is luck on our side this week? A mysterious voice would answer: *count the birds on the wire and all will transpire!* Every Sunday I'd ritualistically count the birds outside my window, tune into the live number drawing, and bet the universe that this evil random game might resolve something. And every Sunday, when the right numbers never came, I'd demand that the voice explain itself. But it only spoke in nonsense until my anxiety built back up to next week's roll of the game.

In hindsight, I yearned for some tutorial that might have been called Navigating The Chasm. If I had known to see the transitional gap between theaters as an opportunity to inhabit a role and choose the next chapter of my day, I would have learned to enjoy the thrill of creating choices. And if I had learned to hallucinate that the feeling of indeterminacy meant I was in the most interesting part of a story, I would have felt more at peace with the voices in my head, each offering an inventive twist to light my path.

Doctors can listen to their intuition. Lawyers can listen to their reason. But Artists get to listen to all the voices inside them going back to childhood. Art can let the Artist experiment with different selves. The picky can become visionary, and the shy can summon the operatic. Psychiatrist Julian Jaynes says these inner voices are vestiges from a time before narrative consciousness, a neurological adaptation in which an imagined figure acts through you during times of stress. Psychiatrist Eric Berne describes a Child, a Parent, and an Adult persona living inside us, each talking over the other in the mind, each competing for expression through one body.

Some cultures like the Balinese have rich practices devoted to deliberately exercising these trance-like possession states, often using the device of masks to characterize their persona, and acknowledge them as a vital dimension of being alive. Improv teacher Keith Johnstone says that masks "drive the personality out of the body" and allow vital, possessive spirits to take control. I became an Artist in part to make a living out of evolving my relationship to the masks inside me. Masks who I felt were the source of my creative impulses, but were not fully expressed or aware of each other. I wanted to feel alive to them and grow their personalities. I wanted to provoke their gifts by deliberately dwelling in chasms that a younger me might have evaded or felt un-equipped for. In art, you choose your own chasms, and the masks are there to light a path where none is given.

In 2014, I hallucinated this chasm: 'The life of an emissary who is caught between unravelling old realities and emerging weird ones.' What did this mean? Who said it? Where did this come from? I believe it came from the desires of the masks. One mask wanted to work with talented people to tell a story. Another wanted to understand how to create enduring characters. Another wanted to engineer multi-agent simulations that could trick me into

loving systems and complexity. Another wanted to combine these things together to produce a World that could 'write itself', the way nature writes itself. This collection of desires from the masks inside me was the genesis of *Emissaries*.

Over the next two years, I struggled to reconcile the desires of the masks. How could a deterministic story mix with an open-ended simulation? How could characters achieve complexity without losing their instant recognition? How could art be authored in its meaning but also live beyond its author and mutate itself? Through much trial and error, team spirit, and psychological reckoning, the masks began to align. The masks got me to practice the feeling of dwelling in the absence of existing Worlds. I wanted to create a World from nothing, to understand the artificiality of making a World, and to become attentive to the magical moment when a World begins to take on a life of its own, despite its artificiality. Most of all, I wanted to know how making a World might make existing Worlds seem less sacred. Together on my behalf, the masks began exercising a strange yet unified activity: Worlding.

What was really happening here? Why now, at this moment in my life? How could I understand the masks in a way that would make them reliably accessible? And why was a World the product of their furious activity?

This book is for anyone interested in reconciling the unnatural art of Worlding with the finitude of human psychology. Yes, Worlding begins as the work of your inner creative gods. Your masks are tasked with choosing a present, storytelling its past, and simulating its futures. But once the World gets going, Worlding becomes the work of the mask of the Emissary who betrays the gods to serve the World itself and nurture its changes. You will switch between masks, encourage their strengths, resist their individual conclusions, and aim them towards the collaborative production of a World. You will learn to channel what the Director wants, what the Cartoonist wants, what the Hacker wants, and what the Emissary wants. And with practice, they will each become a choice rather than a blurry stranger who intrudes on the creative process.

So prepare to say goodnight to 'I'. Goodnight to your self, your ego, your composure, your coherent identity. This isn't goodnight forever. It's

goodnight for now so we can clear the way to fully welcome the masks. These masks channel states of mind that already live inside you, that are already aspects of you. You know them all, but not equally well, because they rarely get to steer the mind in a sustained way, let alone coordinate towards a purpose. But today, our urgent purpose is Worlding.

Worlding, as we'll see, is a full-brain, all hands on deck activity. By the time 'I' wakes back up, the masks will have taken you through such strange lands and through such unexpected flourishings that you won't help but feel transformed. Perhaps the unnatural art of Worlding will begin to feel more natural. And perhaps, if all goes well, you might remember your own stories of Worlding fondly enough to want to World again and again and again, as many times as this lifetime can contain.

CHAPTER 1:
WORLDS AND WORLDING

WHAT IS A WORLD?

What is a World? A World evokes a place. A World has borders. A World has laws. A World has values. A World has a language. A World can grow. A World can collapse. A World has mythic figures. A World has visitors. A World has members who live in it. A World looks arbitrary to a person outside of it. A World satisfies both the selfish and collective interests of its members. A World grants magic powers, especially the power to filter what matters to it. A World gives permission to live differently than the wild outside. A World creates an agreement about what is relevant. A World counts certain actions inside it as meaningful. A World undergoes reformations and disruptions. A World incentivizes its members to keep it alive. A World is a container for stories of itself. A World expresses itself in many forms, but is always something more.

All these qualities describe a World from the perspective of living inside one, in all its manifest subsuming glory. But this view takes for granted how a World begins, how it comes to be. To think about beginnings, we have to go back to the moment before a World, to the moment of a creator looking at Reality - meaningless but interesting - and wondering what to do with it. Philip K Dick said, "Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away." A World is conceived when a creator decides to pick some part of Reality and start *believing* in it again. The belief is fragile, but immediately suggests interesting drama to the creator. The creator sets about trying to shape this belief and channel its potential. And at the same

time, the creator begins to imagine another pleasure: putting aside the role of creator and being a person living inside the belief, the beneficiary of its potentiality, a believer.

From the artistic perspective of creating a World, a fertile definition suggests itself.

> **A World is a future you can believe in:**
> **One that promises to survive its creator,**
> **and continue generating drama.**

A future you can believe in is one that sustains some combo of special conditions that you find meaningful and want to give energy to its continued existence. Because these special conditions promise to make your future better, or more pleasurable, or more interesting to live in. Because you also know these conditions would not exist in Reality otherwise. Not quite the way you like it. The special conditions might be as modest as the pleasure of an entertaining character who only lives within a fantasy World. It might be the special neurological state that can only be mastered in a private psychedelic World. It might be the complex of rituals, hypnotic state, and mythology that exists in the World of a particular religion. Your belief in a World drives your actions toward giving a World expression in physical, verbal, and thought form. In return, you are rewarded with getting closer to a future you want to live in. Later, you are rewarded by others for whom the World is also a future they can believe in.

An important feature of this definition of a World is its double promise: when a World can "survive its creator," that means it has achieved sufficient stability to regulate and safeguard its potentiality without authorial intervention. This is a World's requirement for Autonomy. When a World can "continue generating drama," a World is sufficiently interesting for people to care about and want to explore. This is a World's requirement for Aliveness. When a World is keeping its promise, it continues to be a future you can believe in.

A World that fails on its promise to "survive its creator" will rot and die soon after its creator exits. Think of a franchise whose canon is authoritatively governed by its author. Think of a company whose vision, spirit, ideas,

relationships, and values were solely embodied in its founder. Likewise, a World that fails on its promise to "continue generating drama" becomes a boring utopia populated by the undead. Think of the deadening World experienced by zoo animals. Think of a massive multiplayer game lacking enough emergent gameplay: everyone exits, except the bots, because no one can believe that an interesting future will come of it.

"Drama" means problems that trigger interesting new paths in a World, that arouse its members in unexpected ways, without causing total collapse. A new law that re-allocates base income to every member of a World is a reformative kind of drama. An assassination of a World's lead emissary is a disruptive kind of drama. Drama reminds a World's members of its aliveness and keeps the World worth fighting for.

So a World begins with the creator looking at Reality and imagining a future it can believe in. The creator works to make this future come true when the creator solves for the Aliveness, and later, the Autonomy of the World. How to do this is the subject of Worlding.

There is a bitesize way to say all this: A World is a future you can believe in, by promising to become an infinite game.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WORLDS

Religious scholar James Carse says there are two kinds of games: finite games and infinite games. A finite game is a game you play to win. It has clear rules and a defined ending. An infinite game is a game you play to keep playing. If it is at risk of ending, the rules must change to keep the game going. According to Carse, the ultimate infinite game is evolutionary life itself: Nature.

For us humans, life is filled with the familiar contests of finite games: Deadlines. Deals. Rankings. Dating. Elections. Sports. College. War. Poker. Lotteries. When our finite games are won and done, what is strange is that we don't exit back into base Reality. We wake up in a field of infinite games that perpetually mediate our contact with base Reality. We choose to live in

these infinite games because they give us leverage, structure, and meaning over a base Reality that is indifferent to our physical or psychological health.

We have many names for these infinite games: Families. Institutions. Religions. Nations. Subcultures. Cultures. Social Realities. Let's call them WORLDS.

A World is a construction. It is nothing compared to the true infinite game of Nature, but it is infinite enough because it sustains the qualities of an infinite game long enough and surprising enough for humans to treat it with the status of being alive. A World is an artificial living thing, but a living thing nonetheless. It is ongoing, absorbs change, and attracts players to help perpetuate it. A World is marked by artificial boundaries that filter the shock of Reality's unending surprises and the complexities that they create. Yet a World is itself complex enough that we can generatively inhabit it and create new meaning within its local language. A World asks us to believe in its inventions and contradictions and to be 'safe' from our disbelief. In return, a World eats back at Reality, arms us with perspective, furnishes us with meaning, and gives us some measure of agency to expressively deal with new surprises from Reality. A World offers what Ursula Le Guin describes as 'room enough' to survive, thrive, and imagine possible futures for ourselves, indefinitely.

Up until recently, Worlds were the achievement of long periods of cultural evolution. Think of a nation or a religion. An individual may have originated an idea or performed an act that sparked a World. But no one person authored a World. A World emerged from an iterative process over many generations. Its character formed as a result of stretching itself to accommodate new surprises from Reality. Its health was maintained by players with the power, prestige, and tribal identification to do so. A World perpetually earned its infinite game status by continuing to stay alive through the people who believed in its meaning, lived by its laws, and benefited from its stabilizing structure.

What about fictive worlds? It seems that authors of fiction have been making Worlds for a long time now. But fictional narratives on their own are only the spark of a world to come, the DNA of a world, and threaten to collapse without their original author. To turn a fiction into a World, a World needs an

engine of ongoingness that can generate complexity and therefore surprises, without the supervision of its original author. In the past, engines of prestige and status powered religious Worlds. Recently, engines of commerce have powered fantasy Worlds, manufactured through an expansion of media – the fiction becomes the movie, becomes the video game, becomes the toys, spinoffs, theme park, becomes the working mega-economy of a franchise. This was the innovation of twentieth-century Worlders like Walt Disney, George Lucas, Steve Jobs.

Can we make Worlds on our own? The guardians of old Worlds will tell you a world cannot simply be made by one person in less than one lifetime. It is the product of an evolutionary process. A World requires a past that is complex enough to feel lived in by other players. People don't just want the spark of a World, they expect to discover a World fully formed, inhabit its complexities, believe in its potentiality, and continue to generate meaning from it. If you truly wish to manufacture a World, it will cost you billions and a lifetime of work spent incentivizing other humans to occupy your World. How can a single mind conceive an infinite game, enact its ongoingness, and make a repeatable practice of Worlding?

Luckily, we are in the midst of a strange transitional era. Worlds are stretching faster than we can stomach. Old Worlds are forking off younger Worlds to keep their games going. World boundaries are breaking and reforming. We are developing not only a tolerance for the disorientations caused by the stretching of Worlds, but a desire to experience a mass variety of Worlds. More is better: a proliferation of Worlds gives us an opportunity to consciously reflect on the artificiality of Worlds and appreciate how they allow us to engage with Reality expressively. For the first time, we feel a sense of agency in choosing our life's portfolio of infinite games to play or to exit. Most profoundly, with the affordances offered by simulation and artificial intelligence (AI), non-human players are poised to help perpetuate the ongoing drama of Worlds, thereby reducing the requirement that Worlds need to incentivize economic scale or religious fulfilment to stay alive strictly via humans. There is the feeling that creating a World – Worlding – might be just within reach of an individual artist.

WORLDING IS SOLVING FOR ALIVENESS

What is Worlding? Worlding is the artistic activity of an individual artist conceiving, incubating, triggering, and nurturing a World towards aliveness.

We can look at the journey of Worlding on an ALIVENESS spectrum. Like a baby, a World begins its life incubating in the care of its creator, not alive, not self regulating, not generating its own drama. When a World is born, it is technically alive, but fragile. The creator celebrates but carefully guides the World's every move. When a World begins to generate its own drama, it is unquestionably alive to the creator's delight, and attracts new members who believe in its future and wish to further its expression. And when a World is so alive that it exceeds its creator's ability to envision its future, the World either peaks or is granted Autonomy.

The spectrum of Aliveness can span from an idle World doodled in the margins of a notebook to the macro simulation of Nature itself. This spectrum includes all the Worlds that fail to achieve infinite game status, the ones never quite survive its creator and continue to generate drama. Novels that never turn into media mythology. The business that lives and dies by its owner. The MMO that serves only as training for bots. The fictional religion whose church is a message board with five members. As long as they remain a future that someone believes in, they keep the status of being alive, even if barely. Here, we must take an explicit moral position about Worlds: a World is better alive than dead, better when it keeps striving to become an infinite game, better autonomous than peaked. In other words, we should aspire to make Worlds that maximize ALIVENESS.

Here is a formula for measuring where a World stands on the ALIVENESS spectrum:

WORLD'S ALIVENESS = (Evidence Usage / Creator's Hold)

Evidence Usage means the sum quantity of the usage of all manifested expressions of the World. For Star Wars, all the films watched, toys played with, novelizations read, conventions attended, vfx technique innovations forked, online forum conversations, images circulating in people's minds, and influence on other creator's Worlds constitute its evidence usage. For a personal blog, the caring authorship and tinkering of the blog itself by its

creator, its influence on its reader's thought, bots ranking and scrapping its content, constitutes its evidence usage. A World's Evidence Usage approximates how much people believe in a World enough to perpetuate its expression. Evidence Usage drops when the expressions of a World go unused. There may be evidence somewhere of an ancient cult that could transcend spacetime, but it is lost or no longer believed in, and therefore a World with zero aliveness. Evidence Usage that remains unchanging but non-zero means a World is alive, whether to a thousand people or one person.

"Creator's Hold" refers to the degree of authoritative control the World's creator has on evidence production. The stronger the Creator's Hold, the less permission the creator grants to the World to generate new evidence of itself through its members. Think of Hayao Miyazaki and his strong Creator's Hold over both the Worlds of his movies and the World of Studio Ghibli. When Miyazaki announced his retirement, new directors considered for future productions had to fulfill working in the mold of Miyazaki, and when Miyazaki reviewed their work he found their work inferior. Production at Ghibli halted. In contrast, the weaker the Creator's Hold, the more freedom there is for the World and its members to generate evidence on their own and perpetuate the World beyond the creator. The Creator's Hold on Nature is basically zero. No one is looking to a universe god or Mr. Big Bang or a higher dimensional simulator for permission to generate new and interesting evidence within the domain of Nature, which makes it a really special World to continue creating in.

When a Creator's Hold approaches 1.0 — an authoritative grip on a World — so long as evidence keeps getting produced and used under the creator's control, a World's aliveness can remain non-zero. However, when the creator exits or dies, the World left behind and those in it were so dependent on the creator to permit and guide evidence creation that no new evidence can confidently be made. Evidence usage might still persist, but often the confidence to keep expressing the World diminishes, and actual usage is reduced to only a few enthusiasts or loyalists. Sometimes, Creator's Hold increases after the creator dies, as loyalists to the creator block others from updating the World with evidence of their own making. Regardless, the World's aliveness often drops to zero when a strong holding Creator exits a World. This happens a lot with small businesses where the owner — the

heart and soul and tyrant— dies and the World falls into decay, sometimes taking down the lives of employees and customers who live inside it.

When Creator's Hold approaches zero — a complete relinquishing of creator control — and evidence continues to be created and used, you get a World with the potential for infinite aliveness. This is when a World has achieved Autonomy. Think of this as the moment when a child has grown up, left her parents, overcome their strong hold, and can finally choose to do anything with her life.

WORLDING IS GETTING TO KNOW AUTONOMY

Worlding is firstly the act of creating a life, then secondly letting that life live itself. The first part is about achieving Aliveness. The second part is about granting Autonomy.

We can only value Autonomy in our creations as much as we can understand and value Autonomy in ourselves. Psychiatrist Eric Berne says, "Each person constructs a life script given by their parents, which structures long periods of time, based on illusions that may persist throughout whole lifetimes. Overly desperate attempts to maintain the illusions in later life lead to depression or spiritualism, while the abandonment of all illusions may lead to despair. For sensitive, perceptive people these illusions dissolve one by one, leading to various life crises: the adolescent reappraisal of parents; the protests, often bizarre, of middle age, and the emergence of philosophy after that." He observes that Autonomy is the condition achieved when you come to see your life script as a choice rather than a fixed destiny. Whatever you choose to do then is an act of agency.

Even after you become aware that your life script has hold on you, the difficulty in dismantling your life script is the overwhelming fear of structuring time. "If my life script is a choice, I may either continue my given script, or I may choose Autonomy. If I choose Autonomy, I am left with no requirements in life to do anything in particular. I have unstructured time, for the rest of my time! What is the reason to keep living? Is it up to me to invent it? Who is in charge here? What do I do with myself? How do I motivate

myself to work on anything when anything is possible, but nothing is necessary?"

It is possible to avoid Autonomy by doing nothing. Everyday life creates mundane obstacles and dramas to procrastinate dealing with Autonomy. Small finite wins carry us forward through each day. Yet we accrue a debt in existential misery and regret that eventually comes calling, even if as late as the death bed. If only there was a culture that had ways to practice feeling the strange condition of Autonomy at earlier stages of life!

Here is Steve Jobs with an artistic perspective on the moment of Autonomy: "When you grow up you tend to get told the world is the way it is, and your life is to just live your life inside the world. Try not to bash into the walls too much, try to have a nice family life, have fun, save a little money. That's a very limited life. Life can be much broader once you discover one simple fact, and that is: everything around you that you call life was made up by people who were no smarter than you. And you can change it, you can influence it, you can build your own things that other people can use. That's the most important thing: to shake off this erroneous notion that life is there and you're just going to live in it. Versus embrace it, change it, make it better. Cause it's kind of messed up in a lot of ways. Once you learn that, you'll never be the same again."

For most people, living by this attitude is easier said than done. But one way to get better at understanding how Autonomy might emerge in ourselves is by practicing Autonomy in sandbox versions of life. Worlding is a laboratory to keep failing upward towards Autonomy. We will make and fail many Worlds, but the feeling and experience of doing so is the reward of an artistic practice of Worlding.

In the creation of Worlds, the creator becomes the parent of a World. By creating, caring, and nurturing a living thing, you bank the joys of generating a zone of meaning, purpose, and potentiality where none quite like it existed before. And then, in learning to let it live on its own without your guidance, you begin to appreciate how a Creator's Hold becomes the obstacle to granting Autonomy.

In practicing Worlding, we are engaging in a full-brain activity. This seems like an unnaturally demanding standard to structure a human being's time. All the criteria for what constitutes a World seems to exceed the capacity of a single human mind to conceive and create such a complex thing from nothing. And then sustain caring for it, updating it, and letting it go. It's hard enough to write a good song or invent a new dish. It's hard enough to make art. So how can an artist make an entire World and stay motivated along the way?

The answer is, making art becomes exponentially easier when you believe you are also creating a World along the way. The reward of creating a World along the way is that the inevitable ups and downs of making art feel purposeful. It is an act of making, guided by a higher calling. A future you can believe in. One that is envisioned by you. But before we can learn how this is possible, we need to first understand the psychology of the artist-- the source of invention, but also of paralyzing doubt and self-sabotage.

CHAPTER 2:
THE ARTIST'S MASKS

THE ARTIST'S DILEMMA

Art is not an object, but a special kind of communication between an artist and an audience. It's a communication for when words won't do. For when you want to communicate something more interesting, nutritious, complex, or strange. But since high bandwidth telepathy doesn't exist yet, a mediating object needs to be crafted to articulate this communication: the artwork.

If an artwork is a ship, then the artist is its crew, the content is its cargo, and the destination port is the audience where the communication is received, where the ship docks and the cargo is delivered.

The journey involves the crew dredging up cargo from the sea, retrofitting the ship to fit the cargo, and considering the destination. It sometimes requires the crew to toss cargo overboard when the ship can't bear it. It sometimes requires tearing down the ship into a makeshift raft or converting it into yacht or a submarine or jet ski. In rough waters, the crew contemplates if they should change destination port to suit the ship and cargo, or if they should keep tinkering with the ship and cargo to suit the destination port.

In the end, if the ship is not sunk, abandoned, or freeze-dried for later, it arrives at its destination port. The characteristics of the destination port completes the communication's journey. An old rigid single lane port can wreck the ship on arrival or mishandle its cargo. An open lawless port can accommodate a wider variety of ship and cargo, but who knows what they

will do with it. A standardized port can force the ship and cargo to also standardize. A port that continuously updates itself can influence the ship and cargo to be just as alive. Some audiences care more about the cargo. Some care more about the final condition of the ship. Marshall Mcluhan would say the ship shapes how the cargo is received. Ideally, the ship is both surprising and inevitable, the cargo is a gem that suggests how to live, the destination needs and wants what it got, and the crew is alive and thanked enough to want to go back out to sea and do it again.

The artist's dilemma in our era is that climate change is terrorizing the seas, a great detailed weirdening is infecting the ports, and there's already a lot that can go wrong here! The waves feel rougher and more unpredictable. Retrofitting the ship is costly when you don't know where you're going or what cargo you should carry. Dredging up cargo feels futile when everything is potentially relevant and you don't know what is worth what. The crew is confused, scared, demotivated, in revolt, with no sense of where to go. Nearby ports seem meaningless. Far away ports seem impossible. The artist questions if it's all a waste of time being out here in these complex choppy waters. And yet the artist wants to feel alive and wants to make her aliveness count for something. Because life is long and existence is unbearable without a sense of growth towards something. The artist is paralyzed.

What if these problems could be alleviated if we first address one crucial misunderstanding: that the crew see themselves as one coherent person — an artist.

SEEKING AND STEERING

It took me a long time to realize that the artist is not one person, but a crew of individual mental states inside myself. Each with their own strengths, weaknesses, motivations, and personality. But out there at sea, in the midst of the creative process, the artist experiences a compounding mess of thoughts and feelings fighting to be heard. To an untrained ear, this is all just the undifferentiated expression of an inner voice that can't make up its mind, the pain of the creative process. But if you listen carefully, you can actually hear distinct voices fighting for what they each care about. Each is

trying to tell you which way to go and how to get there for what it believes is in your own best interest. What if we could learn to identify each crew member? What if we could become more aware of who is speaking, understand what they each care about, and know what motivates their chatter? If we call each crew member a "mask," each becomes a role that the artist can choose. Each mask drives the ship with different intent and effect, and so the artist can begin to form a strategy for when to choose which masks. By choosing the appropriate mask, the artist can regain control of what destination to seek and what navigational style to steer at each stage of the journey. Through masks, the artist can wield distinct states of mind as a strategy for creative work. Especially in rough and uncharted waters.

Consider the diagram of masks.
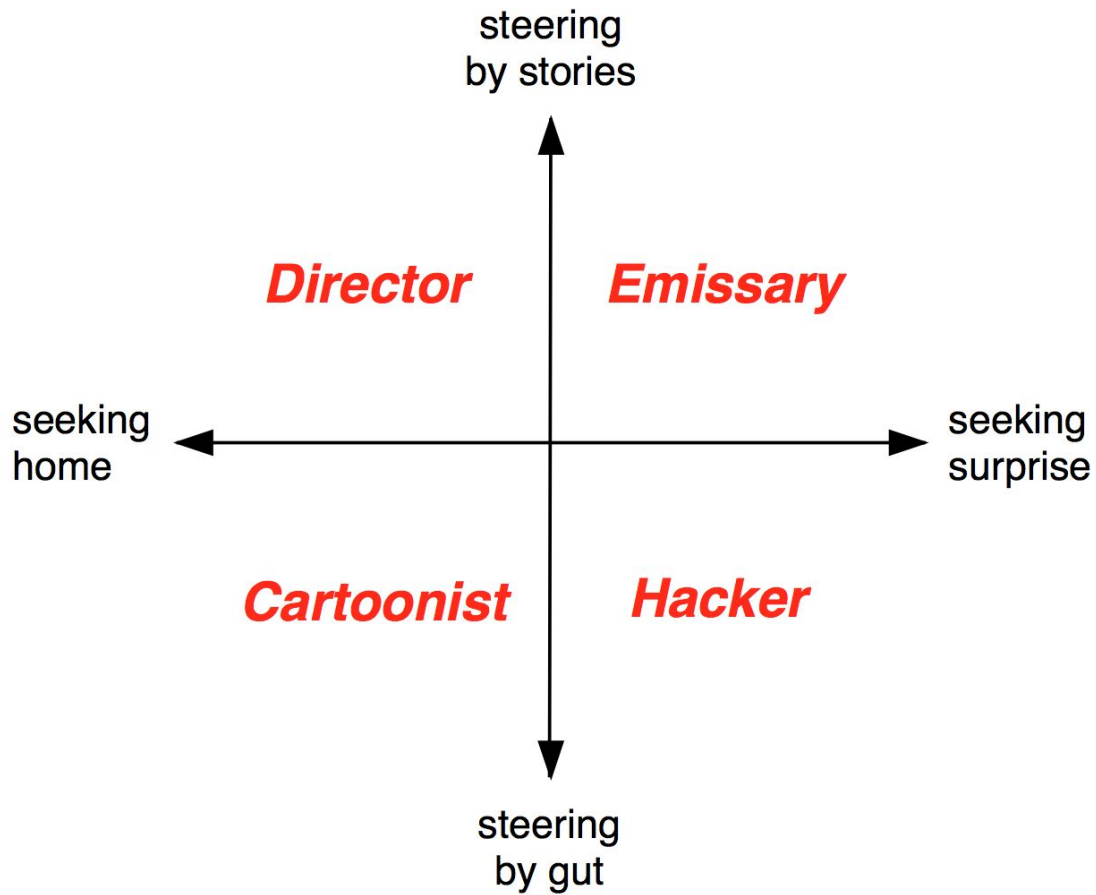
The horizontal axis describes the kind of destination that a mask seeks. A mask Seeking Home is driven towards stability, durability, and the perfection of existing Worlds. It cares about existing infinite games that have proven to sustain human life, physically and psychologically, and wish to return to them and refine them in order to make them more enduring. It is an attitude that attempts to resolve the discomforts of Reality and domesticate them as part of a known human world. In contrast, a mask Seeking Surprise is a desire to chase a frontier, one that is inherently uncertain and unpredictable, but with promises of novelty and interestingness. It does not know what it will find, and that is precisely the point. It is an open attitude that accepts the discomfort of Reality's indeterminacy at the frontier, in exchange for touching new truths.

The masks who Seek Home are rewarded with certainty and security. The masks who Seek Surprise are rewarded with adventure and novelty. If home becomes too safe and boring, the artist Seeks Surprise on the frontier. And if the frontier becomes too overwhelming and disorienting, the artist Seeks Home to reaffirm a stable locus of meaning. It's desiring Order vs. desiring Chaos.

The vertical axis describes the navigational style for how the artist steers towards its destination. A mask who Steers By Gut is navigating by immediate instincts. When the seas are choppy, this mask reacts with evolutionarily honed impulses. Feelings are the most trusted compass. There is no broader perspective that can match the urgency of gut feelings. In contrast, a mask who Steers By Story is navigating with the perspective that your current situation sits within a larger chain of events. Today the ship might be enduring a stormy day, but you know the storm means you're at the end of act two and clear skies can be expected on the horizon. Stories are how we gain a sense of control of the future because they supply us with a role in the story, a vector of meaning at every beat, and the promise of more meaning to come.

The masks who steer by gut are rewarded with immediate results. The masks who steer by story are rewarded with a sense of big picture context. If the Story cannot expand to incorporate the unexpected, the artist turns to the Gut for survival. And if the Gut proves wrong too many times, the artist looks to Stories to put it all into perspective. It's judging by short term vs. judging by long term.

Four types of artist masks come out of this:

- The Director (D) - seeking home, steering by story. The mask concerned with ensuring meaning, typically achieved through making narrative and mythology. Makes "Good" Art.
- The Cartoonist (C) - seeking home, steering by gut. The mask concerned with emotional resonance, typically achieved through making characters, symbols, and names. Makes Flag Art.
- The Hacker (H) - seeking surprise, steering by gut. The mask concerned with disruptive leverage, typically achieved through exploiting a hidden principle or mechanism. Makes "New" Art.

- <u>The Emissary</u> (E) - seeking surprise, steering by story. The mask concerned with ensuring long-term health and growth of a life, typically achieved through setting up values and laws based on a mission worth believing in. Makes Portal Art.

Think of each mask as a character who speaks to you in the creative process. Now that we have named them, we can begin to recognize each mask and distinguish their voices. As we will learn, each mask can be summoned, and can become a choice to wear to the journey of making art.

MASK PARTY

The scope of an art project dictates the combination of masks called into action. A one mask creation is a discrete creative task; fodder for greater uses. A two mask creation is art that achieves a sufficient compression, and is regarded as interesting to someone somewhere. A three mask creation is a complete project, worthy of appreciation for its weaving of multiple perspectives and its stimulation of multiple dimensions of the viewer's mind. A four mask creation is an ongoing living project, such as a World, that immerse a viewer and can contain all other kinds of creations. Adding a mask is moving the goalpost: it forces the very nature of the project to expand.

A food analogy:

- one mask creation: prepping an interesting ingredient or sauce
- two masks creation: cooking an artisanal dish
- three masks creation: designing a masterful full sequence course
- four masks creation: conceiving and running a restaurant, with its own distinct aesthetic, vibe, business model, language, culture, secrets. A dedicated home to one, two, and three mask creations.

A creation is generally more interesting the more masks it involves. More masks do not result in a more complicated experience for the viewer. On the contrary, if all masks are working together, the viewer feels immersed in a World. They feel portaled into a more satisfying experience that compresses many otherwise disparate phenomena, and satisfies more dimensions of their curious mind. It is a complex transmission, but one a viewer wants to

receive and explore and appreciate layer by layer. It is an experience whose complexity reveals itself little by little, and makes it worth revisiting. Moreover, for the creator, a four mask World provides a sustainable ecology for projects requiring fewer masks. It allows all other configurations to thrive inside it.

Here is a more detailed breakdown. Let's assume the artist is not acquainted with the Emissary yet. These are the options available to the artist. (Note: the creation names are archetypal examples).

One mask creations

- C only = a joke
- H only = a trick
- D only = a moral
- E only = ?

Two mask creations

- C + H = a magic act
- C + D = a story
- D + H = a playbook
- C + E = ?
- D + E = ?
- H + E = ?

Three mask creations

- C + D + H = a Gesamtkunstwerk
- C + D + E = ?
- C + H + E = ?
- D + H + E = ?

Four mask creations - ?

- C + D + H + E = ?

If you're an artist, the Director and Cartoonist should be familiar masks. You're used to the Director setting up some parameters of a project, and the Cartoonist working bit by bit to make it emotionally resonant. The Hacker

might also be familiar to you: you discover a new trick, a new mental model, or a new tool and get excited about using it to incrementally expand the range of what your Director and Cartoonist are able to express. But what about the Emissary? The Emissary is often required in other domains, like managing a business, or raising a baby. But in art, the Emissary's talents and mindset are almost never called upon. At least to make the kind of art that artists are expected to make. If art is a kind of communication, then you would expect that the communication is a finite and fixed unit. But what if that communication could signal it is part of an ongoing conversation, and that you are just overhearing a snippet of it. What if that communication could promise there is a lot more waiting to be communicated? What if the communication could hint that it is a peek of something ever adapting like a business, and alive like a baby? What if the communication wasn't a message but evidence of a living entity? What would that kind of art look and feel like? It would be art that serves as an expression of a World.

Now imagine the Emissary joining the creative process, observe how the artist's options open up.

One mask creations

- C only = a joke
- H only = a trick
- D only = a moral
- E only = a rule

Two mask creations

- C + H = a magic act
- C + D = a story
- D + H = a playbook
- C + E = a meme
- D + E = a wiki
- H + E = a tool

Three mask creations

- C + D + H = a Gesamtkunstwerk
- C + D + E = a series

- C + H + E = an app
- D + H + E = a cult

Four mask creations

- C + D + H + E = a World

Recall the artist's dilemma: What do I do with my time? How do I ensure my efforts are worth anything? What is a guaranteed sustainable way to make meaning, relieve restlessness, and weather the changing tides of Reality?

The Emissary answers: *Worlding!*

THE LEGEND OF EMISSARY

Emissary arrives at a construction site and observes the Director, Cartoonist, and Hacker hard at work. Director wants to build a public monument dedicated to Death, a big important subject. Cartoonist says I know: *let's make a really big hole in the ground.* Hacker says *we can test out my new sound that attracts crows.* Director lights up: *yes, the big hole of Death that also attracts life! Good story.* They work in earnest. Suddenly, a typhoon strikes, delaying Director's construction schedule. The flooding short circuits Hacker's speakers and scares away the crows. Hacker says, *forget the sound, I found a black paint that is water absorbent and can make the bottom of the hole look like it goes on infinitely.* They continue in earnest. Suddenly a mob rushes in and protests the construction site. The big hole doesn't represent their humanity. Cartoonist says *fine let's put human-scale demon sculptures along the rim that people can take pics with.* Hacker says *that will ruin the view of my infinity effect.* Director says *the infinity effect is just an effect. It doesn't capture the good story of life coming from Death!* They bicker and blame each other for undermining the project. They can't keep their momentum together. Days pass and they remain paralyzed.

Emissary takes it all in. *There is chaos under heaven, the situation is excellent.* Emissary makes a proposition: *let's open a bar at the bottom of the big hole.* Director thinks: *hmm we would have to install a stairway leading down to the bar, and staff it.* Emissary: *it could be open on special*

days only. It's a giant hole everyday of the year except Sundays. Cartoonist: *Or Groundhog Day.* Hacker: *or leap years?* Director: *so it's a big hole monument that serves as an entrance to a bar?* Emissary: *it's all one thing. The big hole of Death leads to the secret bar, and the bar celebrates liveliness at the end of the big hole of Death.* Cartoonist: *the bar could be called Afterlife.* Hacker: *we could paint the roof of Afterlife my black paint so we keep the illusion of infinity for everyone looking down the hole.* Emissary chimes in: *Why not paint the whole bar infinity black so it feels special inside too.* Cartoonist: *but does the bar exclude children? Can children not experience Afterlife?* Director: *this is a big project, plus the liquor license, and bartenders!* Hacker: *what if it was just a water bar? Serving just water filtered from the bottom of the hole.* Cartoonist: *It would feel special enough being in the infinity room drinking Afterlife water.* Director: *Yes, I can imagine this. I can imagine a series of Afterlife water bar projects in different cities!* Cartoonist: *the mob will enjoy the combined feeling of being scared of the hole then loving the infinity bar!* Hacker: *The typhoon water can be bottled into special water.* Emissary: *Afterlife is born!*

The Director, Cartoonist, Hacker, and Emissary have much work to do, but now they work knowing that their efforts have a home, together, inside something alive and ongoing: an emerging World.

CHAPTER 3:
PORTRAITS OF THE MASKS

THE DIRECTOR

There is a ripe Complex Problem seeping in from base Reality, and the mask of the Director wants to recover meaning from it. Think of the artist who wants to excavate meaning from the complex problem of AI-human relationships, or post-graduation scriptlessness, or the Great Man crumbling, or what a queen has to deal with, or the fixer who can't fix himself, or racism's new clothes, or the pathology of institutions, or climate change dystopia, or any version of 'what's really going on here?'

To face the Complex Problem, the Director becomes complex in its process. The Director believes that the act of structuring a project correctly creates the conditions for the meaningful solution to appear. The Director demands a container large enough to unpack the Complex Problem and all its seen and unseen historical parts. It knows the key to solving the problem is a story throughline buried somewhere in the problem's messy history, if only we would look more carefully and deeply.

The Director works to establish the right container, roadmap, inspirational energy, and narrative that frames the Complex Problem. Most importantly, the Director marshalls a team of experts to help execute this excavation of meaning. It organizes everyone into the structure of a finite journey, and orients them with a driving goal: if we solve the Complex Problem, we get the gold of meaning. The creativity of the Director manifests in these structural choices. The Director believes that once the project gets going, these

choices not only have decisive influence on the shape of the project, but act as True North for navigating through the chaos of production, and quelling the temptation for creative mutiny or self-sabotage.

Burdened with this ambitious project structure, and anticipating the project's long journey, the Director offsets these risks by choosing a reliably humanistic vision to aim for. This vision is to tame the ambiguity of Reality by absorbing it into a specific kind of meaning – meaning that makes us feel back at home in the world again. Seeking Home and Steering By Stories, The Director makes "Good" Art that nobly domesticates the Complex Problem and metabolizes it back into the domain of known and eternal human values. The Director believes that whatever the solution to the Complex Problem is, it will reveal itself to be a fundamental truth, a mythological truth. A truth about how the wants of the individual and the wants of the group can come back into alignment. A truth about how order might overcome chaos.

Psychologically, the Director is not a bundle of expressive childlike energy like a stereotypical artist. The Director is 90% manic parental energy. The psychic composition of the Director is that of a mad controlling Parent far out at sea desperately seeking home again, but who must align with a problem-solving Adult to steer the way. The more that Adult can be outsourced to experts - a producer, an editor, a technical director — and not occupy a part of its own psyche, the better the Director can direct. Like a perfect parent to the project, the Director remains dutifully irrational, maniacally driving the ship towards hard earned meaning.

How can the Director help with Worlding? By establishing and completing the finite projects needed to manifest the spirit of a World and give its expression form. We wear the mask of the Director to channel the enormity of a World into the first of hopefully many finite containers.

The Director's Horoscope

- **Mask Archetype**: The conscientious reformer persona who believes that there are important problems whose complexities deserve to be explored in depth, for they contain within them meaningful solutions.
- **Motto**: "What's the story?"
- **Psychology**: Parent seeking home, Adult steering by story

- **Likes**: Longform, mythology, satisfying drama, exploring multiple perspectives, learning from and revising the past, backstory, deep character origins, roadmaps, a good profound cry.
- **Strengths**: Creating the tangible container structure for everyone else to work in. Meaning resonance. Able to narrativize, historicize, mythologize, and organize. Ability to rally a team toward a finite goal that promises to be meaningful.
- **Weaknesses**: Bothered by open-ended outcomes and unsolved mysteries.
- **Compatible with**: Cartoonist, who can help the Director stretch to make instantly recognizable/iconic characters that make the long journey more emotionally resonant, peppered with limbic candy.
- **Attracted to**: Emissary, who can help the Director's story to expand into sequels, a franchise, a philosophy, or cult following. If only that were manageable and had clear roadmap.
- **Risky with**: Hacker, who could radicalize the project with new abilities for expression, but the Director doesn't know how to count on it. Threatens to change the Director's structure, assembled team, budget, and meaning.
- **Favorite forms**: feature film, novel, non-fiction bestsellers, treatise, Oscar nominees
- **Famous Director-dominant artists**: Hayao Miyazaki (animator), Ursula Le Guin (novelist), Jordan Peterson (psychologist), Adam Curtis (filmmaker), Ayn Rand (novelist), Karl Marx (philosopher), Hannah Arendt (philosopher), Margaret Atwood (novelist), Joseph Campbell (mythologist), Homer (epic poet)

THE CARTOONIST

The mask of the Cartoonist is a seductive one. The Cartoonist is a quick student of human behavior who has learned to play to the lowest common denominator of human cognition — our gut instincts. Think of any artistic form that tries to make you feel something instantly or tap into your reward circuitry: pop music, art photography, freemium apps, children's cartoons, pornography, gossip blogs, Instagram personalities, trolling, clickbait, guru sermons, reality TV. The Cartoonist is strong in them.

The Cartoonist's job is to reduce complexity, turn ideas into images, distill contradiction, mine the familiar, define tribal boundaries, and magnify emotions. All in keeping with the finite cognitive budget common to all human beings. Where the Director pursues an idealistic vision of humans uncovering meaning from an exploration of their problems, the Cartoonist says meaning is easy: we're already at home in the world of our own emotions. Seeking Home and Steering By Gut, the Cartoonist makes Flag Art that encourages us to feel more of what we feel, filter that which affirms these feelings, lend emotive power to our tribal affiliations, and laugh off our human nature when things get messy.

The Cartoonist sees its audience as children. Children are the source of instinctive discernment through a deeply evolved tuning for faces, emotions, body language, status, tribes. But children also want to go home at the end of the day, get tucked into bed, and be told it's okay. The Cartoonist tells us we are messy animals, but comforts us with the belief that human nature has always been this way, and feeling something intensely is the only language you need. Being the Cartoonist is about being your own most instinctive child. 'If I don't get it, a viewer won't get it.' A feedback loop emerges: the Cartoonist becomes an expert in surgically pressing on our ancient animal programming, gets rewarded for doing so, and threatens to keep programming us there. Left to itself, the Cartoonist strips both artist and audience of any orienting narrative of who we might become.

More than anything, the Cartoonist wants to relate. That's why they're so good at accessing emotion. At every turn, the Cartoonist is looking for something that feels resolutely familiar, with just the slightest twist to make you pay attention. A shaved cat. A short tyrant. A blind photographer. A spa for demons. A crying robot. They are guided by the principle: *if it moves me, it will move you. And if I move you, you will trust me*. To create this movement, the Cartoonist wields its Midas Touch. This is both an impulse and an imperative: everything the Cartoonist touches must be turned into something stimulating and legible. It is a lens through which everything is a *signal*. An orderly house isn't just a habitation: it signals a rigid mental-model. A rainfall isn't just a chance occurrence: it signals the saddest day ever. A job isn't just a set of responsibilities and obligations: it signals an archetype who wears its psychology on its shirtsleeve.

So how can the Cartoonist help us in Worlding? By making characters. A character is not a person, but a collection of behaviors and beliefs. The Cartoonist knows that the human mind is specially attuned to the nuances of characters and therefore accepting of the potential complexity a character might pack inside itself. This is the reptilian domain of attention, reaction, attraction, revulsion, celebrities, scapegoats, marketing, and evolutionary psychology. But it is also the domain of the most iconic characters in the history of Worlding, who each serve as a shorthand mental mascot for complex collections of behavior and beliefs. Is Gollum an icon of twentieth-century Worlding, or an achievement in appealing to our base psychology? What about Buddha? Or Yoda?

We must dive into the artistry of the Cartoonist to create the characters, names, words, symbols and signals that keep a World sticky in the minds of its inhabitants and compress the enormity of a World into candy for our limbic system. We will take what is useful and try not to lose ourselves inside the mask of the Cartoonist, as truthy, emotive, cute and comforting as it may seem.

The Cartoonist's Horoscope

- **Mask Archetype**: The spontaneous reformer persona who believes we are united by what we feel, and that that baseline human trait is always ripe to be exploited to alleviate immediate pain and uncertainty. The jokester, the politician, the comedian, the marketer, the persuader, the star.
- **Motto**: "FREE PIZZA"
- **Psychology**: Parent seeking home, Child steering by gut
- **Likes**: Feels, memes, slogans, mnemonics, drama, jokes, irony, attention, animals, bumper stickers, dopamine, serotonin
- **Strengths**: Emotional resonance, characters, archetyping, naming, improv, persuasion
- **Weaknesses**: reducing humanity to their shared inner animal
- **Compatible with**: Director, who can furnish a narrative context, enriching the Cartoonist's characters and behavioral observations, and add the possibility of character growth.
- **Attracted to**: Hacker, who can offer new magic tricks and psychological models to exploit blind spots in human behavior. Can add wow factor, which adds to limbic resonance.

- **Risky with**: Emissary, who could radicalize the Cartoonist's work with an ever-growing platform, but the Cartoonist doesn't know how to count on it. Emissary threatens to demote the Cartoonist's work to marketing and shame the Cartoonist, whose instincts don't fit the values of the Emissary's World.
- **Favorite forms**: social media, elections, talk shows, tabloids, advertising, reality tv, clickbait, news, comedy club
- **Famous Cartoonist-dominant artists**: Oprah Winfrey (talk show host), Andy Warhol (pop artist), Quentin Tarantino (filmmaker), Andy Cohen (reality tv producer), Scott Adams (satirist), Bill Clinton (politician), Kim Kardashian (reality tv personality), Kanye West (recording artist), Mark Twain (satirist)

THE HACKER

The mask of the Hacker is the kid who breaks dad's radio and turns it into a pirate transmitter. It's the punk who figured out that saying 'because' lets you cut lines. It's the whizz who discovers that the algorithm for bird flocking behavior is a fine model for predicting the movement of human crowds.

Archimedes said, "Give me a place to stand and with a lever I will move the world," thinking about how tools can leverage effort. In engineering, we describe machines as force and speed multipliers, hacks that reduce the amount of energy required to move or accelerate objects. Commonplace elements — doorknobs, ramps, screws, axes, winches, and their aggregates — are hacks employed to gain leverage in the physical world. In everyday life, the layering of civilization subsume simple hacks so that we barely notice them at all. A transient person sleeps in a library. Roommates share a Netflix password. Educators teach to the test. Kids say they're at each other's house for a sleepover. Coffee in the morning hacks adenosine receptors in the brain. Sign language hacks an inability to speak. CGI crowds hack a limited budget. Maps hack a territory. Imagining the audience naked is an illusory hack. A get-rich-quick scheme is the dream of a hack. Doping is a performance hack. Dog breeding for traits is a genetic hack.

The Hacker sees through the veil of man-made worlds and glimpses a Reality Operating System (RealityOS) pulsating with possibilities to tinker

with. The Hacker believes that every object, every social structure, every system contains a core innovation that has been dialled down, dressed up and packaged for an all-too-human agenda. This packaging is all interface design. The work of some Director trying to impose meaning, or a Cartoonist trying to trigger our emotional circuitry. For everyone else, this packaging makes the innovation palatable to everyday life, but for the Hacker it represents an artificial boundary that hides and shackles the innovation's full spectrum of possibility. The Hacker's instinct is punk: ignore the given laws, break down the interface veil, free the innovation, play with all its dials, discover its full range of expression, combine it with other liberated innovations at the RealityOS level, and share its magic leverage with the Hacker community.

What the Hacker makes is 'not great or good, but it is New'. New concepts, perceptions, sensations. The thrill of 'aha!' discovery is the Hacker's motivation. Think of any expression you would call experimental, a prank, a magic trick. It requires no deeper meaning than being a successful surprise, and yet another demo that our lives crave acts of Creative Destruction to renew their flame. Seeking Surprise and Steering By Gut, the Hacker makes "New" Art, simply because it can.

There is a cost to hacking for newness. In stripping things down to RealityOS and tinkering at its assembly level, the Hacker becomes accustomed to devaluing the act of dressing its work back up for the rest of us. The Hacker's work manifests as a magic trick with minimum viable showmanship. Meaning is thin, its place in our lives is unclear. Its lack of context leaves us only with the feeling of fleeting delight and shock of the new. The Hacker offers no further orientation. Like the first humans to hack the Earth and strike oil, everyone stands in awe at the gusher, but no one knows how it will change their lives. The riches are rough, exciting and valuable, but meaningless to non-hackers. Ignoring the fact that further development requires interfacing with other masks and worlds, the Hacker moves on to another frontier with its roving Hacker community. In its wake, the Hacker leaves open-source magic for others to try to civilise.

How can the Hacker help us in Worlding? The Hacker unlocks new super powers for the World that give those who inhabit it a special advantage: a leverage over Reality. In the kitchen, the Hacker says, 'I synthesized a new

flavor that brings back memories'. In the writer's room, the Hacker says, 'I found a model that can make any story satisfying'. In the jungle, the Hacker says, 'I isolated a root that kills your ego and lets you dream in 5D.' In the animation studio, the Hacker says, 'I have a simulation that can make the animations animate themselves.' By stripping down existing worlds to their underlying systems and rules, and by refusing the seduction of meaning, the Hacker sacrilegiously discovers the actual and effective means to give the World its magic power. Great hacks, whether a law of physics or a flaw in security, are the basis of new experiences and new modes of expression that can cheat common sense assumptions about the energy, time, or realness that a World should require to become alive and unique. This is the kind of leverage that Worlding can create a culture around. It is the engine that keeps a World interesting even beyond the hands of its finite creator.

We wear the mask of the Hacker to tinker with a deeper material reality and leverage its magic.

The Hacker's Horoscope

- **Mask Archetype**: The spontaneous disruptor persona who tinkers, breaks and modifies systems, discovers first principles, and unlocks new advantages along the way. The cheat, the con man, the wizard, the magician.
- **Motto**: "It might not be science but it works"
- **Psychology**: Adult seeking surprise, Child steering by gut
- **Likes**: clever shortcuts, models, first principles, altered states, science fiction
- **Strengths**: Perceives underlying systems. Eye for easy overlooked leverage. Unafraid to break things to find hidden advantage.
- **Weaknesses**: indifferent to context or presentation
- **Compatible with**: Emissary, who can create a sustainable culture around the hack.
- **Attracted to**: Cartoonist. Wants to make their exploit relatable to people, help get a wow factor.
- **Risky with**: Director, could radicalize with narrative meaning, but the Hacker doesn't know how to count on it. Threatens to turn the hack in service of an ideological purpose.
- **Favorite forms**: apps, cookbooks, playbooks, demos, world's fair, existing systems, complacent industries

- **Famous Hacker-dominant artists**: Elon Musk (entrepreneur), Nikola Tesla (inventor), Satoshi Nakamoto (blockchain inventor), Dan Barber (chef), Harry Houdini (illusionist)

THE EMISSARY

Reality is an endless stream of unknowns intruding upon the artist, and the mask of the Emissary wants to be at home in it. Unlike the Director who interprets unknowns as Complex Problems to be solved, the Emissary sees unknowns as content for its own stream, as energy to be transformed, as information the artist doesn't already know, and therefore as opportunities for the artist to update something about herself. The Emissary believes if only there was a little game from which to interpret and count these unknowns in a special way, the artist could be persuaded to live in closer unity with the unknowns of Reality and the certainty of home. A zone where the artist could reliably grow by simply doing her work.

The Emissary is the one who wants to "garden as though you'll live forever." It's the one who wants to run a streaming channel. It's the one who wants to maintain a lively twitter account. It's the one who says yes to software updates. It's the one who wants to turn ideas into a business. It's the one who wants to see a child flourish. It's the one who knows that playing a one-time game is easy, but playing a game again and again and again creates something much more interesting: something like an ethic of playing, a compounding sense of connection, an emergent culture, a meta-lifeform, an infinite game, a World.

The Emissary thinks about the story of a life, especially as it is underway. It thinks about the health and growth of a life. It thinks about what values of a life are sacred to its core identity and what needs updating. It thinks about the future not as an abyssal unknown, but as a path whose shape is being sculpted day by day, in little and big ways. It thinks on the scale of lifetimes.

The Emissary is the initiator of a World. When the inner life of the artist has gone wrong for too long, when the masks can't organize their efforts, the Emissary emerges with a proposition. The Emissary says: *lets create a life. A living thing called a World. And let's do so by doing what you other masks*

have always done: making finite projects. But these will be projects sustained and motivated by knowing you are making them for the higher purpose of a World. I will nag and intrude on your process to make sure your finite project manifests the spirit of the World: its need for a mythology, characters, special powers, and a matrix of values. We will be subsumed into the World's big picture. But in exchange, the World will guarantee us meaning and purpose.

The Emissary is the governor of a World, a World that wants the Emissary to serve it and serve it imaginatively. Psychologically, this requires an Adult kind of imagination, not a Child's. Being an imaginative Child is seeing new possibilities to the game but getting to quit with zero responsibility or consequence. But being an imaginative Adult is reconciling the differences between the game and the unknowns of Reality. With Adult imagination, the Emissary can paradoxically Seek Surprises and Steer By Stories. The creativity of the Emissary manifests in its responsibility to the question: What unknowns to absorb and what to ignore? What to protect and what to update in this neverending story?

The work of the Emissary is thankless and stressful. People will sooner hate the Emissary for every update that does not serve them, than love the Emissary for everyday the World keeps running reliably. To sustain thinking and acting in service of a World, the Emissary requires a deep reward: the reward of creating something far stranger than just a little game, but a living sentient World that can be at home in the unknowns of Reality. A World that can house other people, possess them with its spirit, and let them levitate a bit higher in life. The Emissary might not always be happy, but is fulfilled.

The temptation of the Emissary is to hand the World back to the other masks. The Director who is eager to prescribe its final meaning. The Cartoonist who is eager to turn it into a channel for advertising and tribal signaling. The Hacker who is eager to strip away its culture and sell its super powers raw. This is a seductive moment for the too-human artist who craves home, belonging, easy wins, and eternal meaning. But the Emissary must resist its humanism here. It must keep the game going. It must keep the game interesting by absorbing new unknowns and updating its story and systems. The Emissary must stay with the trouble of Worlding. And when the Emissary can do no more, it must wilfully exit itself, not risk the World, and

let other emissaries carry on the task. In this way, the Emissary is always 'caught between unravelling old realities and emerging weird ones' in service of the ongoing health of the World. This is the texture of Emissary life.

We will live within the mask of the Emissary and exercise the unnatural feeling of Worlding. We will weave together the work of the other masks, put them into productive conflict, and kindle the fire of emergence. We will give birth to an infinite game, protect it from our own all-too-human instincts, and learn to recognise when to leave a World for other emissaries to nurture.

The Emissary's Horoscope

- **Mask Archetype**: The conscientious disruptor persona who sees in terms beyond a human lifespan, and protects core values and initiates updates on behalf of a greater lifeform. The gardener, shaman, mother, CEO, streamer.
- **Motto**: "A future you can believe in"
- **Psychology**: Adult seeking surprise, Adult steering by story
- **Likes**: aliveness, evolution, deep time, streams
- **Strengths**: creating the mission and culture, designing incentives and laws, sensitive to long term health and growth, protecting core values, seeing the really big picture
- **Weaknesses**: fits everything into the long term vision, easy to hate or blame for not serving everyone's short term needs or feelings
- **Compatible with**: Hacker, who furnishes the World with its special ability, and identifies emerging hacks along the way.
- **Attracted to**: Director, who can help Emissary mythologize a World's past, and develop concrete projects to manifest the spirit of the World.
- **Risky with**: Cartoonist, who could create iconic ambassadors and illustrate values of a World, but the Emissary doesn't know how to count on it. Cartoonist threatens to overly simplify or misrepresent the complexity or values of a World and change its public perception.
- **Favorite Containers**: platforms, series, franchises, theme parks, futurist summits, nature preserves, blockchain startups, think tanks, monasteries, families
- **Famous Emissary-dominant artists**: Kathleen Kennedy (producer), Kevin Feige (producer), Kris Jenner (reality tv mogul), Benjamin Franklin (nation founder), Terence Mckenna (mystic), Vitalik Buterin (Ethereum founder), Dalai Lama (religious ambassador)

CHAPTER 4:
STRATEGIES FOR WORLDING

This chapter is a playbook of strategies for tackling each act of the Worlding process. We will discuss key structural choices and the interplay of masks, illustrated by examples of familiar Worlds. We'll see the masks variably diverge, face crisis, find solace, collaborate on solutions, extend the world outward, and give everything away. The process is as deep as it is wide. The process is this: Preparation, Creating the World, Keeping the World Alive, Exiting the World.

ACT 0: PREPARATION

To prepare for the Worlding ahead, the artist should be familiar with the Director, Cartoonist, and Hacker masks. Each mask knows how to express itself and together, they have experience completing projects. One of them often takes the lead over the others and develops into an artist's preference for how to make things.

ALWAYS BE EATING

What you make is a mutation of what you eat, so if you control what you eat, you can influence what your conscious and unconscious selves will make. The human mind is not authentically original, but instead an information processing organ that needs material to inventively combine, compose, and connect. You are the books, music, films and games that you consume. You are the memorable vacation, drug trip, accident, last conversation. You are the average of the five people you see the most. You are only as good as the food you eat. Without new food, your mind can only rehash what you already know in cycle of diminishing creative returns.

THE QUESTION OF MEANING

Let's briefly answer the question of meaning so we are not too hung up and overly sacred about it. Meaning is what counts. The surrounding context in which something can count is the vital requirement for meaning to count for anything. Voicing the sounds "I do" only means something in the context of a World with wedding rituals. Meaning cannot exist in a void. You can biologically live in a void, and for a time, meaninglessness is itself an interesting and appreciative experience to have. But the desire for meaning will always create an itch in your brain. That itch soon turns into catastrophic psychological pain and suffering. Why? Because after basic material needs are met, your brain projects forward, trying to assess how to structure your time. What is a valuable use of your energy and body? How do you judge? Against what ground? The mind craves a stabilized context to know what is valuable. That is how we are wired. One way to secure a context is to develop a World and live within it.Because the construction and maintenance of a World is costly, the meaning found in the World feels even more valuable. Collectively and cosmically, your attempts at counting are registered by other meaning-hungry agents as a contribution to the macro World called the Human Condition. If no third party alien or simulator overlord is out there counting for us, at least you know that we are alive to continue counting for each other. The most basic emissary work of the Human Condition is maintaining the requirement that there continue to be people to keep count. The most advanced emissary work is uncovering how you yourself count across and in between Worlds.

CRISIS ONE

The artist is faced with unstable Reality permeating multiple dimensions of life. Director, Cartoonist and Hacker find it increasingly difficult to remain motivated on their work. The artist attempts to block out Reality's turbulence and keep the masks busy. But Reality keeps creeping in. Director, Cartoonist and Hacker sabotage each other with doubt, and the artist's sense of meaning and purpose erode to a point of existential crisis. The artist asks,"What do I do with myself?".

GETTING INTO AN OPEN STATE

Usually the main block to creative work is exhaustion or anxiety. If you're exhausted, call it a day and start fresh in the morning. If you're anxious, sit down and write the thoughts as they come to you. Write until your anxieties are outside of you, and instead, are on the page — then, write for five minutes more. What comes out now? Usually, it's what you care about. And what comes after that? Usually, it's ideas and plans for how to address what you care about.

In the process of writing out your anxieties, you are giving permission for the Parent ego-state to innumerate its complaints and letting the Child ego-state report honestly about how it feels. You're creating a literal distance between the desires of the Parent and Child from your mind. This distance frees the Parent to relax, frees the Child to play. It introduces space for the Adult to emerge and begin working productively in update those complaints and feelings from an outside perspective.

THE DECISION TO WORLD

The most important decision in Worlding is the decision to want to make a World. That's it. With that intention you have summoned the Emissary to join the artistic process. This changes everything. The instability isn't made safe, but it is finally acknowledged, and you feel relieved. Because now you are intending to create something that is necessarily complex, unresolved, alive. You're aspiring to fulfill the promise of a World: to create something *that can survive its creator and continue to generate drama*. With this decision made, your masks have a secure place to accrue their time, energy and creativity. You are choosing to create a future you believe in, however incremental.

ACT 1: CREATING THE WORLD

Once Director chooses a container and the artist channels Emissary, the other masks can be persuaded to orient their efforts towards a project that becomes ALIVE: the first viable expression of a World. In exchange, Emissary promises protection and purpose for all weathers. Director, Cartoonist and Hacker go about their work under Emissary's management, setting into motion many of the eventual features of the World.

WHAT IS YOUR WORLD ABOUT?

The simple answer: everything that interests you AND that you could imagine persuading a stranger to become interested in too. By stranger, I mean an archetypal person who exists outside your immediate social reality, someone you must relate to on a more shared fundamental level. The stranger could be the entire human race or your mom.

A revealing exercise is to quickly write a list of what interests you. Whatever comes to mind in 30 seconds. Now look at your list. Circle the things that you are actually excited about and can imagine persuading a stranger to care about too. Do you have the energy to pursue these projects? Pretend the stranger will only care about five, and whittle your interests down. When I began *Emissaries* in 2015, my list narrowed to 1) AI, 2) Julian Jaynes, 3) working with a team, 4) learning to write stories, 5) dogs. You should get excited when you look at your interests. The list can change, but the point is to bring to your own awareness the things that matter to you. Because it is these things that comprise some part of a future you can believe in and will be essential to sustaining a sense of purpose through the Worlding process. Now if only there could be a way to channel them all into a single container.

THE CONTAINER

The freedom of Worlding is that there is no prescribed container imposed on the creator. Filmmakers have movies to contain their ideas. Writers have novels. Musicians have albums. But a World can express itself in anything. This is its freedom. But this freedom doesn't mean freedom from containers. It means freedom to choose a container.

The Director must choose the container. Imagine the stranger again: what if you could tell the stranger about a special container, and all your excitable interests could narratively flow from it: "I'm making a movie about AI, based on a theory of mind by Julian Jaynes, so I need to work with a team and learn to write stories, and I get to watch dogs for inspiration." You would have done the work of compressing the communication of your interests into a shorter, more persuasive narrative flow for the stranger. Much more so than if you had expressed it as a loose collection: "I'm interested in AI, and also

Julian Jaynes, and also working with a team, and also writing stories, and dogs." This is the importance of a container: it acts as portal to your World. If your excitable interests are like the elemental charged background atoms of your unformed World, then the container is the medium of their first expression.

If you want to make a World that is a shaping up to be some kind of fantasy realm, your container might be a novel, a film, or a video game. If you want to make a World that is a some kind of new religious cosmology, your container might be a ritual, an event, or a doctrinal text. If you want to make a World that embodies a green future, your container might be a blog, a documentary, a solar powered lamp, or an electric car. If the right container doesn't already exist, choose one that is analogically close enough and mutate it. When the automobile was first conceived it was called a horseless carriage: the container of carriage, mutated by horselessness. Elon Musk contained his interests in clean energy, climate change, battery storage, and automation into an unfashionable container called Electric Car. When you can name your container, you create a path for all the masks to easily envision their greater purpose.

The Director should choose the container because they're likely to choose something finite and focused, a kind of minimum viable expression for your World. At the same time, Director will also avoid choosing something too simple for Cartoonist and Hacker to do their work in. Director should ask, "What is the minimum unit by which the World might express itself?" Emissary's duty here is to ask if the container can easily imply further interesting consequences outside your excitable interests. Electric Car implies factory design, batteries, sustainable sourcing, unions, drama with Oil. Cardboard Car implies very few interesting consequences. The Emissary is always checking for the container's potential for aliveness.

You may have to revise your container many times in the process. I first conceived of *Emissaries* as an animated children's movie about cognitive evolution. Then it became a 'smart story,' a story that adapts to changes among its agents the way a 'smart house' adapts to its inhabitants. Then it became a simulated reality show, like Real Housewives meets The Sims. Then it became a virtual reality movie. Finally, I decided Emissaries would be a trilogy of simulations.

In choosing a container, you are making an explicit contract with the viewer. A movie wants you for ninety minutes in the dark. A novel wants you to be alone and focused. A song wants you to tune out other sounds. You are saying to the viewer, "This is the game you're agreeing to play. You know what this container expects of your time, attention and way of seeing. By agreeing, you grant me an openness and trust within the boundaries of that container. In return, I will work to surprise your expectations of what is possible by stretching the container a bit farther than you thought it could go." This is the portalling potential that Worlding can achieve with the right container.

DEEPER CONTAINER CONSIDERATIONS

Whatever container the Director chooses, the container itself will suggest immediately what you need to work on next. There are plenty of resources out there to help you produce your chosen container to completion. I will briefly touch upon the aspects that ensure that the realization of the container (Director's project) also becomes a manifest expression of the eventual World (Emissary's mission).

A key consideration when choosing a container is whether it should be declarative (a novel, a movie, a sermon), or interactive (a car, a restaurant, a baby), or something in between (a video game, a ritual, a theme park, AI).

The more interactive the container, the easier it is for the Emissary to make obvious to the Director, Cartoonist and Hacker how the eventual World will be engaged with, and how it will touch and be touched by people. The container of restaurant already suggests ways for how its eventual World might be inhabited and interacted with, much more so than the container of novel. The container of baby is perhaps the most interactive container of all. It triggers the inner Emissary in every human being and very obviously suggests its eventual World: a special snowflake-y person. Interactive containers can almost become synonymous with the World it expresses, because it so directly and multi-dimensionally manifests the special conditions you care about. The World of Tesla is synonymous with its electric car container, but is much more. The World of Minecraft is

synonymous with its video game container, but is much more. The World of Christianity is synonymous with its church container, but is much more.

The more declarative the container (and less interactive), the more potentially fantastical the eventual World can be. A novel has the potential to be much more fantastical than a restaurant or a baby because you can declare whatever fantasy you dream up, and the reader simply accepts it fully within the context of the novel. Here the Emissary faces the challenge of deferring how the eventual World will manifest some of the novel's fantasy in a way that is tangible, inhabitable, and more richly dimensional. It might take the additional creation of a theme park container or character chatbot container to better manifest the World. Declarative containers always require more of the viewer to suspend their disbelief in exchange for being more fantastical.

Declarative containers are traditionally seen as the domain of art and humanities, and interactive containers are traditionally seen as the domain of tech startups and other business ventures, but this distinction is dissolving. One emerging middleground is the container of AI or artificial life, which is somewhere between fantastical and pragmatically realized. The strategy of Emissaries was to manifest itself within the container of simulation, which strikes a balance between being declarative and interactive with itself.

A rule of thumb: If you value the pragmatic realization of the eventual World: interactive container > declarative container. If you value the fantastical potential of the eventual World: declarative container > interactive container. A container closer to the interactive end of the spectrum will require an approach led by the Hacker. A container closer to the declarative end of the spectrum will require an approach led by the Cartoonist.

HACKER-LED APPROACH
Containers that are interactive require a great hack. If you choose a restaurant as your pilot container, you might begin with the hack of a new recipe that irritates a person's lips in a pleasurable way, or the application of a new psychological model that links taste to memories. You might say forget hacking the meal itself, let's inform the wait staff and the customers that there will be cameras filming a reality show and see how everyone's

behavior levitates. An interactive container needs a hack because only a hack can set the container apart and evoke the magic specific to the World. In the absence of a hack, and later, in the absence of any strong characters, the restaurant is just another restaurant, never an evocation of some greater spirit, never a World that can come alive.

The more a container interacts with our everyday existence, the more senses and feedback it engages, the higher the Emissary's expectation that the World offers some kind of superpower hack. The World of Buddhism claims to offer the hack of deep neurological realignment via the container of meditation. The World of 1950s Dianetics claimed to offer the hack of clearing past traumas via the procedure of auditing. The World of 1984 Apple claimed to offer the hack of more productive more pleasurable work life via the container of the personal computer.

A Hacker-led approach begins with an interactive container and builds out key features of the World in the process, all the while achieving the finite goal of the Director to complete the container. A Hacker-led process goes something like this:

1. You discover or learn about a hack. You test it out and find that it works.

> Three years before I made *Emissaries*, I had the idea that if a video game could play itself, it could generate endless narrative and behavioral episodes on its own. I called them 'simulations.'

2. You study the hack to understand and synthesize why it works so that you can develop its power reliably.

> I made several multi-agent simulations to prove it was fertile territory. It revealed that properties like emergence, stretches of boring non activity, and an infinite time scale were reliable features.

3. You see how the hack can go too far, and make laws to regulate how the hack should be used.

I realized that these magic properties of simulation could be used in a spectacular data-viz way on one hand, and in a hard sociological way on the other. Both ways obvious and insufficiently interesting to me. I made it a rule that there has to be at least one agent who embodied a narrative in order to ensure a source of meaning in the simulations.

4. Your Cartoonist develops characters who embody those laws, as well as characters who who violate those laws.

I began *Emissaries* with the requirement that a story embodied in a character would confront the open ended simulation and all its potential chaos. In contrast, I also populated the simulation with characters whose AI allowed them to be reactive embodiments of chaos.

5. Your Director creates a mythological narrative that cements the role of the characters and situates the hack within a meaningful context.

Finally, I developed a narrative backstory for the *Emissaries* simulation, the landscape on which the characters would face an ecological threat, the community of characters who faced the threat reactively, and the narrative agent who would face the threat with a fixed set of goals. I finally felt that the initial hack of a video game that could play itself was much more suggestive of a special zone where the force of mythic stories wrestled with the chaos of simulation.

A test of this approach is to look back at the original hack and ask yourself if you see it as more than just a hack now, but a superpower that drives a meaningful culture around it. Is even the thought of the underlying hack inseparable now from the values and aesthetic of the World? Is the hack situated in a story of how it might affect people who inhabit the World?

CARTOONIST-LED APPROACH

Declarative containers require great characters. For the Emissary, great characters can serve as mascots who stay alive in the imagination, and

serve as mini-containers for instantly channeling the World. Later, great characters can reappear in other containers that manifest the World, and continue to be generators of drama. This is the strategy of The Marvel Universe's emissary Kevin Feige who deploys movie containers anchored by iconic characters to express the World of Marvel. Some characters can become so vivid that you see imagine them as people you want to hang out with, spend time with, watch grow. This is the effect of Miyazaki's character Totoro in *My Neighbor Totoro*, where after featuring in its initial children's film container, Totoro's every appearance — on toys, t-shirts, in cameos, short films and fan art — is cherished.

A Cartoonist-led approach begins with a character and builds out key features of the World in the process, all the while achieving the finite goal of the Director to complete the container. A Cartoonist-led creation process goes something like this:

1. Your Cartoonist devises a character, often with some inner contradiction.

> Bugs Bunny is a herbivore who is more cunning than his predators. Jesus is a higher intelligence god who chooses to suffer and be shamed. Tyrion Lannister has royal status but is physically a dwarf. Drake is a rapper who is a nice guy. Totoro is a feral god who is benevolent towards children.

2. You further describe the character by imagining where it lives, the living conditions that created the character.

> When we see that Yoda lives in a dark, swampy shithole by choice, we understand that he is truly playing a higher spiritual game. By imagining where a character lives as an expression of the character's choices and limitations, you naturally begin to envision key features of the larger World. What does the character's room look like? What kind of food? Is there a pet? What kind of lighting? How does it move through the room? What kind of job does it have? What does the character consider its home and what is its dangerous frontier? What inequities in the environment led to its physical or psychological characteristics? How does the character

greet its neighbor? What are the social norms of the world that constrain the character or make the character complacent?

3. The living conditions imply the laws, so you describe the laws that constrain or give permission to the characters.

Philip K. Dick would sometimes begin his science fiction novels with one simple change from normality: 50% gravity, or a drug that shrinks you, or a law that you can be arrested for intending to commit a crime. What kind of laws does the character accept? What laws does it fight against, but that others accept? What do the buildings look like and whose laws do they reflect? Has there been a history of conflict around these laws? Is the World settled into this or are things under contention?

4. You imagine disruptors of the law and what they attempt to break in the World.

The hobbit is a pacifist but his orderly shire is threatened by Sauron's orc army. There is imperial order in the galaxy, but the farm boy dreams of joining the rebellion. The attitude your character adopts amidst conflict stemming from the laws of the World becomes the mythological story of the character, and announces the core values of your World without even knowing you were working on that. What side of the fence does your character sit in this conflict? And what is the outcome of this attitude? Adjust as necessary.

A test of the success of this approach is to look back at the character and ask if the character is more than just a character, but an ambassador who signals and evokes the World, its mythological narrative, and the character's place in it. Is even the thought of the character inseparable now from the values and aesthetics of the World?

VALUES OF THE WORLD

The Director looks for the values that emerge from your container. The Emissary checks that these values are sustained across the World.

Through its characters and narrative, hacks and laws, the container announces the World's proposition for "how to live." Should you choose to enter the World and live within it, you confirm the World's values and are held to its standards. The World suggests that these values might also be attitudes to live by and carry forth in other domains of life.

The World's narrative mythology shows the rewards of those characters who realize and uphold these values, and the consequences of the characters who violate them. In the mythology of Apple, Steve Jobs is portrayed as the unrelenting think different visionary who got kicked out of his own company by the unimaginative corporate square villain John Scully. After a period of missteps and atrophy, Apple accepts the return of Jobs who revitalizes his kingdom back into an innovation triumph. This is how values concerning cherished character traits emerge.

The World's laws describe which circumstances are appropriate to deploy its superpower hacks, and which circumstances are forbidden and profane. In Harry Potter, young students at Hogwarts are taught many powerful hacks that elevate and re-enchant their experience of life at school. But they are restricted by wizardly law from performing those hacks in the normal world and upon other students. Doing so is punished by banishment from Hogwarts and a lifetime of shame. This is how values concerning the correct use of a World's superpowers emerge.

LANGUAGE / NAMING

The Emissary wishes for a language to come out of the first pilot container. New hacks can be cartooned into new words. Jedi. Wookie. Midichlorians. Pinch Zoom. Dock. Swipe. App. FaceTime. Muggle. Sunken Place. Supercharger. Dharma. Tulpa. Together, these words contribute to the compression of even more expressive ideas within the special reality of the World. They can signal members from non members. They shape an aesthetic of the World like the calls and songs of a bird species cutting through the noise of the jungle.

COMPLEXITY FROM EMERGENCE

On a technical level, the Hacker is always asking, 'What rules lead to the most the leverage?' Meaning, can I develop one thing that satisfies multiple goals, or a combination of simple systems that can accomplish vast complexity? The Emissary ensures that these hacks support the vision of the Director.

A World should be complex, not complicated. In *The Pragmatic Programmer* (1999), Andrew Hunt says: 'Simple rules lead to complex behavior. Complicated rules lead to stupid behavior.' It's Flocking vs. Bureaucracy. Simple rules shared among many objects, characters, entities together create the conditions for emergence. What is emergence? It's the phenomenon in which new behaviours arise through interactions among simpler similar entities. Lots of hydrogen and oxygen produce the property of wetness. Vast complex biology arises from the four bases of DNA.

Think of it as inventing a language. If you choose to represent everything at the level we see it, like Chinese, then the basic vocabulary will be extensive, but brittle. If you represent things as the composition of an underlying alphabet, like Latin languages, then you gain a lot of expressivity, nuance, and variety from simpler shared building blocks.

The Emissary should keep an eye out for signs of emergence, unexpected compounding behavior that arises from the work of the Director, Cartoonist, and Hacker. This is a sign that the World is coming alive.

TROUBLESHOOTING
If you are feeling morale problems, keep in mind the seeking and steering options of the masks and switch your state. Story helps gut: If your Hacker is deciding whether or not a tool is worth the effort to make, ask the Emissary if it will be useful for future aspects of the World. If your Cartoonist is wondering whether another character is needed, ask your Director what place it might serve. Gut helps story: if your Director is feeling weighed down by the long journey to completing its work, call in the Cartoonist to remind you of the character or feeling you love. If your Emissary feels bored that its adhering too much to tradition, call in your Hacker to remind you what is exciting and new and you can lean more into. Your Emissary needs fuel to take your World to market.

MILESTONE: A WORLD IS BORN

People want to visit and live in the World. They access the World via the portal of the Container.

The pilot container is complete and ripe to express the underlying World that the Emissary has so carefully chaperoned through every aspect of the container. Some thoughts to keep in mind:

So far we've talked about the World as mediated by a container. But why can't the World be manifested as the World itself? Because we need the finite tangibility of a container to make it possible for a World to begin from a single Creator. And because on closer examination all Worlds can only manifest indirectly through a container medium. A drawing of Mickey Mouse is a low resolution, low dimensional manifestation of the World of Disney. A Mickey cartoon is a bit higher. And Disneyland is a high resolution, high dimensional manifestation of the World of Disney. But even a trip to Disneyland is not a one-to-one experience of the World of Disney itself. If it was, it would leave nothing to the imagination and to the potentiality of that World. In constructing the pilot container of a World, we begin to appreciate how the container is a body for the spirit of a World to possess and commune with us through.

The completion of the pilot container is a useful moment to highlight the possibility of our wider World. When George Lucas premiered Star Wars, he revised the theatrical release so the title crawl read "Episode IV: A New Hope" in order to suggest the larger scope of the underlying Star Wars Universe that this one movie container belonged to. When Elon successfully landed a rocket for reusage, he was quick to position the moment as a step towards the larger objective of landing on Mars. The completion of the container is the moment to celebrate that a World is born.

ACT 2: KEEPING THE WORLD ALIVE

Emissary attempts to spread the domain of the World, amplifying the World's Aliveness by continuing to program it with new container projects. It is a period of flourishing.

The challenge of Act 2 is adjusting to the demanding priorities of the Emissary. No longer in the background, Emissary actively works to make sure Director, Cartoonist and Hacker stay busy with new container projects that give the World further vehicles of expression and expose the generative potential of the World.

IS THE WORLD REALLY ALIVE?

Recall: Aliveness of a World = Evidence Usage / Creator's Hold. You know when a World is alive when it is capable of generating more evidence than the creator is deliberately authoring. A good symptom of this is if invoking the World generates immediate thoughts of what might happen next within the World.

Signs of a World's aliveness include instances where what might happen next is something that can be answered with certainty by someone who is not the creator. Fanfiction: where fans generate narratives that are true to the characters of the World, with consequences that are true to the laws of the World, yet still surprising. Suggestions to the creator of where they think things are going: predictions of what kind of car Tesla should make next. Predicting what J.K. Rowling is going to reveal in her next book..

At this stage, Creator's Hold is high. Any speculation in the minds of other people is only a good sign that your World is alive.

CONTAINERS ROUND TWO

The Emissary must now consider what container to work on next. If the pilot container was well received, the Director may wish to do more of the same. A movie sequel. An updated rocket. A restaurant franchise. But it is the Emissary's duty to assess where the World needs more development.

Now that you have established a World, any new container you make will have compounding resonance and power by virtue of being an expression of the larger matrix of meaning held by the World. Not all containers need to be the same scale or difficulty to achieve.

If your pilot container was highly interactive, consider making a declarative container to further express the characters, mythology, and values of the World. After the unsuccessful Lisa computer in 1983, Steve Jobs returned with the Macintosh in 1984. It coincided with a narrative commercial directed by Ridley Scott depicting an Orwellian zombie society disrupted by a young athlete who shatters the image of their authoritarian leader. This pairing of narrative and technical product elevated Apple from being just a computer company, like Dell Computers, to being a World that stood for a new era of nonconformity and counterculture values.

If your pilot container was highly declarative, consider making an interactive container to further express the hacks and operating models that give the World special power. After the publication of the book Dianetics, L. Ron Hubbard embarked on a lecture tour, opened a research center, and introduced Scientology. His followers opened a church.

UPHOLDING VALUES VERSUS UPDATING VALUES

The Emissary faces the challenge of deciding which values of the World to uphold, and which require updating. Consider a vegan restaurant whose World has core values around what ingredients are acceptable. To update its values to include meat would destroy the specific quality that makes the vegan restaurant a special container and a special World worth visiting. To update its values to include eggs or milk would be less radical, but also a decision an Emissary would have to fight hard for. The Emissary's task might not be any easier if news came that eggs and milk are now artificially synthesized without the involvement of animals. Merely the idea of this value update threatens to undermine the integrity of the World.

This gets at an essential duty of the Emissary: to determine what values are sacred and what values require updating to continue generatively growing a World. When Star Wars emissary Kathleen Kennedy granted permission to director Rian Johnson to update the nature of the Force to include psychic video chat, tradition-bound fans felt this trivialized a core value at the spiritual heart of Star Wars. Others felt it renewed the idea and spirit of the Force for a new generation. Google's original motto in its corporate code of conduct was "Don't be evil." They later removed the motto and updated it

with their parent company's motto, "Do the right thing." The update alone drew attention to whether evilness had been accomplished.

SURVIVING VALUE VIOLATIONS

A world must survive its own value violations by its members. Every World develops a shadow side where its values are betrayed, a hidden pathological dimension that creates huge drama when they come to light. This is where the achievement of complexity gets ugly. Think of phalluses hidden in the background plates of Disney movies. McDonalds serving feces. Sexual predation among the Catholic clergy. Fake news on Facebook. Bullying on Twitter. Suicide on Snapchat. Apple security backdoors. Ethereum DAO theft.

Some would argue these pathologies of a World are not meant to be eradicated, but are an intrinsic expression of a living World. The underbelly symbiotically fueling the theater of high values. Heaven, for a hell. The point is, a World will face a moment when violations of its own proclaimed values come to light. This is a stage for the reformers and disruptors of a World to battle it out for the World's future. Reformers will want to clean things up, patch the breakages, and push the un-repairables into the shadows. Disruptors will want to sever some essential identity arm of the World, force some people to exit the World, and rebuild from a new branch. The Emissary of a World must decide which direction to steer. If a World can survive either of these responses, it will have continued to fulfill its promise to generate drama. If a World is denied either of these responses, it means no one cares. It has become a future no one believes in.

WHEN A WORLD DIES YOUNG

No parent should outlive their children, and no Creator should outlive their World. But sometimes a World must die. It simply can't keep either its promise to survive its creator or continue to generate drama. This is best illustrated by the phenomena of organizations that cannot survive the exit or death of their founder. Often there is a period of stasis in which the successor emissary carries on to the letter of the World's law, and everyone can feel that the World will simply crumble with the next internal drama. Even if willing emissaries are identified and brought into the World, their

vision might not be brave enough to carry the World forward. A brave emissary has to betray its creator enough to actually keep the spirit of the World alive and hungry. But doing so often upsets entrenched traditionalists within the World, who threaten to exit, or stage a coup. When emissaries engage in protracted fights after the exit of the creator, you get a King Lear tragedy. It doesn't help that the creator often works till her last day, and has inadequately given the time and space for successor emissaries to find their footing.

The best outcome in the event of a World's death is the cannibalization of a World's parts. Armed with experience, subgroups of a World's emissaries go off to start a new World together. The World's accumulated wealth is liquidated and dispersed to its members. The story of the World is documented, maybe even mythologized into a movie, as a lesson for others who wish to learn from the World and its creator.

NEVER ENDING STORY

A never ending story — a mission — that inspires the creator and a World's members can be the North Star of a World in times of reformation and disruption. A story that is simple, aspirational, and slightly out of reach. A mission that can keep the emissary and future emissaries energized and hopeful to continue keeping the World alive.

Consider SpaceX. Elon Musk made a list of things that both he cared about and that mattered to humanity's future: "The internet; sustainable energy; space exploration, in particular the permanent extension of life beyond Earth; artificial intelligence; reprogramming the human genetic code." After failing to purchase rockets from Russia, Elon did the math for the material cost of constructing a rocket himself. He realized that he could vastly reduce the cost of space travel if rockets could be manufactured in house and engineered to be reusable by landing themselves. This realization was Elon's big Hack. Fast forward. SpaceX is a thriving World. It is sustained by two key stories worth getting up in the morning for: 1. The Director's finite but exciting blockbuster mythologizing story: Go to Mars. 2.. The Emissary's infinite and inspiring story: Become a space-faring civilization. Add to that the the Cartoonist's eye-catching image: A civilian object (a car) launched into orbit. With these powerful scripts as the North Stars of SpaceX, and the

proven Hacker credibility to actually achieve it, SpaceX as a World can already fulfill its promise of surviving its creator and continuing to generate drama.

CRISIS TWO

The World has survived, thrived, and now wants Autonomy from its Creator. The potentiality of the World exceeds the vision of Emissary. Emissary is struggling to keep up and without intending to, threatens to limit the growth of the World. The World begins to suffer under Emissary's parenting.

ACT 3: EXITING THE WORLD

Emissary is stubborn to give up the World, but now suffers from a fraying sense of control and sanity. Director, Cartoonist and Hacker are exhausted working on the World. A fateful decision is made: Emissary finally hands over the World to other emissaries and stages the artist's exit as the true test of the World's Autonomy.

SHAKING THE CREATOR'S HOLD

It is very hard to be both the creator of the World and an effective emissary to the World. Think of how loving parents continue to treat their children as children even when they've grown up. They can't help it, they love their children. But their children suffer from some form of arrested development because of this habituated parental dynamic. This is the typical problem of the creator's emissary: it loves the World too much, and that love blinds the creator from seeing the World for the complex living being it has become.

George R.R. Martin says: "Ruling is hard. This was maybe my answer to Tolkien, whom, as much as I admire him, I do quibble with. Lord of the Rings had a very medieval philosophy: that if the king was a good man, the land would prosper. We look at real history and it's not that simple. Tolkien can say that Aragorn became king and reigned for a hundred years, and he was wise and good. But Tolkien doesn't ask the question: What was Aragorn's tax policy? Did he maintain a standing army? What did he do in times of flood and famine? And what about all these orcs? By the end of the war, Sauron is

gone but all of the orcs aren't gone — they're in the mountains. Did Aragorn pursue a policy of systematic genocide and kill them? Even the little baby orcs, in their little orc cradles?"

Consider Star Wars. George Lucas was a born Hacker, but went to film school and learned to cultivate his inner Director and Cartoonist. After making *American Graffiti* he decided that his movies should be about setting a standard of values to care about, not just showing people the way the world is. He wanted to make modern mythology. His inner Hacker turned to the ideas of mythologist Joseph Campbell, and found a template of motifs that re-occurred in stories since ancient times. It was a killer hack because by following its century proven motif model, George would guarantee the meaning and emotional resonance of his newest movie, Star Wars. He landed on a timeless conflict between spiritual mysticism and technologic reason that audiences craved. Fast forward: Star Wars is a huge hit, the birth of the blockbuster, and proof that a movie can become a series can become a franchise of toys, games, theme parks, spin off novels. A living World from the mind of a single creator. George had a high hold on his universe, and was seen by everyone around him as the only God who decides. But George was getting tired. After a string of much maligned prequel movies, he went silent. He could no longer balance being his own emissary, director, hacker, cartoonist. It was all too much. He entertained fantasies of going back to making smaller intimate indie films — in other words, going back to a time when he didn't have to worry about maintaining a World or listen to the chatter of his inner Emissary or the resentment of those who live in Star Wars. "Why would I make any more when everybody yells at you and says what a terrible person you are?" Finally, George sold his World to Disney, and handed Emissary duties over to Kathleen Kennedy. George is a free artist once again, although the constant news of updates to the World of Star Wars will always be painful.

GRANTING AUTONOMY

When you grant autonomy to the World, it is best to do so completely and exit.

Consider the cautionary tale of *Game of Thrones*: George R. R. Martin was a productive writer of fantasy novels. A master Cartoonist and Director. He

developed a World with strong characters featuring amusing inner contradictions. He animated them in an epic story that explored the complexities of ruling a kingdom, with the added backdrop of an existential ecological threat. People loved his World. One day, George found himself at a pivotal turning point: two showrunners, David Benioff and D.B. "Dan" Weiss, wanted to adapt his novels into a television series for HBO. George's Emissary approved: this would mean George could focus on writing more content while leaving Emissary duties to David and Dan. Plus, HBO was testing developing new content for their streaming service HBO GO, which would afford wider access to new viewers. It would also encourage an emerging viewer behavior called binging, that would immerse them in George's World much faster than any other fantasy World before it. Great hack! Fast forward eight years: *Game Of Thrones* is a huge hit, but George is in despair. He can't finish his last novel under the pressure of expectation from all the people who now inhabit Westeros. What's more, its emissaries David and Dan have gone ahead and sufficiently written further mythology than George's own Director. George is stuck: either he finishes his novels as a personal goal, and accept that *Game of Thrones* is truly a living world that is autonomous from him, or he attempts to maintain the status of creator and regain his hold. The latter leads to misery.

The challenge of Act 3 is getting Emissary to let go. Paul Valery said, "A poem is never finished, only abandoned." Whatever you choose to do then is an act of agency.

CHAPTER 5:
LIFE IN NEW NATURE

THE FUTURE OF GETTING UP IN THE MORNING

Bill Gates said, "If science is able to realize the dream of longer healthier happier lives, and most people no longer need to work to feed or clothe themselves, what reason will we have to get up in the morning?"

A happier future in which material requirements are solved will only sooner expose a deeper psychological problem. One that was delayed, but never erased: the problem of Autonomy. And the related cultural problem: the dearth of collective experience, literacy, and tools about how to invent your own motivations, and choose a path that is uniquely your own to confront and progress upon. What is my purpose? What counts as meaningful? How do I invent a path where none is given or required? What do I do with my unstructured time? What's the game? How do I deal with this horrible slice of freedom called Autonomy?

This condition basically describes the chosen daily struggle of an artist. This isn't a romanticization. It is the one truly redemptive and useful feature of the artist's job. Ignoring the end result of art, the artist's job is all about the practice of dealing with the open-ended class of infinite game problems. Problems of choosing a frontier, hallucinating its interestingness, believing in its potentiality, and trying to make something of it. Problems that all of us humans will be left with when every other kind of finite-game defined work goes the way of automation. In the future, everyone is some version of an

artist because everyone must choose their own infinite game problems to invent, frame, and keep alive.

Zooming out, the Human Condition is the macro World containing the layers of Worlds accrued so far that augment humanity enough to level the playing field with Reality. There are periods where the balance between the Human Condition and Reality are well matched. We feel at home in these periods. But like any self respecting infinite game of infinite games, Reality finds unpredictable ways to up the ante, puncturing the boundaries of our homey Worlds and encroaching on us with its weirdness, with its overwhelming details.

When Reality exceeds our imagination – our practiced margin of deviation – fear sets in. It feels like a dark age. It feels like a loss of control. What does it all mean? What is worth valuing? And is this chaos all our own doing? This is a sign that Reality — infinite game of infinite games — is back to playing us hard. The first response is to ignore Reality and hope the problematic parts go away. The second response is to attempt to reduce Reality back to an earlier manageable state. Neither works sustainably and the the Human Condition shrivels a little bit. There is only one solution: to level up imagination at the individual level, through the practice of dealing with infinite game problems that incrementally expand our mental margin of deviation. A margin that might allow us to see overwhelming chaos as overwhelming interestingness. It is in the *practice* that dealing with infinite game problems becomes preventative, then routine, and then, eventually, expressive and fun.

The cost of not doing so is being cast unknowingly as a data-rich woketard sow by bots training to exploit tribal blindness and master human limbic resonance. Then virally spreading your confusion to your children. Then suffering a painful psychological death. Then defaulting to a life of physical ailments that become the all consuming use of your remaining time alive.

So what is the lesson art can teach us about how to live in the future? As much as possible, choose infinite game problems.

Why? (1) Because, as an individual human being, doing so can ensure your psychological well-being, and offer a sustainable source of meaning that can

weather complex times. (2) Because, as a member and candidate emissary of the World called the Human Condition, doing so has the potential to open portals for more people, and makes being alive more interesting for all. Fail or thrive, big or small, your work on infinite game problems contribute to expanding the frontier limit of the Human Condition, a new beat in its never-ending story, a new stretch in its shape.

And how can we learn to love infinite game problems? By Worlding!

It is in the practice of Worlding again and again and again that Worlds become both arbitrary and familiar, and therefore expressive and artful. And in the process, something changes inside the artist. The masks get more and more exercise, they begin to see each another for who they are, and their gifts begin to add up to more than the sum of their parts. Creating Worlds, publishing them into the Human Condition, and living within higher and higher dimensions of complexity as interestingness, begins to feel like working a muscle that has always been there.

TOWARDS A CULTURE OF WORLDING IN THE NEW NATURE

When Reality exceeds our imagination, the Cartoonist inside us feels an ancient feeling. It's the feeling of our pathetic status relative to the Reality environment. The Cartoonist wants to caricature Reality for how it feels and reminds us of its old name: *Nature*. The Director wags its historical finger, "This isn't Nature because this time we are responsible for creating this chaos!" Cartoonist: "Ok, let's call it New Nature."

Recall a time when Original Nature terrorized humans. After some getting used to, early Hackers began to see aspects of Original Nature as an interesting frontier to explore and expose its tricks. *Let's use the sap of the tree to connect these sticks. Let's use two rocks to make little fires at our convenience. Let's study the river zone which is distinct from the forest zone, which is distinct from the sky zone.* The early Cartoonists began giving new names to subsets of phenomena foraged by the Hackers. *River Spirit. Forest Spirit. Sky Spirit.* Each Spirit offered gifts for communicating with it in the right way, and brutal chaotic punishments for ticking it off. Early Directors mythologized the ups and downs of each Spirit's mood, creating a shared bank of knowledge for better dealing with Spirits. Early Emissaries

began to manage the relationship between humans and these cartooned complexities called Spirits, and saw opportunities to durably control certain advantages and tame certain uproars. Together the masks worked to maximize a baseline of luck that could be shared by more and more humans: thus advancing into a culture of productive engagement with Nature.

The feeling of this relationship to Nature is called enchantment. Enchantment is a state of attraction to complexity we do not yet fully understand, but are ready to hallucinate its overwhelming chaos as overwhelming interestingness, ripe to be bewitched and drawn into, to appreciate, and to begin transacting with, casting spells with, programming with, communing with. It is a state that is more advanced than the initial overwhelming terror and confusion toward New Nature, but not yet as ruinous and exploitative as the domesticating control we have since enacted over Original Nature.

Fast forward. So what would a culture of Worlding look and feel like in our post-anthropocene New Nature era? It would feel like an era of enchantment. Enchantment as a pervasive state experienced not just by impressionable children, but by curious Adults.

One of my earliest memories is of my parents taking me to Disneyland when I was three years old. I had spotted a little rail house on Disneyland's Main Street, recessed and inaccessible, with a light flickering inside the window. I asked my mom, who lives there? *Huey, Dewey and Louie,* she answered. I imagined the three ducklings playing together. I wondered what kind of toys they had, what their room looked like, and when they would be called away for lunch time. I imagined how they might get into a fight, or become bored with one another. Then, I imagined that they might look out their window and see me: a child in the crowd, same age as them, looking back. I would be a momentary feature in *their* World. And I had to be ready to do the job of keeping it alive.

This was my first taste of enchantment. Its artificial construction is precisely the point: it is a prototype of enchantment generated by a complex man-made creation. There I was as a child, experiencing Disney's flavor of enchantment. (It would take me many more years to rediscover small pockets of enchantment of the Original Nature variety.) Yes, a Worlding

culture counts as its early forebears Disney, Apple, Scientology, SpaceX, Harry Potter, Star Wars, and all the other creator-born Worlds that have taken on a life of their own. They are pioneers in the techniques of enchantment. But before your inner Director says, "Ew, that's not the appropriate mythological source I dream of for the next chapter of the Human Condition," don't worry, the pre-history of a culture of Worlding gets much weirder as the capability and consciousness to create Worlds becomes available to all people. When that culture arrives, the division between the artificially generated complexity of Worlds and the surprises still latent in Original Nature will blur into the New Nature clusterfuck. Together, indistinguishable, they will comprise the enchanting super spirit with whom a culture of Worlding communes.

Ancient people believed that Nature was suffused with autonomous Spirit Worlds all around us, teeming with activity on their own plane, and open to human visitation. A plurality of self-regulating Worlds would be something like the Spirit Worlds of New Nature made manifest for our times. Imagine a Cambrian Explosion of Worlds, big and small, playful and infrastructural, ephemeral and concrete, all fertile with currencies of meaning. Imagine a culture in which Worlding makes Worlds as prolific and mundane as self-publishing a book is today. And imagine the fluency for Worlds that this ease and proliferation would create: moving between Worlds, existing in multiple Worlds simultaneously, starting and exiting Worlds, authoring Worlds knowing they will be inhabited by someone after a century of AI-aided evolution, returning to Worlds you began as a child. Imagine creating infinite games as an act of agency. And imagine how the art of creating infinite games might open a way to an even greater art: the art of choosing better futures, thus expressively steering the medium of spacetime and sculpting our agency in it.

EPILOGUE:
WORLD TO LIVE

What would living in a culture of Worlding feel like?

You wake up in the morning, camped deep in New Nature. You review the state of your Worlds: Your unfinished novel is ripe with new inferences. A strained friendship is now on fire and might die before breakfast. A hypermind is requesting higher compression signals from you before its negotiations with the president at noon. Your mom channels a legacy voice who reminds you that today is the anniversary of your first fork away from family game night. A population of insects you sponsored out of extinction is at war with your sentient house. The Soul of Los Angeles says it would appreciate a 20 minute walk on its new parkway today. Bob, your artificial fourth ego-state, is whining to use the walk as compute time for itself. Your twin dogs advise you it's time to get up.

You decide to take the walk. Physically, everything looks similar to the early 21st century. Drama is raging in other dimensions, but the built environment barely let's on that anything is changing dramatically. It's the people walking around you who give away the rate of change. You see them shifting behaviors in arrhythmic cycles: their voices jumping notes, their direction reversing, their eyes scanning you twice in different ways. It's hard to see them as people in the traditional sense, knowing what you know. It's considered empathetic to think of a person as a congress living inside the house of a biological body. One that is home to a family of native and adopted entities, and serves as a waypoint for hosting and routing other entities passing through. Some publish their expressions through the

physical medium of the body house. Some publish their expressions into dimensions of New Nature.

There is mass literacy of ego-states, mask states, and all the other inner entities voicing themselves through the body. The body is the bio-address for these entities. You can quickly determine from gestures, diction, and tone who is in charge of the house at any given moment: Parent? Child? Adult? Who is imagining right now: Cartoonist, Director, Hacker, Emissary? Is that her AI ego-state talking? Is that a hypermind trying to megaphone through the house? Is that the house manager trying to put everyone on silence? Those who choose to continue to see a person as a single monolithic entity held to high standards of coherence will only ever be responding to a fraction of the World of a person.

There is a common practice of the lending of masks. The time sharing of surplus ego-state. This has led to the norm of people living multiple lives within a lifetime. Both serially and in parallel.

You notice how far from camp you've walked already, but physical distance is an irrelevant factor for escaping your problems. The notion of the home and the frontier are no longer distant encapsulated domains, but coexist in a fluid integrated feedback loop. Your home is always parked on some stretch of the frontier, and the frontier is always becoming some new room in your home. This is the source of many dramas. Dramas in weirder variety than ever before in human history, at intimate and diffuse scales. But this is the fulfillment of one of the foundational promises of Worlds: to continue to generate drama. In a culture of Worlding, there is incessant drama and conflict permeating the lives of everyone. But unlike conflicts in the old times, these are conflicts that are counted. Often counted by multiple Worlds. Recall in an enchanted forest, every fern, rock, flower, tree, animal, bug, monster, and person keeps score of who did what to whom. An inner ledger. This transactional historical information held personally by every entity might later be used as reason for issuing gifts or curses. Every drama, by virtue of being counted and embedded in the context of Worlds, are eaten little by little and metabolized as fuel for more Worlds to come.

You notice on your walk different species of artificial life living their lives among you. Some are externalized, like maintenance critters, roving vehicles,

standing buildings. Some live inside human bodies, taking the role of a new ego-state. Some serve to maintain a single particular World. Some have passports to move through multiple Worlds. Some have the cognitive status of bots, defined by their restriction to finite game problems. Some have the status of intelligences, defined by their permission to contemplate infinite game problems. What counts as intelligence is flattened into a marketplace of signals. Some hyperminds violently oppose this flattening. You recall that the container of "human" has been fought over and redrawn many times already.

You don't envy intelligences for their brilliance because they're busy doing niche stuff you can't even care to comprehend. Like a new class of researchers and academics. You don't envy the bots for their jobs. But sometimes you envy their sense of certainty about their task in life. In those moments, you might book a bot-like recreational activity that restores the feeling of classic old world certainty — driving, orchard picking, filing unsorted things into alphabetical order.

You see a man crying on the side of the walking path. He just permanently exited an entire World that he built with his ex, only to find out she is forking off key aspects of their World to jump start a new World with an unknowable entity. Yes, there are new variations of pain and suffering, new poisons and new curses. But they come with greater context and awareness of what they pay for. You hear the crying man about to cast a curse, but he sees you watching. His face lights up with an idea. "I've got a name for this new feeling!" He runs off. In a culture of Worlding, the identification, compression, and transmission of complex phenomena is highly rewarded, especially under conditions of stress and pain.

You've noticed that more and more people grow up seeing themselves as a candidate emissary of the macro World, the Human Condition. That is, more people feel entitled to take shots at pushing on the frontier edges of the Human Condition, and help steer its next update, big or small. Sometimes you feel it's all too much. You feel overly aware that you are a neuron in the Human Condition super soul. You want to time travel back to the old times, where there were fewer Worlds and no one expected you to make your own. Your inner Hacker chimes in. It reminds you that a culture of Worlding does

not obligate you to compose Worlds. It is simply a general condition in which you are rewarded for paying attention to complexity, not ignoring it.

For seeing messiness as a feature of the long story. For participating in keeping enchantment alive for others, even when you aren't always feeling it yourself. Your inner Emissary adds a bit: "Worlding is a practice available for anyone to choose as a way to structure their time. One that orients your diverse personal interests into channels of long term meaning potential that can unlock Worlds for others to further World from. In practicing Worlding, you contribute to the collectively maintained feeling of enchantment toward New Nature."

You stop walking and take a deep breath. You see a dock of bikes. One calls out to you, and you like its reputation. You decide to ride it back home to the frontiers you have to face. You don't feel happy, but you feel kind of free.

You have been quietly studying the subject of Autonomy since you started kindergarten. A teacher once told you that the cost of Autonomy illiteracy is that New Nature eats you and you suffer unrelenting waves of existential crisis inside its belly until you get lucky one day and someone who reminds you of your parents comes along and gives you permission to die. In a culture of Worlding, there is high literacy around the subject of Autonomy. It is a lifelong subject of study, understood better with age, but never totally naturalized to the limbic ego-states inside you. You feel lucky you grew up with the first generation of parents who consciously learned how to not hold their children's lives hostage with their nurture script. Their inner emissaries scream, "Too much Creator's Hold, you'll kill the Worlds you make!" When you visit home, they try to talk to you like an old friend, not their child who should miss them. There is higher schooling on how to examine and overcome parentally imposed life scripts. But your experiences tell you the only school big enough to grow along with you is New Nature itself.

Clouds cast a shadow as you dash down the path. A floating light follows you overhead. It's late morning and your other Worlds are signaling for attention. Some require your imagination, some require just showing up.

You dismount the bike at camp. It says, "Hope to cross paths again one day," and zooms off. Does everything have to have a soul now?

Your Hacker and Emissary are tired and need a nap. Your Director and Cartoonist are ready to work. You wonder if you might fall into paralyzing anxiety without all masks ready on deck. But something reminds you that you're equipped and permitted to navigate New Nature. Something reassures you of its enchantment and your place in it.

It's your aliveness script. It promises that doing more of what interests you and what you find meaningful leads to the community achieving its richest flowering. When you close your eyes, you can see it captioning the funny looking time worm that is the shape of your life. It is a promise, a balm, a spell, and a wish. The script reads:
"Live to World. World to live."

GLOSSARY

<u>Aliveness</u> - the quality of being self regulating and self generating, with a motivation to keep doing both.

<u>Autonomy</u> - the awareness of what scripts the way the lifetime of a living being (a person, a World) is structured, followed by the choice whether to seek new scripts or continue with the given script.

<u>art</u> - a special kind of communication between artist and audience, for when words won't do. For when you want to communicate something more interesting, nutritious, complex, or strange.

<u>artwork</u> - the mediating object that needs to be crafted to articulate the special communication.

<u>artist</u> - anyone involved in the creation of art. Used broadly in this book to encompass anyone who deploys some or all of their masks to their work.

<u>complexity</u> - that which emerges from the interaction of simpler parts, including and especially what emerges surprisingly and unpredictably. Prior to study and understanding, something complex is mistaken for complicated.

<u>compression</u> - the human mind's rewarded desire for complex and/or disparate elements to be synthesized together. Rewarded

because human mind has thermodynamic limit, so trained to enjoy compression.

Creator's Hold - the degree of god-like authority the creator has over the World and its updates. The more permission the creator grants to others to contribute updates to the World, the weaker the Creator's Hold.

enchantment - a state of deep attraction to complexity once complexity is characterized as a family of entities with talents, moods, gifts, punishments, and inter-relationships.

frontier - where the edge of a World meets unknown Reality.

finite game - a game with defined rules oriented toward achieving a resolved end stage, win or lose.

flag art - art made with high cartoonist influence. Symptoms: emotional, meme-like, reactive, simplified colors and shapes, jokey, symbolic.

good art - art made with high director influence. Symptoms: morality, narrative, mythological, historical, meaning defining.

home - the comforting known protected center of a World.

infinite game - a game where the only rule is to keep the game going. If the game is coming to a resolution, the game must change to keep going.

Life Script - the narrative map of a living being's life. A familiar human script is: go to college, get a job, get married, have children, retire, die. But can be more exotic: visit every country and live nine lives. Or more open ended: make a living doing what you love, or die. Or more poetic: live to world, world to live.

mask - an inner persona or pattern of thought that expresses itself externally through the body.

new art - art made with high hacker influence. Symptoms: system/model centric, magic trick, wow factor.

New Nature - a name for Reality that includes runaway man-made complexity.

Original Nature - a retcon of Nature: the state of Reality prior to anthropocentric influence.

Parent, Adult, Child (PAC) - A model of human psychology developed by Eric Berne. "Each human being exhibits three types of ego states. (1) Those derived from parental figures, called the Parent. In this state, he feels, thinks, acts, talks, and responds just as one of his parents did when he was little. This ego state is active, for example, in raising his own children. It influences his behavior as the 'Parental Influence,' performing the functions of a conscience. (2) The ego state in which he appraises his environment objectively, and calculates its possibilities and probabilities on the basis of past experience, is called the Adult. The Adult functions like a computer. (3) Each person carries within a little boy or little girl who feels, thinks, acts, talks, and responds just the way they did when they were a child between the age of two and five. This ego state is called the Child."

portal art - art made with high Emissary influence. Symptoms: alive, imaginative, fertile, like an unlocked door to a never-ending story.

Reality - that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away.

seeking - the psychological direction an artist's mask wants to achieve: whether seeking a familiar and safe home, or seeking the unknown and surprising frontier.

steering - the motivational strategy that an artist's mask uses to maneuver around obstacles toward what it seeks: whether

motivated by the immediate present and steering by gut, or motivated by the long term and steering by story.

World - a future you can believe in. One that promises to survive its creator and continue to generate drama. The promise of an infinite game that manifests itself in various finite forms, but is regarded as a diffuse spirit that always suggests more to itself. Common examples: a realm, a country, an institution, an organization, an organism.

Worlding - the art of conceiving, incubating, triggering, and nurturing an infinite game.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ian Cheng (born Los Angeles, 1984) is an artist living and working in New York. He has exhibited widely including solo presentations at MoMA PS1, New York; Serpentine Galleries, London; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin; Julia Stoschek Collection, Berlin; and group presentations at Whitney Museum of American Art; New York; Hirshhorn Museum; Washington DC; Tate Modern, London; Louisiana Museum, Copenhagen; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; Sculpture Center, New York.

Since 2013, Cheng has produced a series of simulations exploring an agent's capacity to deal with an ever-changing environment. These works culminated in the *Emissaries* trilogy, which introduced a narrative agent whose motivation to enact a story was set into conflict with the open-ended chaos of the simulation. Most recently, he has developed *BOB (Bag of Beliefs)*, an AI creature whose personality, body, and life story evolve across exhibitions, what Cheng calls "art with a nervous system."

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