

(work in progress)

Mecha-Druidism

"We are children of the stars. We live among them, and call them by their true names. The very atoms that make up our bodies were born in them, countless ages ago. We are made of star-matter, our hearts forged by the light of supernovae." – Druidess Spirit Two Two 22-9128-2999 The Art of Never Again, Chapter 863: On Life and Death

Freespacer religion, like most things about them, is very practical and very disorganized. There is no hierarchy. Little rules to follow, little ceremony, little waste of time chanting and praying. The details vary wildly from fleet to fleet, from ship to ship and even among individual Freespacers, because of the lack of an "officially accepted" orthodoxy. Instead, everyone interprets religion in his own way. Despite this, almost all forms of Freespacer faith have some things in common: Mecha-Druidism is an animistic, shamanic religion that rejects absolutisms and teaches balance in all things, practicality, and adaptation. Rather stoic about death, the faith teaches its adherents to accept what they cannot change and enjoy the beautiful things of life while they last.

The Fundamentals of Freespacer Religion

Body, Mind and Soul

"Learn the language of man, and you will talk to men. Learn the language of ships, and you will control ships. Learn the language of stars, and you will dance among the stars. Learn the language of the universe, and you will be the universe." – Author unknown The Art of Never Again, Chapter 005: The Way

A central tenet of Mecha-Druidism is that every thing or concept in the universe is made of body, mind, and soul. Some things (like brute matter: a screwdriver, or a rock, for example) lack a mind, while others (abstract concepts: gods, or ideas such as "hope", or "mathematics" for example) lack a body, but everything has a soul, as small as it might be. The concept of "soul" is a tricky one, since Freespacers hold the soul as distinct from the mind. In Mecha-Druidism, the mind is the seat of the consciousness, while the soul is the seat of the being. So, for example, it is Bob's mind that allows him to think and say "I am Bob", but it's Bob's soul that defines exactly who and what "Bob" is, his "Bob-ness": the fundamental concept of being Bob. This is also why there are things without a mind (a screwdriver does not think "I am a screwdriver"), but everything has a soul (a screwdriver IS a screwdriver, and its soul, its screwdriver-ness, lies in, simply, driving screws.). Mecha-Druidism strives to love, respect, heal, improve and understand all souls: the souls of people, the souls of things, and the souls of abstract concepts and ideas. Druidesses work as engineers on their ships, striving to know them perfectly and achieve an understanding of each ship's soul; its "ship-ness". They extend this philosophy to everything else in the universe: objects, people, stars and celestial bodies, and even ideas and beliefs.

Balance

"Balance in all things." – The Art of Never Again, Chapter 333: Of Darkness and Light

Mecha-Druidism teaches to its adherents a number of “paths of balance”, disciplines and philosophies that can be applied to many different fields. Freespacers live in precarious conditions, without the comfort or abundance of a planet, eternally suspended in space. Because of this, the concept of “balance” is important in all fields: in ecology, in starship engineering and design, in astronomy and explorations, in sociology... Everything must be finely-tuned to work under the most hideous conditions imaginable, maintain maximum efficiency, and still be enough sturdy to survive anything the universe might throw at it. Among these “paths of balance” there is the [Way of the Failover](#), considered the pinnacle of Freespacer starship design: how to build a ship in such a way that it will survive, no matter what, period. Other paths of balance deal with starship ecology, piloting and navigation, material sciences and communications, medical science and genetic engineering, and so on. Some of the most ancient chapters of The Art of Never Again detail what was probably the first path of balance: a collection of military maxims and tactics, with an emphasis on non-conventional, flexible combat, guerrilla warfare both on land and in space, and psychological terrorism.

Harmony

“Strive to be strong enough to accept what we cannot change, to be bold enough to change for the better what we can change, to be wise enough to tell the difference between the two, and to be foolish enough to ignore it.” – The Art of Never Again, Chapter 049: Pierce the Heavens

Most of the “paths of balance” have very practical applications: they are guidelines for production, engineering, ecology, sociology, et cetera. However, when someone knows the *souls* of things (and therefore understands them), and knows the correct *path of balance* for them (and therefore knows the correct way to use them), then he can achieve “*harmony*” with them. Harmony, for the Freespacer religion, means “to know how everything is, should be and can be, and know your part in it, and accept it and be happy with it”. It is an almost-enlightened condition where one's actions and existence is in harmony with the universe. However this “harmony” is not purely passive acceptance. If a situation is bad but can be improved (practical example: a damaged starship), harmony lies not in just accepting and enduring it (living in a damaged starship), but in doing one's best to improve it (repair the starship). One's place in nature is not “fixed”, or else the Freespacers would have been made as incapable of evolving, improving, and changing the world around them. Since they can, it's obvious that they should. It's good to know your limits, but it's also good to ignore them from time to time, for the sake of a better future. The Freespacer's concept of “harmony” is probably best described as “Progressivist's Zen”. Knowledge, Balance and Harmony are commonly considered a three-step religious initiation or epiphany: first one learns to “understand” things, then how to “manipulate” them, and, finally, how to “live together” with them.

Worship

“Go get 'em!!” – The First Prayer The Art of Never Again, Chapter 001: The Exodus and Exile

Freespacer religion is not very preachy. Believers are not expected to try and convert non-believers, but at the same time conversions are accepted, and more often than not Freespacers consider their religion to be perfectly compatible with most other non-violent, non-destructive religions out there and have no qualms about someone professing both Mecha-Druidism and some other cult or three.

Holy places and holy relics are overabundant in Mecha-Druidism. All Motherships and many large starships have at least one, and often many, “shrines”, particular rooms or locations that have been consecrated in one way or another or are otherwise considered of great significance. Examples might be: an empty room with only an enormously large window showing the stars outside; a brightly-painted room full of multicolored scribbles, paintings, sculptures made from scrap metal and other pieces of improvised art; a spot on the ship where several cables and power conduits intersect; the ship's main reactor or life support system or (if the ship is a large mothership with an internal ecosystem) the ecology control module; the grinder; the cloning vats; et cetera. As for items, pretty much anything important (for its present or past role, or for any emotional or symbolic significance it might have attached, or simply for virtue of being very old) could be upgraded to “relic”: tools which have been used for generations, ship parts which outlived their own life expectancy or performed admirably even under conditions that would have normally destroyed them, and the like, are all likely to receive a honorable discharge when finally rendered useless, substituted by new spare parts, and “promoted” to holy relics, usually by being carved, painted or colored artistically. Nothing is ever thrown away: everything is either recycled, or remade into a relic.

Actual religious worship is very informal (like everything else, really). The resident druidess (a male priest is still called “druidess”) usually gives a short speech or addresses a particular problem, often involving attendees in the discussion and turning the event in a forum or symposium on some important or interesting topic, which can range from the very immediate and direct (“Either you stop messing around with power conduit #3568, or I'm gonna throw you out of a torpedo tube. Seriously, it's not funny.”) to the deep and philosophical (“So. Are you happy?”). The Druidess also acts as a counselor and psychologist, helping anyone who might have a problem of psychological or emotional nature. A religious service could also turn out to be something practical like working together on something, such as maintenance, design, programming, uploading or improving the accessibility of information on Polysentience, and similar activities. The point of this exercise is that attendees are expected to perform these activities differently from usual, concentrating on the meaning of every gesture and striving to achieve harmony on work. This way, followers can practice their knowledge of souls and the paths of balance under the counsel and direction of the Druidess “on the field” (while, at the same time, working all together). This ritual also brings together people who don't usually work side by side (like a Gearhead and a Nursemaid or a Datajack and a Freethinker), with the objective of improving interpersonal relationships in Freespacer society.

Gods

Freespacer religion is quite tricky about its gods. There are, more or less, three “levels” of gods: the Great Maker, the Ten Component Souls, and... everything else.

The Great Maker, sometimes called the Creator, the Great Clockmaker, the Architect, or, more poetically, the One Who Made All, is the “Godhead” of Freespacer religion, the first supreme principle of the universe. The Ten Component Souls are the more common and well-known “gods” and represent ten different facets of life and existence. Down from here things get fuzzy. It is commonly accepted that big things such as planets, celestial bodies, fleets, starships and abstract concepts have their own small guardian gods. Sometimes a starship's SI is acknowledged as the ship's god, while others claim that the SI acts as the ship's MIND, but the real god is represented by the ship's SOUL, which is a different thing.

The first impression is that Freespacers don't take very seriously their own gods. And, well, that would be true. Except some of the more superstitious 'Spacers, most of them don't actually believe that, out there, there are actual, sentient, spiritual creatures with great powers that watch over them. They know that there's no one to watch over them and they have to work hard themselves if they want to accomplish anything at all, instead of relying on divine intervention.

And yet, despite this, they still honor and respect their gods. It might almost seem like an hobby or an elaborate self-referential joke, but the truth (as most but not all Druidesses come to understand / interpret it) is simply that gods are gods if seen from a certain point of view.

For example: a starship is, at the simplest level of interpretation, just a large spaceworthy metallic hull. However, if we think about it and consider it from a deeper point of view, we can see that a starship is also its crew. The vessel that contains all of their hopes and fears. Their inseparable companion. The way to make their will manifest on the galactic scale. A powerful instrument, but also a friend to be treated with respect. So why not treat it like it were a person? A very big, very powerful, very important person. Basically, a small god.

Thus we see that the core of Freespacer worship is anthropomorphism, the attribution of human (or, in this case, freespacer) characteristics to important things in order to be able to relate with them better on an emotional and psychological level. Making the universe seem less like a mass of faceless, cold, uncaring impersonal forces and more like a colorful ensemble of strange but comprehensible characters.

Basically, once you understand how a ship really works, it makes no real difference for you to consider it like a mass of metal, or like a person. But, in the second case, you can relate to it much better. It's merely a matter of shifting one's own point of view. And, obviously, any Freespacer worth the name will pick the wackiest, most bizarre and colorful point of view in an eyeblink.

Following this concept, the whimsical Great Maker is nothing less than the Big Bang, the creation of the universe, and the sum of all of its physical laws. With the only difference that you can curse at him when something goes wrong, and feel a bit better.

The Great Maker himself is “composed” by his Ten Component Souls, the ten major aspects of the universe, life, and civilization, while still transcending their sum.

Saga

Saga is the Component God of literature, knowledge and history. If depicted, he usually appears as an ancient-looking, smiling male Type Three with a massive neural interface on his head, cables sprouting from it and hanging here and there. He invariably holds in hand some kind of data storage device which symbolically contains the Art of Never Again, but is more often symbolized by a knotted electrical or optical cable. He represents abstract, humanistic knowledge and thought: philosophy, social studies, literature, liberal arts, psychology, et cetera. Everything that has been created to improve the self, the knowledge of the self, and society. Interestingly enough, he is also considered the patron god of revolutionaries, reformists, hackers and guerrilla fighters, because that's what he was when he as young (an allusion to the first chapters of the Art of Never Again, which contain a manual of guerrilla warfare written during the Spacers' insurrection against their masters).

Terra

Terra is the Component Goddess of life, love and celestial bodies. If depicted, she usually appears as a young female Type Three in skimpy clothes and long hair, often dancing. She is often drawn as crowned by various planets, and the planet (often drawn ringed because it looks cool and is easily recognizable. but the ring could also represent an orbit) is also her symbol. She represents most solid bodies in the universe, from asteroids to earthlike worlds, and is also closely related to the goddess Sol. Sometimes they are depicted as bickering over who should be the patron goddess of giant gas planets, because it's a funny image. She is also the patron goddess of all living things and their evolution, to the point of being the pilot of the nameless winged starship that ferries souls to and from the afterlife. Of course, she's not a very good pilot: She can plot a course to the afterlife without problems (after all, it's so huge and bright that you'd have to be an idiot to miss it), but sometimes she gets lost on the way back, forcing people to remain in the afterlife (and that's symbolically why the Reincarnation procedure can't be always used).

Calculator

Calculator is the Component God of computers, mathematics and science. He is depicted as a complex mandala of regular, geometrical shapes interlocking: circles, squares, triangles, pentagons, hexagons and so on. His symbol is a triangle, inscribed in a circle, inscribed in a square. He is the guardian god of every field of "hard" science, but especially pure mathematics, astronomy and physics. He also is the patron of automata, software in all of its forms, and of the process of Emulation, symbolically represented as Terra handing over the soul to him. On starships, all mainframes, computers and elaboration centers house miniature shrines to Calculator, often as simple as his symbol, with numerous decorative embellishments, inscribed on a metal plate riveted on or near to the elaborator. Calculator is considered patient, reasonable and logic. Not cold nor devoid of feelings and emotions, but calm and reflexive and a protector of those who think, long and hard, before they act.

Teminus

Teminus is the Component God of weapons and war. He is usually depicted as a heavy-framed, armored Type Four with red lights for eyes and a large metallic shield strapped to his right arm, and his symbol is the stylized profile of a missile. Due to the widespread use of nuclear missiles as mining tools, he is also considered a god of miners, an industrious, hardworking sort of fellow who enjoys (like every good Freespace) the blast more than he does enjoy the digging afterwards. Another popular depiction of Teminus is of him being lazy: being very happy when he has nothing to do and can just goof off all day playing with his toys, and very sad when his help is actually needed, that is, when there is a war. He would love nothing more than to be unoccupied for ever. He is the patron of weaponsmiths, artillerists and, more peacefully, of anyone who uses high-powered tools, especially for mining or research purposes. A charm consecrated to him is left inside every missile. More importantly, he is the guardian god of the Savant systems that pilot missiles and warheads, and collects every one of their souls to hand them over to Terra when their duty is done.

Saga (male spacer type 3) Terra (female spacer type 3) Calculator (SI) Teminus (male-style type 4) Sol (female spacer type 2) Karma (female-style type 4) Sith (male spacer type 2) Vector (type 3 automata)

Entropy (SI) Fabricator (type 2 automata)

Reincarnation and Afterlife

“lol” – nome The Art of Never Again, Chapter 999: wtf

Alchemy of the Heavens

“lol” – nome The Art of Never Again, Chapter 999: wtf

“Ours is a quest to become one with the universe.” The Art of Never Again, Chapter 002: A New Beginning

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