Artful Design Reading Response – Chapter 8
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Artful Design is a philosophy of how to design well that originates in computer music but can be used as a lens for most design projects. It focuses on how to shape technology with craft, ethics, and aesthetics. Such a philosophy is especially helpful when grappling with questions such as "Why do we design?" and "What are we designing for?" in the face of highly commercial waves of technology that carry with them assumptions and values that are not always aligned with values of music-making. Artful Design encourages its practitioners to put the ethics of how we will live in the world with our creations at the bedrock of their work, rather than as an ethical "leash" to restrain the final product. It encourages them to design not (only) from specific user "needs" but from the underlying human values that underlie those needs. It does so with a treatment of aesthetics that include not only practical design questions and "deficiency needs," but also hidden dimensions such as emotional, social, and moral aesthetics and "growth needs."

Artful Design connects particularly well to the notion of human flourishing. It uses the earlier Greek term *eudaimonia* to refer to a life in which one thrives, with a particular focus on meeting growth needs that enable us to strive for our full potential and self-actualize. These include our need for belonging (social) and our need to appreciate harmony and beauty (aesthetics). Artful Design reminds us that the way we shift technology touches people, altering their lives and their happiness. Our choices in design should therefore be bound to the same standard of ethics as we hold ourselves to in everyday life. We should design to help one another flourish.

This is part of why I find the concept of *folk art* so encouraging – people should make art because expressing oneself artistically and within a meaningful community is a vital part of self-actualization and aesthetic self-fashioning. I would promote the concept of *folk design* as well: design as expressive practice can be equally powerful to art. This connects with Artful Design Principle 8.17, "We design as an act of play."

In response to the question on Page 402, "Are we *happy*?" I would say that the proliferation of high-tech technology has made us forget that some things in life are meant to be hard. In my youth, I have used digital cheats for video games to achieve virtual experience, currency, and items to make myself feel better, but playing the game in this way did not lead to a long-term appreciation for the act; instead, I eventually stopped enjoying it and long after that, stopped playing. There also seems to be a sentiment online that people these days are too quick to leave romantic partners when there are any signs of strife, forgetting that relationships are more rewarding if they are not thought of as finding an already-perfect soulmate but instead thought of as growing together with a person (indeed, designing the relationship).

"The meaning of design lies not in the objects but in what they mean to us." Does this mean that we can never really make artifacts which are "moral" or "ethical"? We can try to make things in a way that is ethical, and we can try to make things that will be used in a way that is ethical, but there is always the possibility that someone will misuse or misinterpret something we make. We

might create a very calming game that is meant to be used to help someone flourish by expressing themselves, and many people might use it that way, but others might become addicted and use the experience to avoid dealing with other necessary aspects of their life. All we can do is provide opportunities for human flourishing and hope that people will work to improve their lives.