Reflection 2: Epitaph

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What a good game! Right after starting a new game, I was mildly confused and thought that the game’s guidance really sucked, but then after a minute or so, its mechanisms naturally unwind. Great simplicity and elegance are buried in the interaction design. The feedback cycle and the timing is JUST correct to make it addictive… maybe for an hour? I don’t know, but I’ve truly had one epic hour on this game. The result was frustrating (I haven’t had any civilization survived to the end), but the FLOW it delivered was great. There are a few things on the UI design that could be fixed to improve the playing experience, though: like the list of events could obviously be displayed in the reversed order so that the player doesn’t have to scroll back and forth always. I managed to make a workaround by tweaking the CSS in the inspector panel. Also, eliminated civilizations could be removed from the page after a while.

About PCG—it is obvious that the author has taken great amount of effort in designing the techs and random events. I could clearly feel that some of them are interconnected, like if tech A and B were both developed, it is highly probable that tech C would be automatically self-developed before you manually interfere. This observation could boost up the development speed. Also, bad sequence of tech devs could lead to undesired results, like if *tool making* was developed before *cultivation* and *fishing*, the civilization could easily over-develop the available resources and starve to death. What I’m constantly running into is: once both *nanotech* and *artificial intelligence* were developed, the nano-warbots would always immediately turn on its host civilization, causing it to be eliminated; also if *nuclear physics* was developed, the planet would soon be KABOOMed by themselves due to false alert. These modern problems are really strangling my neck. The last thing I want to say is that if I were the designer, I’d decrease the chance of some so-easy-to-happen disasters and focus only on one civilization at a time.