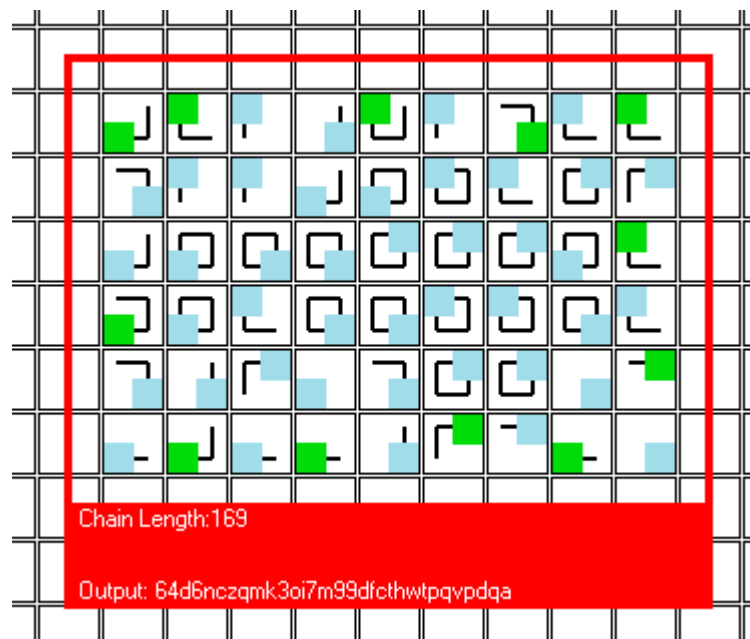


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The Crystalpunk Manifesto for Psycholudology

7-9 minutos



To pry from the cold dead hands of chaos the first animalcules of “the hundred-gated cathedral of the mind” (Herman Hesse)! To play with sticks, shells and stones, rolling them in the cup of your hand, throwing them to the ground and picking them up again, comparing, sorting and aligning them, because it pleasures the hand and satisfies the eye! To cultivate intricate relationships between found objects, on chequered boards of every shape and size imaginable, is to be carnally invaded by

the little minds! To find that the brouhaha evoked by these ideogrammatic alphabetine scribbles are scarring new moods and associations into the vellum of the palimpsest of your brain! To release the invisible forces of language, and to park the underdeveloped mind in the garage box of higher awareness! To push the tabula rasa uphill, across the land of manual skill and over the summit of symbolic processing, into an Alamut of pure gnostic well being! To hike through these spectacular inner landscapes like a mountain goat! To discover what games are buried inside you! To become hooked to a game a little more each time you find that you have refined your skill of adding tantalizing zing to the patterns and combinatorics on the board! To become native to a game: learning to read, write and think in its dialect as if it were your first language; a language expressed by position and movement, communicated wordlessly to any observer able to learn to recognize the repertoire of actions displayed! To play the game and to be played by the game! To know that mind control originated with the invention of abstract games: the occupation theme of Weiqi is not confined to the occupation of board space alone; the game itself occupies the mind, tweaks the neural network to make it fire in its image, new thoughts and intuitions pop-up in your head: the Chinese army, its commanders educated by this game, has always been known to be better than anybody else in surrounding the enemy! To sense that the 'war' of a game is only an oily film floating on top of the surface of a great cooperative expedition towards tumultuous beauty and sublime dangers! To live a hundred years for every minute of gameplay! To make a game out of everything, the game itself included! To keep Free the Game

Libre! To be the unacknowledged legislator of the game by making the rules instead of following them! To be the John Mandeville of Chinese Checkers, the Marco Polo of Havannah or the Ernest Fenollosa of Blokus ("a new world is only a new Mind" (William Carlos Williams) and a good game is more real than what is really real!)! To declare the rules anew, or to cheat in the name of ludopoetic justice, when those dullards who spoil every party with their obscurantist obsessions, start secluding themselves from the patzers in Castellian orders of increased professionalization (the 'professional' the Crystalpunk anti-type)! To instigate psycholudological revolt each time a game is declared more equal than others by the mandarins of mental sports: Image Chess is not superior to European Draughts, Weiqi is not more civilized than Xiangqi! To ridicule those who play to win as an end in itself: what does losing mean to Crystalpunks like us? To want to be the B E S T means being stupid and shallow, only dunces mistake the value for the coin and nobody wants to marry slappers like that! To cry despair over the boardological blackguardism of the enumerating classes, in whose book abstract board games are not games at all but mathematical problems to be solved in the in vitro womb of a database! To keep the game of mental skill tactile: thick black Bakelite tokens wins over cheap plastics fiches like Chinese wins over Esperanto! To curse the architectural profession, as it was one of theirs who invented Scrabble (word games are a tautological monstrosity, like a 'free slave'): when the dictionary can provide the answer, the question must be wrong! To live in tents like the Mongolian hordes who are our kind of Chinese! To live slow and sustainable, free from the Red

Queen's race of careerism, inside self-wrought works of 'non-retinal art' (Marcel Duchamp), fully submerged in the tempestuous enfolding of a game! To use the same small set of counters over and over again to create an impractically large number of unique things (Image Chess has more legal positions than the universe has atoms, but there are more Chesses than Image Chess has legal positions)! To live inside the game, with one's whole being so as to become it, is the sole aim!

(There is every reason to assume that abstract board games paved the way for the subsequent (derivative) invention of that number-crunching plaything, the computer. It is one of psycholudology's little ironies that computers are mainly used to play games, while at the other end of the spectrum they are employed to find for each traditional board game the secret zahir that will force it to fall apart as 'solved'. Even though the optimism of the 1950ties has waned and there is nobody left who believes a computer beating the worldchampion chess to constitute an act of intelligence, we are however stuck with the heritage of thinking about games (and language, and thinking) in terms of their computability. You can't mention Weiqi in educated society without someone uttering that meaningless factotum of science's continuing inability to come up with a program that will beat its best human players, as if that implies some special quality in that game. We know from chess that part of being grandmasterly good is to possess the freak faculty to instantly recall every game you ever played or studied: to be a top player you have to be a human computer, so no wonder real computers, the real idiot savants, have beaten 'us' at it in

the end. Weiqi is arguably a shade deeper than chess, but ultimately all board games, when regarded in this way, are to computers what the sky is to the birds. Let them have it. The real meaning of a game is elsewhere and infinitely more interesting.

Playing against a much better player in serious rivalry will teach you nothing because the moves of the other appear to you indistinguishable from the glossolalia of the possessed.

To play a game is to answer a question with a question on a move-by-move basis. The challenge is in the construction of worthwhile dialogs by finding the right mixture of unobtrusive yet stimulating 'answerable questions' and 'questions worth answering'. We are after highly personalized style not after the stalemated non-conversation between liability-negating lawyers (let them demons play Scrabble!). A friend asked the young Wystan Auden if he had ever written poetry. He hadn't, but much later, in recognition of the power of a good question to reveal what mirrors fail to reflect, W.H. recalled: "I knew that very moment what I wanted to do". A good question is angelic, as if you are being interviewed by someone who already knows for each question what your answer will be, even implying it with more eloquence than you could ever muster, but in a gentle, revealing, liberating way.

To play like you are building a castle in the air is the sole aim! To feel like you are Oscar Wilde's equal for the duration of a game! To play intoxicated! To be intoxicated by playing! To play like you are reading a book! To play like you are writing a book! To understand how to play a bittersweet symphony and a

melancholic verse! To play with friends or to play as a friend! To bring language to the point where the verbs 'to play' and 'to share' become equivalent!)