

# WHY DEVELOPERS ARE GODS

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## INTRODUCTION

- THIS IS A TALK ABOUT WHY GAME DEVELOPERS ARE **GODS**
  - AND **GODDESSES**, BUT I'LL STICK WITH GODS FOR **BREVITY**
- I DON'T MEAN **FIGURATIVE** GODS
  - I'M NOT SAYING IT'S **AS IF** THEY ARE GODS
- I MEAN **LITERAL** GODS
  - THEY ARE THE **ACTUAL** GODS OF THE WORLDS THEY CREATE
  - NOTE: THIS **DOESN'T** MEAN THEY'RE GODS OF THE WORLD WE **LIVE** IN (WHICH I'LL CALL **REALITY**)

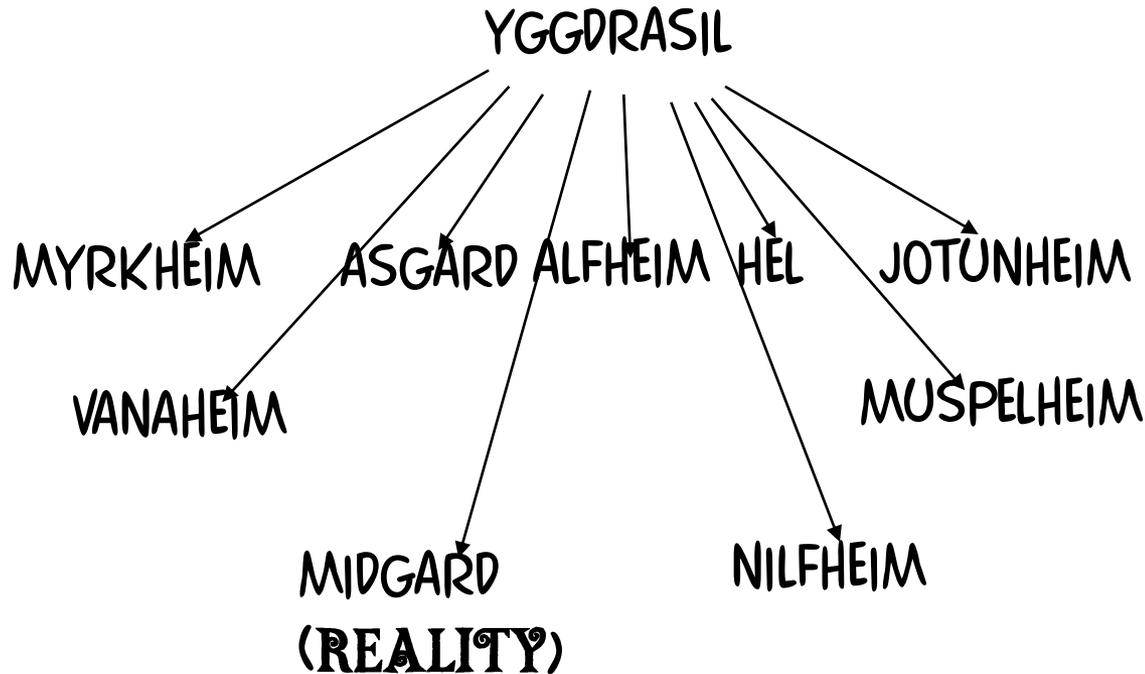
- THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY **DEFINES** A GOD AS BEING:
  - A superhuman person regarded as having power over nature and human fortunes; a deity
    - [Definition A.I.1.a of “god”]
- **“NATURE”** HERE MEANS THE CHARACTERISTICS DEFINED BY **LAWS OF PHYSICS**
- WE **USUALLY** USE IT TO REFER TO **REALITY**, BUT **REALITY** ISN'T THE **ONLY** REALITY
  - HEAVEN, VALHALLA, ELYSIUM ETC. ARE **ALSO** REALITIES
    - NOT NECESSARILY IN **EVERYONE'S** OPINION, GRANTED

## REALITIES

- A **REALITY** IS A SELF-CONTAINED **SPACE OF EXISTENCE**
  - A **WORLD** IS AN **ENVIRONMENT** THAT ITS INHABITANTS **BELIEVE** IS SELF-CONTAINED
- REALITIES HAVE THEIR **OWN** PHYSICS
  - WORLDS **CAN** BUT IT'S NOT A REQUIREMENT
- A REALITY CAN BE **STAND-ALONE...**
  - IN WHICH CASE ITS INHABITANTS CAN ONLY **SPECULATE** ABOUT OTHER REALITIES
- ...OR IMPLEMENTED **WITHIN** A REALITY
  - DIRECT KNOWLEDGE **IS** POSSIBLE HERE

## EXAMPLE

- HERE ARE THE REALITIES THAT ARE IMMEDIATELY **CONSEQUENT** ON **YGGDRASIL**
  - (NOTE: VALHALLA IS IN **ASGARD**)



## GODS AND REALITIES

- THE **GAMES** WE CREATE ARE SELF-CONTAINED **SPACES OF EXISTENCE**
  - THIS MAKES THEM **REALITIES**
- A GOD IS AN INDIVIDUAL WITH **POWER** OVER THE **NATURE** OF A REALITY
- ONLY GODS CAN **CHANGE** A REALITY'S LAWS OF **PHYSICS**
- WAIT! **WE** CAN CHANGE THE LAWS OF PHYSICS FOR OUR **GAMES!**
- THEREFORE **WE** ARE THE **GODS** OF THE **REALITIES** THAT **ARE** OUR GAMES

A PONY

- HERE'S A PICTURE OF A **PONY**

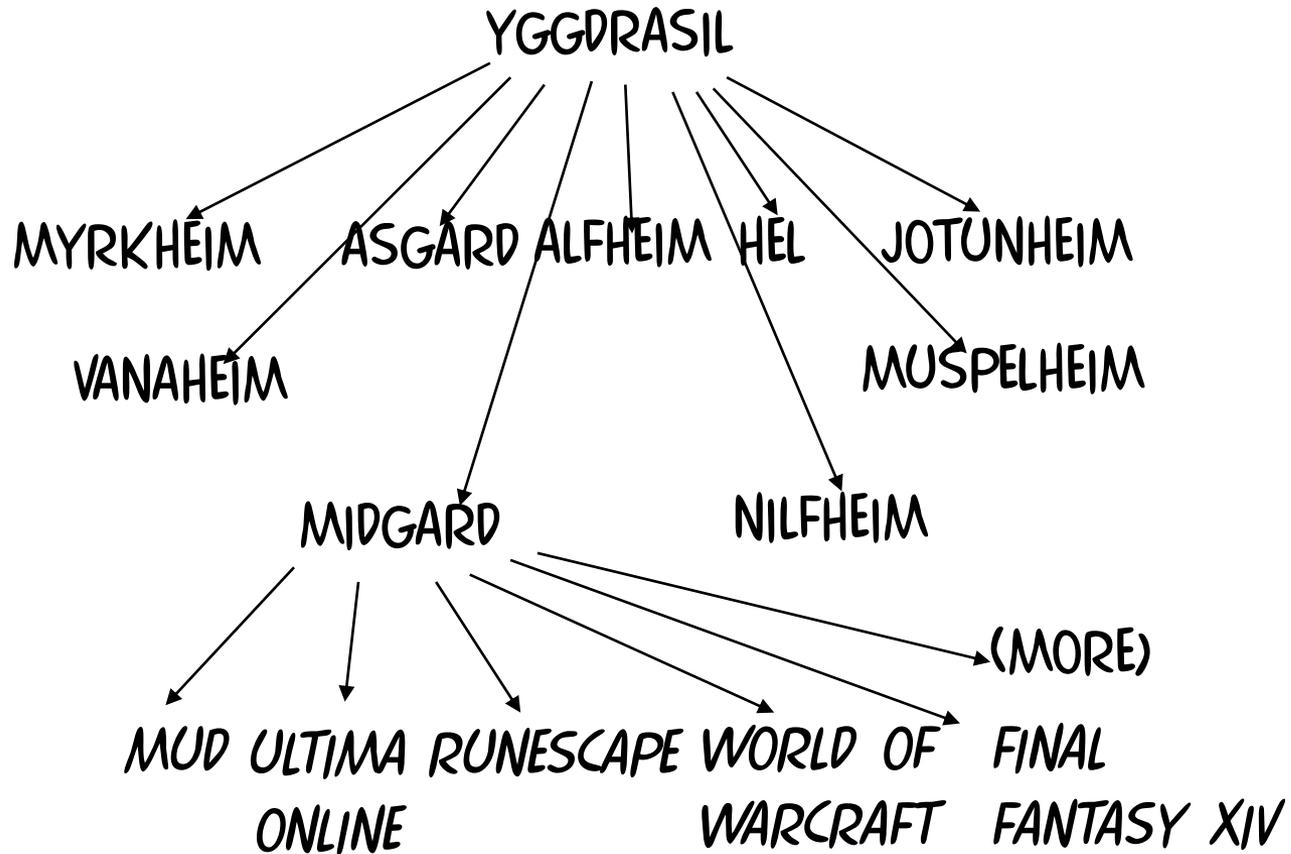


## IMPLICATIONS

- IMPRESSIVE THOUGH **I am a GOD** IS AS A **PICK-UP** LINE, SO WHAT?
- FOR MOST GAMES, IT IS **INDEED** COOL-BUT-NOT-A-LOT-OF-USE INFORMATION
- IT BECOMES MORE **INTERESTING** IF:
  - THERE ARE **NPCS** IN THE GAME WORLD
  - YOU CAN **VISIT** THE GAME WORLD AS A **PLAYER CHARACTER**
  - (AND ESPECIALLY) **OTHER** PEOPLE FROM **REALITY** CAN **ALSO** VISIT THE GAME WORLD
- SO, THAT MEANS **MMORPGS** THEN

## FULLER PICTURE

- HERE'S AN **UPDATED** YGGDRASIL "TREE"



## LEVELS

- NOT ALL GODS ARE **EQUAL** IN POWER
- SOME ARE OMNIPOTENT **CREATOR** GODS
- SOME CAN CHANGE **ALL** THE LAWS OF PHYSICS BUT AREN'T **THEMSELVES** CREATORS
- SOME ONLY HAVE POWER OVER THE LAWS OF PHYSICS FOR A PARTICULAR **DOMAIN**
- SOME (**DEMIGODS**) CAN'T **CHANGE** THE LAWS OF PHYSICS BUT **DIFFERENT** LAWS OF PHYSICS **APPLY** TO THEM
- SOME ARE **MORTALS** BUT POSSESS AN **OBJECT** THAT CHANGES THE LAWS OF PHYSICS

PÉDILA



- HERMES ESCORTED **SOULS** TO THE AFTERLIFE

## DEVELOPERS I

- ACCOUNTS OF **REALITY'S** CREATION MAP NICELY ONTO HOW **WE** CREATE VIRTUAL WORLDS
- HERE'S HOW MEMBERS OF THE ANCIENT **GREEK** PANTHEON LOOK AS **MMO** DEVELOPERS
- THE **PRIMORDIAL** GODS (GAIA, TARTARUS AND EROS) CODED A REALITY FROM **SCRATCH**
- THE **TITANS** BOOTED UP A VERSION OF THIS WITH SOME **MODS** SUCH AS **MORTALITY**
  - THIS IS WHAT WE CALL **REALITY**
- THE OLYMPIANS ARE THE **LIVE TEAM**
  - SEE NEXT SLIDE

## DEVELOPERS 2

- ZEUS IS THE **LEAD**
  - HEPHAESTUS, GOD OF **CRAFTING**, IS A **SYSTEMS SPECIALIST**
  - ATHENA, **PATRON** OF ATHENS, SPARTA AND SYRACUSE, IS A **CONTENT SPECIALIST**
- **NYMPHS**, THE DIVINE BEINGS WHO FORM AND ANIMATE NATURE AT THE BEHEST OF GODS, ARE **PROGRAMMERS AND ARTISTS**
- **CSRS** SUCH AS HERMES AND **PLAYTESTERS** SUCH AS HERACLES ARE **DEMIGODS**
- PLOT-ARMOURED **HEROES** SUCH AS JASON ARE **REALITY'S PLAYERS**
- WE MORTALS ARE **REALITY'S NPCs**

## BEING GODS

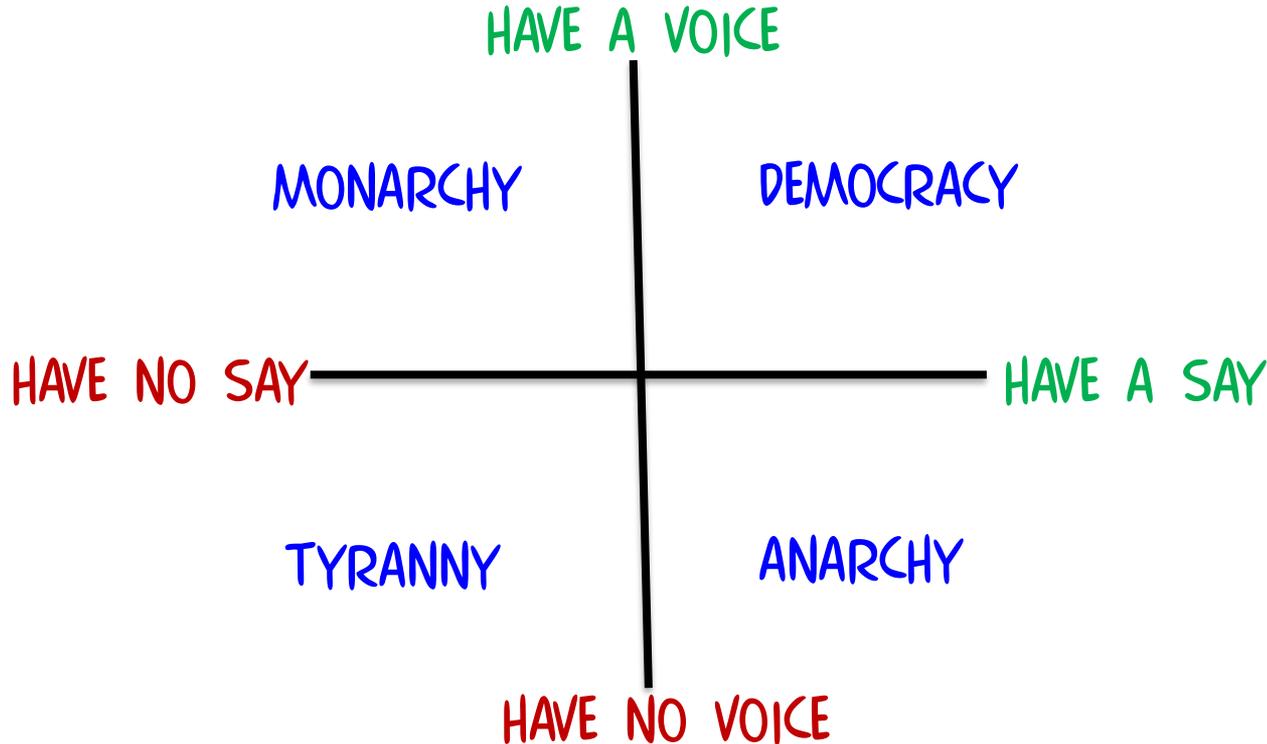
- “WITH GREAT **POWER** COMES GREAT **RESPONSIBILITY**”
- AS A GOD, **YOU** HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES
- IN ORDER (**LEAST** TO **MOST** RESPONSIBILITY):
  - TO WIDER **SOCIETY**
  - TO YOUR **FELLOW** GODS
  - TO YOUR **PLAYERS**
  - TO YOUR **NPCS**
    - WHEN WE HAVE PLANET-SIZED COMPUTERS
  - TO **YOURSELF**
    - SPECIFICALLY, YOUR MORALS AND YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

## SO, PLAYERS?

- YOU SHOULD PRIORITISE YOURSELF **ANYWAY**
- INTELLIGENT NPCs ARE FOR THE **FUTURE**
- THEREFORE, YOUR **EFFECTIVE** HIGHEST RESPONSIBILITY IS TO YOUR **PLAYERS**
- **GREAT!** "WE LISTEN TO OUR PLAYERS"
- NO YOU **DON'T!**
  - YOU DON'T EVEN **HEAR** MOST OF THEM
- WHAT'S **MORE**, IT PRETTY WELL **HAS** TO BE THIS WAY
- IT HAS TO, BECAUSE YOU'RE **GODS**

## VOICE AND SAY

- HAVING A **VOICE** DIFFERS FROM HAVING A **SAY**
  - VOICE: YOUR VIEWS ARE **HEARD**
  - SAY: YOUR VIEWS ARE **ACTED** UPON



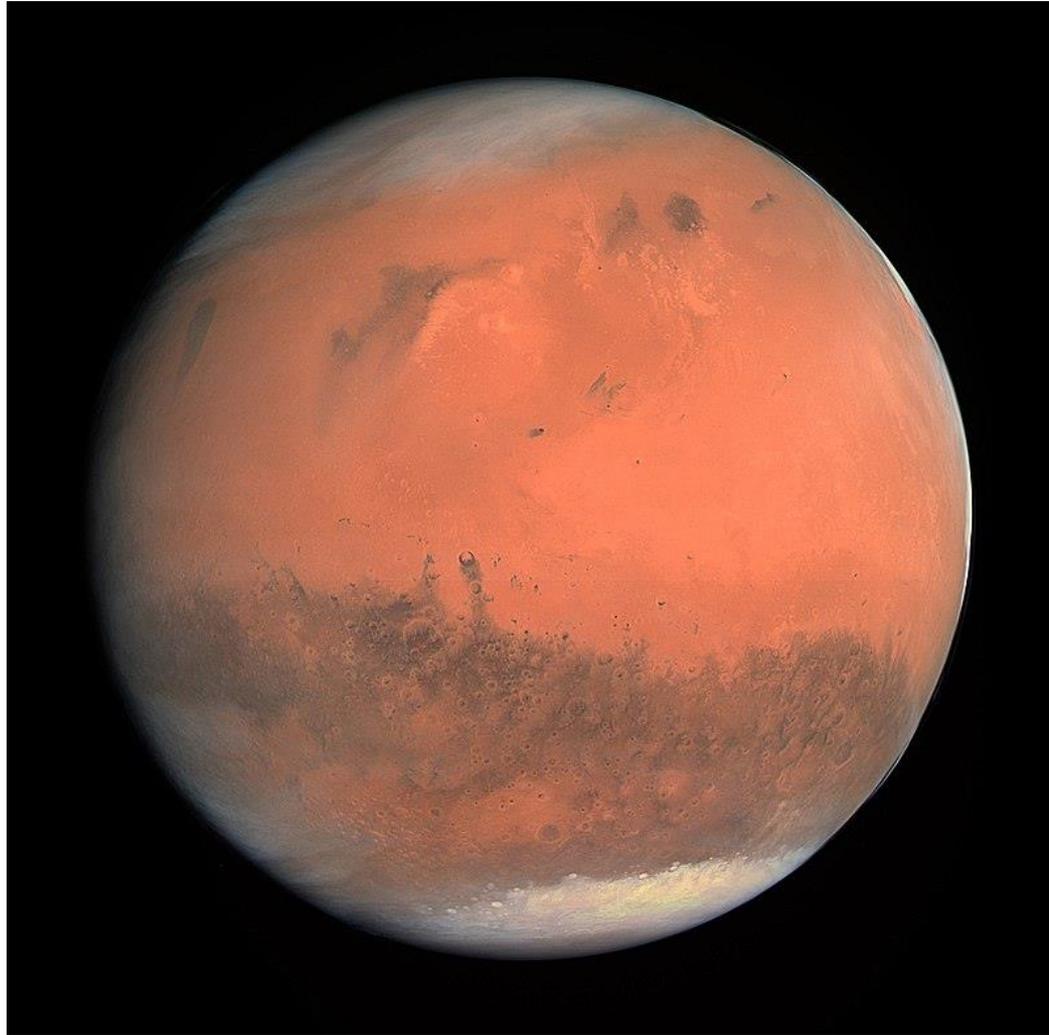
## NO SAY OR VOICE?

- YOU **CAN'T** GIVE PLAYERS A **SAY** BECAUSE IF YOU **DO** THEN THEY'LL **ASK** FOR A **PONY**
- YOU CAN'T **GIVE** THEM A PONY
- THIS **EXPOSES** THEIR BELIEF THAT THEY HAVE A SAY AS BEING **ILLUSORY**
- **YOU** HAVE THE POWER, **NOT** THEM
  - YOU'RE MERELY **INDULGING** THEM BY CLAIMING OTHERWISE
- IF YOU GIVE THE PLAYERS A **VOICE**, THEY'LL **USE** IT TO ASK FOR A **SAY**
  - **AND** TO ASK FOR A PONY

## TYRANT

- THIS MAKES YOU A **TYRANT**
- THAT'S OK, THOUGH – **ALL** GODS ARE TYRANTS
  - THEY MAY BE **BENEVOLENT** TYRANTS, BUT THEY'RE **STILL** TYRANTS
- YOU **CAN** PERHAPS GIVE THE **APPEARANCE** OF A VOICE TO **SELECT** PLAYERS
  - EVEN ONES CHOSEN BY **OTHER** PLAYERS
  - SEE *EVE ONLINE'S* COUNCIL OF STELLAR MANAGEMENT
- THIS ISN'T GIVING THEM A **VOICE**, THOUGH
- IT'S AN EXERCISE IN **NOISE REDUCTION**

MARS



## ABROGATION

- ANY DESIRE YOU MAY HAVE **NOT** TO BE A TYRANT IS **IRRELEVANT**
- RULE #1: GOVERNMENTS CAN BE **DEPOSED** BY THOSE THEY RULE, BUT GODS **CAN'T**
- RULE #2: GOVERNMENTS CAN **RELINQUISH** THEIR POWERS, BUT GODS **CAN'T**
- RULE #1 SAYS THAT THE GODS OF A REALITY CAN DO WHATEVER THEY LIKE **IN** AND **TO** IT
- RULE #2 SAYS THAT RULE #1 HOLDS **REGARDLESS** OF WHETHER OR NOT SAID GODS **WISH** IT TO HOLD

## LAMB DAMOO

- THE GODS OF THE (TEXTUAL) VIRTUAL WORLD LAMB DAMOO **DIDN'T** WISH RULE #1 TO HOLD
- ON 9 DEC 1992, THEY HANDED EXECUTIVE POWER TO THEIR **PLAYERS**
- THE GODS WOULD IMPLEMENT **WHATEVER** THE PLAYERS TOLD THEM TO IMPLEMENT
- MUCH OF WHAT THE PLAYERS **VOTED** ON TO IMPLEMENT INVOLVED WAYS TO **STOP** THEIR **ENEMIES** FROM VOTING
- EVEN **MINOR** CHANGES TO THE LAWS OF PHYSICS OFTEN HAD **SOCIAL** EFFECTS

## 4 YEARS LATER

- ON 16 MAY 1996, THE GODS OF LAMB DAMOO TOOK **BACK** POWER BY **FIAT**
- THAT THEY WERE **ABLE** TO DO THIS SHOWED THEY'D NEVER GIVEN IT UP IN THE **FIRST** PLACE
- DEVELOPERS ARE GODS **IRRESPECTIVE** OF WHETHER THEY:
  - **WANT** TO BE GODS
  - ACCEPT THAT THEY **ARE** GODS
  - DON'T **CARE**, BECAUSE IT'S OF NO PRACTICAL **USE**
- THESE ATTITUDES OF DENIAL ARE UNFORTUNATE, BECAUSE THEY HAVE **CONSEQUENCES**

## LESSONS

- DEVELOPERS **CREATE** REALITIES
- **DIFFERENT** DEVELOPERS CREATE **DIFFERENT** REALITIES
  - THIS IS BECAUSE THE **DEVELOPERS** ARE DIFFERENT
- EACH REALITY REFLECTS **ASPECTS** OF ITS CREATOR'S PHILOSOPHY AND **PERSONALITY**
- YOU MAY NOT **WANT** TO PUT A PART OF YOU INTO YOUR GAMES, BUT IT'S **UNAVOIDABLE**
  - YOU'RE A **GOD** OF THAT REALITY AND YOU HAVE TO **LIVE** WITH THE FACT
- YOU HAVE **INESCAPABLE** RESPONSIBILITIES

## REPONSIBILITIES

- OK, SO WHAT **ARE** THESE RESPONSIBILITIES?
- WHAT RESPONSIBILITIES DO **DEVELOPERS** HAVE TO THEIR **PLAYERS**?
- WELL THERE ARE **PLENTY** OF SUGGESTIONS YOU **COULD** MAKE HERE
- THEY'RE GOING TO **MISS** THE **POINT**, THOUGH
- THIS IS BECAUSE IT'S THE **WRONG** QUESTION
- THE RIGHT QUESTION IS: WHAT RESPONSIBILITIES DO **GODS** HAVE TO **HEROES**?
  - AND TO HEROINES, IF YOU MAKE A DISTINCTION

## ONE

- WELL, GODS HAVE ONLY **ONE** RESPONSIBILITY TO HEROES: TO **FULFIL** THE GODS' **PROMISE**
- "PROMISE" HERE **COULD** BE READ **TWO** WAYS
  - READING #1: GODS MAKE A **PROMISE** TO PLAYERS ABOUT THEIR REALITY, WHICH THEY MUST **KEEP**
  - READING #2: GODS HAVE **POTENTIAL** THAT THEY MUST **REALISE**
- IT **ISN'T** A PUN, THOUGH, BECAUSE **BOTH** READINGS AMOUNT TO THE **SAME** THING
- FOR **GODS**, THE REALITIES THEY CREATE ARE **ASPECTS** OF THE GODS **THEMSELVES**

## ART

- GAME DESIGN IS AN **ART** FORM
- ARTISTS **EXPRESS** THEMSELVES THROUGH THEIR CHOSEN **MEDIUM**
  - COMPUTER GAMES, IN **OUR** CASE
- ONLY BY BEING TRUE TO **YOURSELF** CAN YOU BE TRUE TO YOUR **PLAYERS**
- THEY'RE PLAYING FOR THE **GAME**, BUT THE GAME IS **YOU!**
- YOU'RE NOT **ENGINEERS**, YOU'RE **ARTISTS**
  - AN UNDERSTANDING OF **THIS** IS WHAT REGARDING DEVELOPERS AS GODS **BUYS** YOU

## YOU

- YOUR RESPONSIBILITY IS TO **BE** AND TO BECOME **YOURSELF**
- WHAT WOULD A GAME BE **LIKE** IF IT WERE **DESIGNED** BY:
  - ANUBIS?
  - MARS?
  - LOKI?
  - APHRODITE?
- WHAT WOULD A GAME BE LIKE IF IT WERE DESIGNED BY **GOD**-YOU, RATHER THAN BY **DEVELOPER**-YOU?

## CONCLUSION

- COMPUTER GAMES ARE **REALITIES** AND DEVELOPERS ARE THE **GODS** OF THOSE REALITIES
- YOU OWE IT TO **YOURSELF** AND TO YOUR **PLAYERS** TO **ACKNOWLEDGE** THIS
- GAMES ARE **REFLECTIONS** OF THEIR CREATORS
- IF THE **REFLECTION** IS IMPERFECT, THE **GAME** IS IMPERFECT
- INSTEAD OF CREATING WHAT YOU **THINK** PLAYERS WANT, CREATE WHAT **YOU** WANT
  - WHAT THE PLAYERS WANT IS FOR YOU TO **BE** YOU!
- **EMBRACE** THIS, AND **BE** THE GOD YOU **ARE!**