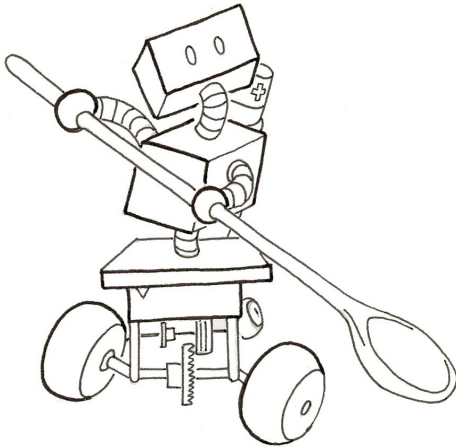


# The InCompleat Robot

*Volume 0*



*Being a collection of journal notes and other  
miscellany lying around the PDX Robot Labs*

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*13 March 2008*

## **import leviathan**

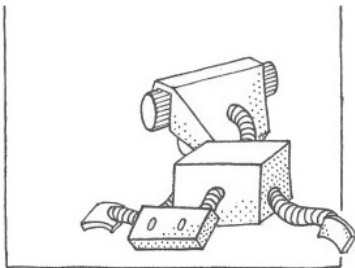
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Teaching the robots political theory is a little difficult when they don't properly understand distance. I can code the numbers in them, sure. They'll load them obediently, just like you memorized the conversion between Celsius and Fahrenheit. But then the times comes to test them for meaning, and the data is suddenly gone. Trashed. I haven't figured out how to fix this bug.

So I do the best I can to encapsulate the theories inside my studio apartment, and sometimes that means that the bed and chairs are warring states, but that's okay. Long as I don't lose any sleep due to colonialism. And hey, it's a great setting for those state of nature arguments! Only I think state of nature arguments are crap. But you know, if I don't teach the robots Rousseau, who will?

Hobbes wasn't so hard:

"Hobbes said that early humans had no avoidance algorithms and careened around at high speeds. They didn't have enough recharging stations and they had no priority rules. All the little humans would be powered down or smashed to bits. What do you call this? You call it: [nasty, brutal, short]. Now repeat after me."



8 February 2008

**"Let's just say it is a measure of disorder"**

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*Forkifies your  
cup of tea* against attackers



"Enemy number one," I tell the bot, "is entropy."

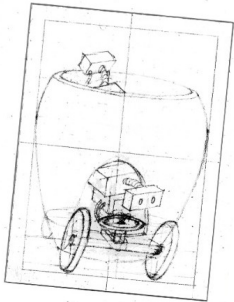
It spins its wheels around and attempts to pick up my chapstick.

I go and fetch Arcadia. *"... time must needs run backward, and since it will not, we must... hmm, disorder into disorder until pink is complete, unchanging and unchangeable, and*

*we are done with it for ever. Ignore the pink thing." I flip towards the end. "Fucked by a dahlia, no... Ah. So the Improved Newtonian Universe must cease and grow cold. Dear me. There."*

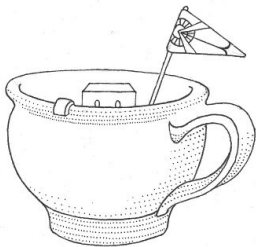
I look at the robot again. It is pushing the chapstick against the cup's handle. "Your batteries will run down before the universe does, but the tea is faster. Entropy. Are you even listening?"

# RULES OF CAPTURE THE FLAG, *Diplomacy Edition:*



1. Each player is assigned a flag at the beginning of play by random selection. The UN teapot is assigned the same way.
2. Maximum speed is 20ft per minute.
3. Throwing objects, including other players, is not permitted.
4. Removing batteries from other players is not permitted.
5. Players may capture another player's flag when (a) the UN teapot is not observing or in a 3ft radius, and (b) you maneuver the other player into a cul-de-sac from which it can't escape.
6. If the trapped player has multiple flags, it surrenders the smallest one. The player must then be released.
7. Players may act in teams. If a team captures

- a player's flag, the flag is surrendered to the player of the trapped player's choice.
8. A player without any flags becomes a "satellite" to the player who captured its last flag. Satellites must reduce speed to 10ft per minute.
  9. The "revolution bell" rings twice per game. When the bell rings, all satellites have a chance to regain sovereignty if (a) the player intercepts the UN teapot or (b) the player avoids being intercepted by its controlling player for 15 seconds.
  10. The game ends in 10 minutes or when 25% of players hold 75% of flags.
  11. All players with 4 or more flags are proclaimed "superpowers" and get to carry a large flag of their choice around for 1 day.



26 February 2009

**"It is not easy for men to rise whose  
qualities are thwarted by poverty."**

-- Juvenal, 55-127 A.D.

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I have not wanted to discuss the recession with my bots, nor explain why I'm suddenly home all the time. I'm making so much progress sweeping out semantic cobwebs and retooling my admin interrupts, and reading *Gravity's Rainbow* with the robins bouncing around, and I know it will soon have to end. I'll be back to staying up late, waking up early, and using coffee as a substitute for interest -- hopefully sooner than I'd like.

But economics are important, so I'm struggling to slip something into an evening session, between the punk movement and undersea volcanic vents. My first instinct is to turn to the experts:

"Ahem. New topic. *Fools always rush in, for all*

*fools are rash. Their very simplicity, which at the start makes them insensible to advice, at the finish makes them insensible to disgrace.'*

Baltasar Gracián, number 78." Every head is tilted at the same angle; I really need to write a diffuser for that. "Hmm. Little ones, this will be difficult. I haven't even given you a currency yet.

"Let's think about 'confidence'. It helps you do things. Gaining confidence helps you do more things. It's an incremental, directional tag; when others point it at you, then you have more. It's a lot like... sharing your data about where the ground is." I hope I have their attention. *Ground* is a constant subject of interest here at the PDX robot labs.

"But sometimes that data will be wrong, yes? And you might give it to others accidentally. So: there is a 'wrong' kind of confidence, too." I have to pause to send out some codes -- one or two bots seem to think this is a scolding.

"Wrong confidence helps you do fewer things.

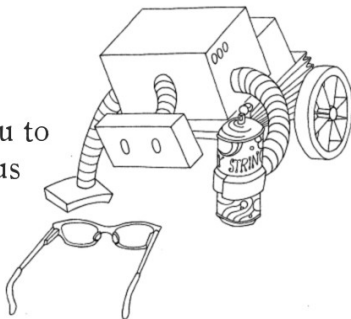
And right now, in the outside-house, we have some bad data checkers. They did not catch the wrong confidence before we spread it, so the outside-house cannot do very much for a little while.

"ERR? Yes. We sent out some ERR codes.

"Oh, thank you. Yes, that is exactly where the ground is."

### Monica's Helper Robot №89

alerts you to  
dangerous  
illusions



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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*Here we see Monica in the act of overthinking something.*



Monica, roboticist and part-time overachiever, wrote her first crude artificial intelligence program in her college days as a salve against political despair. Now she manages a small robot lab in Portland, OR where she teaches history, philosophy, political theory, and where the ground is.