

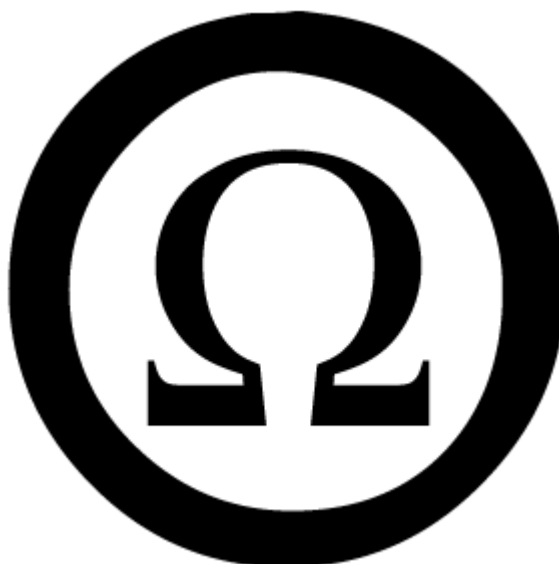
## Religions and Philosophies

Mars is home to many religions and philosophies, some based on ancient ideas, some completely unique to Mars. The most profound difference is that religions tend to be based on custom or mysticism, rather than the currently dominant faith-based religions. The reason is largely selection; neither the CSRE or MTN were cultures where faith was revered and this caused a serious break in continuity. At the same time the idea of rites to sustain society and maintain psychological well-being was seen as quite reasonable and widely promoted, and the mystical impulse is impossible to extinguish in humans. Hence the Martian religions have developed from this basis, mainly aiming for creating a social or mental approach to existence that works (such as Exnerism, Bioism and Aresianism) or seeking deeper spiritual insight in a private or focused way (such as the Fellowship of the Ultimate Testament, the Cult of the Holy Meat or the Hieros Gamos). Since most martians accept the scientific explanation for the universe there is little need to explain creation, rather it is the task of explaining how gods could exist that is important.

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### **Dysonists**

Dysonists worship the posthumans of the Dyson sphere. According to Dysonist belief these beings (or at least some of them) have good intentions and work to help humanity. They intervene subtly on Mars from time to time; the devout believe they ended the Fimbulwinter and have several times protected the planet or individual humans from disasters. They also send extrosattvas, incognito avatars of the posthuman, to the world to teach and guide. The posthumans seek to help everybody to ascend to their elevated state. At death each person is uploaded either directly to the Dyson shell or possibly will be restored at the Omega Point in the infinitely remote future when the universe itself has been remade by the posthumans. Sceptics may point out that the posthumans could have intervened more directly and obviously to make the world better, but the devout only answer that nobody can understand the ways of a friendly superintelligence.



Dysonism is a peaceful, bookish religion where much of the devotion consists of readings of ancient scripture. The general opinion is that the older the scripture, the closer it is to the core truths of the posthuman. Hence much time is spent reading and interpreting 20<sup>th</sup> century transhumanist manifestos, 21<sup>st</sup> century eudoxisms and other evidence for the inherent goodness of the Dyson sphere. Especially Xie Ainuo's *The Posthuman Future* is viewed as a reliable sign that the sphere is benevolent. Dysonists send prayers by radio towards the Sphere, or hope that their thoughts will be recorded by the all-seeing devices of the Dyson.

Dysonism has little organisation, being more of an intellectual and academic pastime than an active faith. Members congregate from time to time to discuss and pray together, but otherwise it has little impact on daily life.

Dysonism is relatively widespread among InfomERCHANTS and the academics of Argyre University.

Symbols: A simple circle, representing the totality of the Sphere. Sometimes an omega sign or five expanding arrows are placed inside to represent the faith in the Omega Point or presence of the Extrosattvas.

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## ***Bioism***

Eastern Religion. Bioism explains the failures of human civilization on Mars by the presence of Death. Death permeates the ground and the air, influencing people towards evil. Opposing the evil is the force of good – Life. Life originated on Earth and has converted it to a blessed place. By leaving Earth humans both fell from grace and shouldered the sacred responsibility of bringing Life to Mars. But Mars fought back, corrupting people and societies, always hindering true progress and the conversion of Mars from unliving to an Earth. Life on the other hand constantly seeks to convert Death into Life. This struggle between the two subtle principles present in everything forms the basis of Bioism.

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## ***Kristianity***

Kristianity is the Argyrian religion that has evolved from the Christianity practiced by the inhabitants of Jezza Retreat. It is essentially a very liberal form of ecumenical Christianity, combining a re-interpreted form of Catholic ritual with the protestant emphasis on individual morality and salvation.



While Kristians are highly tolerant of other religions, they do not tolerate other forms of Kristianity. One of the early archbishops of Jezza, Geert Joh Cheera formulated the Doctrine of Unity: there is only one Kristianity, and it is unified in the Church of Jezza. Heterodoxy (at least not outside the Church) is not allowed, although the fairly broad beliefs of Kristianity mostly precludes heresy. The most serious issue was the Mineart movement of Tara Valley. They sought a return to “original Kristianity”, involving charismatic protestant fundamentalism under their leader Mineart from Mafra. The Church managed to get the authorities of Torsö with them, and imprisoned Mineart. There are still scattered followers in the western mountains, although they are relatively few.

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## ***Dikanka***

Arabian religion. Dikanka is a descendant of Buddhism, teaching that reality is largely a projection of our minds and transitory. In its original form it was a mild metaphysics emphasising that each person is responsible for how he decides to feel; pain and happiness are both states of mind rather than the world, and since pain deals with the illusion of the world it should be ignored, while happiness deals with the self and should be cherished as long as it lasts. At the same time thoughts have power, and to think bad thoughts makes the world worse. The worst sin is to carry malice against somebody, since that will bring misfortune over him – but also reflect back on the thinker. Dikanka priests, exemplars, live as monks within society. Some hold ordinary professions, others wander around subsisting on gifts from the faithful. The exemplars are organised into a loose hierarchy based on seniority and charisma; popular exemplars gather to form the local synod regulating Dikanka activity and teaching.

Currently there is a rapid spread of a radical interpretation of Dikanka, brought about by a revolutionary simply called “The Teacher” who was martyred about 20 years ago. These Dikanka radicals are staging attacks on Xanthian interests and Arabians who collaborate with them.

## **Wellthink**

A secular spin-off from Dikanka in Xanthe. The original Dikanka teachings fascinated many of the rationalistic scholars of Xanthe. While they could not bring themselves to encompass the total subjectivism of Dikanka and its rejection of the Xanthian program of practical world-changing, they saw a far more developed psychology and phenomenology than the fairly rigid Exnerist model. The concept of changing oneself through correct thought fitted their optimistic outlook and ancient descriptions of cognitive therapy.

Wellthink is essentially applied Dikanka/cognitive psychology used for self-help. Originally it was developed in the decades after the conquest of Arabia and had a brief renaissance in Xanthe, but the interest soon waned. Today Wellthink is most common among the lower classes, as the upper classes adhere more to traditional Exnerist psychology (although the concept of self-change has slowly made inroads even there). It is not treated as psychology, but more as a system of mental exercises and teachings giving mental health, vigour and serenity, and for the serious student the ability to perform remarkable feats. Stories about near-miracles performed by masters abound – everything from super-powerful memory, perfect body control and pain control to the ability to levitate or bend stone. Instead of declining in popularity it has become more and more common, a practical folk-religion with little dogma but a broad acceptance and following. Especially clutchball players and other athletes are reputed to train themselves using wellthink, and it has become a part of some newly invented street martial arts.

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## **Aresianism**

Aresianism is an Eastern polytheist religion with a pantheon centred on Ares, the god of Mars. It emerged sometime during the second Dark Age and has spread widely around the Elysian sea. There is a noticeable early Bioist influence in its theology, although the Bioist churches have seldom accepted Aresians.



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## ***Fellowship of the Ultimate Testament***

Millennialist group emerging in the Xanthe Empire. The Fellowship was inspired by the prophecies of Beiwensha, a former policewoman who underwent a series of visions where the Powers described the universe and her role in it. According to Beiwensha the wickedness of people is drawing down Phobos, so that a devastating impact is imminent. It is visibly growing in the sky and within a year it will crash down into New Chryse unless everybody repents and begins to live a pure life. Pestilence, famine, war, mutation and general devastation will accompany the great disaster.

The idea of an end to the Xanthe Empire is absurd to most Xanthians, making the Fellowship a popular joke among people. At the same time the preachings of cataclysm and the need of reform are attracting other people, and the Fellowship does seem to be growing at an alarming rate. Imperial intelligence is following it with interest.

Members often dress in black, white or grey, painting their faces with ash, Many wear bells which they ring, earning them the nickname “The Plague Bells of Phobos”.

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## Exnerism



Exnerism is the state philosophy of the Xanthe empire. It is named after Exner ov Vicuna who formulated much of it and gathered the philosophical writings of his supporters and students into a coherent whole. Since then it has become the core of Xanthian philosophy and statesmanship.

The central idea of Exnerism is Progress. Progress is the goal, the Empire is the tool. A correctly constituted Empire will inevitably develop towards higher and higher levels that in turn will provide the greatest good for all members of the Empire. Hence all rational and good people should support the Empire. Most of the Exnerist writings examine these ideas, analysing what exactly constitutes progress, how it is best achieved, what constitution and rule of Empire this required, and how to practically run the Empire in the best way.

Much of Exnerism is based on analysis of the lessons of past history in order to discern the true laws of how people behave, societies develop and technology, economy and politics interact.

In the system there are four fundamental kinds of people: Creators, Followers, Existers, Destroyers. Creators are the people who create things. They continually invent something new to live. Followers follow something. They have a goal, be it concrete or just a general longing. Existers just are. They are content as they are, regardless of the situation. Destroyers live by destroying. These kinds only live well when they do what they are; a creator will live an unhappy and diseased life if kept from creating, a destroyer will not thrive as a human unless he is destroying. But *what* is created, followed or destroyed can be changed.

Exnerism attempts to aim the creators to create a greater Empire, the followers to follow the vision of the empire, the existers to give the Empire some of their inner peace and stability and aim the destroyers against the enemies of the Empire or flaws inside the Empire. Through sobornicity, the virtue and understanding of how to support society through one's individual contribution, each person can both achieve happiness and serve his land.

While Exnerism is not deterministic, it claims that the "valles of history" will direct development along certain avenues with high probability. With the right preconditions the desired results are highly likely.

Exnerism is more of a philosophy than a religion, but many Xanthians revere Exner in various ways. His birthday 43 Sagittarius is generally observed by remembrance dinners and placing flowers or passed exam documents at his many statues. Many people carry small booklets, "quotien", with his most important quotations. Quotien are said to help make proper decisions and even mysteriously give hints about the future; more educated people joke about how simpletons consult their quotien as if they were oracles.

The more devout followers of Exner form a kind of political/economic/humanistic priesthood, whose goal is to ensure the flourishing of the Xanthian Empire and through it all its citizens. While most people filled with the Exnerian vision have ordinary jobs (often within the government), some become full-time evangelists of Exnerism, Exnerians. Exnerians visit people to extol the fundamental visions holding society together, hoping to kindle the same spark of enthusiasm and nationalism as they themselves feel for the empire. Their reception may be mixed; while some view them as tiresome busybodies other view them with a mild reverence or at least acknowledge the need for someone to uphold the standards of civilized society. Exnerians have in the past been used as diplomats, teachers, announcers of new official policies and lobbyists. In some of the remote provinces they are even deputized to aid the Magistrates or Praetorians.

Exnerians commonly are supported by the House Vicuna, a foundation based in Exner's old home town. The House funds the Exnerian evangelism (with government support and plenty of donations), new editions of Exner's writings and the education of orphans into good citizens.

The two classic Exnerist works is *Eternal Progress* and *Writings*. The first a fairly short volume, required reading for all administrators and often used to test the knowledge of a person considered for a promotion. Nearly all Exnerists can quote it by heart. The second is an extensive multivolume philosophical work, analysing everything in the excruciating detail possible for a highly educated and intelligent centenarian. It consists of the collected writings of Exner ov Vicuna, together with commentaries and historical examples. New editions are constantly issued by House Vicuna. Another important document is the *Canon of History* by Maolebi Prinethe, an extensive analysis of the history of technology and economics, showing what inventions and economic changes led to other inventions. It is essentially the blueprint of how the Empire will progress, and it is not uncommon to hear administrator lament that “we are still in chapter 5B” or debate how to best reach beyond the tantalizing Footnote 43, “On the spread of electricity in the United States”.

## **Symbols**

The name “Exner” is regularly used to signify all of Exnerism; Exner ov Vicuna embodied all that Exnerism involves. Many Exnerists wear black clothing and glasses in the same style as Exner himself.

Exner’s books are important symbols of Exnerism, and sometimes the image of the thin and the thick book (*Eternal Progress* and the collected works) is used to symbolize Exnerism and learning.