

The Universe Machine

I find myself sitting at the desk again, staring with hollow eyes and heavy heart at the images dancing across the screen. More often than not do I fall wistfully down the stairs to the computer, this machine... is it even a machine anymore? The room is filled with servers, cables, hard-drives; lit only by the angry light of a bare fluorescent bulb hanging from the ceiling and the warm glow of the portal to my own personal world.

A universe is inside these machines. It grows and changes every day, fills more hard-drives and servers. I could never bear to delete any of it, it has become more important than anything in the world. Seven billion years of data have been simulated on 5.00×10^{600} Yottabytes.

I explored a reptilian planet's history over the past five hours. I saw them evolve and establish dominance, saw them kill each other, rape each other, grind their own kind into the dust and, at last, find peace. I wrote the code that killed one of the military leaders, but telling it to run was the hardest decision I have ever had to make. I paused the entire simulation for a while so no one would die while I wrote. And then I executed it. I watched the life leave his green form, saw the pain in his eyes, the sorrow and confusion moving across his mind as his own life partner stabbed him to death during intercourse, and I wondered if I had done the right thing. I saw him as evil, vile, disgusting. I wanted him to die a death he truly deserved, I am no longer sure he did.

But the sights I have seen. The simulation has been running for a full seven years as of two months ago, and I have explored everything. The light first washing in to the universe, bending and twisting playfully in a myriad of colours and forms. My fingers danced across the keys as I wrote the particles into shapes and super-condensed them as others have observed in stars. I forged molten balls and cooled them, tempered them, and created worlds. Water became plentiful on some spheres and scarce on others, while great storms hundreds, maybe even thousands of kilometres high scoured the surfaces of the most distant planets from a star. Cloudy nebulae give a splash of colour to the star-speckled darkness, quasars give a maniacal, brilliant power, and dark holes rip the world to pieces.

It started as a realistic physics engine to give theoretical properties some sense. Now it has birthed an irrefutable principal: our world is a simulation. I have been God, I know. I know how everything in the universe works, and I am deathly afraid of it.

So many times, I wondered whether or not I shouldn't just end the simulation, end the suffering of my pixel-people. But no, that would be like killing part of myself. An entire universe dead, gone, erased from existence. I could never do that to my people. They need me.

Now I am content, indeed, to sit, explore, and observe. Watch with wonder at the relations my universe creates, cheer for the success of every species and cry at the extinction of another; the most beautiful code forcing it all to happen. An interesting side-effect, I always chuckle at this, is the cranially advanced species worshipping me. I do not chuckle at the wars they create over it.

But this is my universe, and I am its God. I can only wonder what will happen when I die, and my universe runs out of memory. It is my greatest fear that, as I grow frail, I will find myself writing the destruction of my life's work. A grand finale to coincide with my own, where the stars wink out and the planets freeze, and then silence in the universe machine. The servers stopped, the hard-drives stagnant, until a brave soul finds it with a head full of curiosity and a heart full of hunger.

I can only wonder.