

ON —ING

# On Populating

*A Philosophical Perspective of the Fractalization  
of Humanity Since the Beginning of Time*

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## A NOTE ON PLACEMENT

**On Populating** arrived after a revision to the equation at the center of this work — specifically to the way it accounts for subjective experience: the perspective each of us carries and reflects back into the shared field. For that reason it sits a little apart from where it would fall alphabetically.

Like the rest of the *On* —*ing* series, it is built to be entered from any direction. Read it on its own, or anywhere among the others.



**W**hen is the last time you played a game that gave you a feeling of "full control"?

Honestly, if a game were that easy, you would win every time. There would be no point in playing. Even games like Blackjack have a known algorithm you can follow, but often times you'll get asked to leave whatever establishment you've decided to employ this strategy in.

A chemist friend of mine loves video games. He especially loves the Elder Scrolls series, and his favorite place to exist is inside the MMO variant, where he can interact with other people.

His explanation for this is simple astonishment — the amount of data transfer that must occur for him to play the game. He observes the screen, makes a decision, uses his fingers to press a button and create an input signal, and his character takes a step forward.

### **But it doesn't stop there.**

The change he applied to his character must also be reflected in the game for every other person playing. The signal he input is sent over the internet to a server, where it is catalogued and reflected back to the other players — and whether they "see" it or not, the move happened, and the server responds.

This is a very accurate representation of how realities can be superimposed over one another regardless of sensory input at any given moment. Every move enters a shared sum and is reflected back to all of us, present whether witnessed or not.<sup>1</sup>

Honestly, I'm not a huge fan of games where I have to play with people I don't know, but I love playing cooperative games with my

friends. This is probably why my social circle is so small. It speaks volumes to how I "play the game of life."

I think back to when I was a teenager. One of my favorite games was a game called Populous. I started playing it when I was still studying things like the Bible. I didn't really make any correlation between the two at the time, but the relationship between them is astounding.

### Let me explain.

In Populous, you start with one person... who in time becomes two people. Then they make more people, and you build your "Kingdom" with the people generated.

Unbeknownst to you — unless you've played the tutorial — on the other side of the map exists another "player," controlled by the computer, who is doing the same thing.

The goal is to expand your population, control territory, and eventually consume the entire map for "global domination."

This is not achieved by "moving" the people around the board, like you would think. In this game, you control the environment by recreating "divine intervention" through natural miracles and disasters. The things you do cause the people to divide, expand, conquer, and regrow.

This type of game has always fascinated me, but the idea of "playing God" was a little far-fetched for a teenager holding a Nintendo controller.

Let's fast forward all the way to the release of Sid Meier's Civilization. This is a game I didn't get into until the release of the 3rd version, but I played each one all the way to the most recent, Civilization VII.

This game became a staple of learning and understanding throughout childhood and adulthood. The core concepts were directly tied to reality, and you didn't "control the populous" through divine

intervention — you made the decisions for your country as if you were a human being, a prestigious (or nefarious) leader.

The concept was still the same.

### **Divide, conquer, expand, repeat.**

The interesting thing about Civilization is the number of functions they have added that divide a nation from the others.

### **Religion. Government Type. Military. Economy. Culture.**

These are the types of things that stand in the way of harmony between you and your opponents.

Despite the fact that this is a video game, I want you to hold this truth close to the front of your mind as I continue.

There is no "perfect" way to unify a divided world in a game like Civilization. But when the game starts, there are no enemies. Everyone is working toward the same goal.

### **Life.**

As each country develops over time, the foundational beliefs — like how the country should be run and which supreme being should be worshipped — become the dividing lines placed in the way of unification.

You can "see" the lines on the map as the various empires bump up against one another. But they actually don't exist. They're imaginary lines.

This truth holds over to reality, and the current standing with planet Earth.

I think about this sometimes — the various places on Earth where you can stand in one place and be in multiple places at the same time.

Let's break that sentence down.

Have you ever been to the Four Corners Monument? It exists at the imaginary intersection of Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado. You can stand in one place, and your body exists in four states at one time.

But is it truly "at one time"? If the Earth is rotating through space faster than your brain can perceive, then the part of your body reaching to the east is technically standing in the two eastern states a fraction of a second before the west side of your body reaches the place it's standing.<sup>2</sup>

Make sense? No? Think about that next time the conversation about the importance of Daylight Savings Time comes up. We don't have an accurate representation of how time moves, because it's relative to whatever you're talking about. Next time the conversation of time comes up in general, I want you to ask yourself what the most accurate representation of its measurement is.

A small part of me believes Stonehenge is far superior to an expensive watch that uses electricity to generate a response in a piece of quartz. Most expensive watches have moved past this design, but in reality I still feel like "Earth vs Sun" is going to be the unarguable truth here.

### **I digress.**

Over the course of history, mankind has been divided by these imaginary borders. The Bible calls the story "The Tower of Babel." It's only told once in scripture, but I can see the quantum side of the story reflected in how many times humanity has been divided throughout history.

No matter the reason — gold, knowledge, religion, power — the imaginary borders of humanity have been constructed over time to divide us into sections. Within those sections, we fractalize our conscious thought into smaller sections, and so on, and so forth.

Keep dividing anything far enough and you reach a place where the explanations begin to thin out. Push past every border we can name and eventually you arrive at a question no map accounts for. A select few have always answered that question with the same two words: divine intervention. I theorize they might be closer to the truth than we tend to give them credit for — not because mystery is a gap waiting to be filled, but because at the very edge of explanation, mystery is the most honest thing still standing.

Remember, this is a philosophy piece, not a scientific explanation.

I'm only thinking about life. While I'm still alive. (*The literal, out-of-context definition of philosophy.*)

This type of fractalization can be reflected in the release of the Civilization games I spoke on. When 5 was released, most of the fanbase thought this was the "perfect version." It seemingly included "everything."

When 6 arrived, it actually departed from 5 in a noticeable way — a brighter, more cartoonish look, and cities built out of districts. It landed to a generally warm but divided reception; plenty of 5 loyalists felt it had wandered off. But to me it always felt like another reflection of the same idea, dressed differently. And when 7 hit the market, people were frustrated with the new directions Firaxis tried to take the game, because they didn't make sense to them.

### **Life doesn't make sense.**

The game had everything it needed; anything past the point of explaining that was only going to make it more complicated.

## **Zoom out.**

Life has everything you need; trying to explain it past that is only going to make it more complicated.

## **Zoom in.**

I've recently started playing Civilization VII again. I bought it when it came out, but like many other players, found it dull and non-canonical to the series.

The irony of a game about human growth and expansion being non-canonical is not lost on me.

I want to close this piece with what I perceived to be the "successful move" in Firaxis's design.

## **They listened to the fans.**

In May of 2026 they released an update they called Test of Time — by their own account the single most-requested change the community had asked for — letting you carry one civilization across an entire game again, the way the older entries always had. They unified the idea that the game had been more aligned with perfection in its previous versions. They added complexity and beauty to those existing frameworks, and reinvented the 7th version as yet another mirror of the 5th and the 6th.

Departing from the original design was never the failure. Every system drifts from where it began — that drift is just fractalization wearing another name. The failure would only have been in mistaking the drift for the destination. Coming home to the original framework, and loving it enough to modernize it rather than replace it, is the same move I keep asking us to make with one another.

A very small group of people began to complain again. "Just another repeat."



Not me. I found the new unity to the original framework simply beautiful.

Not only did the game finally adhere to the things that made it enjoyable to play to begin with, but it was given a "facelift." It was a modernized version of a world once loved, lost in design.

Maybe that says something about life.

Maybe we need to stop trying to overcomplicate the design, and just start playing the game together.

Maybe we need to bring a modernized version of love for one another.

### **Realign the fractalization.<sup>3</sup>**

Revitalize a version of a world once loved, but somehow lost in design.

Maybe I'm crazy.

Maybe I just like video games.

But I'll tell you this much: if I were the one in control of this game being played around us, I wouldn't consider it a loss if the borders disappeared and every human won.

**There is no loss in coherence.<sup>4</sup>**

**There is no pain in unity.**

## NOTES

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1. The shared sum is  $\sum_j S_j(\mathbf{t})$  — the collective term at the center of *Toward a Theory of Coherent Existence*, in which every co-present perspective is superposed and can interfere, constructively or destructively. The server is a plain stand-in for the field over which that sum is taken.
2. There is no universal "now" for events separated in space; this is the relativity of simultaneity (Einstein, 1905). The framework carries the same fact as a delay term in the observer equation  $\psi_i(\mathbf{t} + \boldsymbol{\tau})$  — each perspective resolves the shared field a moment apart.
3. To realign is to let the Alignment weighting  $A(S_i, \mathbf{t})$  do its work: turning perspectives toward a shared phase so their contributions add rather than cancel.
4.  $|L|$  — the legible intensity of a life, or a world — rises when perspectives move in phase and falls when they cancel. Coherence is not the erasure of difference; it is difference carried into a single, constructive Intent.

## REFERENCES

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- *Populous* (Bullfrog Productions / Peter Molyneux, 1989) — the first "god game."
- Sid Meier's *Civilization* series (Firaxis Games / 2K); *Civilization VII*, 2025; "Test of Time" update, 19 May 2026.
- *The Elder Scrolls Online* (Bethesda / ZeniMax Online Studios).
- Four Corners Monument (Arizona · New Mexico · Utah · Colorado).
- The Tower of Babel — Genesis 11:1–9.
- Stonehenge — Salisbury Plain, England.
- A. Einstein, "On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies" (1905) — relativity of simultaneity.



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