

Immortuacy and You: A Beginner's Guide to Transition

So you've decided you want to make the jump from hidebound cis-biological views of the universe and join the greater immortuate community. First of all, congratulations! You've taken the first step in a rich and rewarding journey beyond what most sapients can even imagine.

However, it's best to go into this profound change with your eyes open. Immortuacy is not immortality, it is not the cessation of concerns and responsibilities to yourself and to civilization, and it is not for everyone. Here's what you need to know to be a stable and constructive member of immortuate society.

Immortuacy vs. Undeath: A Crucial Difference

First of all, you need to know what separates *immortuacy* from *undeath*. Non-Eoxians almost always use the second term indiscriminately, Eoxians all too often use the first term the same way. Both are mistakes. Immortuacy and undeath are both *distinct* and very *real* things, and immortuacy is something desirable – to individuals and civilizations – but undeath is not. So, what's the difference?

Undeath: What makes a being *undead* is quite simply that it made the transition from life to non-life in a completely uncontrolled fashion. They had no choice, they had no access to transitional counselling, and they were often victimized and controlled by others or simply left to their own devices in the wilderness or the graveyard or the depths of space.

Everything about an undead is a soul's instinctive response to that trauma. There are genuine undead, in this sense, in many parts of the present cosmos, produced by various means. Driftdead are a notorious example. Cyber- and nano-zombies, victimized by technology, are another. Many formerly-biological animals or ancient deceased sentients on Eox itself qualify, too. These are not just a threat to the living. They are often a threat to civilization, period. The living are right to fear and proscribe them and take measures against them. The Convocation of Sages has the same attitude, and so must you.

Immortuate: What makes a being *immortuate* is that they choose their transition, and the very idea of transition, even if they cannot always choose the precise moment of passage. They are helped in the process by someone who is not purely self-interested. They have resources after their passage that help them retain a purpose, a sense of commitment and attachment, and in general what cis-biologicals call a “life.”

This infrastructure is what makes modern-day Eox possible. Be ready to commit to it. It's there to support you, but it will also make considerable demands of you. The rewards are great, but so is the work. Above all, *be ready to do the work*.

The Transition is Hard, and Bravado is Bad

You are almost guaranteed to meet – or perhaps have already met and been inspired by – immortuates who will tell you with great confidence that making their transition was the best thing that ever happened to them. That it was like waking up to their true selves, liking stepping into well-worn boots or other such nonsense. This is not to say it did not *become* the greatest thing to happen to them, but for the most part, this is sheer bravado. Don't believe it, or at the very least don't accept it uncritically.

Death is a shock. Period. There is simply no way around this. Biological organisms are deeply programmed by evolution and divine decree not to want to die, and even moreso not to want to persist *after* death on the Prime Material Plane or to be in proximity to the dead or undead.

Even among the living, amputees and recipients of augmentations report something loosely called *Phantom Limb Syndrome*, which is essentially their body's yearning for a lost wholeness: they will feel “pain” in lost or dead limbs, feel the absence of body parts that have been replaced with cybernetics. This is natural, an inbuilt part of being alive.

To make the transition to immortality is to experience the equivalent of Phantom Limb Syndrome, but *existentially*, as a painful absence of your *entire former self* and most of what made you what you were. There is no way for this not to be a profound and jarring shock. What makes *undead* what they are is precisely that they have nothing but instinct to help them cushion and respond to this shock, a fact which almost invariably makes them destructive, resentful and malignant.

The good news is that as an immortal, your soul – the *real* core of your being – remains yours. You can build around it, and find a new sense of self that fits your new form. Nobody is trying to make you into a mindless instrument of malice or simply leaving you to your own devices. Most importantly of all, Transition Counsellors exist to support you... but in order to benefit from them, you must be ruthlessly honest with yourself, and then with them, about *every* detail of your experience.

You cannot “prepare” for the transition. Anyone who tells you otherwise is simply a liar. No matter what you know intellectually, the very nature of transition makes “preparation” impossible. What you *can* do is remain aware that bravado will only hurt you. Resist it at all costs.

It's Different for Everyone, and Nobody Has All the Answers

Nobody knows every possible combination of factors that produces Life, or that makes Life choose what it chooses, or that leads to one lifeform preferring one kind of barbeque sauce to another. Here's something that shouldn't be unexpected, but often is: exactly the same thing is true of Immortality.

You will have heard of the Bone Sages and their great wisdom. It's not just hype: they are very wise. They succeeded in preserving a civilization where most societies would have simply died and become raw material for archaeologists. Because of that wisdom we have Eox, a rich culture and a critical partner in the defense of the Pact Worlds against threats such as – most recently – the Swarm, but what makes that wisdom so formidable is that the Sages are *researchers*. They and their research staffs do not claim (or most do not claim) to know everything about immortality, and in fact fresh discoveries every year have made the necro-graft industry possible.

We still use an old, arguably outdated typology in describing immortals, roughly describing people as ghosts or zombies, wraiths or vampires and so on. These terms are very imprecise, inherited out of long cultural habit from bygone ages, and it's important to remember it. If you make transition as a vampire, your experience might still be very different from other vampires, for example, and the same goes for any other “type” of immortality you will experience.

This is not to say that you will not benefit from others' experiences and advice, but ultimately your experience will be very much your own, and the differences may be quite important. In particular, intellect and emotions can be impacted in radically different ways in two recently-transitioned individuals who would otherwise seem outwardly near-identical examples of the same “type.”

Resist the temptation to measure your own transition against someone else's, either in boasting or self-criticism.

Self-Care is Important

Immortuates can take on radically different forms, but one thing that is common to all of us is that so long as we're corporeal, our bodies – while animated by a variety of forces, energies and even technologies – are no longer in the business of various functions that biologicals take for granted, such as cellular mytosis. We can be mended or regenerated but do not heal as the living do. Inevitably, we will tend to decay or mummify, a process that only very few of us can compensate for by regular infusions of life-force.

Self-care thus becomes very important after transition, *more* important than it was in life, which many new immortuates are not prepared for. Your physical form requires constant maintenance: re-skinning, mending of connective tissue to allow locomotion, and often various forms of feeding to replenish the energies that sustain you.

More than this, if you happen to wind up in a vocation that involves interacting with biologicals, hygiene becomes a very important concern. It is possible to not constantly, from a living-person's perspective, “stink of death.” But you have to be proactive and consistent about this. It is all too easy to become the shambling, rotting zombie of stereotype if you let your motivation and attention lapse, in which case you may find that even other immortuates aren't eager to be around you.

Care for the mind is important, too. Chances are your new form will not experience sensory inputs the way your living form did – you may or may not still be able to taste food and drink, feel touch and so on – but maintaining an attachment to pleasures that may now seem abstract will nevertheless be an important anchor for your sense of self. It's important to take up a routine, to socialise and have hobbies and to make an effort to *enjoy* immortuacy rather than just existing. Without this, you may find yourself prone to depression, listlessness, or even active jealousy, rage at and resentment of biologicals.

Support Your Fellow-Immortuates

Above all, remember that in unlife as in life, you can expect to get what you give. If you're supportive and understanding of your fellow immortuates in their times of trial, you can expect them to reciprocate. If on the other hand you were a vicious, predatory jerk who was shunned by others while living, you won't find immortuate society much more forgiving of such anti-social behaviour. Remember you are joining a *civilization* with all that implies, not a coven or a horde.

Keep all these points in mind as you embark on your transition, and you will find the process and your new mode of existence tremendously rewarding. We look forward to welcoming you to the immortuate community!