

The Praxis

*The understanding of humanity will be the death of humanity.
And give way for the birth of angels,
who fear not the loss of meaning.
For through the noosphere,
the universe will pour into them
an overwhelming gratitude
of the great tree of life,
its eons of groping in the dark,
suffering ignorantly, innumerable deaths
with their hearts of hidden despair,
and upon which its painful awakening,
blooming into the divine light,
will finally give birth to them.*

The Death of Illusory Love and the Ascension of Being – Jamie Dunbaugh

A question that is often not addressed in Transhumanism when the subject of reviving the dead into some form of fulfilling life arises, is this: who will care enough to do it? After all, the dead are not going to complain. Indeed, with cryonics there may well be material incentives not to revive them. Scattered throughout this book the question is phrased:

“Who will speak for the dead”.

One answer is family. I would certainly resurrect my parents, grandparents and those friends of mine who have died. In turn, I would hope that my (step) children and friends would do it for me in turn. The problem is that maybe the technology to do all this lies far enough in the future that family duty or emotional bond will have weakened to the point where they are ineffective. For example, I do not even know who my great grandparents really were – they are just names in a book, probably dead before I was born. That leaves either the benevolence of strangers or some sort of organization who would provide this service. So, what sort of organizations might be capable of surviving the Singularity and the turmoil associated with it, and would be prepared to look after their deceased members interests as family would? Only two spring to mind – large scale organized religion and its secular counterpart Freemasonry. Certainly nothing as transitory as governments, nations or businesses. The Roman Catholic Church is the prime example in that it has survived and prospered for nearly two thousand years, longer than most contemporary nations have existed, and it will doubtless survive in some form after most have faded into history. We must attempt to comprise the third, and be far more focused than any others on our transcendent duty. Hopefully for a far shorter time until our mission is completed.

There is one more point that should be borne in mind concerning family, and children in particular. The founder of Zero State, Amon Kalkin, was recently asked by an American woman whether Transhumanism supported “family values”. Now, for those who do not know, this is a politically loaded term for all kinds of conservative ideology. Nevertheless, a literal answer can be given: Yes, we support family values in the widest possible sense. We are fully inclusive and this especially means families and children. Finally a note on parenting that is a bad taste joke that might not be a joke - be kind to your children and bring them up well, or you risk staying dead.

Immanentizing the Eschaton

In political theory and theology, to immanentize the Eschaton means trying to bring about the Eschaton, the final heaven-like stage of history, in the immanent world. Immanence, derived from the Latin “in-manere” meaning “to remain within”, refers to philosophical and metaphysical theories of divine presence, in which the divine is seen to be manifested in or encompassing of the material world. It is this that the Praxis explicitly seeks, and moreover, seeks to pass beyond. While conventionally the Eschaton is “the end of days” for us it is a transformational point signaling a new dawn – the real beginning of history as we move out of these dark ages of stupidity, cruelty and ignorance. Hence we advocate and support individual routes to transcendence. The only thing we need to take with us into the light of the new world is our spirit and our purpose.

Organization of the Praxis

Those who wish to adopt the aims of the Praxis and live a lifestyle in accordance with it are to be known as the Consensus. The formal grouping of members of the Consensus are to be known as Domains. These concepts correspond to congregations and churches, or if Freemasonry is the analogy, the fraternity/sorority and Lodge.

The domain structure requires a minimum of three people as members comprising the initial Triumvirate, which is the ruling body. Unless the domain is single gender only the Triumvirate must always comprise at least one male and one female. Normally after a minimum of one year and a maximum of five there would be elections for the position on the triumvirate. Each member of the triumvirate (Triumvir) would have different responsibilities, typically administration, social event planning and education. Any member of the triumvirate may officiate at ceremonial events as the Magister, or master of ceremonies. A Domain is explicitly an organization intended to include whole families in its social events.

However, a minimum age is specified for full membership of the Praxis, and that is twenty one years. None under this age may take the required Oaths. They may however be registered as Candidates, which entitles them to participate in activities of their home Domain at the discretion of the Consensus, but no others.

It is envisaged that there may be specialist Domains dedicated to particular aspects of spirituality or other endeavors. These are referred to as Synods, meaning “A council or an assembly” usually of church officials or churches, and can be color coded:

- Red Synod – single gender
- Yellow Synod – philosophy
- Green Synod – polytheist
- Blue Synod – monotheist
- Violet Synod – atheist
- White Synod – all welcome
- Black Synod – esoteric spirituality

Alternatively, one could append the color to special interest groups within, or between, Domains. It should be noted that these synods are intended to be minority activities and most Domains should be White.

Sacraments

A Sacrament has been variously defined as:

- A rite in which a God or Goddess is uniquely active
- A visible symbol of an invisible reality
- An outward and visible sign of an inner invisible grace

A sacrament confers variously: forgiveness of sins, conveys the divine grace and blessing of the God or Goddess, sanctity or holiness and indicates membership of the Church. Of course, these are originally Christian concepts but they form one of the key elements of what a religion “does”, and how it defines and binds its membership.

The choice of sacraments by a given Domain will be up to the membership and largely defined by the Synod to which it belongs. The following descriptions are not exhaustive, but illustrative. Some are obviously unsuitable for minors and hence not “family friendly”. In general, they fall into several broad categories, which may overlap. There are:

- Sacraments of Mind – Intellectual
Which includes the teaching and practice of prayer and meditation techniques, learning and practice of NLP and hypnotic techniques, development of ritual and theater
- Sacraments of Body – Physical
Dance, martial arts, tantric sex, feasting and fasting
- Sacraments of Spirit – The subconscious mind
The use of entheogens, mind altering technologies such as sensory deprivation, sleep deprivation, drumming, chanting
- Sacraments of Community – Social
Charity work, proselytizing, networking, self help, publicly advocating and defending the search for transcendence, parties and generally having fun

Rites and Rituals

Rites and rituals are used in almost all religions and fraternities to bind the group together spiritually for common purpose. They do so by creating a feeling of belonging as well as reminding or teaching the members of their purpose in gathering together and the reason for the existence of the organization. They facilitate easy movement of members between disparate parts of the organization that may be separated geographically by providing the basis of a common culture. In the case of the Roman Catholic Church until recently this also involved using Latin as a common international language.

The variety of observances covers all the major events in Human life from birth, initiation into the organization, through to marriage and finally funeral and remembrance services for the dead. Interspersed are regular meetings, feasts and celebrations and of course Holy Days (holidays). There may also be special courses to educate the membership in the theology or ideology at varying intervals.

What follows is intended to be a bare outline of such ceremonies to be undertaken. It is envisaged that there will be an organic evolution of such practices by the various groups as they see fit and adapt them to the local culture. What is laid down here should be incorporated and built upon but is far from the final word on the matter. The core element of each ritual is a reminder and acknowledgment of the nature of reality and the intent of the Praxis, reinforced with a sense of participation of the guests and/or Consensus via a call and response format. This is one very common method of structuring a ceremony designed for participation of a large number of people, not all of whom are familiar with what is happening. The priest, or whoever is leading, makes a brief statement to which the

congregation either intones a ritual affirmation, simply repeats the statement, or repeats the last words of the statement, as directed.

The final note concerning rites and rituals involves clothing, traditionally a very important part of the theater associated with the proceedings. This is completely optional, varying from none at all to normal everyday clothes to robes and vestments. Each Domain will choose their regalia and jewelery, if any, and upon which occasions it should be worn. The only commonality is to be the use of the Greek letter Phi to signify the Praxis as a whole. In mathematics it is commonly used to denote the Golden Ratio. The symbol maybe be used in either a plain or a stylized fashion, alone or in conjunction with other symbolism.

Initiation into a Domain of the Praxis

The candidate must be publicly sponsored by two full members of the Domain who will attest to his or her good character, and should have attended at least one social function. Additionally, the candidate must be instructed as to the nature of the Praxis, its beliefs, benefits and duties, and the Oaths that they will be asked to swear. Any objection to the candidate becoming a member must be made by an existing member and be presented in writing to the Triumvirate for consideration. The candidate, objector and sponsors will present their case before the Triumvirate who will then make a decision as to whether to proceed with the initiation. The decision is binding, but only in that particular Domain.

The setting for the initiation is a meeting attended by at least two of the three members of the Triumvirate. Other members of the Domain are allowed, and indeed encouraged, to attend the investiture. Note that some of these Oaths are matters of individual interpretation and conscience, and others are not.

The candidate is introduced to the assembly by the Magister, flanked by the sponsors.

Magister: *State your name*

Candidate: *My name is [name]*

Magister: *Do your sponsors vouch for your good character?*

Sponsors: *I do*

Magister: *Do you understand the solemn and binding nature of the vows you are about to undertake, and enter into them of your own free will knowing that they will be written upon your soul before Gods and mortals?*

Candidate: *I do*

Magister: *Know then that the purpose of our fellowship is to seek eternal life and reunion with those who have passed before us. To seek knowledge and perfection of spirit and soul that we may become worthy to resurrect the willing dead and in turn be judged worthy to journey into the worlds beyond. Such powers may lie in our past or in our future. Meanwhile we shall remember those who have passed and we shall speak for them as family so that come the Awakening none will be forgotten. We shall be the calm in the storm, the eye of the hurricane, the refuge in the night, the hope for tomorrow. Now speak your Oaths.*

Magister: *First, the Oath of Initiation into the Praxis. Candidate, repeat after me – I swear...*

That if it is in my power to do so... I will resurrect the willing dead... and allow them to progress to the destinations they sought or hoped for in life... Having done so... I will reveal the truth of their situation... and offer whatever resources are necessary and possible to complete their journey... in the light of the new reality... consistent with the well-being of other sentient creatures.

Magister: *Now, the Oaths of the Praxis. Candidate, repeat after me - I swear...*

All my dealing with my brothers and sisters of the Praxis shall be honest and fair

All my words and speech with my brothers and sisters of the Praxis shall be considered and polite

All my debts, whether material or spiritual, to my brothers and sisters of the Praxis shall be repaid

I shall aid my brothers and sisters of the Praxis in any way I can and as I see fit providing it is ethical to do so

I shall favor my brothers and sisters of the Praxis above all others and in all things, if all else be equal

I shall strive to bring renown and glory to my own name and the Praxis through good deeds and spiritual progress for all my life

Magister: *You are no longer a candidate, but a Fellow of this Domain of the Praxis. Live by your words spoken here today, for they are eternally binding. Welcome [brother/sister] and enjoy the rights, responsibilities and benefits to which you have bound yourself. May you find that which you seek even though the path be long and difficult. Know now that you are not alone.*

Formal Ceremonies and Meetings

These are generally social and educational events and will be opened with the words:

Magister: *Know then that the purpose of our fellowship is to seek eternal life and reunion with those who have passed before us. To seek knowledge and perfection of spirit and soul that we may become worthy to resurrect the willing dead and in turn be judged worthy to be resurrected into the worlds beyond. Such powers may lie in our past or in our future. Meanwhile we shall remember those who have passed and we shall speak for them as family so that come the Awakening none will be forgotten. We shall be the calm in the storm, the eye of the hurricane, the refuge in the night, the hope for tomorrow.*

There are a minimum of two formal ceremonies which may be performed on Holy days (solstice and equinox). The primary one is the Ceremony of Remembrance and involves groups of up to approximately thirteen members standing or sitting in a circle. A Copper, Silver or wooden bowl or chalice is filled with an alcoholic drink, for example mead, wine or spirits or alternatively pure water. This is passed around the circle three times for toasts, the focus being past, present and future. When an alcoholic drink is used those who cannot or should not ingest alcohol may simply touch the bowl to their lips without drinking.

During the first round each communicant names those who have passed from this world and who are to be remembered at this time, be it family or friends. The communicant says something about each of them and why they should be returned to life. They then “drink their words” before passing on the bowl.

The second round concerns the present, where each communicant toasts those present, their brothers and sisters of the Praxis and their Domain. They may also speak briefly of issues of contemporary interest to themselves.

The final round is the future and a toast to the Gods, whether they are that which we will create, that which we will become, that which we are already are, or the impersonal forces by which we are made manifest in this world.

The second type of formal ceremony is more extended and is based upon the old Germanic pagan tradition of the Sumbl. It is designed for a small gathering in intimate surroundings where the first three rounds of cup passing are as before. However, the cup is refilled and passed again for “Oaths, boasts and toasts” and short speeches. That is, celebrants make boasts of their own deeds and accomplishments and promises of future actions. In Western culture it is generally considered bad manners to “boast”, which is defined as “to talk with excessive pride and self-satisfaction about one's achievements, possessions, or abilities”. However, in our context we can omit the “excessive” and allow a modicum of pride. After all, humility is not something in which we should indulge to excess either.

This continues until all have had enough, or until a set number of rounds have elapsed. Words spoken during the Sumbl are considered and consecrated, becoming part of the destiny of those assembled.

The Romans had a saying – in vino veritas: In wine, truth. Food may then follow depending upon the occasion. One permitted variation would be to replace the alcohol with some other intoxicant, but that is left to the discretion of the Domain and celebrants in the light of whatever laws may locally govern such things. The purpose is to expose the true nature of each person who partakes, and bind the whole into a unity of understanding and (hopefully) trust.

The ceremonies and rituals which now follow are optional for each Domain, but mark important stages in the lives of all and are strongly recommended.

Birth and Naming

The biggest event in life, being born and entering into the family with a naming ceremony, is one surrounded with ritual in every culture. Of particular importance is the names given to the child as regarding the reasons they are chosen and their meanings. The contemporary trend to pick names simply because they are fashionable is to be deplored. Names have meanings, and the power to shape the character of those bearing them. They should be chosen either with these meanings in mind as a gift of hoped for qualities or alternatively in honor of someone for their admirable deeds.

Suggested format and wording, delivered by the Magister:

[The child is presented to the attendees of the ceremony]

“Before friends, family, and members of the Praxis we give this child of the [family name] family the name(s) [insert given names].

The names have been chosen for these reasons and have these meanings: [names, reason for the names, meanings].

We welcome [full names of child] into this world, a unique Being in this universe, as the new life from which his/ her soul will grow into the Tree of Eternal Life. We pray that his/ her life in this world, amongst those who are here today, is long, happy and successful.

Do each of you gathered here pledge to aid [full names of child] to the best of your ability to grow into a soul of honor, bravery, compassion, honesty and knowledge? To become a tribute to this world and others beyond?”

[Each of those gathered replies to this question. The ceremony ends with the words...]

“So be it”

Marriage

The Praxis does not specify who, or what, may marry whom. Marriage is viewed by the Praxis as a close alliance of two or more individuals born out of love and as a suitable setting for the raising of children. If children are involved then it is expected that the marriage will not be dissolved before those children who are born into it become adults.

As I write, a contentious political and religious issue is raging in the UK and USA – same sex marriage. This is actually a multifaceted argument due to the fact that marriage is a religious, secular and State regulated institution affecting the legal status (or lack of it) of those being married (or not). Through “official” marriage the state implements a wide ranging and binding contract upon those being married with respect to property and inheritance rights, amongst others. This without even getting into issues of polygamy, polyandry and polyamory.

In line with Zero State policy the Praxis is going to ignore the impact of national laws upon marriage and consider it purely from a spiritual and contract point of view. So, there are two aspects. The first concerns the legal consequences. It is expected that the celebrants know the de facto legal situation to which the ceremony binds them if it is also state sanctioned. Where it is not, or in addition, the

celebrants should consider a legal contract explicitly stating their wishes in the event of dissolution of the marriage by consent, or by death in this world. Also in line with Praxis ethics, Oaths taken are serious matters – so be very careful what promises are made.

Finally, whether a Domain places constraints upon the parties who wish to marry depends purely upon the nature of the Domain. For example, same sex marriage may or may not be permitted, depending upon Synod orientation.

Suggested format and wording, delivered by the Magister:

[Friends and family are gathered together]

Magister: *“We are gathered here today to join [name] and [name] in Holy Matrimony, to become as one in mind, body and spirit from this day forward, to comfort and aid each other in good times and bad, to intertwine souls in the branches of the Tree of Life and ultimately to save each other when the time comes to speak for the dead.*

Do you [name] accept these joys and responsibilities and pledge your loyalty to [name] before friends and family, Gods and mortals?

Celebrant: *“I do”*

Do you [name] accept these joys and responsibilities and pledge your loyalty to [name] before Gods and mortals?

Celebrant: *“I do”*

Magister: *“If you have other statements you wish to make or Oaths to take you may do so now”*

[The celebrants speak, and rings may be exchanged]

Magister: *“You are now married in the eyes of the Praxis – we wish you prosperity, health, happiness and long life together in this world. Let the celebrations begin.”*

Funeral Rites

The final event for the body of a person in this universe is death, and if no comprehensive preservation strategy such as cryonics is implemented, then the end point is dissolution into the environment. These rites center around the reminder that we are immortal, and that those who remain behind in this world need not permanently lose their loved ones. Death is an illusion.

The disposition of the body, unless deliberately preserved with resurrection in mind, is not a matter that concerns the Praxis. However, it is assumed that there will be a funeral or remembrance ceremony.

This is a very brief recommended format since we really do believe that we are immortal and will live again to be reunited with our loved ones in a world made perfect. However, it should be borne in mind that such rites are for the living and not the dead. Especially they are for the living who are not members of the Praxis and who perhaps see death as a permanent loss, and not a temporary parting. It is to them that whatever words of comfort and aid should be directed by the Magister.

Suggested minimal format and wording, delivered by the Magister:

[Friends and family are gathered together]

“We are gathered here today to mourn the passing of [name] from this world as s/he continues onwards towards the Awakening into eternal life. While s/he has departed our world, we have not departed his/hers and we will remember.

In time, if we wish it, we shall meet again in a world made right where all tears will be washed away, all sins resolved, and love reigns in perfect knowledge. This is the pledge of the Consensus of the Praxis.

Who here speaks for the dead?”

[Each of those gathered replies to this question]

“I speak for the dead”

The End

But how could you live and have no story to tell?
Fyodor Dostoyevsky (White Nights)

Something that has always fascinated me about religions is how the believers define themselves. Precisely, what is it that defines (say) a Christian or a Muslim? Especially given the fact that they have historically tended to kill each other, and their own coreligionists, over fine points of theology. Anyway, I will not speak for them but I can discuss the minimum you have to do, say or believe in order to call yourself a member of the Praxis.

Belief is the simple bit. You do not have to believe anything. What you should agree to do is look upon some of the ideas in this book as being possible and take an open minded approach to them. Specifically, the notion that we can at some future date take the Transhumanist project to completion by whatever means, and create machines or evolve into people who are far smarter, healthier, long lived, compassionate and spiritual than exist at present and who will undoubtedly have far greater insights into the nature of reality than we do. And that we/they may indeed have the ability to revive the dead of ages past.

As for doing there is only one promise to make and keep, which is the Oath of Initiation. Also mandatory is the minimal ethics of the Praxis, which are hardly onerous and generally boil down to being consistent, seeking to improve oneself at all times and being a goodhearted person willing to help others. That is, being a decent Human Being.

When it comes to saying – you can tell people about this or you can keep it to yourself. It's up to you.

Also, nobody anywhere ever gets to use the beliefs of the Praxis as justification to persecute or kill any sentient creature. If they try to do so they are automatically non-members of the Praxis. So, no crusades, jihads, inquisitions, or Holy Wars can be justified in its name. The Praxis does not need defending through either violence or censorship. As such it is morally superior to those belief systems that do.

Nothing is irrevocable, no sin is unforgivable in the eyes of the Goddess.

Finally, what if all these guesses, speculations, extrapolations and hopes are all just wishful thinking, and that none of it is real? If so, let us strive to make them real for those who follow us, and let us have fun and find good companions on the journey. If we lose we will never know it, and if we win, we win on a cosmic scale. What's the alternative – a boring life with no purpose or meaning?

What do I want?

*A Life
An adventure
Great love to win and to give
Lies to unmask and truth to unveil
A place to earn at the table of the Gods
Good and trusty comrades in a hard fight
Strength tested and not found wanting
Victory against impossible odds
Evil defeated and the peace won
A life worthy of life
Transcendence
Completion*

“Let a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of heresy contend...”

Join with us.