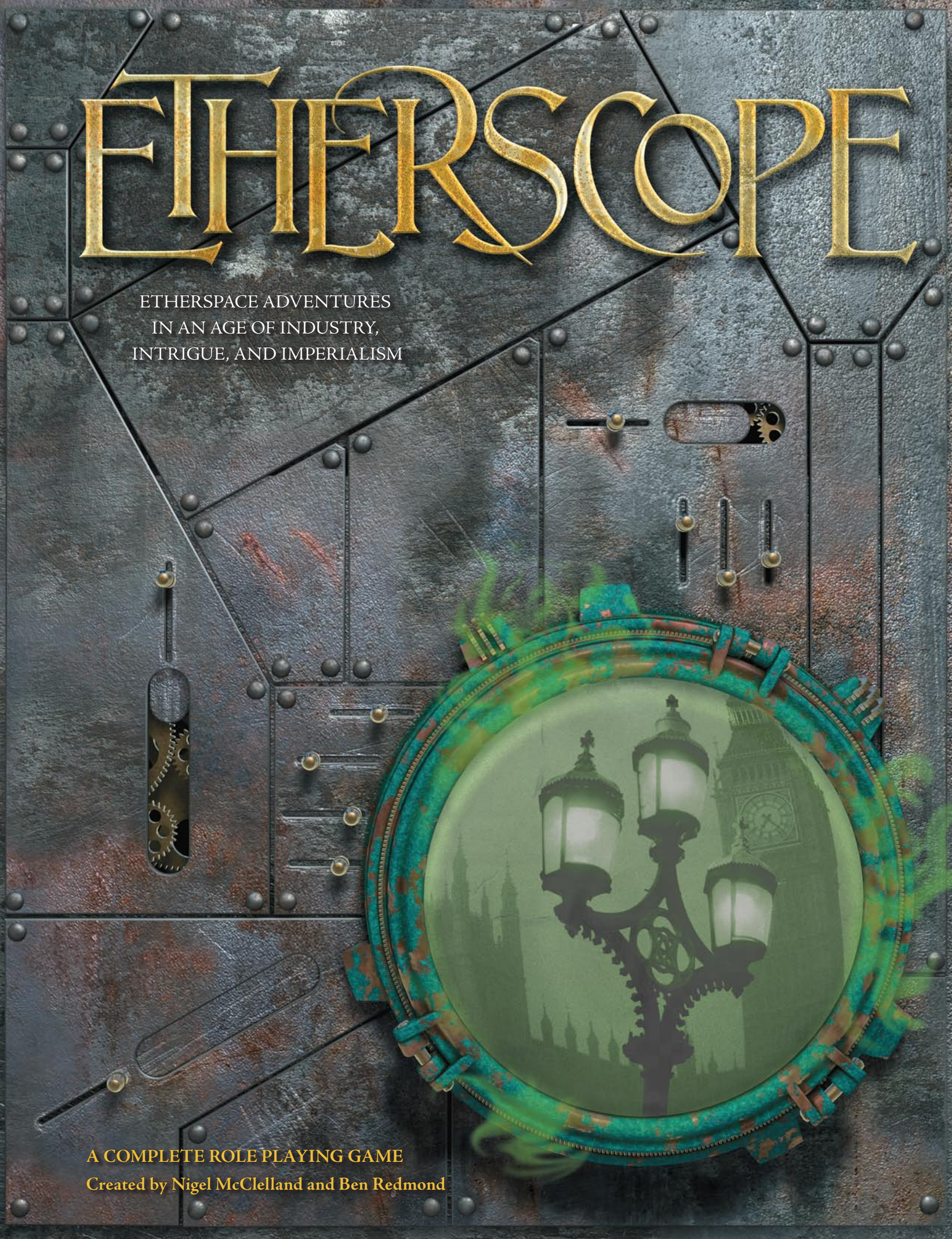
ETHERSCOPE™

ETHERSPACE ADVENTURES
IN AN AGE OF INDUSTRY,
INTRIGUE, AND IMPERIALISM



A COMPLETE ROLE PLAYING GAME

Created by Nigel McClelland and Ben Redmond

ETHERSCOPE

CORE RULEBOOK

For our families and the memory of John Henry Greenwood, loving grandfather of Nigel McClelland, whose support and belief have made this book possible.

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CHAPTER VI: THE SCOPE

This chapter provides you with a broad overview of the 'Etherscope' itself, providing details on the 'geography of Etherspace', the 'scientific and technological implications, and all the 'game' rules to allow your characters to explore 'the' Scope'.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The following section considers the core theories behind the Science of the **Etherscope** world. It reveals what makes Scope riding, zepcars, and cybernaughtics a reality.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ETHER SCIENCE

Around the mid-nineteenth century, three key theories existed that all played a role in the formation of ether science. The first of these theories was the laws of thermodynamics, in particular the second law, also known as the entropy law. These theories were first developed by Carnot early in the century, and completed by Thompson and Clausius in the 1840s. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, were Michael Faraday's 1845 theories on electromagnetism. Finally, Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was published in 1859. However, it was Herbert Spencer's work that led to the important theories and discoveries of ether science. Spencer's *A System of Synthetic Philosophy* integrated ideas from all three earlier theories, along with some concepts from other contemporary science and philosophy. He drew upon three key concepts, described below.

Entropy Law

There are two laws of thermodynamics. The first states that energy is never used up, merely changed from one form to another, one of the ideas used by Spencer in his *Synthetic Philosophy*. The second law states that the amount of energy available for use in a given system has a tendency to decline. This is entropy, the desire for everything in nature to return to a uniform, decayed state.

The Ether

The word "Ether" was used by Faraday, but was in actuality a classical reference to the ideas of Plato. Plato, an ancient Greek figure, theorised that the five "true" (now known as Platonic) shapes were those of Fire, Earth, Air and Water, of which the Greeks believed all matter was comprised. Plato therefore needed a fifth element, which he did not fully understand, but which he called "Ether," the stuff of the cosmos.

Electromagnetism

Faraday could show that electromagnetic force was a wave, and as such there must be a medium through which it travels, such as how sound waves travel through the air and cannot pass through a vacuum. Faraday did not know the nature of this medium, but he named it "Ether" after Plato's concept of a cosmic element as he knew that, whatever this substance was, it must be present in the vacuum of outer space.

Spencer's Synthetic Philosophy

Herbert Spencer was a philosopher and writer of great influence on the Victorian world. Before publishing his A System of Synthetic Philosophy, he had written on a wide variety of topics, such as sociology, psychology, and biology. He was deeply affected by Darwin's work and even coined the term "Survival of the Fittest." Spencer's Synthetic Philosophy, historically only published for private subscribers, brought together his own ideas of sociology, psychology, and natural philosophy in a great work published in nine volumes over thirty-one years. Whilst it may be impossible to paraphrase such a work in one or two sentences, the basic premise is that all of nature, whether it be energy, species of life, human societies, or individuals, has a tendency to evolve from the general to the specific. Simple examples can be readily seen in each of these areas: Human civilisations evolve from small communities where everyone shares in all tasks, to towns with specialist farmers, blacksmiths, merchants and the like. In biology, we can see how an embryo seems to evolve from a tadpole-like creature into a somewhat reptilian and finally a recognisable human form. In thermodynamics, we can see how the processes of interaction transform energy. However, this theory falters when faced with the Entropy Law, which states a desire for all nature to return to a largely disorganised state.

The Etheric State

Spencer developed a theory in his early volumes that his peers felt was so groundbreaking they urged him to publish his work for the whole scientific community to debate. Spencer took his same line of thinking on a general evolutionary theory and added Entropy into his concepts. He started from Plato's original shapes and, in combination with Faraday's ideas, speculated that the shapes did not represent the four elements as observed by the Greek philosophers, but instead referred to the different states of matter and energy. He claimed that ideas about Air relate to a gaseous state, Water a liquid state and Earth a solid. Energy was the equivalent of Plato's Fire element, whilst Ether was Entropy. He theorised that, as energy is interchangeable with entropy and the three

Etherscope Terms

Domain: An area of Etherspace that has been sectioned off from wild Etherspace and made suitable for human immersion, often holding cities for Scope users to explore or the processing systems of industry and the military.

Ether: The substance of entropy, which can react in a number of different volatile ways when it comes into contact with *Prime Reality*.

Ethertech: Technology whose operation involves a connection to Etherspace.

Ether Balloon: An ether bubble created by a special type of portal, used in place of the gas balloons of zeppelins.

Ether Flue: A series of portals through Etherspace that are used to purify coal gas.

Ether Veil: A thin layer of ether that covers all matter and energy in the universe. The human brain causes ripples in this veil, creating the source of thought.

Ether Guns: Long-range cannons with *ethertech* guidance systems.

Etheric State: A theoretical understanding of entropy as a state of the universe. It is one of the fundamental states defined by Herbert Spencer: Solid, Liquid, Gas, and Energy, the etheric state.

Etherium: An iron-cobalt alloy forged in Etherspace. It is exceptionally light and strong.

Ether Jet: A propulsion system developed from *vent portals* used most often in aircraft.

Etherscope: The areas of Etherspace that have been modified by human technologies, created from a collection of domains and *Scope cities*.

Etherspace: A parallel universe made up of ether.

Immersed Scope Use: To transfer one's consciousness into Etherspace, thus experiencing the Etherscope as a new universe.

Personal Domain: A small domain usually the size of a desk or small office for use by an individual private owner.

Pleasure Domain: A domain that has been created for *Scope users'* leisure activities.

Prime Reality: The "real world" of matter and energy.

Program Crafter: A Scope user who specialises in creating materials from Etherspace.

Remote Scope Use: To use the Scope from a *Scope Point*, thus viewing the Etherscope through a portal.

Scope City: A large domain within the Etherscope developed to appear like a city in Prime Reality. It is often found at the centre of a cluster of domains belonging to an individual nation. Scope cities are usually surrounded by a *Wall* of personal Scope domains.

Scope Jack: A cybernaughtic attachment that allows the user to connect directly to a Scope point, allowing him to immerse himself into the Scope.

Scope Point: An Etherspace portal protected by a glass window that allows the user to manipulate Etherspace either via a pair of remote hands or through "jacking in" if he has a Scope jack. Scope points always open to a set location in Etherspace, usually a personal domain within the Wall of a Scope City, but the user can move away from that point once inside.

Scope Processor: Processing systems held within the Etherscope allow for high levels of miniaturisation. Such processors take up no space in Prime Reality other than the portal used to display the results.

Scope Rider: A user of the Scope who has become involved with hacking activities, usually associated with a countercultural movement.

Scope Tab: A drug taken in tablet form which transfers the taker's consciousness into Etherspace at a specific location, often a pleasure domain within the Etherscope.

Scope User: One who enters the Scope. Such a user is either immersed or remote.

The Wall: An area surrounding a Scope city that holds all of the personal domains for that city.

Upload Capsule: A drug similar to a Scope tab that provides very specific knowledge, such as the layout of a building.

Upload Tab: A drug similar to a Scope tab that provides general knowledge and skill bonuses, such as Scope-fu training.

Vent Portal: A portal to Etherspace that leaks volatile ether into Prime Reality. As the ether leaks out, it converts matter to energy, providing an efficient source of energy.

Zepcar: A personal zeppelin about the size of a typical street car. They have a special ethertech control system that lets the user "drive" in vertical lanes in areas of the city with special control pylons.

states of matter are interchangeable, that energy and matter must be interchangeable, also. Entropy thus became known as "the etheric state," a fifth state alongside solid, liquid, gas, and energy. This led to a rush of "believers" trying to provide evidence that matter could be made interchangeable with energy.

The Discovery of Etherspace

Many scientists were fascinated by Spencer's theories and a race began to extract or identify the etheric state. However, the discovery of Etherspace came as a shock to everyone, including the man who discovered it.

Harold Wallace was a poor and struggling professional scientist, making a living from teaching and using his earnings to submit papers to the Royal Society, many of which were rejected. Wallace was not even trying to discover ether when his experiment first opened a gateway to Etherspace. Like many great discoveries of Science, the uncovering of Etherspace was purely accidental. Wallace was experimenting with magnetic fields and using powerful electromagnets. He discovered that at certain specific frequencies, a ring of electromagnets positioned in accurately measured positions opened a portal into a mysterious, other realm. This was Etherspace, a strange parallel dimension, different in many ways from our normal understanding of the laws of physics. After a century of research into the etheric state, scientists discovered that, as Faraday theorised, ether is prevalent throughout the universe: a small veil of entropic substance encapsulates all. Etherspace, however, is a universe made entirely of ether, and there is a constant of ebb and flow of material passing back and forth between the two universes. It has also been discovered that ether is the medium through which thought waves ripple. Scientists and philosophers had long argued over the possibility of a materialist understanding of thought, with many arguing that the simple electrobiology of the brain could not possibly hold all the answers to the human soul. It appears that the human brain has a less discernable quality, as it generates waves in the ether veil, and these waves have been proven to be the source of thought and consciousness. This discovery has provided a number of interesting technological applications, such as Scope jacks and tabs, which allow the transference of human consciousness into Etherspace, but as yet little is properly understood about the nature of thought and its implications on technologies and their use.

The Impact of Ether Science

Spencer's work had an impact throughout all aspects of society. Most notable was the effect on philosophy and politics.

There was an almost-instantaneous Plato fad amongst the thinking classes. Plato's Republic became the talk of the educated classes, and many became proponents of an intellectual elite ruling their countries. This made a crucial difference in the political arena, where the Second Reform Bill of 1867 was crucially altered — instead of securing voting rights for working class men, it provided for weighted voting power for those who had "proved themselves successful." This was supposed to apply to successful industrialists and engineers, but a financial prerequisite led to an increase in power for the landed aristocracy as well as the bourgeoisie.

Cultural Impact of the Scope

The Etherscope itself, understandably, has also had a massive cultural impact. There are those within the guilds who are concerned about its effect on the lives of working folk, worried that it means less skilled jobs and more potential for exploitation. Whilst the guilds are not the political force for organised labour that the unions were, there are some members who are more proactive, seeking to destroy what they can within the Scope. These people learn the skills of the Scope user to fight the perceived threat to their livelihoods.

Perhaps those with the biggest interest in the Scope are the Scope riders and tab-jammers. These counter-culturalists have made the Scope their homes. They are revolutionaries, rebels, and free thinkers, seeking to break the power of the ruling classes through the knowledge that can be obtained through the Scope. Whilst the Scope provides them with a great resource and an ability to strike successfully against their masters, the drug culture associated with the movement leads to addiction and other social problems. The young idle rich have found that the Scope allows them a great new way to explore their desires and throw wild parties — it has become the primary means of hedonism in the modern world. Finally, there are Scope temperance movements, largely stemming from the establishment churches. The Anglican Church in Britain is particularly opposed to the widening use of the Scope, especially the drug culture of the tab-jammers. Vicars and ministers demonise the use of Scope tabs from the pulpits most Sundays.

TECHNOLOGY

This section considers the different technological applications of ether science. It is this technological application of the science that makes **Etherscope**.

Applications of Ether Science

Etherspace is different in many ways from the previous understanding of space. In the early days of Etherspace research, people rushed to experiment with portals and to discover new ways in which they could manipulate and control this resource. It was quickly discovered that most material is degraded or destroyed upon entering Etherspace; only magnetically active materials seem to have the ability to survive. It is also difficult to take ether from Etherspace, as matter has a tendency to degrade when brought into contact with pure ether. Pure ether is an unstable substance with a range of properties depending upon the type of portal that is opened. Ether often reacts with both matter and energy when it leaks from Etherspace and can convert energy and matter from one form to another, or even between types of the same form. The exact properties of ether as it comes into contact with Prime Reality appear to be based on the location within Etherspace the portal opens upon. Turbulent regions of Etherspace tend to consume matter, turning much of it into raw energy, whilst tranquil regions absorb all energy, causing an instant freeze effect.

Vent portals were perhaps the first technological application of Etherspace, providing a powerful and readily controllable source of energy. Vent portals open onto a turbulent region of Etherspace. As ether leaks from the portal and touches the air and other matter, it converts them into pure energy. This was quickly developed as a heat source for furnaces and steam engines, providing a more efficient source of energy. However, gas remained the primary source of domestic heating and lighting as the flow of vent portal energy is to intense for such purposes and the process for controlling it precisely too expensive for any but the elite of society. Later, people discovered how to forge etherium, an iron-cobalt alloy, within Etherspace, as well as the means to move this substance through an open vent portal. Etherium is much stronger and lighter than any other material, and has allowed many technological breakthroughs.

Not only is it possible to pass magnetic materials into the ether, but research has shown that they can also be used to control the substance of Etherspace itself. This has enabled the forging materials and objects of pure ether. Whilst these objects cannot be removed from Etherspace, their applications within are unlimited. It is through such manipulation of Etherspace that the Etherscope has been created. Domains have been isolated from the ebb and flow of Etherspace. These are the building blocks of the Etherscope, holding whole cities and vast processing systems.

One final important development is Damian Knighton's ether flue. Knighton created a tunnel of portals within Etherspace that had an entry and an exit. Etherspace destroys complex molecular structures, hence removing impurities from simple gases and liquids passed through the flue. This allowed for an ultra-pure coal gas to be filtered through Etherspace, thus enabling gas lighting systems to become a much more viable technology. With heavy investment from British and Reich governments, the ether flue resurrected the coal mining industry. Coal had been replaced as a fuel source following the development of vent portals, but purified coal gas provided economic stability for the two superpowers' coal-based economies through the mass marketing of gas to the lower rungs of society.

Steam-Tech Vehicles and Engines

Steam-powered vehicles and motors have become the mainstay of the world. Etherium boilers and vent portal furnaces have allowed engineers to greatly increase the reliability and power of steam engines, thus preventing the rise of oil-based fuels and the internal combustion engine. The essential technology of an engine remains the same: Pistons work

in alternation to turn a crankshaft, and a gearing system converts this force into revolutions of the drive wheels at varying torques. Thus all ships, cars, and flying machines are powered by steam engines. This prevalence makes the atmosphere and smell of the cities unique. There is a distinct odour to a steam engine — a mixture of steam, oil, and smoke. It is perhaps a stronger and dirtier smell than the exhaust fumes of a gasoline engine, but it does not have the same damaging effect on the environment. Indeed, it provides the busiest cities with a rush-hour sauna-like effect as the atmosphere becomes dank with steam.

Zeppelin-Tech and Zepcars

Powered flight has also taken a unique direction, thanks to a number of factors.

Militarily, there is little need for air power. The massive power of ether guns has increased the tactical range of battleship weaponry to hundreds of miles. With the advanced targeting systems allowed by Etherscope technologies, ether guns have grown to become the most devastating and cost-effective way to wage war.

Dieter Keinann developed ether jet engine technology in 1897. With this breakthrough came quick and manoeuvrable zeppelins that can carry vast amounts of armour and heavy weapons. The New Reich's air dreadnoughts of the Pan-European War were the result — flying fortresses capable of waging war in any terrain. Even these behemoths, however, cannot match the armour and weapons mountable on naval superdreadnoughts of the British Empire. The Empire guards its superdreadnought military advantage with ruthless determination, even though no other nation has the wealth and political will needed to create these ships. The power of the Reich's air dreadnoughts and the devastation they caused during the Pan-European War has led to the German word zeppelin replacing "airship" or "dirigible" in common usage. Now people across the world refer to any dirigible as a zeppelin.

Early experimentations with using vent portals for direct propulsion proved problematic. As vent portals convert matter into energy, there was an unfortunate tendency for such portals attached to vehicles to suck in the vehicle's workings structure. The principle of an ether jet is to feed the vent portal with air rather than parts of the vehicle it is designed to propel. As such, a turbine blows onto a ring-shaped vent. This air is then converted into energy to provide thrust. The main reason for the development of lighter-than-air aircraft, however, has been the application of ultra-thin etherium to increase the toughness and reduce the weight of gondolas, and, perhaps more importantly, the invention of ether balloons.

A special portal has been developed which can create a bubble of Etherspace with energetic lift properties within Prime Reality — an invulnerable and controllable balloon for all aircraft. The ether balloon itself is completely invulnerable. If a bullet, or indeed any other material, hits the bubble, the object immediately vaporises. In the aftermath of a battle, it is not an uncommon sight to see the burnt-out shells of destroyed zeppelins still floating immobile above the battlefield.

Civilian applications widely use zeppelin technologies. With the massive growth of city populations, and requirements for longer-distance travel, the **Etherscope** world's cities have become massively congested. That private transportation remains a privilege of the upper and middle classes makes this advance in transportation technology even more remarkable. However, a new social class of skilled workers has evolved: the enginaughts. These pilots of commerce and public transportation vehicles have flooded the city streets.

Another application of zeppelin technologies, the zepcar, provided a temporary solution to congestion problems. These vehicles are small zeppelins, of a similar size to an ordinary town car. Within areas of heavy congestion, pylons run alongside the road, allowing transmission of traffic flow data for vertical lanes. Thus the zepcars "drive" at a given altitude, dictated by the pylons. If the pilot wants to move up or down a lane, an on-board Scope processor determines when there is a safe opening and shuffles the zepcar up or down a lane. As a result, driving a zepcar remains a largely two-dimensional experience in terms of manual piloting operations. The introduction of the zepcar had a massive immediate impact on congestion. However, in the fifteen years since, traffic levels have increased further and now even the zepcar lanes are clogged with traffic. Some more aggressive drivers have developed ways to fool the lane processors and effectively fly their zepcar freely. This is illegal everywhere, and many crashes have resulted from the use of such devices, although it can certainly cut down the time you spend in traffic.

Scope Microtechnologies

The use of "ethertech" has enabled miniaturisation on a grand scale. By manipulation of magnetic frequencies within Etherspace itself, ether can be moulded into a number of pseudo-forms. This sequencing of magnetic frequencies to create forms is called program crafting. Although these forms do not survive outside Etherspace, program crafters can build a wide variety of structures within its confines. These creations can be programmed to respond to specific circumstances. Thus the program crafters have been able to create processing systems to solve a variety of information problems. This has enabled the creation of a number of technologies: small processing systems to handle all domestic and commercial appliances, large data processors of industry, targeting systems for ether guns, and communication devices allowing transmission broadcasts of audio and visual imagery through Etherspace — radio waves are literally transmitted through the ether almost instantaneously.

Scope Points

Scope points are access and control systems for the Etherscope. Each is a portal which connects to a specified processor stored somewhere in Etherspace. Typical user interfaces are handled by generating an Etherscope environment that can be interacted with. Most commonly a desk analogy is used. When the user's Scope point is activated, the portal opens onto the image of a desk, visually representing their various different applications and data files as objects on the desk. These objects act not only as the processing system of the Scope point, but also as storage: An individual document contains all the rules that dictate its behaviour and interaction with the rest of the Ether-

scope, as well as the data stored within its contents. Ether processors involve interactions between programmed ether objects. Data is stored by creating new objects, and systems involve the objects effectively "talking" to each other. For example, a search program will "talk" to each data file program it encounters as its object form moves through the area of its search and encounters the object forms of data files.

It is important, however, to point out that the portal opens a three-dimensional domain within Etherspace, and as such, interfacing with that domain is more complicated than simpler two-dimensional output devices. The most common way of interacting with your Scope environment is through a pair of Scope gloves that transmit your movements into a similar pair of hands within your Scope environment, thus allowing you to readily manipulate your objects. Older, simpler interfaces included a mechanical arm, whose movements were mirrored in the Scope alongside a keyboard for text input. Scope point processors use magnetic switches within Etherspace to allow you to interpret, input, control output, and store and process data.

The Etherscope

As Etherspace is one large continuum; all "computers" are effectively "online." All the data and processing technology is held within Etherspace. As such, tight security walls and systems must be built up to protect systems from invasion by hackers, known as Scope riders. A Scope user can choose to access the Etherscope remotely or immersed. Remote access is described above, typically involving the use of Scope gloves. The user can travel the Scope, viewing the different domains and systems she visits on the other side of the glass of her Scope point. Interestingly, Etherspace appears to be able to be manipulated to a small degree by thought. This has led to the development of technologies that allow people to transfer their consciousness into the Scope.

Immersed Scope use, as this method is called, requires either Scope tabs or a Scope jack to transfer the user's consciousness. A Scope jack is a cybernaughtic attachment that can plug the user's brain directly into a Scope point. As such, it transfers the user's consciousness to the same domain that the Scope point is plugged into. Scope tabs transfer the consciousness to a specific place, usually a recreational domain in the Scope. The type of tab you buy will take you on a specific trip. When immersed, you take on an avatar, a Scope persona. This stems from your subconscious or psyche, and will invariably look like you, although the avatar is often a stylised or idealised form. Avatars can interact with the domains of the Etherscope as if they were Prime Reality. However, some have found ways to bend the physical laws of these domains, being able to move vast distances with a single thought and act much quicker than the domain would normally allow.

Tabs can also provide the Scope rider with a short-term boost to skills or knowledge. These "uploads" can allow you to access Scope programs that boost your avatar's abilities and draw from data banks within the Scope. These tabs provide boosts to skills, but only last for a short time. The information conveyed can only occupy short-term memory. The implications of technology that would manipulate the long-term memory and the ethical use of such technologies are under debate.

Drones and Gremlins

Amongst the most frequently encountered Scope programs are drones. These small animated programs perform specific tasks. They are often shaped like a creature or some bizarre automaton, but some of the best look just like men or women. Drones are, though, nothing more complicated than a Scope program and only able to act in specified situations according to specific rules of operation. They are quite limited and so are often only used to help bolster security (acting in response to a hacker) or to perform simple filing-type tasks.

Gremlins, on the other hand, are brilliantly sophisticated programs, able to think for themselves, and possess personalities of their own. Scope hackers originally created the gremlins, designing them to cause havoc within a system. More recently, any program crafter with enough ability has made use of gremlins. Seeding a drone with a part of the program crafter's personality creates gremlins. Whilst this does weaken the program crafter in the Scope, it seems not to affect their ability to function outside of the Scope. However, gremlins are rare, as only the greatest program crafters are able to create them.

Military Technology Applications

The military uses technology on many different levels. There are the massive land and air dreadnaughts of the New Reich — huge mobile bases the size of small towns. Bigger still are the superdreadnaughts of the sea that afford military dominance to the British Empire. Powerful cannons on these battleships, which patrol all the seas of the world, are used to assert British control of the oceans and ports. Infantry in steam-powered heavy armour fight most land combat. Handguns, rifles, and autoguns are common, but powered armour allows for much heavier weaponry to be carried by the infantry. Zeppelins are used for reconnaissance flights, but the big accurate guns of the battleships and dreadnaughts are used for tactical bombings and other more traditional aircraft duties. Small, one-man steam-powered tanks thunder across the battlefields in lightning shock attacks, and small-scale air dreadnaughts fill out similar roles in supporting infantry offensives. Many soldiers are enhanced with cybernaughtic attachments, including weapon systems, targeting devices, and built-in armour, creating "perfect" soldiers. The deltas are also widely used by the military forces of the world. Their keen sense of smell and dogged nature makes them the ultimate soldier and scout.

Cybernaughtics

Combining the technologies of eugenics and ether science has allowed the integration of machinery into the human body. Industry and the military have leapt upon this process in their never-ending quest to create the ultimate worker or soldier. From cybernaughtic limbs that dramatically increase strength, to internal processors that enhance neural responses, cybernaughtics have found many applications in the Etherscope world. As with the Etherscope, access to these technologies is

carefully controlled, becoming as much an indication of status and class as anything else. Systems range from clunking heavy collections of pistons and gears given to labourers as new limbs, to sleek servo-geared chrome constructs sported by the elite. A lack of safety regulations in many factories has led to a high level of industrial accidents, impacting efficiency. For the unscrupulous industrialist, the cheap industry-level cybernaughtic attachments have become a way to ensure the assembly lines continue to run. Like most technologies in the **Etherscope** world, it has found its way to criminals and adventurers alike. A thriving black market exists, with a good number of chop-shops hiding in the shadows of all the great industrial cities. Such locations are discrete, as discovery can lead to a jail sentence. Cybernaughtics are a popular fad amongst the upper classes, where fashion designers have manoeuvred into the world of cybernaughtics and provide sophisticated and artistic attachments that become the talk of society.

Stephenson-Brunell Spires

Two key figures of Victorian engineering have led to the greatest engineering achievement of the modern age. Lawrence Isambard Stephenson-Brunell is the inheritor of the engineering greatness of his great-great-grandfathers, George Stephenson and Isambard Kingdom Brunell. Stephenson-Brunell, following in their footsteps, developed a new form of engineering, completely altering the face of the planet as a result. Ironically, Britain has not been the greatest beneficiary of his work. His greatest achievement, if not the greatest engineering feat of the century, is the spire complex — an entire city encapsulated within a single structure. The spire is a mighty structure of glass and etherium, built to contain its populace within a smog-free environment, where every amenity is close at hand. The first spire city, Bristol, was built to help purify the air of industrial pollutants, and maintain a higher level of cleanliness, reducing the spread of disease. After forty years, Bristol has outgrown its two-million-plus population and is in a poor state of repair due to the lack of investment by the British government. However, in America the newer, modular dome-and-spires structure allows cities to grow. Stephenson-Brunell is the most noteworthy defector in the modern age, leaving Britain for America, where his spires are commissioned in every city and which has become rich on the fruits of his genius. Spire cities are found throughout the United States; the five boroughs of New York each have their own impressive dome-and-spire structure, whilst Chicago remains the tallest and largest single structure in the world, encasing hundreds of square miles under a single roof.

GEOGRAPHY OF THE SCOPE

Etherspace is an infinite swirling sea of etheric current. The Etherscope has been crafted out of this sea, creating domains that appear as encapsulated bubbles within the ocean of Etherspace. The creators of these domains can set the rules by which people's Scope avatars can move and interact. They can craft physical structures, from great skyscrapers to tunnel complexes. There are a number of domains created within Etherspace that now make up the Scope. Each nation has its own main domain — a Scope city in which people can meet, host conferences, socialise, or conduct research. Each city is isolated from the others, as the imperialistic times mean that the nations guard their national security fervently and do not want information to pass to other nations through the domains. However, some Scope riders and spies have learnt to jump the rails and break out of these domains and travel to the cities of other nations. The Scope riders even have their own city domain: Haven.

A TYPICAL SCOPE CITY

Each Scope city is built around a similar set of principles. The city itself contains many structures, each designed for multiple purposes. There are libraries and museums, recreational centres, debating halls, and conference centres. See the illustration for the layout of a typical Scope city.

The Central Administration Tower

Each city is characterised by a Central Administration Tower, through which the civil servants of the nation can watch and govern the city domain. This is usually represented as a tall skyscraper that touches the roof of the domain. Inside the tower is a closed domain in its own