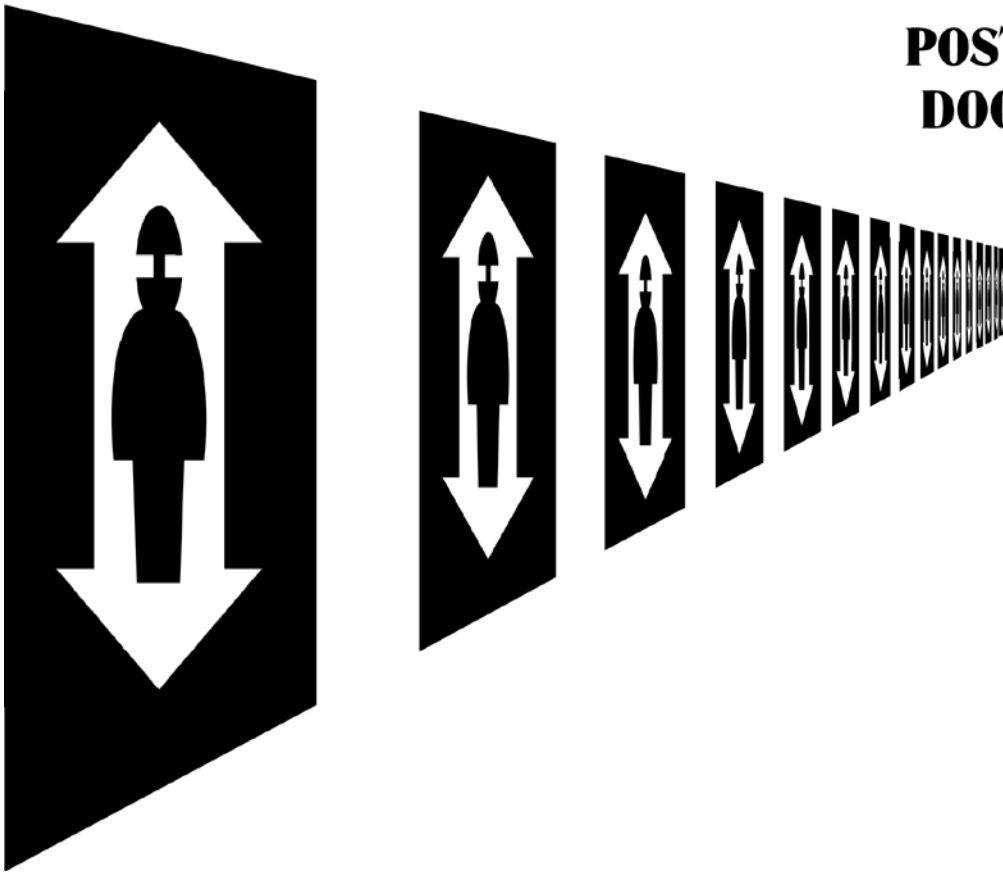


# THE POSTHUMAN DOORWAYS



**DESIGNED BY JASON PITRE FOR GAMECHEF 2013**

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Icons by Thomas Tamblyn

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# OVERVIEW

## THEME

Transhumanism. The idea that sufficiently advanced science and technology can change what it means to be human. Our bodies will improve, overcoming the frailty of human flesh. Our minds and cultures will expand, changing how we perceive the world. Changing our fundamental natures like that poses several questions.



- How will our new natures transform the world?
- What will the future society look like?
- What will we lose in the process?

This game is meant to explore those questions, and many others, during play.

## EVOLUTION

*Homo sapiens sapiens* is evolving. Genetic engineering allow us to gain new traits and adapt to local conditions at startling speed. Cybernetic technologies allow us to enhance our senses or replace limbs, giving us inhuman capabilities. Human cloning technologies allow for rapid recovery from injury and physical immortality. External communications technologies allow us to interact directly with a pervasive digital reality.



The cost of this is the loss of our human experiences and identities. We lose the small rituals that centre us as people. The smallest rituals, from a morning coffee to a friendly handshake can become impossible as our bodies become incompatible with our former way of life. By changing our bodies, we become alien beings. How much do you value your human frailties?

## ENLIGHTENMENT

Our minds and our societies are changing. Generations past, back in the days when information was scarce, learnt how to examine and explore a limited number of subjects to great depth. Now, it's a challenge for most youth to sit down and read a single book. The information revolution turned us into a remix culture, driven to multitasking and synthesis of countless different information sources. We have begun to learn and to think in radically different ways than we had in the past. The new cognitive cybernetic implants and mental enhancement drugs are only accelerating the pace of change.



This change, driven by communication technologies and unlimited information, has radically affected society on a whole. Religions have fractured, with fringe sects and syncretic faiths rising to prominence. Cultures and languages are being assimilated, losing their distinct character as they meld into and influence the new global society. Governance in this hyper-connected age is increasingly difficult, with radical new subcultures and ideological factions stepping into the power vacuum.

Many individuals reject this increasingly alien world, embracing tradition and freezing their minds into static forms. They embrace their orthodox religions, traditional cultural identities and distinct languages. They stand apart and clash violently with the radical thinkers.

## DOORWAYS

This is a game about too many questions with too few answers. Each questions asked during play opens a doorway to the future, and there are always some left unexplored during play. In a world of limitless possibilities, we are forced to still make limited choices.



# STARTING TO PLAY

## REQUIREMENTS

In order to play the game, you need...

- 3-5 people in total.
- 2-3 hours
- A stack of index cards
- Some pens or pencils.
- One copy of the Enlightenment sheet
- One copy of the Evolution sheet
- A table or other surface to sit around.

This game does not have a proper Game Master role which means that everyone is referred to as a player in the text. The players will create situations and provide the opposition for each other during play.

Give one index card to each player, then place the rest of the stack on the area of the Timeline marked "Potential Futures".

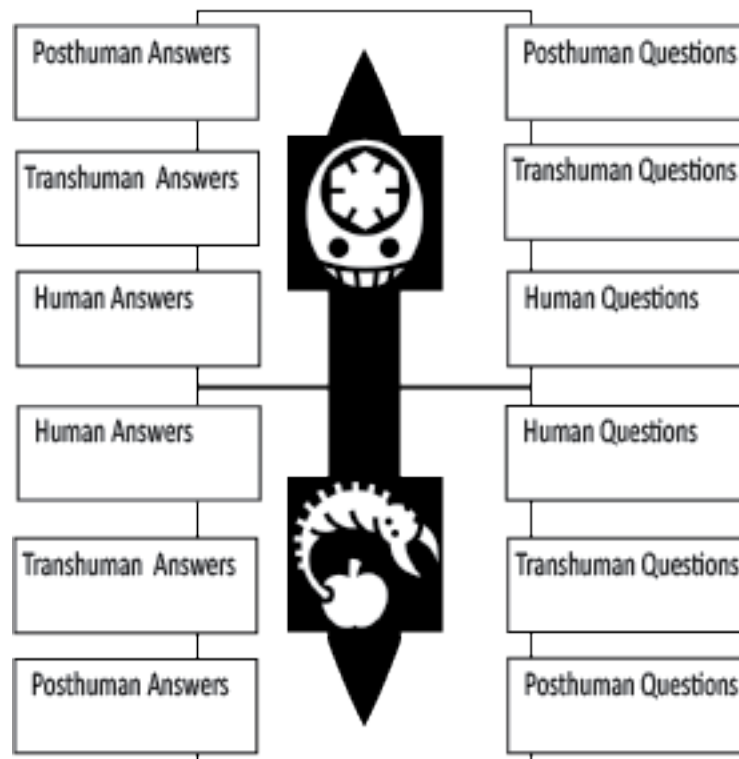
Prepare another index card marked "Guiding Characters" and leave it blank.

Our example has three players: Alice, Julia and Stephen

## THE TIMELINE

Place the two sheets on the table, with the Enlightenment Sheet above the Evolution Sheet. This will mean that you will have a 8.5" wide by 22" high play space known as **The Timeline**. This is where you can keep track of each of what happens to the world.

This story will take place during three different eras; distinct time periods in your character's lives. The Enlightenment Sheet and Evolution Sheet each have space for each of the different eras, allowing you to either explore the physical or mental transformations of each era.



Characters start as teenagers and students in the **Human Era**, the near future only slightly beyond our own time. These are when the first real changes begin to take place and your characters develop as individuals. This is a period of foreshadowing; endless possibilities and of unknown dangers.

The **Transhuman Era** is reflects the world of adulthood. This is where your characters will pursue careers, raise their families and create lasting works. This is a period of transition, where the familiar aspects of the world begin to fall away and the characters are forced to adapt.

The **Posthuman Era** is reflects the world of the elders. This is where your characters try to understand the real nature of the world's transformation, and to preserve the remnants of the old world for new generations. It's a time where the characters work to help the next generation cope with the ongoing transformation, and to find some kind of comfort in this alien world.

## **THE CONTEXT**

The first thing you do when creating the game is determine where the game will take place. Take one index card and write "Context" on it.

The player who brought the print-outs of the sheets starts by picking a country in the real world that the game will take place in. Write that on the Context card and pass the card to the person on their left.

The second player picks a specific real-world city or settlement in that country. Write the name of that place on the Context card and pass it to the left.

Each other person gets to create one specific location within that city or settlement, where much of the scenes will take place. When they create a location, they write it on the card and pass it to the left, until everyone has created part of the context for the game. This will result in 1-3 locations, depending on the number of players in the game.

For example, Alice decided that the game should take place in the **United Kingdom**

Stephen is sitting on Alice's left, so he decides the game should take place in **Oxford**.

Julia gets to make up one location within Oxford, and decides that the **Oxford Hackerspace** sounds like an excellent place for technological innovation.

# CHARACTERS

Now that you know where the story takes place, each person needs to make their character. Characters are individuals in the city who are intimately affected by the mental transformation and physical evolution of humanity.

Each player should have an index card in front of them, which they can use to record details about their character. Create a name for your characters and write it at the top of the index card. Try to create a name tied to one of the ethnic or cultural groups that could have a presence in your chosen city or settlement.

Each character will have four **Drives**; a Vision, an Identity, a Frailty and a Ritual. Write these titles on the left side of the index card, with an empty checkbox on the left and room for text on the right.

- **The Vision** represents some mental or social augmentation they are desperate to gain through advanced technology or science. This may happen during an Enlightenment scene.
- **The Identity** represents some mental or social trait that they are terrified of losing as a result of the constant change. This may happen during an Enlightenment scene.
- **The Frailty** represents some physical weakness or characteristic that they are desperate to overcome through advanced technology or science. This may happen during an Evolution scene.
- **The Ritual** represents some physical habit or activity that is important to the character, that they are terrified of losing because of the physical transformation. This may happen during an Evolution scene.

For example, Alice is portraying

**Julia Cangini**

Vision: Perfect memory

Identity: Italian Nationality

Frailty: Skin cancer

Ritual: Jogging in the mornings

Betty is portraying

**Rebecca Hopkins**

Vision: The ability to speak any language

Identity: Devout Roman Catholic

Frailty: Overweight

Ritual: Curling up with a good book

Stephen is portraying

**Sylvan Dupuis**

Vision: Fame and glory

Identity: An innovative artist

Frailty: Blindness

Ritual: Physical intimacy

## INITIAL QUESTIONS

This game asks you to play through a series of scenes, each of which is based on a specific question written on an index card. In order to start the game, you need to prepare two initial questions which will begin the process.

Take an Index card from the stack of potential futures. Write the first standard question on the top half of the card: “**What physical augmentation technology first became popular?**”

Find the “Human Era Questions” section of the Evolution sheet of the Timeline, and place your index card there.

Take an Index card from the stack of potential futures. Write the first standard question on the top half of the card: “**What new cultural fad has dominated popular culture?**”

Find the “Human Era Questions” section of the Enlightenment sheet of the Timeline, and place your index card there.

## GAMEPLAY

During the game, you play through a series of scenes.

Each scene has one player filling the role of Explorer, one as the Doorway, and everyone else as Guides. The Doorway establishes a scene for the Explorer to play in based on one of the Questions in the Timeline.

At the end of the scene, 1-2 the participants will ask more questions and play will move clockwise around the table to the next player.

Keep rotating around the table four times, so that each character is the focus of the story for four scenes. When that is done, you work together to end the game and establish legacies.

The player who brought the print-outs of the sheets starts as the Doorway for the first scene. The person to their right will be the Explorer of that initial scene, and the rest will be Guides.

For the purposes of the examples,

**Alice** is the initial Doorway

**Betty** is the Explorer portraying **Rebecca**

**Stephen** is the Guide, portraying the minor characters interacting with Rebecca.



## **THE DOORWAY**

The Doorway is the player is asked to privately determine the answer to one of the questions on the Timeline, and use the scene to communicate that answer to the rest of the group. For the purposes of this section, I am referring to the Doorway with the female pronoun of “she”.

The first thing she needs to do is look at all of the Question cards on the Timeline and select one, putting it in front of them.

If the Question card was from the Enlightenment Sheet, this will be an Enlightenment scene that focuses on the intellectual and social transformation of society. She looks at the Explorer’s character card for the Vision and Identity drives.

If the Question card was from the Evolution sheet, this will be an Evolution scene that focuses on the physical and biological transformation of humanity. The she looks at the Explorer’s character card for the Frailty and Ritual drives.

She has the responsibility to make sure it’s hard for the Explorer to achieve their Vision, retain their Identity, overcome their Frailty, or continue their Ritual.

- If the Question card was in a Human Era of the Timeline, then the scene will take place during the character’s youth.
- If the Question card was in a Transhuman Era of the Timeline, then the scene will take place during the character’s adulthood and maturity.
- If the Question card was in a Posthuman Era of the Timeline, then the scene will take place during the character’s senior years, when the world has already radically changed.

She can determine exactly when within the Era the game will occur. She may choose to have a scene immediately after the previous one, years in the future, or even create a flashback.

She uses the Context card and the locations provided to determine where the scene will take place. Consider a location that would interact with the character’s Drives.

She creates one minor character for each Guide to portray at the beginning of the scene. She only needs to create a role for the minor characters; the Guides will do the rest of the work.

To that end, she narrates and describes what happens in the first ten seconds of the scene. Try to use this power to put the Explorer in a difficult situation that threatens the character based on their Drives. Make it hard for the Explorer to maintain Rituals or Identities, keep them burdened by Frailties and block their Vision. Give them obstacles to overcome.

When that’s done, ask the Guides to describe their characters.

Alice is the Doorway and she chooses the initial Evolution-sheet question in the Human Era:  
*"What physical augmentation technology first became popular?"*

Since Betty is the Explorer, Alice looks at the Rebecca's Frailty and Ritual drives. She decides that the technology should be something that would overcome the Frailty, yet interfere with reading. She decides that the new technology are drug-based metabolism boosters that interfere with sustained concentration, but cause weight loss.

Alice declares that this will take place in the Oxford dorms, adjacent to the Hackerspace. It's during the damp November weather of Rebecca's first semester at Oxford, and one of her closest friends bursts into the room. "Hey Becca, have you heard that Bobby Ridlington took that metabolism booster?"

Alice then turns to the Stephen and invites him to create this Guide character.

## THE GUIDES

Each scene will have 1-3 players assigned as Guides. Their task is to portray minor characters introduced by the Doorway, and to offer the Explorer hard choices. Each Guide needs to do the following steps.

When the Doorway asks you to describe your characters, take the “Guiding Characters” card. If you can reuse a previously created character written on the card, just say their name aloud. Otherwise, make a name for a new character and write that name on that card.

Describe the two most important things about the guiding character’s physical appearance, as well as their age and their role in society. All of this should be based on the roles presented by the Doorway.

Look at the the two Drives relevant to this kind of scene (Vision/Identity or Frailty/Ritual) and pick one of them. Your guiding character cares a great deal about preventing the Explorer from getting what they want with that Drive.

Tell the group what that guiding character is thinking at the very start of the scene. This can be a way to discover their personality, express their goals and to establish objective facts about the world/story. The only limitation is that you cannot establish anything that would prevent an Explorer character from playing in scenes.

During the scene, you can do three types of things.

- Speak in your guiding character’s voice
- Describe the guiding character’s actions
- Offer the Explorer a hard choice that they must make or pay a terrible price.

If there is a conflict between a guiding character and a Explorer’s character, the Explorer gets their way. They will still need to make any hard choices you present.

There is a maximum of 3 hard choices per scene, so make them matter and hit close to home. Make them personal, emotional and meaningful.

Stephen decides that Rebecca’s friend is Thomas Barker. He’s a 18 year old hacker with a bad attempt of a moustache, and he has a heck of a crush on Rebecca. He loves her current heavy-set appearance and wants ‘Becca to accept her own beauty. That’s why he would want to interfere with any attempts to use technologies to overcome her Frailty drive.

Stephen starts by telling the group that Thomas is thinking it’s important to scare Rebecca off the new drugs, partly for her and partly so she would stay “in his league”.

Stephen speaks for Thomas: “Yeah, apparently he signed up for the drug trials. Seizure, violent outbursts and all sorts of crap. Nasty side effects and for what? Loosing his beer gut? What an idiot.”

Stephen says “Do you smile and take joy at the suffering of others, or do you start to hate yourself just a little bit more about your weight?”

## THE EXPLORER

The Explorer is the one who gets to actually portray their own character during the scene.

As an explorer, your overarching goal is to:

- Achieve your Vision
- Retain your Identity
- Overcome your Frailty
- Continue your Ritual

This can be remarkably difficult, especially due to the pressure and influence of the Doorway and of the Guides. You may have to make some tough decisions, and make some sacrifices.

During the scene, you can do three types of things.

- Speak in your character's voice
- Describe your character's actions
- Make a hard choice from the options offered by a Guide.
- Reject a hard choice, choosing a third path by putting an X beside one of your drives. You sacrifice that particular drive and you won't get your desired result. This will matter at the end of the game.

If there is a conflict between your Explorer character and a guiding character, you will get what you want unless they present you with a hard choice.

After you have made three hard choices, you *Close the Scene*. Alternatively, rejecting a hard choice will also close the scene.

Betty says that Rebecca smile a wry little smile. "Are you kidding? You can't get away from the news. He is looking pretty fine though!"

Betty describes Rebecca flipping through the news and chatting with Thomas. After a few minutes of dialogue, Stephen offers one more hard choice, either to join the Hackerspace club or to go out with him to the pub for dinner. Betty rejects both options, and puts an X beside her limitation. She decides that the metabolism boosters aren't worth the price. The move on to close the scene.

## **CLOSE THE SCENE**

At the close of the scene, the Doorway player writes the answer on the relevant Question card, and puts it in the “Answer” section of the Timeline for the appropriate Era and scene type. This is now a fact about the world that will influence things in the future.

The Doorway player will take one index card from the stack of Potential Futures and write a new question on it, for the opposite sheet. For instance, at the end of an Evolution scene she will write a new Enlightenment Question that can go in any Era.

If the Explorer sacrificed one of their drives, they get to take another index card from the Potential Futures and write a second question. This second Question can be on either half of the Timeline, also in any Era.

Move onto the next scene by rotating all of the roles one position clockwise. This means that:

- The player who had been the Doorway will become the Explorer,
- The Player who had been the Explorer will become a Guide, and
- One of the players who had been a Guide will become a Doorway.

## **ENDING THE GAME**

At the end of the game, each person narrates one short and final scene for their characters in the far future, in a time after the Posthuman Age. For every drive they sacrificed, they player must narrate one regret that haunted their lives.

When it’s done, gather up all the unanswered question cards and store them with the sheets. In your next game, you can replace the two initial questions from two of those cards.

Thank you for playing.

# Posthuman Era

**Enlightenment  
Answers**



**Enlightenment  
Questions**

# Transhuman Era

**Enlightenment  
Answers**



**Enlightenment  
Questions**

# Human Era

**Enlightenment  
Answers**



**Enlightenment  
Questions**

# Human Era

**Evolution  
Answers**



**Evolution  
Questions**

# Transhuman Era

**Evolution  
Answers**



**Evolution  
Questions**

# Posthuman Era

**Evolution  
Answers**



**Evolution  
Questions**