ESCHATON

CAGD 398 - Special Topics

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Trello Board:

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Each section marked with an asterisk* will begin with an Overview, Goals, and Epic User Stories

Abstract

Es·cha·ton
(Noun)   The final event in the divine plan; the end of the world.

Genre: 3rd Person Shooter RPG
Target Audience: Core Gamers from ages 16-24 who are Explorers & Storytellers
Player Interaction Pattern: Single Player vs. Game
Roles of Players: Single player controls their avatar using a 3rd person over-the-shoulder perspective.
Platform: PC Digital Distribution & Eight Generation Home Console

Story & Setting:
Angels fell down to Earth in 2060 and brought with them a technological and spiritual revolution. Among this technology was a utilitarian means of determining one's morality score, Ascende, and society became warped by it. Everyone was split into castes determined by an algorithm and enforced by zealots. *Good deeds became greedy and bad deeds became a commodity*. Rise up and fight grand angelic boss fights and take down an amoral morality system in this dystopian apocalypse shooter.

Core Gameplay:
- Eschaton is a 3rd person shooter role playing game where the player must determine the fate of Earth by combatting colossal monstrous alien beings, zealots, and their own morality.
- A linear morality system, "Ascende", is used as both a means of progression and a currency. This score is visible for all game characters and society is segregated by score.
- Weapons combat is supplemented by a ditransitive munitions system, allowing the player to use divine artifacts to modify their near-future science-fiction weaponry.

Competing Games:
1. Mass Effect- Eschaton is aimed to be a *spiritual* successor to the Mass Effect trilogy, but instead offers a closer to home experience in real-world locations set in the near future.
2. Deus Ex- Eschaton shares some similar narrative themes with Deus Ex, but also offers gargantuan boss fights with cosmological powers.
3. Destiny- Eschaton also offers grand boss encounters, but also crafts the story directly around the individual player experience and choices.
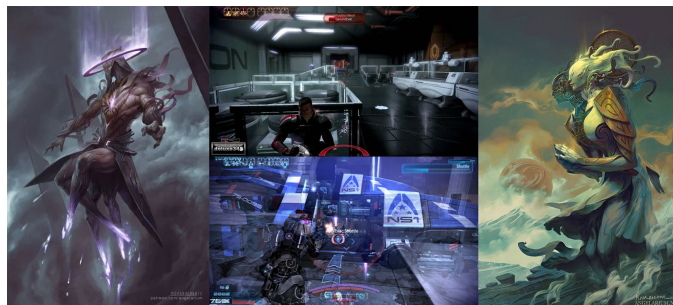
Feature # 1 Combat

Overview

Weapons combat in Eschaton is built on the theme of combining near-future science fiction Earth technology with religious symbology gifted to humanity by divine angelic beings. Every weapon, attack, and utility action are meant to represent the clash between the two worlds.

Goals

- The player should be able to customize their gunplay output, both before combat in preparation and during combat in the midst of the chaos.
- A player's choice in weapons should be primarily made as a choice of personal expression and have a meaningful impact on their gameplay pattern.
- All weapons and tactics available to the player are also available to adversaries.
- Each weapon should have a discernible timing pattern in it's moments of power and weakness.
- There should be room for a player to experiment with other strategies without committing their entire build.
- Weapon synergies should be highly encouraged but not mandatory.
- Players and enemies should both be able to alternate their strategies quickly and this information should be made clear to the player.
- Skill expression should come from adapting a strategy on the fly, rapidly reacting to changes in states, and interactions for the world.
- Weapons combat should be distinctly fictional, in presentation and in feel. It does not need to be overly realistic and it should give a sense of wonderment when first encountered.
- The choice of weapon determines the fire pattern from the player and the ammunition determines the impact on the enemy.
- Divine attacks should be over-the-top visual displays that lead the player to believe they come from faith more than the scientific advancements of the angelic alien race.

Epic User Stories

- As a player, I would like to be able to meaningfully change my gameplay with my loadout before I head into a combat level.
- As a player, I would like to be able to partially adjust my weapons quickly and intuitively in the middle of combat.
- As a player, I would like to always feel like there's another strategy I can try if I get stuck.
- As a player, I would like to be able to express skill by recognizing the strengths and weaknesses in weapons as well as their timings.

Core Mechanics

There are four core components to shooting in Eschaton. Targeting, Firing, Damaging, and Reloading. These components are constructed by the combination layout unique to this game. Targeting comes from the weapon shell. Firing a weapon is determined by relics. Damaging is determined by ammunition. Reloading is determined by the storage container of crafted ammunition. The player is free to mix and match these components to craft their gameplay experience.

Fire Action

A Fire Action is the direct result of the player pressing the shoot button. One Fire Action can contain multiple shots, different effects, and several unique components or behaviors. One button input, will lead to exactly one Fire Action output.

Combat Parameters

Weapon Parameters are derived from the weapon equipped, the player's statistics, and the type of ammunition used.

Power

Power indicates the total amount of damage one Fire Action will deal per attack. It is also the variable used for other utility calculations in the case of unique effects applied on-hit.

Fire Rate

The rate of fire represents the minimum time between consecutive Fire Actions. Holding down the shoot button will repeat the Fire Action at this rate. Attack Rates are presented to the player on a scale of music notes. For instance, an 8th note weapon fires 4x faster than a half note weapon. Divine weapons use unusual timings such as a 5/8ths note.

Accuracy

Accuracy determines both the impact of recoil, in the possibility of multiple attacks per Fire Action, determines the range of possible spread those attacks will have. A higher accuracy rating lowers recoil and spread.

Range

Each weapon's range is measured by three values assigned to Close, Medium, and Far distance. These values may be red, orange, yellow, chartreuse, and green. Enemies hit from a red range take reduced Power and those hit by green ranges take increased power. Each weapon has different ranges where it is strongest. Some Weapons have black values indicating that they cannot reach a certain range.

Reload Speed

This is the total time required to perform the Reload Action. During this time, the weapon will be unavailable and the player will be unable to fire.

Reload Action

The Reload Action primes a weapon to be used again. The result of this action is determined by the fire type and individual weapon. For weapons without a clip size, this provides a Power bonus to the following Fire Action, relative to the inverse length of the Reload Speed.

Critical Rating

Some targets possess vulnerable locations, such as their head, which take an increased amount of Power. The multiplier is determined by the Critical Rating, making some weapons more suited for hitting critical areas.

Shielding

Some targets possess locations that aren't particularly vulnerable, such as armor, which have their own health total. Attacking these areas does not directly damage the target but they can break when they run out of health. Breaking a shield can either reveal a vulnerable location or stagger the target.

Bulk

All units possess a bulk value which provides a flat damage reduction to oncoming hits. Fire Actions that hit a single time will be reduced a single time, whereas a Fire Action that hits five times will be reduced five times. Some units have exceptions to their bulk, based on vulnerabilities.

Resistance (typed)

Resistance applies a percentage damage reduction to oncoming damage based on matching types.

Vulnerabilities (typed)

Vulnerability applies a percentage damage increase to oncoming damage based on matching types.

Targeting Types

Reticle Projectile

A projectile weapon will fire an object directly at the targeting reticle with a travel time. This is most commonly found in early 21st century man made weapons.

Hitscan

A hitscan weapon fires a raycast at the reticle and determines a hit on the same frame as it is fired. This is primarily used by man made laser weapons and angel crafted solar spears.

AutoTarget (High/Low)

Auto target weapons passively lock in targets for a brief duration upon the reticle hovering over them, achieved through raycasting. Firing can hit the last target locked or all targets recently locked. Low quality Auto target weapons attack the spot they first targeted when the enemy was found. High quality auto target weapons attack the target, even if they move.

Smart Target

A smart target weapon automatically prioritizes the closest enemies to the weapon, starting with the direction it is facing.

Fire Type

Direct Physical Projectile

Direct physical projectiles are fired in a straight line and damage the first thing they come into contact with.

Lob Physical Projectile

A lob physical projectile is fired upwards and follows an arc as it falls down to its target, due to gravity.

Stream Projectile

A stream projectile fires a continuous beam that damages the target consistently over time.

Bezier Projectile

Bezier projectiles follow an indirect path to their target, usually on a curved arc. This is done for visual effect and most will not deal damage until they hit their targeted area.

Melee

Melee attacks are secondary attacks in Eschaton, primarily used to apply status effects such as staggering or to build space via a knockback. A small selection of unique weapons make use of melee attacks.

Placement Weapons

Some weapons require that they be placed down in order to control a location. This includes turrets, mines, and runes.

Orbitals

Orbital weapons spawn the projectile above the enemy and attack downwards with tremendous force. All orbitals are unique weapons.

Reload Types

Finite Clip

Finite clips can store a fixed number of shots to be shot before requiring a Reload Action to continue.

Finite Cells

Finite cells build heat when shot and require a reload action to vent the heat or to replace the cell. If fired slowly, a finite cell can last significantly longer than a finite clip, but not indefinitely.

Burst Cells (small, medium, large)

A burst cell requires either a small, medium, or large reload time. When the Reload Action is taken, a burst cell adds a percentage multiplier to the Power of the next Fire Action. The strength of this multiplier is increased with the longer duration of the reload time.

Weapons

Guns

Guns in Eschaton are the vehicle which the players use to deliver the projectile. The method of delivery is determined by the gun and the gun is responsible for at least half of the base value statistics used in calculating an attack's statistics. The player may have two guns and one melee weapon equipped at any moment, but with only one weapon active at a time. Targeting type is determined by the weapon type.

Due to the speed and frequency of weapon alteration in Eschaton, clarity and modularity are paramount principles in designing weapons. There are five classes of weapons, each acting as a distinct template to allow the player one further level of expression in their gameplay.

Handguns
Although they are generally held with both hands, handguns in Eschaton represent a class of ranged weaponry that can be held with a single hand. They are commonly found, easy to use, and provide a good baseline estimation of how modified ammunition can interact with the gun. Using a handgun should never be a bad option in any encounter in Eschaton. However, it will rarely be the most optimal solution. Above all else, handguns are convenient and the game world will reflect that. Handguns are best at short range, but have lower range modifiers than other weapons in their strengths and weaknesses.

Sniper Rifles

Sniper Rifles is another category that is not exclusive to its namesake. Instead, it is a class of advanced ranged weaponry that excels in long distance combat. This is achieved through longer reload times, lower fire rates, and increased critical ratings although there are exceptions to each of these. Sniper Rifles make for excellent tools to attack at a vulnerability.

Assault Rifles

Assault Rifles is the last of the categories not exclusive to their namesake. It is a class of rapidfire weapons with a preference for medium ranged combat. Assault rifles are the class of weapon with the most variety in fire pattern and will generally have at least one be the right tool for the job, regardless of the job.

Melee Attacks

Melee attacks come in several unique forms in Eschaton. They range from an unarmed shove to a quick shiv to the battering of angelic wings. The purpose of melee attacks in this shooter is to create space. All melee attacks come with some form of movement disruption for the affected target. Some melee attacks may provide better bonuses, range, or damage, but there is minimal depth to it relative to the weapons.

Divine

Divine weapons are distinctly unfair tools with extremely pronounced strengths and weaknesses. Choosing to use a divine weapon is choosing to live and die by the effects of the weapon. Each should represent a supernatural power such as lightning, fire, and plague. The use of divine weapons is rare in Eschaton and is always a grand display with stronger outcomes than normal weaponry. However, the use of divinity by humanity is considered a sin and each attack will come at a cost.

Ditransitive Ammunition

Artifacts and Ammunition in Eschaton directly feed into a weapon in order to adjust the output of the weapon. The player can feed two slots directly into their weapon, both of which can be filled by either an artifact or an ammunition type. Artifacts primarily modify the player's behavior when shooting while ammunition only modifies the output behavior of the attack itself.

Artifacts

Artifacts directly modify the player's behavior and can even grant access to unique abilities beyond the gameplay of the guns. Man made artifacts give slightly more realistic science fiction modifications such as silenced firing, firing extra shots, or exploding projectiles. Divine artifacts

grant unique powers at a much greater cost to Ascende, such as teleporting to the location of the hit, calling down lightning on hit, and draining life.

Ammunition

Ammunition comes in the form of clips or cells (see reloads) which store a finite number of shots. The role of ammunition is explicitly to modify the statistics and on-hit effects of a Fire Action. The type of clip or cell determines the method used for reloading. Ammunition is consumed on use (ditransitive ammunition consumes both pieces with each Fire Action) and can be found, looted, or crafted.

Birotational Tabbing

This will be diagrammed in the UI section. However, it's important to note that the player will have two sets of three slots for their artifact & ammunition system. Each set of three has only one active at a time and can be rotated during gameplay with a single button. By rotating both, the player always has access to 18 possible combinations of gun attacks with only three elements on their screen at a time.

Sample Ditransitive Ammunition Table

	Poison Burst Cells	Bottled Halo (relic)	Pocket Missiles clip
Standard bullet clip	+Poison damage +Burst on reload +cell heating mechanic	+decreases accuracy on-hit +target is brightly lit +clip reload	+clip reload +projectile is a missile that explodes
Liquid Hatred Cells	+Poison damage +Burst on Reload + cell heating + each bullet increases damage dealt and taken by 3%, stacking.	+decrease accuracy on-hit +target is brightly lit +cell heating +each bullet increases damage dealt and taken by 3%, stacking	+cell heating +projectile is a missile that explodes +each bullet increases damage dealt and taken by 3%, stacking
Storm Effigy (relic)	+Poison damage +Burst on reload + cell heating +target hit emanates a lightning bolt to the closest damageable target	+decreases accuracy on-hit +target is brightly lit +target hit emanates a lighting bolt to the closest damageable target	+clip reload +projectile is a missile that explodes +target hit emanates a lighting bolt to the closest damageable target

Each also modifies accuracy, damage, and rate of fire in amounts small but noticeable, but I did not want to clutter the table further.

Weapons Combat Asset List

Asset List Goals

- All assets in Eschaton should contribute to a visual style unique to Eschaton's setting.
- Clarity in gameplay is the most important facet; a player should be able to see information on screen and make decisions rapidly as their circumstances change.
- All assets should contribute to a consistent visual style such that any screenshot taken in the game would be identifiable as Eschaton from a short glance.
- Assets should reflect the player's power fantasy and portray strength when the player is strong, but also make the world feel strong. Even the meekest civilian encounter should feel significantly more powerful in Eschaton's future setting than in a modern one.
- The art style of assets shall be a fusion of two styles. One to reflect humanity and technology and the other to reflect divinity.
- The "Rule of Cool" is more important than realism.
- Audio assets should be able to tell a story on their own in the flow of combat.
- An experienced player should be able to receive significant information from audio, in-game visuals, and on-screen UI with clarity and with precision.

Overview

With a limited amount of weapons in Eschaton, since expression can be achieved through the ammunition system, each weapon in the game must be visually distinct from one another at a glance and from a distance.

In order to achieve this, each weapon may have each of the following:
- 3D model: base weapon
- 3D model: modular weapon clips per reload type
- A post-processing shader
- Audio clips: equip, reload, fire
- Procedural textures using color palettes chosen by the player, divided into "primary, secondary, and accent colors"
- Subtle particle effects indicating motion, fire, and the weapon's divinity if applicable.
- Unique attack animations where applicable.
- Menu & gUI icons
- Particle effects indicating direction of fire.

In addition to unique per-level soundtracks, Eschaton features a modified version of each level soundtrack with increased tempo and decreased noise (in the sense of total amount of auditory information conveyed) which is blended to if the player is in combat.

MEETING REQUIRED - ASSET OPTIMIZATION

Assets not mentioned in this document are assets intended for the purposes of memory optimization, accessibility modifications, and cosmetic variations. Each of these will require meetings with different teams to sort out.
Topics I know little-to-nothing about and will need meetings before I can further explain in documentation:
Audio, Shaders, Particle Effects, Weapon Shells, Impact hits (decals?)...

Furthermore, a number of 'smart' tools will need to be created to manage weapon assets. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:
- An audio modifier for weapon firing noises which adjusts pitch, tone, and other values in accordance with the types of ammunition being fired.
- An audio controller to help the player intake new information, adjusting total volumes by small values and prioritizing audio from new sources. If a new enemy joins an in-progress combat scenario and starts firing at the player, it must be immediately clear to the player that there is a new source of danger. This goal will also be achieved visually.
- A smart decal system indicating damage onto assets and direction of the source of that damage, allowing the player some foresight for where they are being attacked from and also seeing their actions damage the world. [not sure how games achieve this, so a meeting will be required for each of these tools]

Art Styles of Eschaton

Realism Earth	Realism Earth refers to a period in the neature future where technology is further integrated into daily living. Low level cybernetics and "smart" appliances are commonplace and everything is covered by mostly plain sheet metal or plastic and branded. Text is primarily in Art Deco fonts and objects are modelled to be familiar looking to real objects.
Divine Light	Divine Light objects are inspired by high renaissance style art with religious symbology focusing on beauty, soft edges, and light. Divine Light objects should be immediately recognizable as angelic in nature, but should also have some indication that they are technology as well. Their function does not require any basis in realism, but their form needs to indicate that these are just extremely advanced technological works.
Divine Dark	Divine Dark objects are inspired by a more modern perspective on religious symbology with a focus on intimidation, wonder, and exploitation. Divine Dark objects should be immediately recognizable as frightening in nature and should reflect the cost to one's Ascende that comes with using them. There should be some element to indicate that they are technological tools, but their function can remain as unrealistic and as cruel as possible.
Grunge	Grunge in Eschaton refers to how well kept an object is and is generally a reflection on the typical owner as well. If an object has a grunge finish, it will have more procedural dirt applied to it and the owner is less likely to be part of an organized group. In a more traditional morality compass, Grunge finishes would reflect chaotic owners.
Clean	Clean in Eschaton also refers to how well kept an object is and is a general reflection on the typical owner as well. If an object has a clean finish, it will be slightly more reflective and indicate an organized group.

A note on weapons audio

Meetings with audio engineers and designers will be required for further development, but weapons audio in eschaton is meant to be a tool to aid in clarity of fire and function - both for the weapon the player is using and for the weapons being fired at the player. Weapon reload and fire audio should be unique per weapon both in sound and in timing and the size of a weapon

should impact the weight of the footsteps of the player. Audio is not mentioned further in this feature due to meeting requirements. A supplemental weapons audio document will be drafted as soon as those meetings have occurred.

Weapon Assets

Class: Handguns

Class Animations: Equip, Reload, Aim, Aim Fire, Hip Fire.

Development Name	Description / Name	3D Model(s)	Visual Style / Shader	Particles & Polish	Required?
Handgun_1	Common Earth Handgun	Gun, Clip, Cells	Realism Earth Grunge	Gunshot residue	Mandatory
Handgun_2	Officer's Sidearm	Gun, Clip, Cells, tracking dart	Realism Earth Clean	UI locking reticle	Mandatory
Handgun_3	Wrist-mounted radial fire	Wrist bracer, cells, side clip	Realism Earth Grunge	Wrist interface plane	Optional
Handgun_4	Lightpistol, heavy	Gun, Clip, Cells,	Divine light clean	Divine muzzle flash animation, "God rays" glow on player when firing	Preferred
Handgun_5	Wraithpistol	Gun, Clip, Cells, Spirit lash	Divine dark grunge	Wraith attack animation	Preferred

Class: Assault Rifles

Class Animations: Equip, Reload, Aim, Aim Fire, Hip Fire, Sustained fire

Development Name	Description / Name	3D Model(s)	Visual Style / Shader	Particles & Polish	Required?
Assault_1	Military Rifle	Gun, Clip, Cells	Realism Earth Clean	Gunshot residue	Mandatory
Assault_2	Zealot Fanatic Rifle	Gun, Clip, Cells, parchment pages	Realism Earth Grunge	Each shot fired briefly increases emissive on inscriptions	Mandatory
Assault_3	Gravity well Generator	Gun, Clip, Cells, Gravity Well	Divine dark clean	Wave distortion effect in surrounding area	Optional
Assault_4	The alternator	Gun, Clip, Cells, two of each mesh kitbashed together	Half realism Earth Grunge, Half divine light grunge	Each shot fires from a alternating barrels, both have unique "pump animation" to prime the other	Mandatory
Assault_5	Channelled Hellfire (smart target)	Book	Divine dark grunge	Open book animation, unique fire stance	Preferred

Class: Sniper Rifles

Class Animations: Equip, Reload, Aim, Aim Fire, Hip Fire, Stationary Aim

Development Name	Description / Name	3D Model(s)	Visual Style / Shader	Particles & Polish	Required?
Sniper_1	Lightsniper	Gun, Scope, Clip, Cells	Divine light clean	Pulls light from around the player to use as ammunition	Preferred
Sniper_2	Autorifle	Gun, Scope, Clip, Cells	Realistic Earth Clean	Auto target UI reticle	Preferred

Class: Melee Weapons

Class Animations: Animations are unique per weapon: Equip, Attack

Development Name	Description / Name	3D Model(s)	Visual Style / Shader	Particles & Polish	Required?
Melee_1	Unarmed	n/a	n/a	Player shove animation	Preferred
Melee_2	Gladius	Sword (short), sheath	Realistic Earth Grunge	Un/sheathing animation	Optional
Melee_3	Wings	Angelic Wings	Divine light clean	Alternating wing slam attack animations (left, right, both)	Optional

Class: Divine Weapons

Class Animations: Animations are unique per weapon: Equip, Attack

Development Name	Description / Name	3D Model(s)	Visual Style / Shader	Particles & Polish	Required?
Divine_1	Locust grenades	Locust swarm (particle effect?), grenade	Divine dark grunge	Locust swarm	Preferred
Divine_2	Self Immolation (w/ immunity)	n/a	Divine light grunge	Immolates the player and anything in contact with the player	Optional
Divine_3	Stormcaller	Book	Divine Light clean	Open book & pray animation, calls lightning on enemies when shooting	Preferred
Divine_4	Chains of Light	Broken chains attached to the player's wrist	Divine Light grunge	Whip attack animation using light chains.	Preferred

Feature # 2 Ascende

Overview

Ascende in Eschaton represents the convergence of narrative and gameplay systems by means of a currency. In this world, the score of ascendence is made visible by angel-given technology. The player can always see their own score in UI and can see this score when looking at any other person, as they would their name. Ascende is believed to be the rating that will determine one's fate after death, to enter a proverbial heaven or hell. However, the rating system is definitively unfair and weighted against humanity. All social interactions are weighted by an ascension score.

Goals

- The player should be able to use one score as both a currency and a morality system.
- When used as a currency, Ascende is primarily spent on services, not goods.
- There is no finite limit, upwards or downwards, for Ascende. It is simply a numerical scale.
- The player should feel meaningful consequences for their actions.
- The player's own morality should conflict with the morality system of Ascende.
- Threshold rewards should encourage the player to make decisions outside of their morality, but not feel mandatory.
- The player should feel like this system is a core feature of the world that they are fighting against.
- The system itself should become the enemy of the player by the end of the game.
- When used as a means of progression, Ascende should be measured by the magnitude of total decisions made, not necessarily the result of those decisions.
- Individual NPC behaviors should respond to the player and each other's Ascende.

Epic User Stories

- As a player, I would like to have a dystopian morality system be a key part of the society around me.
- As a player, I would like to have my own and other's Ascende score be integrated naturally into the game UI.
- As a player, I would like to be able to use my Ascende score to purchase services from others.
- As a player, I would like to have my decisions have consequences reflected in the world around me and in my Ascende score.
- As a player, I would like to have a story that makes me resent the use of an Ascende score by society.
- As a player, I would like to feel that Ascende makes sense for the Angel's morality but does not make any sense for humans.
- As a player, I would like to make difficult decisions based on my moral principles conflicting with my goals.

Numerical Calculation

Ascende is derived from the combination of all moral decisions made by the player and anyone else in their world. All humans start with an arbitrarily low value which can be seen at a glance through the player's game UI. This value is then increased or decreased by decisions made by that character. In theory, good decisions increase it and bad decisions decrease it. There is no finite limit, upwards or downwards. The player's starting Ascende is determined by their choice of backgrounds in character creation.

Magnitude

The moral consequences of the player's Ascende is calculated differently from the linear scale of the face value Ascende score. It is a combination of scores which can be viewed in the player's character statistics panel of their game-menu. While the face-value ascende score is merely an aggregate value combining their positive good and negative bad, their Magnitude weighs the total amount of good, bad, and balanced decisions the player has made.

Magnitude is a collection of three numbers. A good score. A bad score. And a ratio of good to bad decisions. Good and bad here being morally relative to the bias of an angelic egoist morality system used for Ascende.

Narrative outcomes are the result of these three numbers and will represent a ratio of the types of decisions the player has made. Whether things beyond the player's control work out or not is up to the types of decisions the player has made. The world reflects what they have done to it. This way, they can progress in a positive direction, a neutral direction, and a negative direction. The ratio of consequences to actions depends on the ratio of the player's three magnitude scores.

Magnitude is also a means of character progression. The total magnitude score of a player can be treated as an XP or level system that measures the total amount of actions taken. Since each score is measured positively, magnitude is a measure of the amount of actions made of each morality, not their weighting.

All game levels require a certain amount of magnitude to be entered. Each level can be entered by a requisite amount of each type of magnitude, but the way you enter that level and your starting location in that level is determined based on which prerequisites the player has met and their story choices.

Consequences

The player's magnitude directly determines the endgame consequences in the story. As the game ends, a number of plot points will have their endings determined by the ratio of the player's Good Magnitude, Bad Magnitude, and Balance Magnitude.

NPC Responsiveness

NPCs will generally respond to the player with a few prescribed lines based on their visible Ascende score. The tone and speed of their dialogue will also be adjusted a barely perceptible notch to indicate this response.

First Impressions

First impressions are a disproportionately large part of how major story NPCs will react to the player. Some story NPCs are particularly judgmental and will track two values for the player.

The first is the score of the player when they first interact. The second is the change from that score, which is divided by half before being applied to their perception of the character. This achieves two things. The first is that it gives weight to the dystopian elements of society. People are excessively judgmental and unfairly so. It will be a frustrating motivator to help the player want to take down the system. They are judged for their background and who they used to be, rather than who they are. The second is that it will make story NPCs who don't do this stand out as true friends or respectable adversaries. These people will see you for who you really are and that matters.

NPC Naming

The society molded by an Ascende score encourages everyone to be judgmental and the player is no exception. ALL NPCs have five names assigned to them, with only one visible to the player at any moment through the in-game UI. Numerical breakpoints in Ascende determine which name is visible to the player. If the player is neutral, it will be the name the NPC has introduced themselves as. If the player is a little bit negative, it will be only their first name and lower case. If the player is very negative, it will be a rude nickname meant to insult their looks or personality. If the player is a little bit positive, it will be formal with titles. If the player is very positive and has accessed a certain relic, they will be able to see the true name of any creature. A creature's True Name is derived from a latin-creole conlang constructed for this game. Some relics grant the player the ability to coerce or control an NPC in combat at the cost of significant Ascende if the player knows their True Name.

The goal of altering an NPCs name is to subtly add some bias to the player's perspective and show the impact of a positive feedback loop in this bias. In theory, it is the player's equivalent of a first impression. The goal isn't to alter how the player views the same NPC as their alignment shifts, but rather to influence the player's view on all new people they come across and to muddy their perspective as a consequence of their previous decisions. Subtlety is preffered.

Example NPC Naming Chart

Very Low Ascende	Low Ascende	High Ascende	True Name (Maximum Ascende)
julie	julius caesar	Caesar the Great	Καίσαρ

Weapon Interactions

Some weapons, relics, and ammunitions will contain an Ascende cost per Fire Action spent. This usually comes with an increase in power or access to unique abilities deemed unethical. Ascende gains from using weapons are logarithmically capped and and determined on a per-weapon basis.

Systemic Bias Against Humanity

As the player progresses through the game, they will encounter some Angels multiple times. They may even partner with them briefly. During this time, it will be noticeable that Angels get significantly more Ascende from everything than humans do. Furthermore, Angelic morality will conflict with a few traditional human principles and be very black and white. Some NPCs will acknowledge this bias in frustration.

Combat Respawning

When the player dies in combat, they may choose to spend a significant amount of their Ascende to rise again at that same spot with half as much maximum health. The player must then kill a number of people equal to the amount of times they have done this in order to gain access to their maximum health. This is intended to be a negative feedback loop for Ascende in exchange for the chance of continuing a level or boss fight in progress. This is also intended for the awesome visual of the player's soul being ripped out of their body while dying and then the player's living body pulling it back in.
If the player chooses not to spend their Ascende, they must instead restart the level from the last checkpoint. The amount of Ascende spent on respawning must be significant so that the cost outweighs the amount to be gained by restarting the level.

Zealots & Humanity

As the player's Ascende changes, zealots, refugees, and other groups of humanity may change their default behavior around the player. Some will become less aggressive and others will become more.

Use as a Currency

Finally, a player's Ascende score is used as a currency in the game to purchase services from others. Most other humans they encounter are fairly rigid in their Ascende standing, generally hoping for a greater score but not actually doing anything to improve it. However, most humans are also willing to bend their Ascende in order to achieve their personal goals. The player can facilitate this by convincing people to do deeds beyond their own morality. Doing so is a deed with an Ascende score in itself.

Zealots have raised mercenaries in the world to pad their Ascende score as much as possible before committing unspeakable acts in order to enforce the system. This technique is commonly used on the black market as well, so that people can keep their hands clean while achieving dark deeds. The player has the opportunity to be both customer and actor in this type of behavior.

Ascende Asset List

Asset List Goals

- All assets in Eschaton should contribute to a visual style unique to Eschaton's setting.
- Clarity in gameplay is the most important facet; a player should be able to see information on screen and make decisions rapidly as their circumstances change.
- All assets should contribute to a consistent visual style such that any screenshot taken in the game would be identifiable as Eschaton from a short glance.
- Assets should reflect the player's power fantasy and portray strength when the player is strong, but also make the world feel strong. Even the meekest civilian encounter should feel significantly more powerful in Eschaton's future setting than in a modern one.
- The art style of assets shall be a fusion of two styles. One to reflect humanity and technology and the other to reflect divinity.
- The "Rule of Cool" is more important than realism.
- Audio assets should be able to tell a story on their own in the flow of combat.
- An experienced player should be able to receive significant information from audio, in-game visuals, and on-screen UI with clarity and with precision.

The ascende system does not require many assets on it's own, as it is merely a numerical value built into the UI and the narrative systems, each with their own assets. It needs the following:

- UI Chart: responsive graph for Magnitude values
- UI Name: naming system that allows for five names to be stored and shown accordingly
- UI numbers: graphics to hold the space where Ascende value is stored on screen
- UI Animation - an upwards and downwards counting animation for when an Ascende score has changed.
- UI nameplate: showing name and ascende value in HUD when looking at an NPC
- UI Vignette - add a brief darkening or brightening vignette effect to the screen when an increase or decrease to Ascende is made. Stronger with the amount changed.
- Audio sfx - a quick noise to notify the player that their choices have made a change in their Ascende score

Ammo & Ascende System On-Screen GUI
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