

# WHY GOVERNMENTS AREN'T GODS

AND GODS AREN'T GOVERNMENTS

**COMMAND LINES**

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## INTRODUCTION

- THIS TALK CONCERNS **VIRTUAL WORLDS**
  - MMORPGS, MMOGS, MMPS, PSWS, MUDS, MOOS, M\*S...
- IN PARTICULAR, IT CONSIDERS WHO **GOVERNS** SUCH WORLDS
- THERE ARE **THREE** POSSIBLE ANSWERS:
  - REAL-WORLD **GOVERNMENTS**
  - VIRTUAL WORLD **DEVELOPERS**
  - **PLAYERS**
- OK, SO THERE ARE **FOUR** POSSIBLE ANSWER IF YOU INCLUDE:
  - **NO-ONE...**

#### GOVERNMENTS

- REAL-WORLD GOVERNMENTS PREVAIL IN THE **REAL WORLD**
  - VIRTUAL WORLDS' **HARDWARE** EXISTS IN THE REAL WORLD
  - VIRTUAL WORLDS CAN THEREFORE BE **SWITCHED OFF** IF REAL-WORLD GOVERNMENTS SO CHOOSE
- REALITY **ALWAYS WINS**

#### DEVELOPERS

- VIRTUAL WORLD **DEVELOPERS** PREVAIL IN THEIR **OWN** WORLDS
  - TO THE EXTENT THAT REAL-WORLD GOVERNMENTS **ALLOW**
- CAN ASSERT THEIR AUTHORITY IN **TWO** WAYS:
  - THROUGH THEIR VIRTUAL WORLD'S **PHYSICS**
  - THROUGH APPLYING THE REAL WORLD'S **LAWS**
- FOR EXAMPLE, TO STOP **THEFT** OCCURRING IN A VIRTUAL WORLD, A DEVELOPER CAN:
  - **CODE IN** CONCEPT OF OWNERSHIP
  - **BAN** IT UNDER THEIR **EULA**

## PLAYERS

- **PLAYERS** ORGANISE INTO THEIR **OWN** GROUPS WITH THEIR **OWN** RULES
  - WITHIN CONSTRAINTS OF VIRTUAL WORLD'S **PHYSICS**
  - WITHIN CONSTRAINTS OF REAL WORLD'S **LAWS**
- **ACTIVE** PHYSICS HAS GOVERNANCE FEATURES **CODED IN** BY THE **DEVELOPER**
  - EG. HARD-WIRED CONCEPT OF A **GUILD**
  - **CAN** INCLUDE "FORMAL" GOVERNMENTS, EG. MONARCHIES
- **PASSIVE** PHYSICS HAS GOVERNANCE **EMERGING** THROUGH **INTERACTIONS** BETWEEN PLAYERS
  - THE **REAL** WORLD WORKS THIS WAY

## STANDARD VIEW

- IT'S **CLEAR** THAT DEVELOPERS HAVE **REGULATORY** POWERS THROUGH THEIR **CODE**
  - "CODE IS LAW" AND ALL THAT...
- THIS GIVES THEM A FORM OF **SOVEREIGNTY**
- **GENERAL** CONSENSUS AMONG OBJECTIVE OBSERVERS SEEMS TO BE THAT THE **DEVELOPER** THEREFORE **ASSUMES** THE ROLE OF **GOVERNMENT**
- DANGER: THERE ARE **STANDARDS** EXPECTED OF GOVERNMENTS THAT MAY BE **INAPPROPRIATE** IN VIRTUAL WORLDS!
  - AN "ESCAPE FROM A PRISONER OF WAR CAMP" GAME

#### A PROBLEM

- THERE **IS** AN ISSUE HERE
- VIRTUAL WORLD DEVELOPERS **ROUTINELY**:
  - **PUNISH** PLAYERS WITHOUT **TRIAL**
  - **EXILE** THEM
  - **RESTRICT** FREEDOM OF SPEECH
  - **DESTROY** PROPERTY
  - **INFRINGE** PRIVACY
- SOMETIMES THEY SEEK TO **JUSTIFY** THIS IN TERMS OF **SAFEGUARDING** THE WORLD'S *FUTURE*
  - OTHER TIMES THEY JUST DO IT ON A **WHIM**
- SHOULD **GOVERNMENTS** BEHAVE THIS WAY?!

#### A DEFLECTION

- NO, GOVERNMENTS SHOULD **NOT** BEHAVE THIS WAY
- IF A **LOWER-TIER** GOVERNMENT **DOES** BEHAVE THIS WAY, THEN A **HIGHER-TIER** GOVERNMENT WITH **AUTHORITY** OVER IT SHOULD **INTERVENE**
- DEVELOPERS, AS THE **GOVERNMENTS** OF THEIR VIRTUAL WORLDS, SHOULD THEREFORE ADHERE TO THE **SAME** STANDARDS AS THE **REAL-WORLD** GOVERNMENTS THAT CLAIM **JURISDICTION**
- WELL, **ALMOST**
- THE THING IS, VIRTUAL WORLD DEVELOPERS ARE **NOT** **GOVERNMENTS**

#### RULE

- VIRTUAL WORLD DEVELOPERS **DO** RULE THEIR VIRTUAL WORLDS, BUT THEY **DON'T** DO SO AS GOVERNMENTS
- THEY RULE AS **GODS**
- THE DIFFERENCE:
  - **GODS** OPERATE BY **CHANGING** THE LAWS OF **PHYSICS**
  - **GOVERNMENTS** OPERATE BY JUDICIOUS **APPLICATION** OF THE LAWS OF PHYSICS THAT PERTAIN TO THEIR WORLD
- I **CAN'T** DISOBEY THE LAWS OF **PHYSICS**
- I **CAN** DISOBEY THE LAWS OF **THE LAND**
  - EVADE DETECTION, EVADE OR DEFEAT THE FORCES OF LAW...

#### KEY FEATURES

- THERE ARE TWO **KEY FEATURES** OF DEITIES THAT **TOGETHER** UNDERMINE **ANY** ATTEMPTS TO CONSIDER **GODS** AS **GOVERNMENTS**
- 1) GOVERNMENTS CAN BE **DEPOSED** BY THOSE THEY GOVERN; GODS CAN'T
- 2) GOVERNMENTS CAN **RELINQUISH** POWERS; GODS CAN'T
- THE FIRST SAYS THAT DEVELOPERS CAN DO *whatever they wish* IN THEIR VIRTUAL WORLDS
- THE SECOND SAYS THAT THIS IS TRUE **WHETHER THE DEVELOPER LIKES IT OR NOT**

## CONSTRAINTS

- THERE IS A HIERARCHY OF **CONSTRAINTS** HERE
- EACH **LEVEL** OPERATES **UNDER** THE CONSTRAINTS IMPOSED BY **ALL** THE LEVELS ABOVE
- EACH LEVEL CONSTRAINS **ALL** THE LEVELS BELOW
- THE CONSTRAINTS DEPEND ON THE **PHYSICS**
  - **PASSIVE** CONSTRAINTS USE WHAT THE LAWS OF PHYSICS ALLOW TO **ENFORCE** THEM
    - "THE LEGITIMATE USE OF FORCE"
  - **ACTIVE** ONES ARE **IMPOSED** THROUGH THE LAWS OF PHYSICS **THEMSELVES**
    - THIS DOESN'T NEED TO BE ENFORCED
- DON'T WORRY, THERE'S A DIAGRAM SOON...

## WARNING

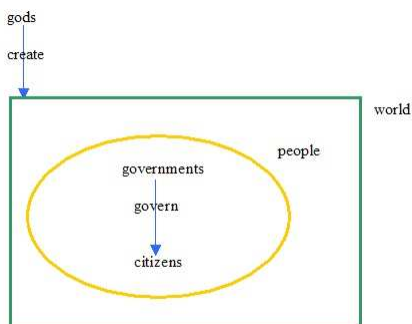
- THE **RELIGIOUS** AMONG YOU MAY BE **SEETHING**
- YOU'RE **SHORTLY** EITHER GOING TO **SEETHE** SOME MORE, OR ACCEPT THAT I'M **NOT** DEIFYING HUMAN BEINGS HERE
- A GOD IS A **CREATOR** OF A REALITY
  - THEIR GODLY POWERS **ONLY** APPLY TO THAT REALITY
  - A DEVELOPER IS A GOD **ONLY** FOR THE WORLD THEY DEVELOP
- IT **IS** A THEOLOGICAL ISSUE AS TO WHETHER CREATING VIRTUAL WORLDS IS **BLASPHEMY** OR **SACRAMENT**
  - IT'S **OK** TO SEETHE ABOUT THAT!

### THE HIERARCHY

- **REAL GODS**
  - 0, 1 OR MANY, DEPENDING ON YOUR BELIEF SYSTEM
- **REAL PHYSICS-BOUND**
  - **US!** CAN ONLY CHANGE PHYSICS BY APPEALING TO GODS
- **REAL-WORLD GOVERNMENTS**
- **VIRTUAL WORLD DEVELOPERS**
- **VIRTUAL PHYSICS-BOUND**
  - **PLAYERS!** CAN ONLY CHANGE VIRTUAL PHYSICS BY APPEALING TO DEVELOPERS, GOVERNMENTS OR REAL GODS
- **CODED-IN GOVERNMENTS**
- **VIRTUAL-WORLD GOVERNMENTS**

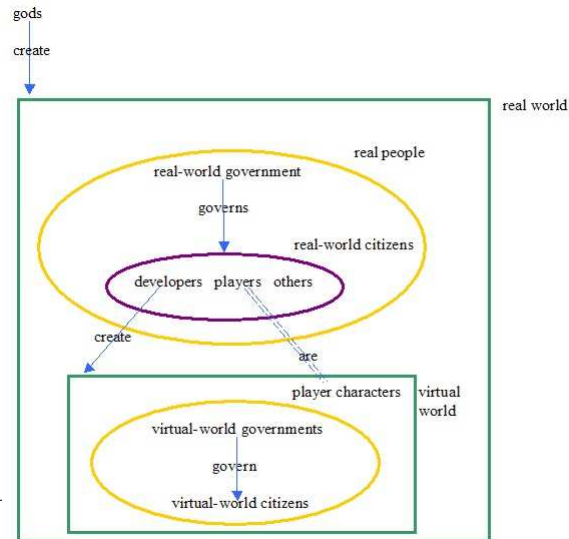
### GODS, GOVERNMENTS AND CITIZENS

- **BASIC RELATIONSHIP: GODS CREATE A WORLD, WHICH CONTAINS PEOPLE, SOME OF WHOM GOVERN THE REMAINING CITIZENS**



## THE REAL AND THE VIRTUAL

- COMBINING TWO **INSTANCES** OF THIS, WE GET:



## GODS OR GOVERNMENTS?

- **INITIAL** OBSERVATION:
  - GOVERNMENTS ARE FORMED BY MEMBERS OF A POPULATION
  - GODS ARE **NOT** MEMBERS OF A POPULATION, THEY ARE **EXTERNAL** TO IT
  - THEREFORE **GODS CAN'T FORM GOVERNMENTS**
- **PROBLEM:** THE DIAGRAM WAS over-simplified
  - GODS **CAN** PLAY THEIR OWN VIRTUAL WORLD!
- **SUPPLEMENTARY** OBSERVATION:
  - EVEN IF GODS **DO** PLAY THEIR OWN VIRTUAL WORLD, THEY'RE **STILL GODS**
  - THEIR INDIVIDUAL POWERS **TRUMP** THOSE OF ANY IN-WORLD GOVERNMENT OF WHICH THEY'RE MEMBERS
  - THEREFORE THEY **STILL CAN'T FORM GOVERNMENTS**



#### APPROACHES TO GOVERNANCE

- **HISTORICALLY**, THERE HAVE BEEN **FOUR** APPROACHES BY DEVELOPERS TO THE **RULE** OF THEIR VIRTUAL WORLD
  - **DIRECT** RULE BY **FIAT**
  - SUPPORTED **PLAYER-TIER** GOVERNMENT
  - **DESCENT** INTO THE VIRTUAL WORLD
  - **ABROGATION**
- A **FIFTH** APPROACH HAS BEEN **SUGGESTED** BUT NOT YET TRIED IN EARNEST
  - **CO-OPERATIVE** OF GODS
- I'LL GO THROUGH THESE INDIVIDUALLY...

#### BUT FIRST

- BUT FIRST, A WORD ABOUT **RULE**
- IN GENERAL, DEVELOPERS JUST WANT TO **CREATE WORLDS**
  - IDEALLY, THE WORLD WOULD RUN WITH **NO** INTERVENTION
- IN PRACTICE, THE PLAYERS **ALWAYS** ACT TO GOVERN THEMSELVES ANYWAY
- DEVELOPERS **ONLY** STEP IN TO ANSWER APPEALS FROM THE PLAYERS
  - "PRAYERS"?
- DEVELOPERS RULE THEIR WORLD **BUT NOT ITS INHABITANTS**

#### DIRECT RULE BY FIAT

- HERE, **DEVELOPERS** RULE THEIR VIRTUAL WORLD BY APPLICATION OF THEIR **GODLY POWERS**
- GROUPS OF PLAYERS CAN/WILL **SELF-ORGANISE**, BUT THERE'S **NO** CUSTOMISED SUPPORT FOR THIS
  - NOTE: THIS IS **EASIER** WITH PVP AND PERMADEATH!
- PLAYERS CAN'T **TAKE CONTROL** OF THE WORLD BECAUSE **CHARACTERS** ARE NOT ON THE SAME PLANE AS **DEVELOPERS**
  - YOU CAN'T **OVERTHROW** YOUR **DEITY**
- BUT PLAYERS CAN **SWITCH** REALITIES
  - **DENY** FAILING GODS THE "WORSHIPPERS" THEY CRAVE

#### SUPPORTED PLAYER-TIER GOVERNMENT

- HERE, DEVELOPERS **STILL** RULE BY **FIAT**
- BUT THEY PROVIDE PLAYERS WITH THE **TOOLS** AND/OR **STRUCTURE** TO DEVELOP THEIR OWN GOVERNMENTS
  - EMBEDDED IN THE **PHYSICS** OF THE VIRTUAL WORLD
- TYPICALLY THIS APPROACH EXPECTS **MULTIPLE** GOVERNMENTS
  - GUILDS, CLANS, ...
  - YOU **DIDN'T** THINK A VIRTUAL WORLD WOULD ALWAYS HAVE JUST **ONE** GOVERNMENT, DID YOU?
- **COULD** PERMIT A SINGLE, WORLD-WIDE GOVERNMENT
  - BUT CONFLICT IS **SO** MUCH MORE FUN!

#### DESCENT INTO THE VIRTUAL WORLD

- HERE, THE DEVELOPERS RULE BY **PLAYING** HIGH-RANKING **CHARACTERS** BUILT INTO THE **FICTION**
  - EG. YOU'RE LIKE **ODYSSEUS**, THE DEVELOPER IS **ZEUS**
- MAY HAVE AN **ASCENT** COMPONENT
  - PLAYERS CAN **THEMSELVES** BECOME DEMI-GODS
- NOT IN GENERAL A **POPULAR** APPROACH
  - GIVES IMPRESSION THAT DEVELOPERS ARE SO **CONCEITED** THAT THEY WANT TO **LORD** IT OVER THEIR PLAYERS
    - THIS IMPRESSION IS OFTEN TRUE, TOO!
  - FOOLS **NO-ONE** ANYWAY, REGRESSES TO THE **DIRECT RULE BY FIAT** CASE

#### ABROGATION

- HERE, THE GODS REGARD THEMSELVES AS THE **SERVANTS** OF THE PLAYERS
  - MOST FAMOUSLY TRIED IN **LAMB DAMOO**
- HAND OVER CONTROL TO A PLAYER **COUNCIL** AND MAKE **WHATEVER** CHANGES TO THE PHYSICS THEY **ASK** FOR
- BUT THE POWER IS **illusory!**
  - ULTIMATELY, DEVELOPERS HAVE A **VETO**, WHETHER THEY WANT IT OR NOT
- A **DEITY** WITH A **PARLIAMENT** IS STILL A **DEITY**

#### CO-OPERATIVE OF GODS

- HERE, THE IDEA IS THAT THE PLAYERS **ARE** THE DEVELOPERS
- **REAL-WORLD** LAWS ARE USED TO DEFINE A **CONSTITUTION** THAT **LIMITS** THE POWERS OF THE EXECUTIVE
  - SO ONCE YOU'RE **IN** POWER YOU CAN'T CHANGE THE CODE TO **KEEP** YOU IN POWER
    - WELL, YOU **CAN**, BUT THEN THE LAW CAN BE USED TO CHANGE IT **BACK**
      - IF YOU HAVE ANY PLAYERS **LEFT** BY THE TIME IT WORKS ITS WAY THROUGH THE **COURTS**...
- SERIOUS PROBLEM IN LACK OF **ARTISTIC** INTEGRITY

#### WHAT PLAYERS THINK

- I'VE BEEN USING "DEVELOPERS" HERE, BUT NOW I'M GOING TO COME CLEAN
  - I MEAN **DESIGNERS**
- DEVELOPERS **UNDERSTAND** THE LINK BETWEEN **CREATIVITY** AND **CREATION**
  - THEY THEREFORE **CEDE** CONTROL TO THEIR **DESIGNERS**
- PLAYERS HAVE **ALWAYS** CALLED DESIGNERS "GODS"
  - **DESPITE** THEIR PROTESTS
  - **DESPITE** THE TITLES THEY GIVE **THEMSELVES**
    - ADMINS, ARCH-WIZZES, SYSOPS, AND, YES, GODS...
- THE PLAYERS ARE **RIGHT**. TRUST THEM. THEY **KNOW**

#### USURPING

- A REAL-WORLD GOVERNMENT **COULD** ORDER A VIRTUAL WORLD'S PHYSICS TO BE CHANGED
- WOULD THAT MAKE THE **GOVERNMENT** THE TRUE GOD OF THE VIRTUAL WORLD?
- **NO**, IF THE GOVERNMENT ONLY DECREES WHAT THE VIRTUAL WORLD'S PHYSICS **MUSTN'T** IMPLEMENT
- **YES**, IF THE GOVERNMENT DECREES WHAT THE VIRTUAL WORLD'S PHYSICS **MUST** IMPLEMENT
- THE FORMER IS JUST ANOTHER **CONSTRAINT**
- THE LATTER MAKES THE DESIGNER THE **INSTRUMENT** OF AN **UNCARING GOD**

#### WHY THIS MATTERS

- THIS **MATTERS** BECAUSE THE PHYSICS DETERMINES **ALL ELSE**
- WHOEVER CONTROLS THE **PHYSICS** IS THE **GOD**
- WHEN THE **CREATOR** IS THE GOD THERE IS **ART** IN CREATION
  - DESIGNERS PUT **THEMSELVES** INTO THEIR WORLDS
- IF THE ARTISTIC LINK IS **BROKEN**, A VIRTUAL WORLD LOSES ITS **SOUL**
- THIS ISN'T ABOUT **GOVERNANCE**, IT'S ABOUT **CREATING NEW REALITIES**
- VIRTUAL WORLDS CAN'T BE GOVERNED FROM **WITHOUT** ANY MORE THAN **STORIES** CAN!

#### SUMMARY

- GODS WORK WITHIN THE PHYSICS OF THEIR **OWN** REALITY TO CREATE **NEW** REALITIES WITH **NEW** PHYSICS
- GOVERNMENTS **APPLY** THE PHYSICS OF THEIR REALITY TO MODERATE THE BEHAVIOUR OF THOSE WHO **SHARE** THAT REALITY
- FOR GODS TO BE GOVERNMENTS, THEY WOULD HAVE TO BE **OF** THE REALITY THEY MODERATE
- YET THAT REALITY IS **OF** THEM **THEMSELVES!**
- IF THE WORLD HAS SPRUNG FROM MY **MIND**, HOW CAN I BE **PART** OF IT? IT'S PART OF **ME!**

#### CONCLUSION

- DESIGNERS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS THE **GODS**, NOT THE **GOVERNMENTS**, OF THEIR VIRTUAL WORLDS, BECAUSE **THAT'S WHAT THEY ARE**