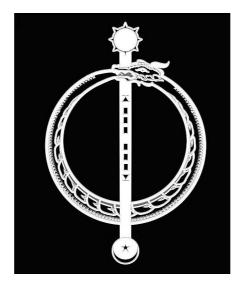# The Praxis

The Praxis[i] is the name of a book authored by myself that was created as part of the Phi Division of Zero State[ii] and published in collaboration with Zero State Media[iii] as Project 011 . The aim is to present aspects of Transhumanism in an explicitly religious and simplified context, then follow it up with the actual praxis itself i.e. the conversion of a philosophy into action. Since it has been reviewed by Giulio Prisco[iv] both here (IEET) and in his blog I will cover some of the features omitted by Giulio and only treat the remainder lightly.

Briefly, since I assume everyone reading this is familiar with the standard tropes of Transhumanism, I will simply say that explicit parallels are drawn between conventional religions, particularly Gnostic Christianity, and H+ features. Most notably these are...

- The search for life extension technologies as a modern incarnation not only of the alchemical search for immortality but as the final attempt to eat from the Tree of Life as described in Genesis.
- The Abolitionist Program of David Pearce using genetic engineering and other techniques to abolish suffering throughout Nature as the apotheosis of Buddhism.
- Uploading as the Transmigration of Souls
- Artificial General Intelligence in the form of Artilects as a parallel to the Messiah myth and the creation of beings that would effectively be gods.
- The Singularity as the Apocalypse.
- Cryonics and data mining techniques for resurrecting the dead.
- Because (I assume) we do not want the likes of Ted Bundy or Jack the Ripper resurrected, given godlike H+ powers and released into the world, we will have a Judgment Day.
- Heaven as either a perfected PostHuman Earth or a far richer simulated environment for uploaded souls.
- Becoming PostHuman entities - the heretical notion of actually becoming gods ourselves.
- And finally a core belief of the Gnostics, which was/is salvation through knowledge rather than faith.

These similarities set the scene for the major topic of the book – dying, and the resurrection of the dead in the multiverse. The definition of the multiverse that sums up all the possible types would appear to be that every possible state exists "somewhere". This latter forms one of the key elements in that there are radical implications concerning personal identity if we do live in an infinite, or sufficiently

large, multiverse. These implications bleed over very strongly into various H+ themes. [As a throwaway aside, it implies that our existence here and now is inevitable].

For example, one of the most plausible methods for reconstructing the dead of past ages, or at least us, is from records such as DNA, medical records, photos, writings, videos and so forth. The argument runs that if a simulation of (say) myself could be created such that in the simulation I am writing exactly these words at exactly this time it would be a fairly accurate reconstruction of the historical "me", long dead. However, would that really be true? The counter argument is that it is only a copy, albeit possessing its own life and sentience and not the "real" me at all. I remain dead. To actually be me the copy has to have identical brain states with the original. Unfortunately some fairly crude back of envelope maths[v] suggest that the necessary information output from a person is insufficient by at least three orders of magnitude to select one unique state from a possible 10^10^16 states.

Hence most of the data used in the reconstruction e.g. "what I had for breakfast on 1 January 1990" has to be a guess that, although possibly having an effect on defining my mental state, may not affect the words that I am typing now. Does it matter? When is a copy good enough to truly be "me". The answers are unknown, but my own view is that if I am to be brought back from the dead there should be a subjective continuity of consciousness which an imperfect copy cannot possess. Otherwise, it is someone else – a nearly identical twin, but not the real me.

However, in the multiverse this may not matter because somewhere we can achieve perfection in the reconstruction. This is where the multiverse can "rescue" the situation because part of the reconstruction process can randomly guess what should fill the information gaps. The result of making that random guess is a spread of possible versions of the deceased across the multiverse, including at least one that exactly matches the original. So, the entity doing the reconstruction gets a resurrected person that exactly matches all the data they have of the original – which is as accurate as they can get. On the other hand, somewhere in the multiverse a true and perfect copy is produced that has the requisite continuity of consciousness.

There are other implications...

If we take as an example the Quantum version of the multiverse, the popular conception of the Many Worlds Interpretation, we end up with a multiverse where all possible paths branch from every moment. This lead to bizarre situations such as Quantum Suicide and Quantum Immortality[vi], and arise because from a subjective point of view all we can observe are the worlds in which we do not die, or rather the worlds in which there is a continuity of consciousness amongst all the paths that fan out from the present moment. Somewhere, somehow, we always survive. Exactly how it appears to us is another matter, especially if there seems to be no room for such a continuity to arise. With a gun to the head there is perhaps a one in a thousand chance of a misfire – instant life or death. But what of someone being executed by Guillotine during the French Revolution? The last thing they see is the world spinning as their head drops into the basket – get out of that one! What has to happen if they are to subjectively survive those last moments?

The answer would seem to be that even if they started off in the "real" universe the most likely branch they find themselves in is one where they are now in a reconstruction simulation. I suppose another possible escape route would be if advanced extraterrestrials swooped down, scooped up their head and body and re-attached it using magical medical technology. I have to say, I think the probability of this is considerably less than them finding that they have migrated out of baseline reality.

A corollary of these scenarios would appear to be that as the probability of our continued survival drops as we get older, at some point the probability of being in a simulation increases to the point where it exceeds other probabilities. Which bring us to the Simulation Argument[vii].

Typically, the pertinent questions concern who is running such simulations, how many of them there are, and why they exist. The answers I suggest are a PostHuman "us", billions, and they exist in order to resurrect our dead families. They are necessary in the resurrection process because of a consequence of the Halting Problem[viii], namely that it is in general impossible to jump to the output of a program, in this case a reconstructed personality, without executing the intermediate stages – the life of that person.

This in turn implies that if the above is true it is overwhelmingly likely that we are in just such a simulation. The period we live in is probably unique in being the most information rich in history to date, the one where people still die and also the one that immediately precedes the Singularity. That being so, there are people alive today who will still be alive in the PostHuman transition. However, it is likely that those people will have parents and grandparents who did not make it. Reviving family would, for me at least, be a very high priority. So too presumably for billions of others.

This naturally leads to what may be termed Judgment Day, so-called because some hard choices would have to be made. For example, do we really want Jack the Ripper and Ted Bundy revived and let loose as potential Gods? I think not. Those people would appear to be obvious cases for non-revival, but where is the line to be drawn? There are other options. The final personality could be substantially modified in order to "wash their sins away", or at least their desire to sin. Or if some turning point in their past could be found then they could be set on the road not taken, and "reincarnated".

The above assumes that these processes will take place in the lifetime of at least some of those now alive, but what happens if it is not possible to do this for a couple of centuries, or even millennia? While I would definitely try and bring back my parents, I do not have the same desire to bring back some medieval peasant only vaguely related to me. Who speaks for them? Intentions die, people die, corporations die, nations die – but religions can outlast them all. Even modest pseudo-religions such as Freemasonry are older than the USA.

Which brings us to the Praxis – the application of a philosophy, in this case the recasting of Transhumanism and it's associated mythology of Singularity and Simulation Argument into an organized pseudo-religious form.

At the beginning of the book I listed the general idealized criteria which define a religion. These are:

1. It must provide a doctrine
   In this case, The Praxis

2. It must have canonical texts that expound upon that doctrine
   The obvious documents are the various Transhumanist declarations and books such as those by Kurzweil.

3. It must offer an ethical framework
   Very generally, be the kind of person that others would like to bring back into the world, unaltered.

4. It must offer an explanation of the world around us and the world within
   This is a combination of science and the probability that we are in an ancestor reconstruction.

5. It must offer hope and comfort in adversity
   Specifically, that if we are in a simulation the suffering we undergo now is a necessary part of a resurrection into a far better world. And that if we are not in such a simulation, we will be in future. There is a better life after bodily death, and if there is not we can make it so.

6.It must offer a mission in life beyond the mundane

> The mission, simply stated, is to revive the dead of times past and eliminate all involuntary suffering in sentient creatures everywhere.

7.It must offer community, fellowship, mutual support and a better way to live

> This is the core of the Praxis as an organization comparable to ones family. We will speak for the dead if nobody else will.

8.It must empower the individual

> We do so by adopting one of the key features of Zero State – we look after our own.

9.It must offer a vision of a life beyond this one

> Which it obviously does, given the above.

10.It must offer transcendence

> Which it will, if we are successful in either the past or the future.

There then follows a suggested outline for an invitation only fellowship. That is, invitations should only be extended to actual friends and personal acquaintances – most definitely not "Facebook style" friends. If in doubt, a friend is somebody you would lend money to and expect to get it back (and vice versa)!

The members take a specific oath of initiation. One part of this is:

> *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.*

Also included are outlines for ceremonies of birth, initiation into a domain of the Praxis, marriage and death as well as suggestions for various sacraments and "holy days" as social occasions. The importance of ceremonies and rituals for group binding and transmitting a pure message cannot be over-emphasized. The specific details are beyond the scope of this article and comprise a significant fraction of the book. However, it's hardly a secret! Something we do omit, that the major religions do not, are threats and coercion. All we ask is that we pledge to help each other and if we can use technology to accomplish our goals we do so. That we leave nobody behind, no matter how much time passes between now and when the Transhumanist vision comes to fruition. We will be the family that cares enough to revive you if your own does not.

The first of the names to be remembered by The Praxis is Fred Chamberlain of the Terasem Movement[ix].

> *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.*

i   http://www.neopax.com/praxis/index.html
ii   http://zerostate.net/
iii   http://zerostatemedia.com/
iv   http://ieet.org/index.php/IEET/more/prisco20120819
v   Conversation with Anders Sandberg, Extrobritannia list
vi   http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quantum_suicide_and_immortality
vii http://www.simulation-argument.com/
viii http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halting_problem
ix   http://www.terasemcentral.org/