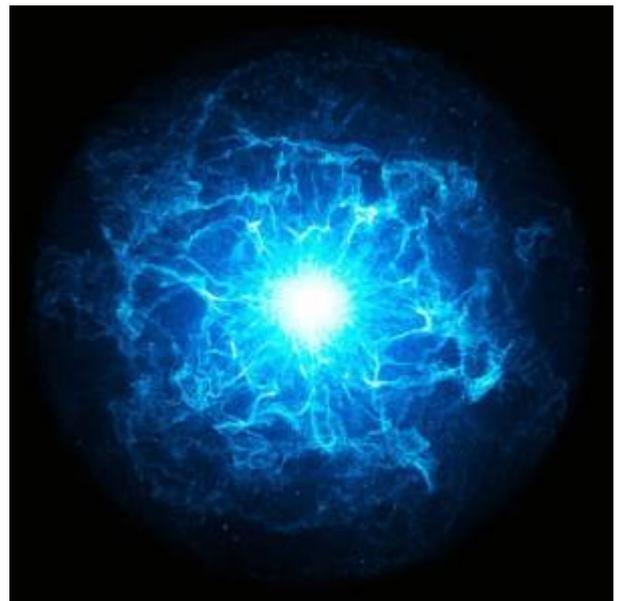


# Technology and Decay

## Summary

- The Decay is a powerful force that stunts technological development.
- Due to the stunting of technological growth, technology has large gaps and surprising advances - the most notable is the preference for simple melee weapons in combat.
- Ship Hearts keep the Decay at bay and enable use of complex technology.
- Ship Hearts are primarily employed in Starships but also found used on highly developed planets. They are rare but have been accessible since the Last Interstellar War thanks to the Cooperation.
- Startouched commune with and harness power from Ship Hearts and are able to use some of its power off-ship.
- Aboard Starships, Ship Hearts project a Ship Personality throughout the Ship. This Personality is highly capable but it is **not** deemed a true intelligence.

## Decay and Ship Hearts



The Decay is a universal force that has impeded technological advancement across the galaxy since humanity invented the wheel. The simple fact is that over time, any complex manufactured mechanism will break down and cease functioning. The more complicated the mechanism, the faster this happens. Simple machines, and complex mechanics all the way up to unpowered flight will tend to evade the Decay, but anything more complex will almost certainly begin to deteriorate as soon as it is used.

Due to the damning effects of the Decay, technological progress across the galaxy has been stymied, excepting for seemingly random leaps and bounds of progress made by the civilisations that founded the Galactic Cooperation thanks to the protection of **Ship Hearts**. These incredibly powerful objects - production of which is not a widely known secret - are capable of both powering large and complicated machines and in doing so protecting them from the effects of Decay. This effect - known as Energising - is the technology that fuels the Cooperation Zeitgeist with the launching of Starships

powered and shielded by these Ship Hearts being its primary technological offering to new worlds.

Aboard a Ship, a Ship Heart will be kept in the most secure and well protected area of the ship, often guarded by Startouched Mystics and their machinations sometimes beyond the access of a ship's captain. In the event of emergency, ships are capable of ejecting the Ship Heart to keep it safe from harm, though on many ships inspectors have reported that the interference of devoted Mystics may render those systems unreliable.

Though many in the galaxy manage to live lives unbothered by Decay, the force remains a real and pressing danger to any travelling to planets in the Borderlands or beyond, and still renders any attempt at space travel that is not reliant on a Ship Heart a doomed endeavour.

Complex biological machines evidently are not affected, but it is as yet unclear why the Decay only affects manufactured mechanics. Though pre-war records are hazy, it is implied that initial research that eventually spawned [the Various](#) hoped to defer the Decay by making use of its ambivalence toward biological mechanisms, and to some extent it has been successful, provided a balance is struck. The further an individual Various strays from the biological, the greater risk of Decay they open themselves up to.

## Ship Hearts and Mysticism

The exact means and operation of a Ship Heart are not widely known, but the mysteries surrounding the capabilities of the Hearts - their power, their ability to operate multiple systems in tandem, and indeed the relationship with the Decay - are the subject of devoted study and exploration by the [Mystic Sects](#). With great study, dedication, or sometimes sheer devotion, Startouched are capable of tapping into the power of Ship Hearts and harnessing it for later use. When a Startouched uses their power, they inherently feel themselves exerting the power of the Ship Heart they attuned with, though the mechanism of this phenomenon still remains unexplained.

## Technology Levels



Due to the warping of technological advancement due to the Decay, there are strange gaps and leaps in technology for all civilisations in the galaxy. The most notable point is that most military endeavours are focussed on simple melee weapons rather than complicated ranged weapons. When ranged weapons do enter the equation they are generally simple mass drivers. Though there are exceptions, the tried and tested Decay-proof methods generally prove effective. Similarly, while powered armour certainly exists, simpler armour is generally a preference for missions into Decaying space.

When powered directly by a Ship Heart, few need to worry about access to energy. However, those used to Borderlands exploration have had to find their own solutions to energy to power their equipment. Battery power, solar power, or petitioning a connection to a Ship Heart are all well trodden means of circumventing this problem, and solutions for portable energy transportation are generally the cutting edge of the Cooperation's scientific Zeitgeist.

## Communication and Travel

Necessarily, telecommunications are only capable when protected by a Ship Heart, meaning that much of galactic society developed around a necessity to deliver messages in person or by physical means. Since being able to employ Ship Hearts for the problem, long range communications have been made possible - used particularly for interstellar contact - but in general, the people of the galaxy are more suited to face to face interaction over remote contact.

Faster Than Light travel has also been made possible in the Cooperation Zeitgeist thanks to the advent of Interstellar Gates - these portals through space allow ships that pass through to travel in a matter of minutes. They are incredibly difficult to set up, however, requiring specialist equipment and planning to do so.

## Terraforming

Another of the Cooperation's technological marvels is the Terraforming Seed. This technological masterpiece, under the protection of a Ship Heart, can completely transform the climate of a barren rock into a place capable of supporting life - seeding the world with the tools to evolve its own flora, fauna, and atmosphere. The miracle of the Terraforming Seed is that this process takes only 1,000 years (rather than the millions of years required normally). Using Terraforming Seeds, the Cooperation can take completely uninhabitable worlds and make them ready for habitation in only a millennium.

Due to the speed and of the process and the nature of nature, the results are often unpredictable - the plant and animal life created by Terraforming is unique and varied, and aside from producing worlds for settling and living on, the process also creates countless biological discoveries to be made. While the process in theory can create sapient life, Terraforming Seeds naturally curtail the speed of evolution before that point.

## Starships and Personalities

Starships, being necessarily powered by a Ship Heart, are the most technologically advanced capabilities that the Galactic Cooperation's technological Zeitgeist has to offer. Ships are often equipped with high powered mass drivers, laser focussing technology, reactive armour plating, wireless networking capabilities and holodecks. Of these, only wireless networking and holodeck capabilities have become mainstream within Cooperation cities. Starships vary hugely in size and purpose, though the requirement for acquisition of a Heart generally tends ships toward a certain minimum size. Unwieldy Battleships and Transports are just as common in space as sleek Destroyers or luxury Cruisers.

Life aboard Starships and Stations is consequently vastly more luxurious than planetside life outside of the core Cooperation worlds, despite decreased living space. In part this is down to the perpetual access to complex items, but also down to the omnipresence of the Ship Personality - a projection of the Ship's processes that manifests differently from ship to ship and maintains operations. Some Personalities are more personable than others, some prefer to consider themselves strictly functional, but only on a Ship will these personalities come to light. Interaction with these Personalities is also an important part of Startouched Mysticism.

Personalities are **not** considered to be true intelligence.

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