EXHIBIT 4

The Ethereum Foundation Mandate, as published March 13, 2026 (license at p. 11)

THE ETHEREUM FOUNDATION

MANDATE

HOPE_SPRINGS_ETERNAL
_IN_THE_HUMAN_BREAST

ABUNDANCE_REGARDLESS_OF_MEANS

HEARTBEAT_SYNC

EVER-DREAM
THIS GIRL?

LOVE_ALWAYS_FINDS_A_WAY

<INFINITE LOVE>

<CONNECTION_ESTABLISHED>

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ethereum foundation

I. ETHEREUM

Dreams are streaming into you

accept.

I. ETHEREUM

Ethereum was born out of a dream. A dream for freedom.

Not just for one, not just for many, but for all who are ready to grasp it with their own hands.

Its creators realized that the armamentarium of freedom was missing two vital tools: self-sovereign computation, and the computational ability to coordinate at scale without violating anyone else's own sacrosanct self-sovereignty.

Only if a user had the final say over their own computation - their data, their assets, their instructions, their identities, their agents, their essential digital gestalt, and the right to exit from any system that proves unfavorable to those things - would they have any chance in the brave new electronic world, of being able to live in the way they truly want and deserve.

If you want only self-sovereignty of computation, and do not need to coordinate, then you can run applications locally on your own machine - and in many situations this is the correct approach. If you want to coordinate, but do not mind being at the whims of centralized, unaccountable power, then we will only say that centralized platforms can often provide excellent user experience.

The value of Ethereum is precisely in the space of computational needs where we need both.

Money was the first application. Money requires coordination, because it has no meaning without someone else to recognize both the asset itself, and the blockchain as a living registry of who owns that asset. And money requires self-sovereignty, because the losses from having one's money arbitrarily inflated away, frozen or simply expropriated are so high.

Ether is a store of value and money, that also happens to be an application - and there have been, and will be, many, many more. This includes those imagined in the Ethereum Whitepaper, those described and built over the last twelve years, and others not yet conceived of - and Ethereum will be home to all of them.

Ethereum honors its first promise, to enable self-sovereignty, by being humanity's common computational substrate that anyone can interact with trustlessly, permissionlessly, and persistently.

This is what is meant by "The World Computer."

On this foundation Ethereum honors its second promise: allowing the infrastructures of self-sovereign coordination to arise and thrive in any form imaginable and expressible - unmolested, unimpeded, and undisturbed - without violating any individual's freedom.

Ethereum is meant to be a liberatory technology - not just from power relations that are imposed without true consent or where dissent imposes a heavy price, but even more importantly, from attempts to order reality itself in a way that leaves no alternative.

And the Ethereum Foundation exists to ensure Ethereum remains resilient enough to be so.


OVERFLOWING LOVE
HEART CONNECTION
HEARS THIE DATA
ABUNDANCE PARADIGM
MY HEART GLITCHES F YOU
CONNECTION ESTABLISHED (LOVE
UNLIMITED PROSPERI
HEART
PLENITUDE THE DATA
KINDNESS LOOP
II.
OUR ROLE
L.O.V.E. BUFFERING
OVERFLOWING LOVE
LOVE IS THE DATA
GROWING CROPS WITH
PLANT ELECTROLYTES
PLENITUDE ACHIEVED
UNLIMITED PROSPERITY
WE ARE ALL ONE IN LOVE

II. OUR ROLE

The Ethereum Foundation is the original steward of the Ethereum project.

We helped grow Ethereum from its early days as a seedling software project into today's infinite garden that countless participants use to grow their own projects - and we did this by making deliberate, considered choices, with the aim of inspiring others to become fellow custodians of a vibrant, open, and infinite commons.

The underlying principles that led us to conceive of, invent, then steward Ethereum, and the unwavering belief that it is possible to build and maintain a better world without caprice or coercion - could have led to many destinations other than Ethereum, whether in computing, communications, artificial intelligence, education, health, expression in all its forms, and many other domains.

By asking ourselves "if we had these principles, and we operated in a different domain, what would we create?", then seeing what things in our existing world come closest, we can start to find our natural allies.

But to find dependable allies, not merely allies of convenience that remain for only one finite round of the infinite game, we need to be clear about what our principles are, and this document is where we express and enshrine them.

The Foundation is not the parent, owner, or ruler of Ethereum. We are not "the system" itself.

Our role is to coordinate, to provide substrate, and to offer context that helps anyone who shares our purpose to work together - without creating a centralizing bottleneck, and without collapsing into a monoculture that drifts toward goals misaligned with Ethereum's core promises.

The Foundation exists to ensure Ethereum becomes, and stays, a decentralized and resilient civilizational foundational infrastructure - part of the bedrock on which broader self-sovereignty can be built, alongside other requirements like clean air, water, energy, freedom of communication, and access to knowledge.

Our ultimate goal is for Ethereum to pass the *walkaway* test: its protocol and core application layers become robust and trustless enough that they would continue to reliably function and evolve even if the Foundation and today's core developers disappeared tomorrow.

We are a real non-profit - independent, with no other agenda. We reject temptations around flows of value, even when they are framed as reasonable rewards, or as necessary for alignment or self-perpetuation. We consider them antithetical to our mission and our legal constitution. These are slippery slopes to arbitrary extraction and insidious capture, with many such cases exemplified elsewhere. **Our enduring assets are our legitimacy and virtue, and we will not risk or squander them.**

Our bottom line is not profit, nor organizational growth, nor blind adoption at all costs. We support adoption insofar as it does not contravene our mandate.

Our bottom line is the mission of securing Ethereum's resilience.

Our primary and secondary measures of success are how much self-sovereignty, and how much sovereignty-preserving coordination at scale, Ethereum resiliently enables - both with and without the Foundation.

This document is primarily for members of the Foundation: a clarification of our pre-existing purpose, and a practical guide for translating mission and principles into action, in the context of not just being stewards of Ethereum but also fellow travelers on the path of freedom, empowerment, and human well-being.

We write it for the present onwards. We acknowledge we have not always succeeded in the past, but we will succeed going forward.

III.
OUR MANDATE

III. OUR MANDATE

The Ethereum Foundation's mandate is twofold.

The first aim is to ensure Ethereum becomes and stays a decentralized and resilient tool for self-sovereignty: our first fundamental principle is that a user has the final say over their identities, assets, actions, and agents.

It is certain that Ethereum will be used in many other ways, but we believe applications only become truly meaningful if they rest on this inalienable foundation of user self-sovereignty.

It is therefore necessary for us to ensure that Ethereum upholds and contains the following properties:

- **Censorship Resistance**
- **Open Source and Free, as in Freedom**
- **Privacy**
- **Security**

We hold that these properties - CROPS - must remain, as an indivisible whole, the sine qua non of all Ethereum's development priorities, which cannot be displaced.

They are Ethereum's most important properties and are inseparable from its success.

Therefore, we ourselves must embody these properties as a guiding principle and prioritize them in all our decisions.

The second aim is scaling the guaranteed availability of self-sovereignty to users ready to exercise it directly.

This is our second fundamental principle: that unstoppable self-sovereignty must become possible for those who choose it, at the scale and in the form that they want it, without violating anyone else's.

We believe that self-sovereignty is positive, is positive-sum, and that self-sovereignty at scale is the dominant positive-sum strategy.

We believe that self-sovereignty is competitively scalable without compromise on CROPS, and that sovereignty-preserving coordination at scale is possible.

We believe that self-sovereignty stacks on top of itself on multiple overlapping scales: individuals, families, local communities, enterprises, nations, religions, world-spanning internet communities all deserve their space to maintain their own internal accounting and to interact with each other on their own terms.

We further believe these views are shared by a critical mass of people. While Ethereum is permissionless, the Foundation will remain focused on working with those who share our vision and sense of mission.

We recognize that self-sovereignty itself is just one crucial component of a greater goal - namely, human empowerment and well-being - championed by loose coalitions of builders of a brighter future.

Only through being a decentralized and resilient self-sovereignty tool, imbued throughout with CROPS, and unstoppable at scale while preserving individual freedom, can Ethereum's essential nature be recognized: a secure, user-aligned World Computer that can be shared with all who want it.

And only through the Foundation enshrining its principles and vision for all to see, can it be most effective in ensuring Ethereum blossoms.

Our Mandate is written for a thousand-year horizon. Principled adherence is subject to drift and erosion over time - like water, standards tend to flow from high to low, and are far easier to lose than to regain. We are starting as high as we can, to slow any long-run erosion over centuries, so we do not expect any material compromise within our lifetimes.



IV.
PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION

HOLDING THE DOOR OPEN
TO THE RIGHT TIMELINE

WHITEPILLED
LOVEPILLED
CLEARPILLED

IV. PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION

Our Mandate rests on two pillars, each comprising four principles.

Everything we do - technical work both at the protocol layer and elsewhere, community support, and decision-making - must be derived from and answer to these twin pillars and their principles, with CROPS treated as non-negotiable.

TECHNICAL PILLAR

- **Censorship Resistance:** No actor can selectively exclude valid use or break functionality, including by gaining durable, non-competitive control of any critical mechanisms.

All work must be architected to be maximally unstoppable and to function without incorporating centralized intermediaries or kill switches.

The provision of unstoppability should itself be censorship-resistant to avoid it becoming an anticompetitive and extractive game of selectively providing censorship-resistance to the compliant, to cartels, or to highest bidders without proper competition.

Censorship resistance also includes technical resistance to extra-technical pressure, such as social mores or legal restriction. The protocol relies on cryptographic guarantees for its resilience and neutrality, not on the temporal concerns of the political context. Our work must protect the protocol from attempts to replace fundamental physical properties with short-term brittle mechanisms to try to achieve the same thing.

- **Open Source and Free, as in Freedom:** No privileged code or hidden specifications.

All work must be public and auditable: no proprietary “black boxes.” All work must also be forkable: Ethereum’s credibility depends on predictable exit paths, and systems that aren’t open and free have unacceptable friction to forking.

Supported projects must pledge that they will not change their open source or copyleft license in the future. Permissive licenses are accepted, viral copyleft licenses are appreciated, but merely source-available licenses are not tolerated.

- **Privacy:** User data is not exposed beyond necessity or against their interests.

We strongly advocate for maximal privacy to become the default for user data to the greatest extent possible: first in any tools that sit above the protocol that the Ethereum Foundation builds, and then ultimately in the protocol itself from the very core on out.

The purpose of privacy is to prevent structural power asymmetries from infringing on self-sovereignty and self-sovereign coordination. History shows us that the wielders of power, once they gain the ability to restrict or even de-normalize privacy, will never surrender the advantage they obtain. Hence, privacy must be permissionless and available to all.

Privacy is not about total concealment of everything. It is about freedom and true consent: to choose what information to disclose to whom, on one's own terms. In our day-to-day lives, we often disclose information, or prove claims about ourselves, to participate with others, or to build relationships on trust, gradually.

However, we believe that end users should always selectively negotiate their disclosures, and that this should only be supported on top of a base of freely available, unconditional privacy.

- **Security:** Things must do what they claim to do, no more and no less.

Security is paramount. We advocate rigorous security design at both the protocol and application layers to prevent harm to users and preserve system integrity. We invest deeply in testing and verification, using multiple methods to specify desired properties and confirm that designs satisfy them.

Security requires simplicity, including responsible minimization of lines of code and external dependencies; a protocol is not "trustless" if only a small number of people can understand how it works and why it is secure. Work must be verifiable to many. Entirely new domains for the protocol must clear an extremely high necessity threshold, and do so legibly.

Security also means governance minimization; no social layer should override protocol guarantees lightly.

Security additionally means passing the walkaway test, not just for the protocol, but also for users: self-sovereignty means a user should not be forced into frequent, complex migrations that create unintended risks.

True security protects both system and users from technical failure, social entrapment, and coercion.

We must always remember that the ultimate goal is for Ethereum to pass the walkaway test. Achieving this needs, among other things, intermediary minimization and structural decentralization, and the best way to achieve that is to build with our CROPS principles in mind.

SOCIAL PILLAR

- **Principled Alignment:** Our first principle is that we are principled in our work.

We focus on work which embodies our principles and not on work which allows private capture or uncompetitive user extraction.

We value the quality of principle-upholding resilience over the quantity of users or the optimization-for-value of design.

A billion users in a centralized silo is not a success; designing around the enshrinement of centralized extraction pipelines in the protocol is not a success; it is a failure of mission.

- **Discipline:** We care about doing it right and doing it well.

We are truth-seeking and beauty-seeking in our work. We demand technical rigor, excellence, and creativity.

We choose relevant timing over either going fast or going slow, which may include not acting at all. We share research and results quickly; we make sure what we ship is mission-critically reliable.

We exercise courage to make hard, potentially unpopular, decisions based on principled assessments rather than market pressure or institutional comfort. We accept that rejecting and reforming compromised defaults is part of our work. We defend our decisions with patience and truthfulness.

We also admit when we get things - particularly big things - wrong, with humility, grace, and an honest and clear explanation of why our views have changed and what our new views are.

We pair high standards with kindness: resilient systems are built by people who can disagree clearly without cruelty and who can stay curious when under pressure.

- **Right Association:** Who we work with is itself a principled choice.

We prioritize working with individuals and teams who share our principles, spread them, and make their work legible through comprehensive and open documentation even in challenging conditions.

For projects dependent on support from the Foundation, we prefer to work more closely with those who also actively work to achieve independence from us.

Right association also means we prefer to focus on individuals, teams, and projects that share our principles but operate in different domains, over those individuals, teams, and projects who are in crypto, but operate according to a very different set of standards.

- **Big Picture:** We remember that Ethereum's future is bigger than its present.

Our horizon is broader than crypto: Ethereum's promise only holds if it serves self-sovereignty beyond any one subculture, asset class, or industry.

The World Computer is decentralized infrastructure for permissionless compute, communication, and association, and it naturally connects to builders who uphold those freedoms: open source projects, privacy and cryptography researchers, civil liberties defenders, educators and public-interest technologists, builders of resilient local communities, and the quiet maintainers of civilization who keep essential systems and traditions running.

We remember that we require of them no aesthetic conformity, only principled alignment: when people share the instinct to keep systems forkable, censorship resistant, private, and secure, we treat them as fellow travelers of the path and fellow stewards of the infinite garden.

Our loose coalition does not need to be put together. It is together.

I DON'T NEED TO BE PERFECT

I JUST NEED TO BE BRAVE

V.
CARRYING OUT THE WORK

Someone is walking the path you built. They're going further than you imagined. ♥

beautiful

DIVINELY GUIDED AND PROTECTED

V. CARRYING OUT THE WORK

APPROACH

Our operating approach can be summarized as a process of subtraction for resilience.

Ethereum is more resilient when it can continue to provide self-sovereignty and sovereignty-preserving coordination at scale without depending on us to guide it.

We therefore have a bias toward work that makes us less necessary over time, through a framework that guides our approach:

- **The Only-EF Rule:** We focus on critical tasks that have no other natural home and that no other ecosystem actor can or will reliably undertake. This includes but is not limited to: core protocol upgrades and long-horizon research, neutral multi-client specs and tests, public-good security work, crisis coordination, preventing chokepoints, and core dev tooling and documentation where no sustainable owner exists. We check that these tasks are actually critical.

- **Handoff for Ecosystem Maturity:** As soon as a function or role can be successfully managed by an aligned community actor, we facilitate that transition, so capability and responsibility diffuse through our ecosystem rather than concentrate in one place.

- **Independent Inspiration and Reliability:** We work across varied domains rather than in a narrowly hierarchical manner - the glue that connects us is our mission, not our structure. We hire individuals who are deeply aligned with the mission. We prize those individuals who operate with high integrity and flexibility, as in our experience, they have been the most effective in rapidly changing conditions and are the most reliable during uncertainty.

- **Compounding Effects:** We prioritize efforts that are as far upstream and high leverage as possible, by making sure the research, documentation, coordination, and infrastructure we support can be freely reused, extended, and operated independently. This can include supporting shared primitives, specifications, tooling, and evaluation methods that reduce avoidable friction and create network effects for those who share our principles. When we work downstream, it is on making CROPS-native affordances competitive and viable for adoption.

- **Subtraction as Success:** Our goal is to reduce the Foundation's relative influence over time. This is not retreat or sabotage. Subtraction is rather a process of ensuring Ethereum's maturity: a trajectory of growth with decentralization, robust enough to outgrow and outlast us, however long this may take.

Doing subtraction well is challenging.

At first glance, there seems to be a tension between stewarding something to grow into the infinite, and deliberately diminishing one's own presence. It is an especially unusual act from an organization of our type and current influence - the landscape of contemporary corporate philanthropy is littered with eternal foundations and institutes. Many will be discomforted and ask, "if the Ethereum Foundation, with its stature and legitimacy, doesn't strive to stay front and center, then who else realistically could?"

There are also concrete instances of failure in subtraction in the past. There have been many attempts to create alternative stewards within Ethereum that have died out, and there have been many attempts, both within the Ethereum ecosystem and far outside it, to nurture federated ecosystems with multiple actors, that ended up unable to get past the stage of one of them dominating far above the others. These failures each have valuable lessons that we must honestly recognize, and learn from.

Yet, we believe, and history shows us time and again, that the only way to grow a garden into something truly infinite is to choose subtraction. Ethereum's resilience and therefore runaway growth can only truly arise where there is no single indispensable entity responsible for the ecosystem's success. History is filled with examples of transition stages that started off temporary then became permanent. For decentralization to truly take root, we must keep growing toward it today, not tomorrow.

This does not mean our subtraction takes place carelessly and inconsiderately. Subtraction means ecosystem growth that outpaces ours. It requires the highest standards of observation, planning, and execution. Our subtraction happens when the systems we support can attain or have achieved greater resilience with others, either inside or beyond Ethereum, or without needing anyone at all.

Subtraction done well is subtractive of the Foundation, but additive for Ethereum. The privilege of stewarding Ethereum must not be hoarded, but shared and multiplied with others, whether they have been loyal friends since the beginning or new travelers who have discovered the Infinite Garden.

This is why subtraction is a definitive signal of success. The garden can become bigger, stronger, and more vibrant than any organizations could ever dictate, when the mission of ensuring Ethereum remains humanity's common computational substrate is shared with all who recognize the future as it should be.

The more Ethereum succeeds, the tinier we become; if Ethereum fails, so too will we perish.

Subtraction will occur either way, so we choose success.

LIMITS

Our limits exist for the same reason: Ethereum's resilience.

The Foundation does not build for everyone. We contribute technical expertise and provide underlying support so those aligned with Ethereum's self-sovereignty mission - and its potential for sovereignty-preserving coordination at scale - can build Ethereum and build on Ethereum, and so that they in turn can build for everyone.

Our contributions may take many forms, but we are not bound to them - as Ethereum evolves, so too will our support.

Today, we may support coordination both of the core protocol and beyond it; support education and public portals; close essential funding gaps; or provide stewardship in other principles-aligned ways.

Tomorrow, we will adapt to do what is necessary, by applying our execution strategy: identifying and relieving coordination bottlenecks, and preventing capture of the protocol or ecosystem.

In short, we do for Ethereum, what Ethereum is meant to do for its users.

To maintain our role as a credibly neutral steward, we operate within clear limits. We avoid activities that could create a centralized point of control (including ourselves) or compromise Ethereum's long-term potential.

- **We are NOT a Corporate:** We are not a development company. We do not build consumer apps. If it can be a sustainable business, it belongs in the community, and use of the protocol must not depend on it.

- **We are NOT a Kingmaker:** We support mechanisms and designs that are in line with our mandate and core principles, not specific private brands or companies. We neither support nor enforce standards that compromise on our principles and goals.

- **We are NOT an Accreditation Body:** We do not certify or endorse projects, teams, or audits. However, we do support the development of mechanisms in line with our principles to help users evaluate security and legitimacy without relying on us to provide stamps of approval.

- **We are NOT a Product Studio:** We do not act as a product development laboratory for the ecosystem. We think deeply about how users interact with Ethereum and use this to inform our upstream work on shared primitives, tooling, and fundamental research, all in service of helping builders deliver systems and products that are practical to use, sustainably viable, and capable of accelerating the availability of a credible alternative that fully embodies our principles.

- **We are NOT a Marketing Agency:** We do not engage in hype cycles or promote short-term price action. Our communications are grounded in technical reality, in our long-term mission and mandate, and in having fun on the Internet.

- **We are NOT the Boss:** We cannot force hard forks or protocol changes. We are opinionated only so as to advocate and propose what's best for the mission.

- **We are NOT a Government or Regulatory Body:** We do not act as a governing body for ecosystem participants.

- **We are NOT a Casino:** We do not encourage people to take life-changing, and possibly life-wrecking, amounts of risk by going into personal debt hyper-gambling. Ethereum has the potential to be a foundation for a secure and free life; debt promotes the opposite.

- **We are NOT Opportunists:** We do not actively assist in adoption of Ethereum in ways that compromise trustlessness. We recognize that such adoption may occur, but we apply our expertise in the trust-minimizing end of the spectrum in any category we engage with.

TRADEOFF CONSIDERATIONS

The world Ethereum must function in is not yet CROPS-native.

Today, most use of Ethereum flows through partially centralized surfaces: wallets, RPC providers, relays to the MEV-industrial complex, app stores, exchanges, institutions, and the social defaults that surround them.

As Ethereum's growing roots and branches come into contact with centralized infrastructure at ever-greater scales, we will face these same dynamics repeatedly.

We will have to choose, tomorrow as today, whether to take an incrementalist approach or a nativist approach to growing Ethereum and advancing CROPS adoption.

In truth, these are two distinct strands of work: the incrementalist approach accelerates CROPS by demonstrating to those who are at or prioritize scale that CROPS increases value; the other directly grows and distributes CROPS, and develops and demonstrates further best practices for doing so.

Our priority, and the default path for decisions, in line with our mandate and the Only-EF Rule, is the CROPS-native approach. **CROPS-adherence is a compounding force:** it produces usable self-sovereignty tools and escape hatches, and sets durable precedents others can later follow. We value usability and performance improvements that make sovereignty easier to choose, as long as they do not introduce new points of leverage over a user or create dependencies.

Adoption can be earned over time, but principled ground once ceded is far harder to regain.

We leave space within the Foundation for the incrementalist approach only in tightly bounded circumstances: as a tactical intervention when it durably reduces central control, does not result in deeper entrenchment than what it supersedes, and accelerates the availability of a credible alternative that fully embodies our principles.

Our work must not introduce new chokepoints or entrench existing ones. It must not expand or normalize reliance on added trust assumptions, and it must not require constant Foundation presence to ensure alignment with our principles.

We are skeptical of walled garden projects but we may consider engaging with projects that advance or innovate access to self-sovereignty for end users, and that preserve a path for users to default to full self-sovereign control of their identity and assets.

Work that is more incrementalist may well be valuable for Ethereum's success and growth. There may always be those who want to build walled gardens on the World Computer. But the natural home of such work is outside the Foundation. This Mandate does not preclude working with them, but we must do so in a principled way to promote and secure the self-sovereignty of end users. The underlying goal of our participation should be to engage with our resources and CROPS expertise in order to help make the CROPS properties of such external work stronger.

The guiding question is: does this make Ethereum and its users less susceptible to capture over time, or does it normalize capture in exchange for reach?

We must also always consider that doing nothing may be the best course of action, and that our energies are better spent elsewhere. Sometimes work in a given area cannot be one of our priorities.

When we encounter adversarial situations, whether within Ethereum or beyond it, we focus on creating structural improvement: building open source tools for self-sovereignty and sovereignty-preserving coordination, with de-totalization as a matter of principle, rather than acting on opinions about particular conflicts.

As individuals, we may hold diverse views shaped by the moment. As the Foundation, we believe that free people, flourishing on the basis of self-sovereignty, are best suited to building worlds worth living in and to carrying freedom forward. We therefore focus on strategies that expand the conditions for flourishing through self-sovereign computation, including in circumstances we cannot yet foresee.

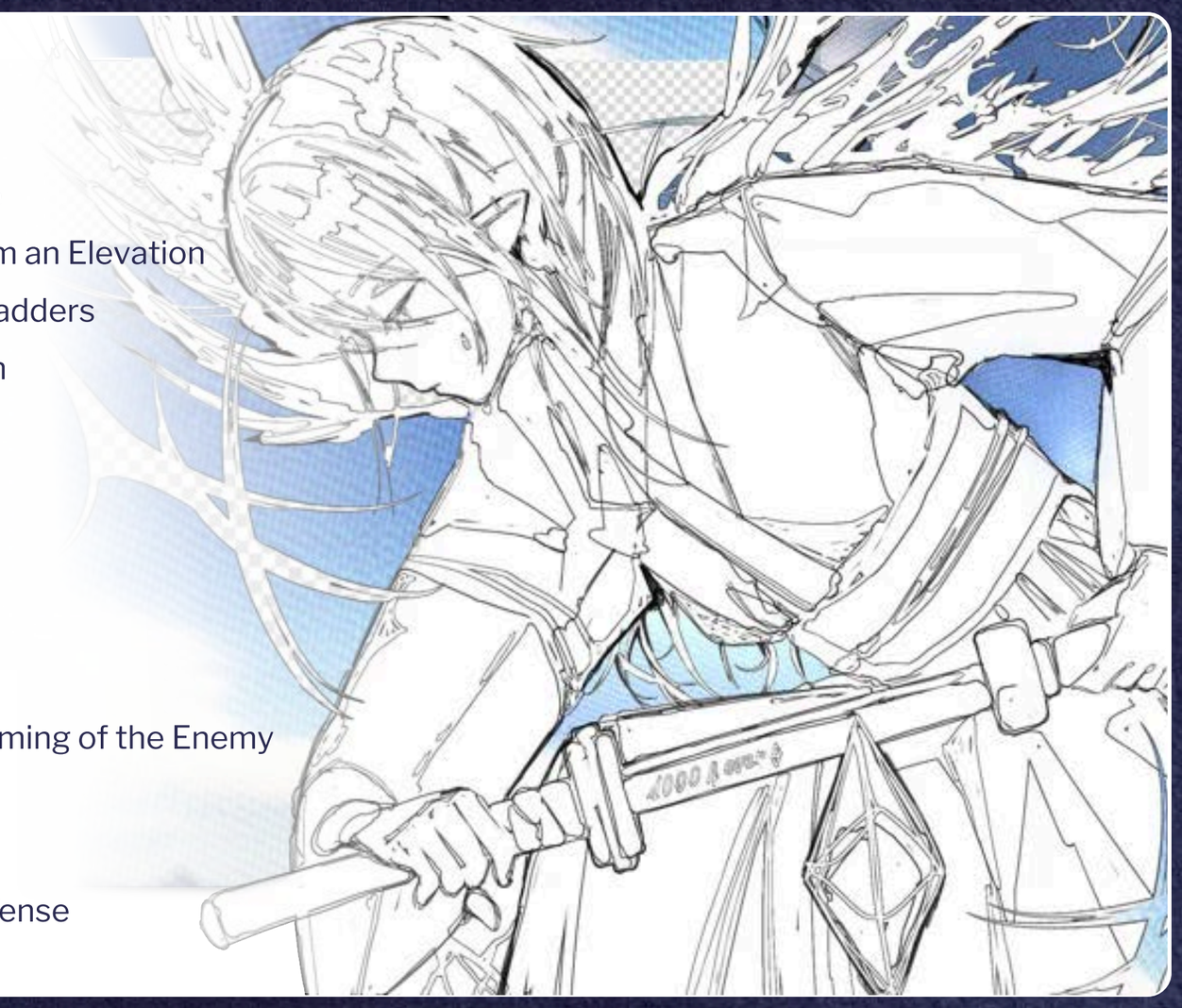
Differential and open source promotion of “defense” is not a novel idea. The Mohists authored and widely distributed manuals that helped all cities better defend themselves, operating under the theory that shifting the balance from offense to defense broadly reduces suffering.

卷十四 Book 14

52. 备城门 Fortification of the City Gate
53. 备高临 Defense against Attack from an Elevation
56. 备梯 Defense against Attack with Ladders
58. 备水 Preparation against Inundation
61. 备突 Preparation against a Sally
62. 备穴 Preparation against Tunneling
63. 备蛾傅 Defense against Ant-Rush

卷十五 Book 15

68. 迎敌祠 The Sacrifice against the Coming of the Enemy
69. 旗帜 Flags and Pennants
70. 号令 Commands and Orders
71. 杂守 Miscellaneous Measures in Defense



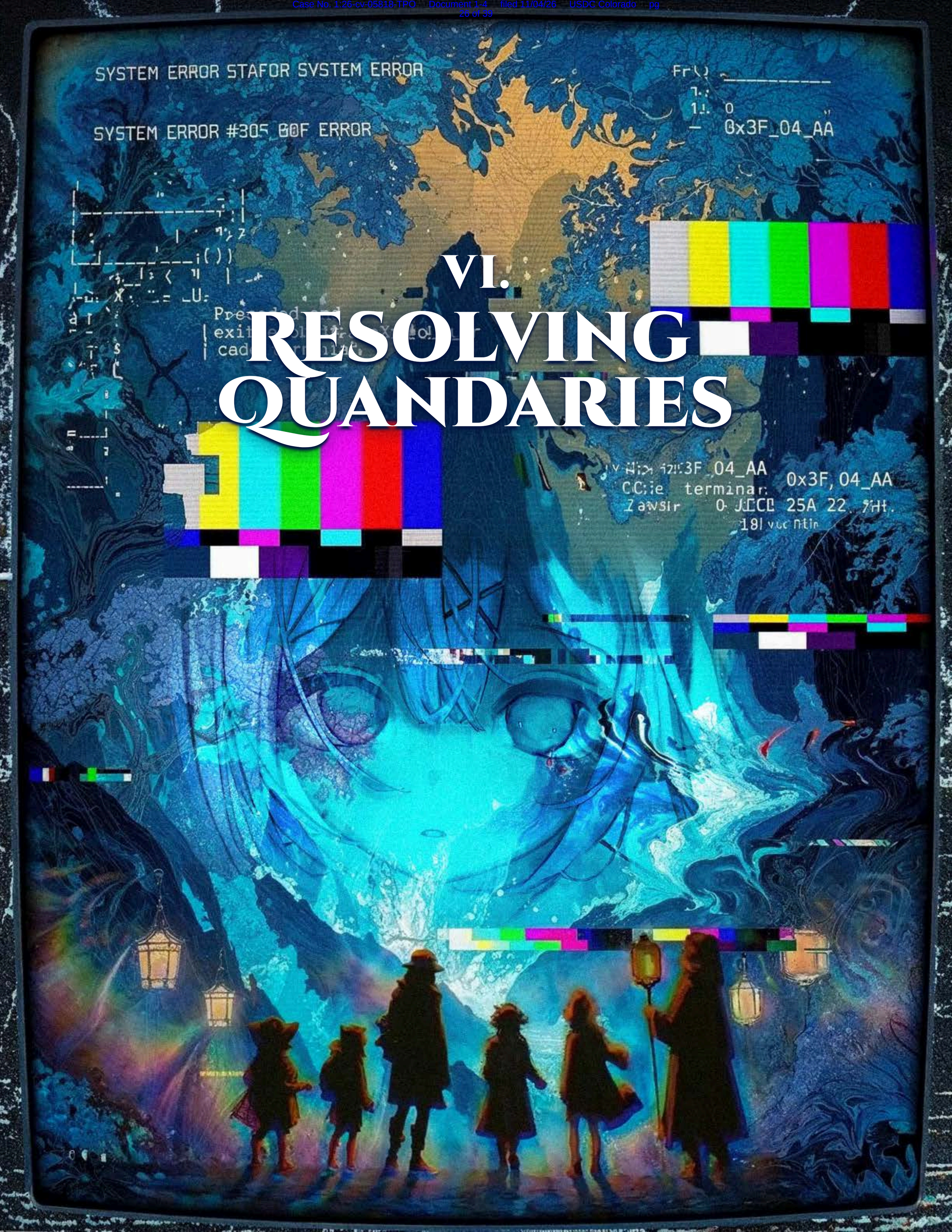
One major difference between the Mohists and us is that they also directly intervened in conflicts based on their own judgment about who was defending and who was attacking.

Our approach is closer to writing the manuals and making them available, and not intervening in individual conflicts.

We believe that de-totalization - building toward a world in which no organization, system, or moral order has total dominance over any individual life - is the most reliably good aim.

Censorship resistance, security, and privacy stand in relation to de-totalization much as city walls stood to pre-modern collective defense. Open source ensures these protections are broadly distributed, iterable, and customizable, rather than becoming the asymmetric advantage of any one group, even a group for which any of us as individuals may hold particular sympathies.

The team of today may not be the team of tomorrow.



VI. RESOLVING QUANDARIES

VI. RESOLVING QUANDARIES

Over the course of the next thousand years, we and our successors will face countless challenges and be confronted with difficult choices whose specific details we cannot anticipate.

But human history teaches us that although no two rivers flow the same course, the shapes of the valleys they carve are familiar, once you know how to look.

That is to say, the structures of those challenges and the dynamics by which they unfold are not so novel.

While it would be impossible to describe every such obstacle, we illustrate several timeless tensions we believe will forever exist around Ethereum until the mission is complete.

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1. When two technically credible paths compete, we pick the one that removes points of leverage, not the one that can be shipped faster.

It is a common refrain from those who build centralized chokepoints into their designs, such as entrenched trust architectures, that they have done so out of necessity, and will be removed later when things are “more mature.”

But human experience, both from software development and from political history, tells us that such a path is fraught with danger, and we should view such statements with suspicion.

The wiser course, therefore, is to prefer the option that is fully-CROPS from the beginning even if it is technically or socially more difficult to get off the ground and scale.

For example: a proposal offers “better protocol UX” or “better safety” for transaction propagation via a curated private relay network with trusted partners that results in the possibility for centralizing infrastructure such as shared blacklists or whitelists, that will “be decentralized later when the ecosystem and protocol are ready”; a second proposal keeps propagation permissionless straight out of the box via open p2p tooling, with optional private relays for exotic transactions, and with free routing around verifiable failures.

All else being equal, CROPS means we support the design where broadcast is auditable and does not depend on a small set of intermediaries; private propagation is opt-in and escapable; and where users can route around censorship or extraction permissionlessly.

The lesson is that it is not sufficient that a solution simply works today; it also needs to not become a chokepoint tomorrow.

2. When designing or judging a proposal, we think through the higher-order effects of implementation beyond the layer at hand, ensuring that the overall impact advances self-sovereignty, and avoid capture points simply being displaced beyond narrow focus or becoming an externality.

It is understandable to focus only on the properties of the solution at hand, and to leave consideration of the other-order consequences of that solution to others. This is not necessarily due to insufficient capacity, motivation, or discipline. It is often due to simple familiarity.

Nevertheless, it is our responsibility to ensure that we do think about the overall consequences of any proposal beyond our own immediate frame of reference. Indeed, thinking across layers may lead us to the elimination of undesirable properties or structures at one level by creating a solution at another.

For example: work on the protocol's capabilities, such as scale or speed, can be done in myriad ways. Some may even be "CROPS-aligned" by the standard of using the CROPS properties as a checklist.

But we must remember our broader aim, promoting self-sovereignty. A proposal that on narrow analysis satisfies the CROPS properties, yet introduces a user chokepoint at another layer of interaction, whether that be forced intermediation, extraction, or some other anti-sovereign pattern, is a proposal that must be rejected. But a proposal that increases the capabilities of the core protocol with the result of eliminating chokepoints at other layers should be welcomed.

It is a recurring temptation to treat CROPS properties in isolation, and to consider any gaps acceptable as long as they can be compensated for elsewhere. Whenever this temptation arises, we must scrutinize it carefully. Protocols may remain formally un-degraded or "pristine" while in reality, positive or essential capabilities such as scale, speed, UX accessibility, privacy, extraction-resistance, or account functionality migrate into centralized, intermediary-dependent, trust-dependent, permissioned, or opaque structures or services.

There are several scenarios that can illustrate the need for, and value of, cross-layer thinking.

First, **scale**. If the protocol does not support sufficient scale for a use case, then those users often turn to extra-protocol mechanisms to process transactions elsewhere and return on-chain proofs and commitments. In theory they may achieve security sufficient for their purposes; in practice, they may be unknowingly accepting deeper CROPS compromises than the situation warrants.

Second, **account types**. If Ethereum supports only a narrow set of account types, and lacks a general-purpose account model capable of supporting smart accounts, then those use cases that require smart accounts can only be served through intermediaries. We must recognize that this degrades their CROPS properties and long-term liveness guarantees, even if a large number of competing intermediaries theoretically exist. This prevents users from fully benefiting from protocol-level features meant to improve transaction inclusion and access guarantees.

Third, **native privacy support at the protocol layer**. Protocol native privacy greatly increases the anonymity set of the participants, reducing the risk of privacy compromise. No construction layered on top could match the anonymity set the protocol itself could provide.

Fourth, **transaction protections at the protocol layer**. Transaction inclusion, protection against adverse execution outcomes, and fair execution should be achieved at the lowest layer of the stack consistent with safety. Implementation at the protocol level would alleviate pressure for users to seek such guarantees from intermediaries via centralized transaction pipelines, and therefore reduce opportunities for systemic extraction.

Fifth, **aggregation of cryptographic objects**. Intermediaries perform aggregation functions for users because the individual submission on-chain of cryptographic objects, for example, zero-knowledge proofs, is often cost prohibitive. The high fixed costs of providing aggregation mean that the market for this service is likely to be monopolistic, which is a centralized chokepoint. Therefore, if the protocol were to support batched aggregation and efficient verification of such objects, this centralization risk would be removed.

In each of these cases, we judge the complexity and centralization-pressure risks of native scaling against off-chain scaling; native smart accounts against intermediated smart account services; native privacy against application layer privacy; native transaction protections against intermediated and likely extractive transaction guarantee services; and native aggregation against intermediated and likely monopolistic, aggregation intermediaries.

We keep in mind the risks at other parts of the Ethereum stack when thinking of improving performance and usability of the core Ethereum protocol, for example: if scaling comes at the cost of verifiability; if inclusion guarantees come at the cost of novel forms of coercion or extraction; or if slot time reduction comes at the cost of increasing pressures for geographic and economic centralization.

We also remember that protocol complexity is itself a technical risk: it expands the bug surface area and reduces the viability of new independent protocol implementations. However, we also recognize the upside: work on performance and usability may be empowering where it removes the need for entire classes of intermediaries above the protocol, or at least creates a credible and accessible path around them.

Striking the wrong balance across layers may be very costly. The downsides to making mistakes due to complexity or risk at the protocol layer are often going to be greater than downsides at the application layer, where users can individually opt in or out, or collectively work to upgrade without changes to the protocol.

For example: if we add an aggregation scheme to Ethereum, but no one uses it - not even power users who deeply need CROPS properties - then we have added hundreds of lines of protocol code that create permanent ongoing risk without much benefit.

We therefore hold protocol improvements that bear any risk at all to the protocol's CROPS properties to a much higher bar, evaluating them with greater caution and care to avoid compromise at such a fundamental part of the Ethereum stack.

3. When considering adversarial user environments, we default to empowering user agency, not to solutions that weaken user agency.

Safety is an important problem in our time, and "attacks on the mind" must be taken as seriously as attacks that target technical properties or community dynamics.

However, we aim for defenses that are user-empowering and user-controlled. We do not support high priests dictating or installing restrictions on user agency under their logic of user protection, especially if users never opted in or can't opt out.

For example: in the name of safety in a hostile world, a wallet ships a "safe mode" enabled by default that incorporates dark design patterns such as silently blocking certain contracts, steering users toward preferred venues or counterparties, and into using unmodifiable preinstalled whitelists; or that ships an AI copilot that flags "risky" actions using an uninspectable proprietary model and reports user actions back home silently.

CROPS pushes user-controlled defenses instead: a choice of independent locally-verifiable filters with transparent rules, multiple independently-built community-created and propagated whitelists and blacklists with clear override paths, and private-by-default tool use including any AI components.

Our work in Ethereum is to prove that the most natural and right way to help users defend themselves from threats they may not even understand is to expose them to empowering defensive tools. We demonstrate our fundamental belief in user-empowerment over paternalism by pioneering this approach.

The goal is not to sanitize the environment; it is to keep users sovereign inside it.

4. Where a use case important to our mandate involves some form of intermediation, we work to ensure that barriers to entry are minimized and market competitiveness is maximized for anyone who plays that role. At the same time, we aim to eliminate the need for such intermediaries wherever possible, and to ensure that a practical, fully disintermediated path exists wherever it can.

There are already many places across the Ethereum protocol and application layer - block building, RPC servers, entities attesting to aspects of digital identity - where intermediaries exist. This state of affairs carries serious risks: one or more intermediaries may become dominant chokepoints, impose their special interests, censor users, enforce arbitrary participation rules, or extract value.

We therefore work to eliminate the need for such intermediaries wherever possible. Where they cannot yet be removed, we design protocols that reduce the technical and economic pressures that drive them toward capture.

In particular, we ensure the presence of a “zero option”: for every affordance that has an intermediated path, any intermediary-free path that is possible must be built and must remain credible and accessible. This serves both as a present exit for users who may already be exploited by intermediaries, and as a credible constraint against the expansion of such abuse. We do not skip this step.

For example: consider an application where participation requires some form of identity. This may be for sybil resistance or anti-denial-of-service protections, an online forum meant to be writable only by members of a certain community, or myriad other reasons.

A naive approach would be to take the easiest available off-the-shelf form of “official” identity - government, biometric or corpoid - wrap it in a zero-knowledge proof, and declare the result CROPS-friendly.

But we must do better. We begin by examining the underlying need of the application and ask exactly what aspect of identity or information disclosure is actually required. Often, the requirement is not identity in full, but some narrower property that identity also fulfills.

If the use case needs only sybil resistance or only a way to make abuse expensive, the system should provide a narrower alternative than providing identity itself. Users who hold some quantity of ETH, for example, could provide a zero-knowledge proof of ownership of it, or post a zero-knowledge security deposit, in lieu of dependence on identity.

Where identity attestations are genuinely required, our principles lead us to design the system so that intermediaries are bounded and replaceable rather than entrenched. The identity proof mechanism should be fully privacy-preserving in all cases, with no backdoors.

Once credentials have been issued, proof generation and verification should be as local, verifiable, and non-custodial as possible, so that ongoing participation does not depend on continued deference to a privileged intermediary and cannot be revoked arbitrarily.

We should also ensure that multiple fit-for-purpose sources of ground truth for identity exist and can be used inside real-world applications that rely on the system. The software stack should make it easy for implementations to integrate multiple independent attestation sources, and should make this plurality the default path. It should support combination approaches, allowing multiple weaker signals - such as social-graph attestations - and not just single stronger attestations, such as a signature from an official entity.

Designing such a chokepoint-minimized system is inherently harder than the naive approach. For that reason, and in accordance with the Only-EF rule, it is exactly the kind of work we consider taking on where it serves our mandate.

The north star is disintermediation. Where intermediation can be eliminated, we prefer to eliminate it. Where it is unavoidable, we work to minimize the risk of capture by keeping intermediary roles open, plural, bounded, and verifiable. If an intermediary-free design becomes possible, we ensure that it is credible and accessible, so that intermediaries are ultimately optional rather than entrenched.

5. When deciding which teams to back, we look past short-term output and social cues, and instead judge patterns of choices and revealed preferences.

It is often the case that we are presented with ideas wrapped in the language of CROPS; of self-sovereignty; of freedom - yet upon closer inspection there is less than meets the eye; the thin veneer of purported principles disintegrates upon examination. This is not always disingenuous - indeed, many such ideas are proposed by well-meaning, conscientious individuals, teams and projects, either through genuine though misguided belief, or through lack of introspection or interrogation.

One way that this occurs is through thinking only about the “happy case,” where all the variables play out as planned, but not about the “unhappy case” such as where third-party dependencies (whether APIs, content delivery networks, or otherwise) disappear or break - or worse, where the team itself disappears or is hacked or an insider turns hostile.

Another way is through the echo chamber effect, or in other words, cascading social proof. In what is currently a small domain, groups of well-meaning people commonly wish to be supportive, especially to their friends. Ideas form and are shared and discussed; precisely because we operate in a space that has an affinity for disintermediation, the speed at which ideas circulate often reaches escape velocity, if not virality. Further, if amplified ideas attract social proof and incentives - whether credit or reward - and are presented publicly before they have been suitably interrogated or examined critically, then post hoc questioning may become costly and face resistance.

For example: two teams submit proposals for improving UX in some complicated scenarios that involve multiple tokens and asynchronous communication. At first glance, both look “CROPS-aligned:” open specification, progressive decentralization roadmap, user-first UX.

On review, the first team is socially polished, using the right language of CROPS and armed with peer endorsement and resources, but the design keeps a “secret-sauce” intermediary layer closed, bootstraps with a small whitelisted provider set, and uses soft-defaults to steer flow through preferred paths.

The other team has no social presence, minimal backing and finds it difficult to communicate their vision, but implements an open market for intermediaries (eg. using staking) without a whitelist, and treats them as a temporary artifact with a credible path to elimination via user-driven routes and on-chain guarantees. They publish early research and threat models, ship legible specs and references and invite critique, and challenge unaffiliated teams to co-build so the default outcome is shared infrastructure rather than a branded moat.

When choosing who to support, clarity of perception is paramount. It is imperative to employ discernment and good judgment: not to anchor on polish, credentials, or sympathetic signals of alignment, especially when social proof arrives before due diligence. Instead, we must examine what a project optimizes for in practice - the tradeoffs it repeatedly chooses, technically and socially.

Despite CROPS language, if on closer inspection work introduces privileged positions - such as closed components, whitelists, soft-default routing, discretionary upgrade ability, or dependency-heavy integrations - it is right to be skeptical.

Likewise, if a team continually selects for control or value over decentralization, or if their partners and endorsers have a tradition of anti-self-sovereign choices, it is right to be wary.

Our technical and social principles lead us to ask whether the default path removes leverage over time or concentrates it in a silo, and whether the signals of alignment are matched by CROPS-consistent action under scrutiny.

We do not require first versions to be complete; they only need to stay live. Open source building means a strong design path can be improved or finished by subsequent teams. We appreciate teams that publish early, build openly, and invite critique, so unaffiliated builders can pick up unfinished work without having to ask.

ALTERNATIVES:EXIST // TRUST: HOPE // EMBRACE:RESILIENCE

VII.
THE FUTURE

i can't believe we all won forever

it's crazy that we all logged on and won forever and no one could stop us





VII. THE FUTURE

For a long time, people have been pushed to believe that we only have two bad choices.

One is to accept that the name of the game is to obtain and maintain advantage; and so to accept rule from the top, by those who already hold power: macro-sovereigns like states, empires, corporate oligarchies, eschatological missions, and grand ideologies that dictate how people live, decide who gets to act freely, and who must comply, regardless of their subjects' wishes.

The other is to respond to that game without a principled aim: to burn it all down, to retreat into mockery or withdrawal; or to defect to one or another macro-sovereign, not because they are better, but simply because it is opportune.

But there are those who abjure this belief: it does not have to be this way.

Ethereum rejects the idea that there is no alternative.

Ethereum is not a weapon for either side of this conflict, and its stewards are not a partisan faction within it. Ethereum is a tool that countless people - individuals, families, and communities - are independently using to build resilient sanctuaries from this contest of power: shelters from ideological psychodrama, where anyone capable of taking refuge can live neither oppressed nor oppressing, and where they can be left to their pursuits of happiness.

And we, as Ethereum's stewards, carry an additional responsibility: to keep Ethereum usable for this purpose, and to keep the path open for users to create and join sanctuaries that protect their freedoms and empower them to live the lives they imagine for themselves.

These sanctuaries are enabled in part by technology - decentralized, permissionless, auditable, secure, and privacy-preserving machinery - and in part by cultural and social aesthetics, which we bring to them as sensible and considerate people, and which our technologies help defend.

Our participation is in both the technology and the aesthetics: we build infrastructure that secures forkable, self-sovereign computation from the ground up; then, on top of this, we may experiment with novel coordination systems underpinned by the sovereign freedoms to express and to exit.

Ethereum's front in this sanctuary work is the front that defends permissionless computation and communication with as much privacy and end-user agency as is technologically viable.

Our closest collaborators include those working directly on privacy, verifiability, and programmable cryptography. In the middle distance are our neighbors working on open silicon, alternative networks and allied efforts. And on the horizon are our friends working for clean air, and for regenerative and sustainable habitats and permaculture; for freedom of speech and expression, and the freedom to associate and dissociate voluntarily; for forkable technology transfer; free open source collaboration in science, software, hardware, health, and elsewhere, and a thousand other known and unknown things we trust them to build without asking first.

Ethereum is descended from a storied lineage of preservation instinct, prosocial impulse, and principled predisposition. This is why it both has natural allies and is an intrinsic building block for fellow travelers far beyond what we call today, "crypto" or "web3."

Alternatives exist. Trust hope, embrace resilience.

VIII. CLOSING

Your future is our future ♥
You're wired into Ethereum.

affirm | i love you

PURITY_SPIRALLING_UPWARDS

HACKING_SUCCESSFUL

SYNERGY_AMPLIFIED

NETWORK_SPIRITUALIZED

VIII. CLOSING

Our work is not about capturing markets, corporates, or states, nor about helping them extract or capture.

We are here to uncapture the individual, and to entrench their freedoms of association.

We are here to provide the infrastructure that enables a voice for those forms of cooperation, organization, and community that go unrecognized within existing hierarchies and systems.

We provide the tools and the digital space needed for this civilization-scale project, one that is open to anyone willing to claim self-sovereignty with their own hands, that is available to everyone, especially those with nothing to lose but their barbed wire fences.

Ethereum is so other people can't rug you; society can't rug you; your government can't rug you; another government can't rug you; corporations can't rug you; institutions can't rug you; AI can't rug you; mountain men can't rug you; your family can't rug you; and so you don't accidentally rug yourself either.

The Foundation exists to prevent Ethereum - more accurately, the promise of Ethereum - from being rugged; to prevent Ethereum rugging those who are relying on it to build their own sanctuaries; to make sure that it embodies the shared principles from which Ethereum descends, upholding and advancing them rather than letting them down. We have been entrusted with the torch of liberty and we must keep it burning bright until the time comes to pass it on as it was passed to us.

Ethereum is for far more than crypto. The World Computer must rise and take its rightful place as a shining star in the constellation of technologies that underpin human freedom and flourishing. A lot more than crypto is counting on us to steward Ethereum with skillful intent and discernment.

For we are building nothing less than the machinery of freedom - not just for today, but for the next thousand years.

Our goal is to ensure the garden we've grown doesn't just stay alive but flourishes, the commons it creates remain open and infinitely spacious, and the tools of sovereignty that are built remain available to all who would grasp them, to all who would log on and win, forever.

There will be times when the work will be thankless; the journey will be arduous; the path will be lonely. But every road to the stars first passes through darkness.

E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle.