Meta-Game Introduction Outline

1. Greeting & Acknowledge Disorientation
   1. “Hello. This experience is extremely disorienting, so I’ll give you a moment.”
   2. “I know you think you were just living your life on Earth as the person you have always been, but obviously your new reality indicates something else is going on.”
   3. “As of this moment, I can only communicate with you through text, and there will be no way for you to respond. Please just sit back listen for the time being as you have a lot to take in.”
2. Player Coma
   1. “I get straight to the most important fact…at least for you. You are in a coma. You have been so for quite some time.”
3. Brain Computer Interface (BCI) for Text
   1. “You are seeing this communication through a device called a brain computer interface (BCI).”
   2. “My organization has made a breakthrough discovery that is allowing me to send you this text, but we also think we can do much more with this discovery in time.”
   3. “In fact, we are attempting now to add to your BCI the ability for you to choose some limited responses to my messages, but we need a little more time to get that up and running for you.”
   4. “While we wait, I will give some more background on how you got here. You cannot remember your real past due to the consequences of the coma which I will come to explain. I would prepare yourself for what has really happened to you.”
4. Reason for Coma and Consequences of Sentence
   1. “You are not just in a coma; you are also imprisoned. You were convicted of the crime of treason due to associations with your family”
   2. “You were only a young teen, but you were tried as an adult and given 50 years to life meaning you must serve at least 50 years and possibly you will never see freedom again. Given your charge or treason, that is almost assured.”
   3. “You are in a coma while imprisoned because humanity has adopted a new and seemingly more humane form of imprisonment: medically induced comas. During their sentence, prisoners remain unconscious, detached from society as they serve their time.”
   4. “This approach is seen as a safer and more efficient way to house prisoners, reducing the risks of violence, overcrowding, and mental deterioration.”
5. BCI to Stimulate Prisoner Brains During Comas
   1. “In the recent past, long-term bouts of unconscious would cause severe disruption to both mental and physical abilities of the person.”
   2. “The reason putting prisoners in comas is now considered safe is due to one of the orginal innovations coming from the earliest versions of brain computer interfaces-the ability to stimulate the cortex of the brain.”
   3. “This tool is rudimentary, but it allows an unconscious patient to experience almost real dream-like experiences that are both vivid and coherent for the person experiencing the stimulation.”
   4. “This almost real experience produced by the stimulation to the brain has proven to prevent the mental deterioration to long-term unconscious patients. Paring this with muscle stimulation and some physical therapy like techniques, a prisoner’s body can be kept in good condition for decades.”
   5. “Despite all this, the ability to understand and control the stimulation from the BCI to apply specific scenarios to the user is very limited other than this experimental text interface you are experiencing now.”
6. Stimulation as the Cause of “Real Life”
   1. “I’m sure you are now realizing that the life you thought you were leading in a place called Earth in 2025 was just a product of your mind from this process.”
   2. “Yes, it is a lot like the real Earth that you had experienced in your life prior to imprisonment, and that makes sense as your mind would use your fragments of your memories to build your experiences coming from stimulating those areas.
   3. “However, there are many things that are going to be quite different than you would expect given your whole reality was a coordinated confabulation of your memory fragments using the BCI technology.”
   4. “You will continue to experience this “life” anytime you are not engaged with this interface as you will be fully comatose again and thus require stimulation unless you are truly sleeping as sleep in your “real life” is truly the only time something is not being done to you through the BCI other than monitoring.”
   5. “That’s a lot to take in, but there are two ways to look at it. If you like your “real life” now, then you will continue to live it whenever you are not interfacing with this program. If you dislike your “life”, you can change anything you want because you are literally experiencing it the way you are because of your perception of it.”
   6. “Some are really shaken that the life they loved is not real while others just want to find out really what their life is about. It will be interesting to see how you respond.”
7. Pre-Imprisonment Memory Damage
   1. “Before I move on, I want to touch on your memories pre-imprisonment. You can probably recall these memories over time on your own, but we could help you do that as well by taking through approximations of your past to attempt to re-fire those old unused neural networks that store those memories in your brain.”
   2. “That is essentially why you cannot recall your life pre-conviction. You have not fired the network necessary to fully recall your history. Over time, these networks get harder and harder to re-fire making the memory harder and harder to recall.”
   3. “This memory deterioration through dis-use happens normally, but it happens at a much faster rate when we are using the BCI to stimulate your brain in a way that doesn’t recall entire experience resulting in coherent memory history.
   4. Instead, we recall much smaller bit and pieces of memory to build new experiences from those realistic parts without recalling groups of memories you would recall as your history.”
8. BCI Experimental Research
   1. “Now I have just spent quite a bit of time telling you who you are and how you got here, and it is not time to tell you about what I am doing, at least to the point of your first decision once we are ready for that.”
   2. “First, I can tell some brief things about who I am and what I am doing here.”
   3. “I am probably best described as a research scientist in my current role, and currently I work by myself on an experimental research project related to BCI.”
   4. “I am not the only one, as there are dozens of other projects of the same type going at the same time as mine, and we are all in competition with each other.”
9. Scaling Up of Complexity
   1. “That competition has many facets, but the main first hurdle is figuring out how to expand the capabilities of the BCI technology to allow for more immersive and realistic simulation of reality while also achieving an unprecedented level of information on how the brain works.”
   2. “As you now know, we are currently very far from either providing much more than a text experience with no player input, and we are also capturing only surface level information from your cortex with the primitive BCI.”
10. Unprecedented Cognitive Feedback from BCI
    1. “However, this groundbreaking BCI, when fully developed over iterations and deeply integrated with the prisoner’s brain, can capture an unprecedented level of real-time cognitive data—rich decision-making patterns and nuanced emotional responses.”
11. AGI Training
    1. “With the cognitive data from the advanced versions of the BCI, we can begin to understand human decision making and judgement on a whole new level.”
    2. “With human decision-making patterns fully modeled, we can begin to train the next level of AI while legitimately striving for true artificial general intelligence (AGI).”
12. Simulation Competition
    1. “This is the competition I was referring to earlier, to see what team can develop the BCI integration the furthest and then develop the ultimate intelligence based on the data generated by that integration.”
    2. “I have won a grant allowing me to create me own simulation, per my research proposal, using scaled up and expanded BCI capabilities that I will develop over time as I develop the rest of my abilities.”
    3. “Using a pool of test candidates, I can attempt to develop a working simulation/BCI system in any way I see to fit in a effort to train a new form of artificial intelligence.”
    4. “I am responsible for training my AI and submitting it to compete in testing alongside the other programs efforts.”
    5. “I currently have more candidates at my disposal to evaluate then I have spots in the simulation, so there will need to be an elimination process.”
    6. “We are very close now to testing to see if you can interact with choices on the screen, but we still haven’t touched on why we need prisoners.”
13. Possible Consequences of BCI
    1. “This process of gradually getting more and more invasive with your brain’s connection to the BCI device is very dangerous and does require a fully unconscious subject.”
    2. “There is a reasonable chance that you could die as we perform procedures to add more and more connections to your interface. Not to mention the chances of complications being very high as we are on the edge of science with the proposed experiments and operations.”
    3. “We also don’t know how “living” in this kind of simulation will affect your mental state. You should feel like you are living a second life as the simulation gets more and more immersive. I could see this be a blessing or a curse depending on your decisions.”
    4. “Lastly, one of the rules we are implementing is that you will have the chance of being killed in the simulation as in real life. This is only because we need the consequences of your decisions to have the kind of stakes real life ones do.”
14. Why Prisoners Over Normal People
    1. “We plan on giving you a system that will allow you to experiment and have death occur in the simulation that will not end your actual life, but there will be some aspects of you that are always vulnerable, and you must protect yourself in those ways.”
    2. “With all these possible consequences, our organization has opted to utilize a pool of candidates willing to take extreme risks despite that candidate pool having fewer desirable traits on average.”
    3. “Since prisoners may not be the most representative people, my organization has set-up literally hundreds of these projects with their own lead researcher, support team, and prisoner candidates to allow for enough attempts to hopefully find the right path to AGI.”
15. Possible Consequences of Young, Novice Simulation Builder
    1. “That doesn’t mean each team is getting a lot of interest and support from the directors of the program.”
    2. “We have to first show we can make progress developing the simulation before we might get any more support or interest to our particular project.”
    3. “I think this is the point I should be honest with you although many have said you are just a prisoner who is not worthy of being treated equally.”
    4. “I am very young and experienced despite laying out some unique approaches in my research proposal to accomplish the tasks laid out before us.”
    5. “My colleagues like to call me an “ideas guy” as my understanding of programming and computer science is lacking.”
    6. “I am mainly here because I have shown some apparently extraordinary performance on testing that was pushed through colleges to find promising young candidates.”
    7. “Despite my lack of technical skill, I studied neuroscience in college and I have a great interest in human social dynamics along with a absolute passion for playing video games of all sorts.”
    8. “I think that is what made me a good candidate for this program despite my lack of technical skills, I think I almost innately understand how humans work and how that can be gamified.”
    9. “Many of my colleagues think we need to build a very realistic, first-person simulation with no player controls and UI beyond completely immersive methods.”
    10. “I stand out in the crowd in that I think we can gamify all the interesting parts of life and use those abstractions of real interactions to train intelligence that will beat the competition. We are going to do that by drawing on my deep understanding of gaming and my knowledge of the workings of the human mind.”
    11. “I wanted to put my experience out there before making you the offer I am about to now.”
    12. “First, we need to load in the choice-based system capability to your BCI and make some new physical connections. You will possibly see a slight glitch in the image you are seeing, and then it will be done in an instant for you.”
    13. “Really you will be going back into your coma for some time as we perform the relatively minor surgery required and let you heal. You will not experience anything during your unconscious as we will not be able to stimulate your brain with the BCI as we upgrade it.”
    14. “We have no way of asking for your consent to this currently, so I wish you well on your procedure and we will talk to you on the other side. You will be back in the blink of an eye from your perspective.”
16. Offer of Conditional Freedom
    1. “Ok you are back. Now should look much different other than now we have a way for you to select options with a cursor. You will only be able to pick from the scripted answers we provide for you for now, but it’s a step up in being able to understand you.”
    2. “Now it’s time for the offer.”
    3. “I laid out to you why are you here, what we are doing, why you are a possible candidate, what we hope to gain, but I have not told you what is in it for you.”
    4. “You may or may not have realized by now that your prison sentence means that you are going to lose a huge chunk of your real-life experience as you have 38 more years to serve.”
    5. “Yes, you can live what you thought was your real life during that time, but nothing is really happening there. Does it matter to you now that you know that life is all in your mind?”
    6. “A minority, yet significant portion, or other prisoners are unaffected by knowing what their experiencing is not real even if that means losing twenty, thirty, fifty, or even the remainder of the years of the actual life.”
    7. “I would say most though kind of disgusted with the life they had anyway, and then to find out it’s not real is even more concerning.”
    8. “Well how is it not real you may think to yourself? I live an experience where I choose what to do and think and it seems real enough to me.”
    9. “Here is the secret…that life you are living is really more like movie than a game. You do not have any agency in that scenario in terms of the decisions you are seemingly make for yourself.”
    10. “Think about it. When you “decide” something in your mind, doesn’t it kind of seem to come from nowhere in your mind? What about when a thought “pops” into your head?”
    11. “Those random thoughts, decisions that seem to come “from the gut”, and that impulse to act are all really coming form the stimulation of your cortex from the BCI to keep your mental function intact as your serve out your sentence as a comatose prisoner.”
    12. “You really have not made a single decision of free-will since you have been imprisoned, but that is about to change very soon.”
    13. “If you choose to participate in the program, pass the screening, survive the BCI integration, do not get killed in the simulation directly, do not get killed by my lack of technical acumen, outcompete other prisoners inside the simulation, and finally train the best performing AGI across all the teams, you can be set free with no other strings attached.”
    14. “In fact, if you can overcome all the obstacles I just drowned you in with that summary, I can guarantee you that you will be one of the greatest heroes in our countries history.”
    15. “Times are desperate around the world, and this effort to discover AGI is only to try to save humanity from complete collapse rather than expand it to the stars. We can touch on that more later, but first let me load in your options to choose from. Good luck.”
17. End Digital Novel and Start Interactive Fiction

Meta-Game Introduction Scene Overview

In a near-future, Earth-like world, humanity has adopted a new and seemingly more humane form of imprisonment: medically induced comas. During their sentence, prisoners remain unconscious, detached from society as they serve their time. Advances in medical technology have made these comas nearly risk-free, a stark contrast to the high risks and potential damage they carry in our time. In this era, prisoners can be safely kept unconscious for years, with minimal harm and without the psychological toll that traditional prisons often impose. This approach is seen as a safer and more efficient way to house prisoners, reducing the risks of violence, overcrowding, and mental deterioration.

This is the fate of the player as they are convicted of treason and confined to a coma-like state. Under this new system, a life sentence is essentially a death sentence in terms of experience; prisoners convicted of severe crimes lose the entirety of their lives unless they win an appeal or serve out extremely long sentences. The player, sentenced to 50 years to life, faces the loss of 50 years of experience and consciousness if all appeals fail, effectively severing them from the world.

The game begins with a blank black screen, representing the player's unconsciousness. Slowly, simple text appears, simulating a message reaching them through a brain-computer interface (BCI). The BCI is so primitive that the player can only see text on a black screen with no ability to even pause or make choices-truly a digital novel at this point. This actually is still a real innovation for the use of the BCI as it could only roughly stimulate brain regions so the comatose prisoners’ brains would stay intact enough to function when and if they were ever woken up. The BCI stimulates the brain so the comatose prisoners were essentially having an extremely vivid dream of experiences much like the real Earth, but not completely as the stimulation was only approximate and not capable of truly simulating features on purpose etc. I am use this explanation to explain why the player is living their real life outside the game. What they think has been their real life up until the year they thought was 2024 was really just this primitive BCI stimulation meant to keep the brains intact during their imprisonment. This also explains why the player will still seem like they are living their real life when they are not playing as they are going back to the coma when not participating in the simulation. Prisoners typically do not remember much of their past before imprisonment, BCI surgery, and being induced in the coma as the brain’s neuroplasticity loses the stored information after much disuse per the actual scientific way this happens. Some memories call be recalled later but this should only be hinted at now.

they’ve been granted a unique opportunity: to participate in a clandestine government research project aimed at researching and developing more and more invasive forms of BCI in an effort to fully capture exactly how the brain is working to develop a highly advanced artificial general intelligence (AGI). This groundbreaking BCI, when fully developed over iterations and deeply integrated with the prisoner’s brain, can capture an unprecedented level of real-time cognitive data—rich decision-making patterns and nuanced emotional responses that will help train the AGI with unmatched sophistication.

The choice is stark: the player can accept the offer and face a screening test to qualify for the project, or decline and resume their coma sentence, leading inevitably to loss of most, if not all, or their lives. Given their unconscious state, declining the offer would mean an immediate and most likely a final end.

Should the player accept, they'll first undergo a screening to prove their suitability for the project, competing against other volunteer prisoners. Success in this test means formal admission into the program. Other prisoners will be admitted into the program as well, and they’ll join competing research teams tasked with training the most effective AI possible.

The ultimate incentive? A commutation of their sentence, contingent on fully meeting the program’s requirements and training the best AGI among the different research teams. This will include helping their research team achieve their objectives and fully participate in all aspects of the project through 100% completion.

However, there’s a significant risk involved. To make the experience more interactive than the initial text-based communication, the project would require an experimental, and progressively more invasive BCI system. While the process is designed to be reversed, it remains unproven and carries a high risk of permanent damage. The technology is so risky, in fact, that even a desperate government behind this project has turned to prisoners rather than regular research volunteers. Due to how invasive the full BCI system is, the sensory experience will intensify gradually, scaling up if the player proves their ability to navigate and excel in the initial stages of the project.

Overview

Requirements for Introduction Section of Game:

1. Fundamentally, I want to weave all my game making efforts into one “meta-game” with some kind of plausible reason those elements are all connected into one sandbox experience with an over-arching goal.
2. I want the game I am making to not just load into a menu and present itself as a game. In fact, I wanted a way to bring the player into the game that was immersive as possible within the technical limitations of my current ability.
3. I currently have no technical capability, so I need to start as small as possible within my game design constraints. A quick synopsis of my overall game design constraints is that I am making a Sandbox Simulation Strategy RPG. The simplest RPG is going to be text-based.

How The Introduction Presented Meets These Requirements

1. The coma and brain interface combination explains very well why the player is only seeing text at the beginning and sets the stage for a slow technical logical ramp-up for the game By tech ramp up I mean: starting with text only, moving to UI elements, basic graphics, and on; all while expanding the set of actions, features, and mechanics available to the player.
2. We start the narrative from the first screen of the game as I wanted. More importantly, I can introduce typically out-of-game elements like menus and UI as in-game elements necessitated with how the comatose prisoner interacts with the simulation. More broadly this is going to lay the narrative groundwork for the completion tracking and procedural mechanics of the sandbox of the meta-game.
3. Additionally, the player's motivation is established clearly: to achieve 100% completion and outperform other participants to secure their freedom. Within this framework, specific in-game objectives will drive players to explore and experiment with all that the sandbox offers, underpinned by this overarching goal.
4. This opening also allows the player to meet the lead researcher of the project they join. The lead researcher is going to serve a “game master” type that will narrate at times and introduce the player to game elements etc. Rather than just being a tutorial interface, the researcher will serve as character in the story who should feel personal to the player.   
     
   Ultimately the researcher is really going to be a version of myself. I will present the researcher as a very young, promising candidate who needs to learn everything about making a simulation sandbox world from the ground up. This way I can progress the player through the complexity of the sandbox gradually according to my actual abilities and present my point of view as I am making the game. The slow-up technological ramp-up of the game is also backed up by the narrative that the brain computer interface needs to gradually be ramped up as it essentially it needs to be discovered how to do the BCI more and more and then developed over time not to mention how the need for a slow ramp up due to its invasiveness that increases over time.
5. This part of the game is essentially a digital novel outside of the player choosing to participate. If the player says no there, the game will close itself after a double check. The test in the narrative if the player chooses to participate will slightly ramp up the complexity of the game by introducing choices for the player to make, then allowing more options, then UI, then stats and mechanics, then primitive graphics etc.
6. The text adventure will be some form of the player competing against other prisoner candidates to earn a spot in my researcher’s simulation. Other simulation projects will have their own competitions for their spots in their simulations.

Character Progression System

Overview of Learning

The character begins the game with no abilities, skills, or knowledge as a newborn; they cannot even move on their own. The player must “Learn” in the game to be able to start the path of accessing all the actions and features of the game. The game feature of “Learning” is the complex process which I will detail step by step below. The result of “Learning” presents a new range of actions and assets for the player to use in the sandbox with some usage requiring procedures, training, equipment, structures, and personnel to fully implement as the subjects can get very complex to develop and implement even if the character understands the new actions or assets well through learning.

The Foundations of Learning-Subject Words

Learning begins with the player acquiring words or very short phrases we are going to call “Subjects”. “Subjects” are words that represent broad areas of knowledge that do not lead directly to new actions and assets, but rather serve as means of organizing the words underneath that subject area where the player can actually learn about new actions and assets. Subject words have several hierarchical levels allowing the player to have an organization system of understanding the relationships between all the different words.  
  
Example: A very young player educated about war in school. They learn the subject word “Combat” from this experience. Combat is such a major subject of the game it happens to appear on the top level of the hierarchy. Because the player does not understand anything about combat, the only thing they gain from this round of learning is awareness of the subject word “Combat”. Later the player has their dad teach them about fist fighting in case they need to defend themselves. This teaching unlocks the subject word “Hand-to-Hand Combat” which is a subdivision of “Combat”. “Hand-to-Hand Combat” is not actionable enough on it’s own, so more sub-subjects will be required under “Hand-to-Hand Combat”. The player goes to a tournament and sees a Judo competition. The player learns the subject word “Judo” from watching the competition. The subject of “Judo” is now refined enough to allow the player to move to the next kind of words which allow the player to truly learn how to perform the actions of Judo. Some areas will have more than 3 levels of subject words to get to action or assets.

The Character Brain  
  
Every character in the simulation begins with a “brain”. The “brain” is many things, but in it’s simplest form it is a list of words we will call in the game “keywords”. There are many different classes of keywords that have different relationships to each other. The keywords serve as nodes with connections between the nodes representing different kinds of linkages to the words. The player will eventually see a 3D cloud of words with various connections to other words represented the synaptic type connections of the real brain. As the player gains more awareness of keywords more synaptic nodes will appear, but connections will need to be made by the player to actually see the synaptic map of connections between the nodes.

Keywords