

# Packy McCormick’s “Natural General Intelligence” leads a systems-focused reading list

Recommended Reading from Tech Founders

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A focused reading list led by Packy McCormick’s recommendation of Natural General Intelligence, with additional picks on the videogame crash, Feynman’s Challenger investigation, and the logic of longtermism.

The standout recommendation is Packy McCormick’s pick: he read an early draft, explains why its planetary-modeling problem resembles biology, and directs readers to spend time with the finished essay and its interactive graphics. [1]

### Start here

#### *Natural General Intelligence*

- **Type / creator:** Essay by Ryan Orbuch for Lowercarbon. **Link:** Read the essay. [1]
- **Recommended by:** Packy McCormick, whose endorsement is unusually substantive: he describes reading an early draft, gives a biology-based rationale, and calls the goal worthy. [1]
- **Key takeaway:** The essay proposes a “Natural General Intelligence” foundation model grounded in the planet’s state and dynamics—connecting the biosphere, atmosphere, oceans, land, ice, and subsurface so it can anticipate responses to intervention and update from observation. [2] Its proposed loop is practical rather than mystical: ingest observations, simulate possible futures, direct new measurements toward key uncertainties, and use the Earth’s response as evidence. [2]
- **Why it matters:** This is a concrete agenda for making AI useful in the physical world. It also keeps authority in the right place: the model would

improve the empirical feedback loop, while choices about interventions, risks, and governance remain human responsibilities. [2]

## Three strong supporting picks

### *Searching for Feynman*

- **Type / creator:** All-In Summit presentation by Bill Gurley. **Links:** Watch the presentation post · Resource links. The source labels it “Bill’s Presentation: Searching for Feynman” and supplies the companion resource page. [3]
- **Recommended by:** Chamath Palihapitiya, who called it “incredibly important” and “so well done,” then said: “Please watch.” [4]
- **Key takeaway:** The companion guide makes the recommendation more than a talk: it assembles Feynman’s “Personal Observations on the Reliability of the Shuttle,” his own account of the Rogers Commission, the commission’s full report, and the televised ice-water demonstration. Its governing lesson is that “Reality must take precedence over public relations,” paired with Feynman’s emphasis on independence from organizational interests. [5]
- **Why it matters:** Read it as a primary-source path to institutional truth under pressure—not merely as a story about a famous scientist’s presentation.

### *The Game Industry Is Broken—Can We Fix It?*

- **Type / creator:** Edge Magazine long-form interview / cover story built around nine industry experts. **Link:** Read the full interview. [6, 7]
- **Recommended by:** Tim Sweeney, who says that many quotes have circulated without context and tells readers to “read the full thing.” [6]
- **Key takeaway:** The feature frames the downturn as multi-causal: macroeconomic pressure and internal dysfunction combine with escalating AAA budgets. Sweeney contrasts a \$12 million *Gears of War* with a roughly \$100 million sequel budget while the revenue projection remained about \$120 million because the audience was not growing. [7] He argues that the industry is approaching a hard audience cap and that companies must either build an ecosystem or operate inside one; the proposed direction includes cross-game social features and a more interoperable economy. [7]
- **Why it matters:** It is a concrete case study in what happens when cost growth outruns audience growth—and in the strategic tradeoff between owning a platform and reaching users through someone else’s.

### *A long-form X essay on effective altruism and longtermism*

- **Type / creator:** Long-form X post by @banteg. **Link:** Read the post. **Recommended by:** Ben Thompson, who places it in the context of

accounting, finance, and especially discount rates, then calls it “Long but excellent.” [8]

- **Key takeaway:** The post’s arc moves from measuring “people helped” to measuring the “fraction of cosmic endowment preserved,” then uses expected-value calculations built on enormous future stakes and highly uncertain probabilities. It ends by asking whether the hypothetical constituency invoked by those calculations can answer questions or falsify the assumptions behind them. [9]
  - **Why it matters:** This is not a neutral primer on effective altruism; it is a pointed stress test for long-horizon reasoning. Thompson’s framing makes it especially useful alongside finance basics: inspect the discount rate, the probability estimate, and the sign of the intervention before accepting a very large expected-value claim. [8]
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## Sources

1. Weekly Dose of Optimism #211
2. Natural General Intelligence
3. X post by @theallinpod
4. X post by @chamath
5. Searching for Feynman
6. X post by @TimSweeneyEpic
7. The game industry is broken – can we fix it?
8. X post by @benthompson
9. X post by @banteg