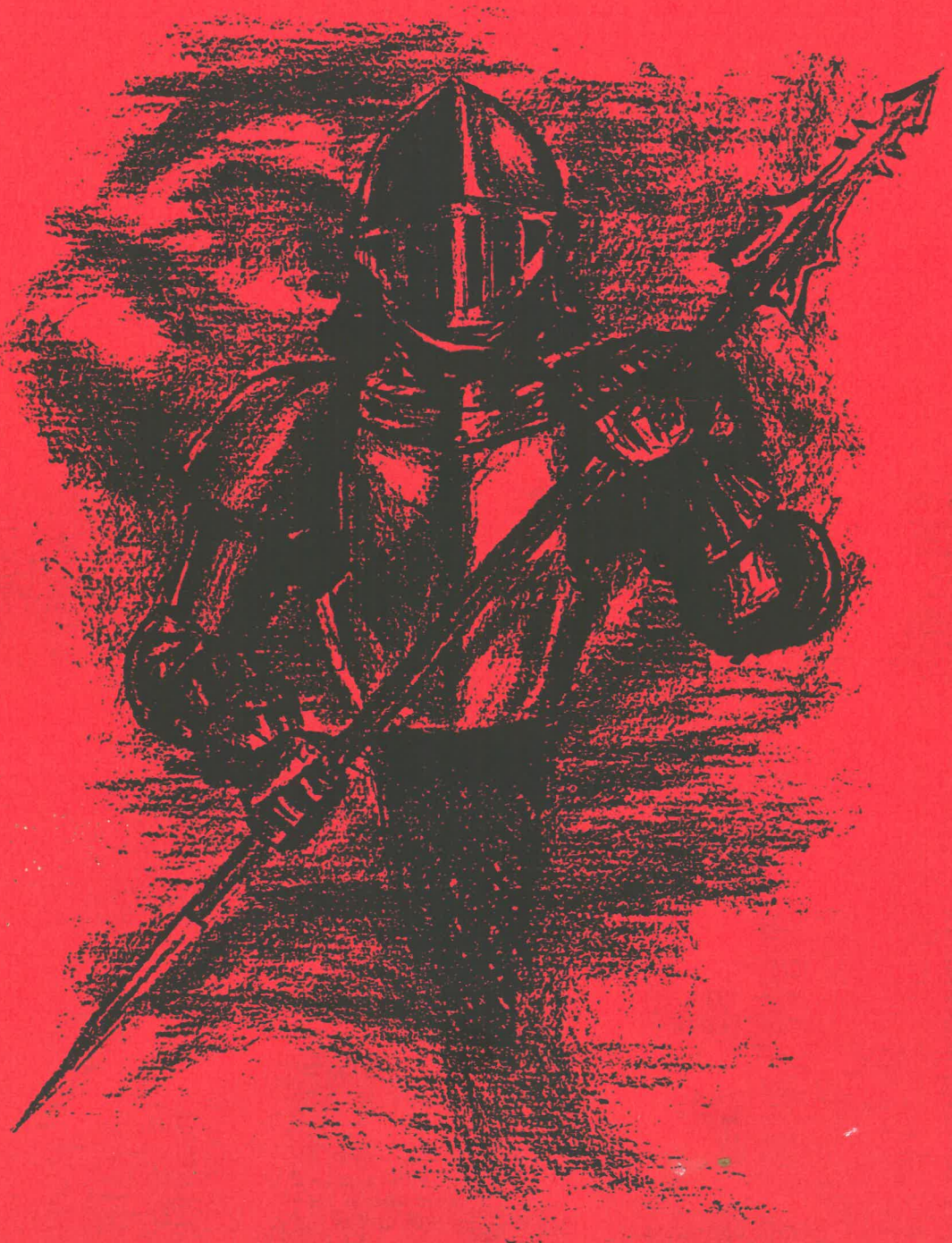
# Queensland Wargamer

ISSUE NO.42

November 1995



ISSN 0159-0383

# QUEENSLAND WARGAMER

## No. 42 November 1995

The *Queensland Wargamer* is the journal
of the Queensland University Games Society.

Published irregularly during the year.

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## Editorial

*There are six people sitting around a table in a room. Everyone has pieces of paper in front of them. Several are fondling small dice. One person is sitting apart from the others, hiding many pieces of paper from everyone else's view. The war is on: the GM versus the players.*

Has this ever happened to you while you were roleplaying? The GM sheltering from the players with all his or her NPCs in a little fortress, as the players prepare to strive together against their common enemy in the violent pursuit of XP and/or treasure? A classic case of "us against them", a ongoing struggle that need never end.

But wait! Roleplaying doesn't have to be like this! The GM and the players don't have to fight each other. Instead, they can work together to ensure that everyone has fun. The GM doesn't have to try to kill the players, or not let the players succeed: the players don't have to conspire against the GM, or do everything they can to de-rail the story-line. Roleplaying can be a cooperative experience, with players giving advice and being partially responsible for their own enjoyment of the game, and GMs being prepared to listen to what their players want to happen and include it in the game. There is nothing about roleplaying that forces it to be a war between two opposing sides. Think about it.

Gary Johnson

# Life Underground

by Nick Lawrence

The ecosystem aboveground contains the full circle of life: producers (plants), herbivores (plant eaters), carnivores (animal eaters), detritivores (eaters of dead things), etc. Life underground typically only contains predators and detritivores. The problem with a lot of underground adventures is that there is an awful lot of life down there, but it is apparently living without a regular food supply. A properly functioning ecosystem will include more producers (plants) than consumers (animals). But it is difficult for plants to grow underground.

The main problem is that plants are photosynthetic and there is no light underground. Explanations given for prolific underground predators are usually either non-existent, based on the predators occasionally feeding aboveground, feeding on things coming underground (e.g. adventurers), or some mystical or magical explanation.

Predators feeding on life aboveground or coming underground can only really explain predators living near the surface, not life on deep dungeon levels. And there should be no need to invoke magical explanations when perfectly adequate (in fact, more ripe with potential!) explanations exist in our own world. Basically, plants need a source of energy. Photosynthetic plants need light. However, there are some other plants (mainly single-celled plants) that use the energy of chemical reactions (chemosynthetic) or heat (thermosynthetic). Considering that normally the deeper you go underground the hotter it gets, and that heat is spread out gradually (i.e. it does not suddenly increase), it should not be too hard to introduce thermosynthetic plants to the fantasy world. After all, we accept so much else.

This raises these questions: how do thermosynthetic plants function, what do they look like, and what do they mean to adventurers?

Firstly, thermosynthetic plants would not have leaves. Instead, they would have organs capable of converting heat into plant matter. These "therms" would grow downwards instead of upwards. They would be black and cold to the touch, and adventurers would encounter them near heat sources.

Roots normally perform the function of providing stability and collecting water. Since the bulk of the plant is no longer aboveground, indeed almost the entire plant is supported by earth, the stability function is not required. Roots would instead seek water. Adventurers would encounter roots near water.

Air is a requirement of the thermosynthetic process (as is water). Normally, leaves would collect air directly, but this is not the case with "therms". Instead, other organs would collect air and pipe it to the "therms". The nearest equivalent in the real world is the air-gathering roots of

mangroves. These look like leafless stems sticking up out of the mud or water. Stems would seek out tunnels, cracks and crevices, and also the surface, to gather air. Adventurers would encounter them almost anywhere in the dungeon that there is air.

Trunks support leaves high in the air to collect sunlight. They would no longer be needed underground, and would only occur in extensive stem systems in caverns, or if the stems extended aboveground where they would grow into a leafless tree-like arrangement of stems. Adventurers would encounter them in large open spaces and might use them for timber.

Tubers are the method of storing resources used by plants. Tubers would be hidden within the ground at the connection of the plant's roots and shoots. Adventurers would only encounter them by digging and could use them for food.

Flowers are a plant's method of distributing and gathering pollen. Flowers need to attract pollinators, and would probably use smell instead of colour, as it is dark underground. They would reward pollinators with nectar and would sprout in the places where pollinators could visit the flowers and then move on to other plants. Adventurers would encounter them in the tunnels and could use them as a source of nectar.

Fruit is the reward for animals to spread the seed of the plant, and would grow where these animals would be able to access them. Fruit would also use smell to attract fruit-eaters. Adventurers could use fruit for food.

So, as far as plants are concerned, adventurers could encounter tunnels full of stubby stems, occasionally filled with sweet-smelling flowers or fruit. Streams would attract roots and as the adventurers went deeper underground, the temperature would rise and they would encounter "therms". Digging in the right places would unearth nutritious tubers. The presence of distinctive stems aboveground may be a clue to the experienced adventurer that caverns occurred underneath.

With the proliferation of plants, herbivores would evolve to feed on them. This would be a relationship of mutual benefit. The herbivores would feed on the plants, and would not only distribute pollen and fruit, but would also dig tunnels that would bring air and water down to deeper levels, encouraging the growth and spread of the plants. Prolific burrowers would have an evolutionary advantage as they would have a guaranteed supply of food in their burrows. Also, the bigger the burrowers, the more air and water would be supplied and the bigger the plants would be.

The presence of many burrowing animals would go a long way to explaining the presence of dungeons. The biggest criticism of dungeons is one of economy. In most cases it is simply not worth the effort for dangerous creatures to do major earthworks and dig all those tunnels. Taking over the tunnels of harmless herbivores, however, is a different thing altogether. Predators would find ready-made tunnels and would be close to their food source (herbivores). A large number of underground herbivores

would support a correspondingly large number of underground carnivores, in proportions suitable for dungeon adventures.

Intelligent creatures would also find it uneconomical to dig their own tunnels, unless what they were digging for was very rare and could not be found anywhere else (e.g. minerals) or it was an important part of their culture (e.g. burial). For the purpose of living areas it is easier to live aboveground. Also, for the purpose of defence it is often tactically sound to have a good view of the surrounding area and to be able to escape in any direction. However, the existence of extensive, already-dug tunnels, populated by plants and herbivores, makes living underground economically sensible.

Once intelligent beings settled in tunnels they would being cultivation in the tunnels. A well-organised tunnel system would provide good ventilation, and a reliable water source. Irrigation techniques would not only supply water to plants, but air as well. Intelligent planning and digging of tunnels would dramatically increase plant growth, hence feeding the population. However, it is very unlikely that the tunnels would be dug by hand. Firstly, it is too big an effort for most humanoids. Secondly, there would already exist a large number of herbivores much better suited to digging tunnels. Humanoids would probably domesticate and train the burrowing herbivores, and use them for tunneling. A close real world parallel is the domestication of cattle for plowing fields, a major agricultural achievement.

Defence underground would take the form of an early warning system (similar to the advantage of having a good view of the surrounding area), but since sight is limited, they would instead use the best thing underground, namely sound (infravision is limited by tunnel corners, whereas sound isn't). Careful tunnel design would guide sounds and echoes along tunnels to warn inhabitants of intruders. Defence would also include detecting invaders tunneling in, relying on vibrations (humanoids would invent the seismograph!). Tactically, defence would involve reinforcing, limiting and controlling the entrances to the main tunnel complex, and the construction of hidden escape routes and flanking tunnels from which to attack the invaders by surprise. Also, rigged cave-ins would slow down the invaders' progress. These are all options that are more available underground than aboveground.

So, if we introduce thermosynthetic plants to the fantasy world (and the existence of thermosynthetic plants should be well within the stretch of any roleplayer's imagination), there follows on from that the existence of underground producers (in the ecological sense), therefore large prolific burrowers, therefore deep extensive tunnel complexes, with many predators and entire civilisations of humanoids owning domesticated burrowers, all underground.

# "But I'm an Individual!": The Law/Chaos Axis in AD&D

by Gary Johnson

I read with interest Travis Hall's thought-provoking article in the last *Queensland Wargamer* on AD&D alignment. As I read his definitions for the various alignment poles, I thought about the definitions I used when I DMed AD&D (1st Edition) back in the 80s. Travis and I were in general agreement on good and evil, but I had a different set of definitions for law and chaos (which is hardly a surprise, us being different people and all).[1] As I thought about law and chaos, I realised that I couldn't remember what the rule books said about alignment. Curious, I took out my battered copies of the PHB and DMG, looked up the index in the DMG, and then turned to page 23. What I read there surprised and impressed me.

I was surprised and impressed because it became clear to me very quickly that Gary Gygax was trying to include in alignment much more complex ideas for law/chaos than I had ever imagined. To sum up Gygax's paragraph, the opposition between law and chaos is between the group and the individual. Because the group is, by Gygax's definition, ordered and organised, this opposition can also be expressed as being between order and randomness. However, this is a supplementary difference: the important distinction between law and chaos is that law favours the group over the individual, and chaos favours the individual over the group.[2]

This particular definition is usually overlooked in discussions of law and chaos, or relegated to a supplementary role while the writer goes on to discuss particular issues of being lawful or chaotic, such as whether or not a character has to follow systems of institutional law different to their own. Contrary to this tendency to examine specific cases, I intend to discuss the general principles behind the system for law and chaos detailed in the rulebooks, in the hope that players and DMs alike will benefit from having a clearer understanding of what Gygax is trying to say.

First of all, I want to take issue with one of Gygax's assumptions. As I mentioned above, Gygax defined the group (i.e. law) as ordered and organised, and the individual (i.e. chaos) as being the opposite, which he described as randomness and disorder.[3] I think Gygax erred when he did this, because I do not think that stressing the rights of the individual over the group brings about randomness, disorder, or anarchy (in the pejorative sense). Nor is there a necessary link between organisation and promoting the rights of the group. What Gygax has done is bring together two sets of criteria and tried to tie one to the other, without enhancing his theory of

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[1] For those who are interested, I had decided that lawful characters would obey a rule unless there was a compelling reason to break it, chaotic characters would not obey a rule unless there was a compelling reason to do so, and neutral characters were somewhere in between.

[2] Dungeon Master's Guide p.23. That chaos is randomness is an inference drawn from specific alignment descriptions, and not stated in the paragraph in question, where he merely writes "while chaos holds to the opposite view."

[3] Player's Handbook p.33: see entries on chaotic-evil, chaotic good, and chaotic neutral; Dungeon Master's Guide p.23: see entry on neutral good.

law/chaos and, in fact, detracting from the group versus individual framework.

But hold on, I hear you say. What's wrong with the idea that law is order, and chaos randomness? Isn't that what the words mean? Why waffle on about the group and the individual? Because the idea that a lot of people are random (i.e. chaotic) in their behaviour is foolish. We live in a universe surrounded by ordered structures, either natural, artificial, or abstract. Order and complexity are inherent in the universe and in the way we think about things. As I mentioned in my article in the last *Queensland Wargamer*, "Complexity, Realism, and AD&D", most game universes are very similar to our own universe, with some cosmetic changes to make them distinctive. Thus, we can safely assume that the game universe also contains inherent order and complexity.[4]

Now, human behaviour is also influenced by ordered structures. When we speak, we use a complex structured system — language. When we eat, we prepare our meals according a number of ordered systems, including what we do and don't like to taste, what we can and can't afford to buy, and what we know is and isn't available. When we think, we draw upon past experiences and learnt information to make rational (i.e. ordered) decisions. We are, all of us, beings with an inherent predilection to order.[5] A normal, rational individual cannot be truly random: they can appear random, but they will still follow ordered systems of thought.[6] Only the insane could actually be random, rather than appear random.

Viewed in this way, it is obvious that it is a waste of time to treat law and chaos as order and randomness. Are we to assume that all chaotic beings are irrational? Is every elf (that is not a player character) hopelessly insane? Is every person in the real world who believes in the rights of the individual over the group a lunatic? Gygax's supplementary explanation fails to be consistent with his principle definition, the way the rule books view the game world, and the way the real world is. My advice is to jettison it completely, rather than try to preserve the validity of an inconsistent and poorly thought out definition.

We can now turn to the issue of the group versus the individual. In the rulebooks, Gygax focuses on order and randomness when he describes various alignments, which means that most of his discussion of law and chaos is, for our purposes, irrelevant. What we are left with is the general guide-line that "law generally supports the group as more important than the individual, while chaos promotes the individual over the group".[7] How should we implement this simple statement, that can and should be applied to so many different situations and issues?

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4 Even if the game world is meant to be very different, the players and DM will still act as if the universe contains order because the real universe (the one we are all in) acts in these ways.

5 This is not to say that we don't appear to have free will, nor that we may even have free will, but that our actions are influenced in ways that can be predicted and that follow organised and recognised procedures.

6 The decision to act randomly is in itself following an ordered procedure, namely "I will act randomly in all circumstances". Order at the heart of chaos!

7 Dungeon Master's Guide p.23.

To phrase the matter differently: should an individual consider the group more important than himself or herself, or vice versa? This gives us a firmer footing on which to discuss the difference between law and chaos.[8] There are numerous issues raised by this question. Should the decisions of the group be more important than an individual's wishes? Are there aspects of an individual's life that the group should have no authority over? Do the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few? Is "the greater good"[9] more important than what we want for ourselves? Do we actually have an inviolable right to do what we want (perhaps with some limits)?

Do not expect easy answers here: these are issues that political philosophers have grappled with for thousands of years, and are still debating today. I have no doubt that some of you have different answers to some of these questions.[10] To help you understand these issues, let me give you some information about the way our society (i.e. late 20th century Australia) stands with regard to these issues. This way, you will have some real world examples of what law and chaos mean according to this schema.

Australia is a liberal society. By liberal, we mean that people (individuals) have certain rights that the state (the biggest, meanest group of all) cannot infringe unless certain conditions are met. The police are allowed to arrest us, but only if we have committed a crime.[11] We are allowed to have our own opinions on different issues, we can think what we want about religion, science, etc., we are expected (in fact, compelled) to participate in political decisions by electing representatives to our political assemblies, and so on. Our society, in fact all Western societies, tend to emphasise the individual over the state. We tend to think of ourselves of individuals first and foremost.[12]

This is not the way things have always been. In Medieval Europe,[13] to use a pertinent example, people tended to put the group first. The Church and the family were the two pillars of society, and people allowed these two groups to determine their behaviour. This creates a problem for us if we

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8 On the other hand, this construction does seem to require that we consider law and chaos as social phenomena, rather than as cosmic entities. If you favour the idea of alignment poles existing as entities or ideas independent of the existence of people (i.e. even if none of us were around, there would still be law and chaos, good and evil), then perhaps this framework is not for you.

9 Good in the sense of benefit or need, not moral goodness.

10 Of course, there are some questions that most of us living in Australia would answer in the same way, e.g. whether people should be kept as slaves. This consensus exists because our culture has certain official (i.e. legal) positions on some of these issues, for which read on.

11 This is the theory, not necessarily the practice.

12 Of course, the state is not the only group that affects us. Other potentially important groups include our families, our friends, our workmates, our church, or any other collection of people that has some influence on us. Very few of us place such an emphasis on our individual autonomy that we leave our place in society and go off into the desert to be alone. Human beings are a social animal: we prefer to live in communities. However, I intend to keep this discussion focussed on our relationship with the state for two reasons: firstly, it is easier to focus on one group rather than all groups; and secondly, if you choose to emphasise our social instincts you are essentially accepting that only a small minority of people are chaotic, which puts us in the same position we were in earlier when chaos was equated with randomness.

13 It seems to me that c.1500 is a useful cut-off point for the Middle Ages. Although our modern world-view doesn't really begin to exist before the 18th century, the period between c.1500 and c.1700 seems to be qualifiably different in world-view to the preceding era. It is one reason why, for instance, we can appreciate Shakespeare's plays, while the morality plays of the MIddle Ages do not fire our interest.

want to model our AD&D world closely on the Middle Ages, because people thought differently back then. They were usually prepared to let their elders or their superiors make important decisions for them. To us, this seems wrong, because we feel instinctively that people (i.e. us) should get to make their own decisions, and should have control over their own lives. We are socially conditioned by living in an individualistic society to favour chaos over law.[14]

However, do not think that all modern societies are chaotic. Marxism, for instance, stresses the community over the individual, which makes it lawful. "The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few."[15] The reason I feel that Marxism is lawful and not chaotic is that it seems to me to require that people lower themselves so that everyone will be equal, whereas liberalism argues that everyone is equal but should be allowed to try and achieve anything they can achieve. Because it emphasises group cohesiveness and equality, I think that Marxism is lawful, and not chaotic.

Hopefully, by now you are starting to understand the difference between law and chaos in this model. Of course, knowing that liberals are chaotic and medieval people are lawful is meaningless if you can't use these examples to describe the various societies in your campaigns.

There are some conclusions that you may have drawn that I think I should correct. For the record, I do not think these three principles are valid: firstly, that people who support the superiority of the individual cannot participate in the state or obey the law; secondly, that people who consider the group superior must obey the law; and thirdly, that individuals cannot promote their own interests if they support the superiority of the group. For the first point, I'll save us all some time by citing a document that shows that people in the real world can promote the individual and think that there should be a state:

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.[16]

As I have implied previously, most people are not at either extreme of the law/chaos axis:[17] thus, it is quite plausible that people who are chaotic can support the existence of the state. Indeed, nearly all liberals feel that the state is indispensable, because it protects the rights of individuals by

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[14] Whether or not we call ourselves political conservatives or liberals, right-wing or left-wing, we all accept a liberal world-view. For instance, even our conservatives accept the existence of welfare, unions, and civil rights, all of which were vehemently opposed when they first started appearing in the 18th and 19th centuries. We are inclined to be chaotic, even if we consider ourselves politically conservative!

[15] I'm not sure who said this first, but Colossus says it often enough in the X-Men!

[16] So, how many of you recognised the American Declaration of Independence?

[17] Which raises the interesting possibility that we should all be neutral. However, if everybody is neutral, then the law/chaos axis is useless for describing characters, so in the interest of having a valid distinguishing quality I will ignore this possibility.

compelling those who would harm the rights of others to "play ball" and follow the rules.

On the subject of the group obeying the law, I'd like to make this simple point: if the law had recently been changed so that the group no longer had some powers over the individual, people who supported the rights of the group would not be inclined to follow the law. If, for instance, the family had been responsible for the execution of wills, and a law was passed taking that power away from the family and giving it to the state, people who supported the rights of the family group would not support that law, although those who supported the rights of the state (another group) would support the law.[18] In general, people who support the group will obey the law as long as the law represents the interests of the group.

With regard to the final point, I think everyone would agree after some thought that people can be greedy, opinionated, self-important, etc., whether or not they are lawful or chaotic. Just because you think the group is important does not mean that you will not seek promotion within the group or try and use your position in the group to lord it over other people. Medieval nobles certainly dominated and exploited the peasants, but they didn't, by and large, think that individuals were more important than family and Church.

If there are valid general conclusions to be drawn from our real world examples, I believe that they would be trends, rather than the extreme polarities the above three conclusions positions. For instance, it seems to me that lawful people and societies tend to consider tradition important, and are less willing to tolerate innovation and change. I also think that lawful people would be more likely to equate morality with obeying the law, and to consider what is legal right and what is illegal wrong.[19] After all, the law is a tradition handed down by one of the most influential groups, the state. By comparison, I feel that chaotic people tend to be more creative and innovative, especially in the sciences, because they question the traditional, accepted beliefs. Not that my impressions are necessarily right, or that you have to use them if you accept my model for law and chaos. They are simply impressions that I have and that I think some of you may find useful when trying to roleplay these alignments.

If you choose to use this model of the law/chaos axis, there are certain implications worth taking into account. Firstly, law and chaos are simply indications of how people relate to other people. They do not determine morality: that is what the good/evil axis does. Law/chaos is not subject to moral relativity, because it is not moral: it is a way of describing social interactions that have no necessary moral implications. Secondly, because we have chaotic tendencies in the real world, it will affect us when

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[18] Which incidentally proves that lawful people can disagree with each other, just as chaotic people can disagree over, for instance, what the rights of individuals to defend themselves against aggression should be.

[19] Often there is a significant overlap between the law and morality, e.g. killing someone is usually (though not always) morally and legally wrong. However, there seems to be little that is morally wrong with smoking marijuana, but it is illegal. I suspect that a lawful person would be inclined to think that smoking pot was wrong in itself, and not just illegal.

we roleplay. Keep this in mind when you design a character or a campaign world. No matter how hard we try, nearly all of us will find slavery distasteful, and some may not be able to tolerate the idea that slavery is acceptable. Trying to make modern 20th century people think like Medieval people is like trying to fit a camel through the eye of a needle: we can't do it no matter how hard we try. We remain 20th century people pretending to be Medieval people, despite our efforts. People in the Middle Ages would never have dreamed of sitting on top of the grassy knoll with a crossbow waiting for the king to ride past. But your players will.

## Campaign Settings and Game Worlds for AD&D: A Review

by Travis Hall

An important subject to think about when taking up AD&D is whether you should play in one of the published campaign worlds, and if so, which one. Published worlds make things easier, as the DM doesn't have to make everything up, but they also restrict the DM somewhat, as the DM's ideas have to be compatible with the published material. Also, the campaign books do cost money. If these limitations are not enough to deter you from playing in a published game world, then read on! What follows is a brief overview of the various AD&D campaign worlds.

### Greyhawk

This is the old standard. It was the very first setting published by TSR for D&D. Once, it was a very popular world, and new players will hear much about it from older players. Unfortunately for its fans, TSR is no longer producing Greyhawk material. It was a good world, but don't bother buying the supplements unless you are a collector. Greyhawk is dead. Long live Mystara.

### Dragonlance

My favourite AD&D campaign world. It has always had a unique blend of heroism and tragedy, light and dark. It is also well supported by the original series of novels, although the more recent ones leave a lot to be desired. Something that should be considered is that the Dragonlance world has been around for over a decade, so you can't expect to find all the supplements. On the other hand, most of the books are still available, including a reprint of "Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home", which is a brilliant source book. Supplements for this world have dropped off recently, but there are more than enough to keep a game going for years, and the lack of new supplements means you have some hope of catching up with the backlog.

### Forgotten Realms

The basic 2nd edition world. Lots of supplements giving lots of information, but also requiring lots of cash. Many DMs swear by this world,

but I have always felt that it lacks something. The world is too "nice" (not "nice" as in classy or "nice" as in good monsters to eat your PCs, just "nice"). TSR seem to have given in to pressure to avoid including anything unsavoury in their standard game world. I consider the result quite wishy-washy. In all fairness, though, Forgotten Realms probably has a larger following today than any other AD&D game world, and could be regarded as the standard against which the other worlds must be measured. Not a bad world, but nothing special either.

Dark Sun

Powergaming to the max. This is a world populated with beasts which would make a dragon wary to cross the road. This world is where you go if you want PCs who can kick "normal" PCs' butts. The thing is, everything is bigger and meaner, so the concept of an ultrapowerful world doesn't add to the challenge or the roleplaying. It just gives players something to boast about. Doesn't have the extensive support of the Forgotten Realms, and it isn't designed for beginners. Handle with care.

Spelljammer

Along with the aforementioned Dark Sun setting, this campaign world seems to be part of an attempt by TSR to breathe new life into AD&D by creating weird and "original" settings. In this case, the attempt has failed. Like Greyhawk, Spelljammer has been discontinued due to its lack of popularity. As to the setting itself, it is a cross between fantasy and science fiction, with AD&D's fantasy concepts used to try to explain a fantasy space setting. It doesn't work. Whether you love or hate the concept, after trying to use the setting in play you will have to admit that the published material has many flaws which make large chunks of Spelljammer unplayable. I recommend avoiding this world. It isn't worth the aggravation to fix it up. If you like the concept, design your own world instead of buying Spelljammer.

Ravenloft

TSR's fantasy-horror AD&D world. This may be yet another attempt to interest people in the game by creating strange new campaign worlds: certainly Ravenloft is not the abysmal failure Spelljammer is. TSR have included enough of the classic elements of the horror genre and good, old-fashioned ghost stories to make the world believable and to allow players to draw on what they already know to help them imagine the setting, while including original tales and ingenuous twists on the standard ideas. The material is quite well done, with few faults, and is very readable. The only real problem I have with Ravenloft is that in some places TSR have included their versions of some classic tales (including obvious rip-offs of "Frankenstein's Monster" and "The Island of Doctor Moreau") but have missed the point of the original stories. The result is a story with some superficial scariness, but lacking the truly chilling elements of the original story. Still, you can't have everything. The supplements are some of the best around, and many are useful even for non-Ravenloft campaigns.

Although I almost never use modules, those who do tell me that many of the Ravenloft adventures are among the best ever written for AD&D.

Planescape

The Planescape setting is a campaign based mostly in the Outer Planes and the Astral Plane, with occasional trips to the Inner Planes. The setting allows you to play the inhabitants of the various heavens and hells. The writers of Planescape have tried to give the setting its own unique feel, which is nice in theory, but unfortunately the feel they have chosen seems more like cyberpunk than fantasy. The setting is almost wholly created by its designers, and I think Planescape could have been much better if it drew more heavily on the legends and myths which most players have at least a vague familiarity with. The text is saturated with slang from the Outer Planes, which is not at all related to the fantasy lingo which we all know and love, and makes reading the text difficult at times. The artwork is not believable, as it warps the subjects of the pictures in an attempt to give that "far out" feel, and does not help anyone imagine what things actually look like. Overall, I don't think the concept is too bad, and there are some good ideas here, but I find the end product more annoying than useful. It is definitely not a beginner's setting, as it does not relate to anything non-AD&D, and few things which are AD&D. Another attempt to add life to the game with a wild setting. Buy at your own risk.

Mystara

Mystara is the old D&D Known World setting. Recently, TSR decided to upgrade (I use the term advisedly) the world to AD&D status. If you are looking at starting to collect campaign supplements, I strongly recommend this game world. Being the newest addition to the AD&D line, you can start collecting now and buy each book or boxed set as it comes out, which hurts the wallet a lot less than trying to catch up. Also, the source material for Mystara has always been very good. Mystara is a "standard" AD&D fantasy setting, as opposed to the weird ideas of Planescape, Spelljammer, Dark Sun and Ravenloft, so many players will feel much more comfortable with Mystara than these other game settings. There is one thing to be careful of, however. In D&D alignment there is no good/evil axis, which means that law sometimes means good and chaos sometimes means bad — but not all the time. In the transfer to AD&D, the definitions have gotten a little muddled, resulting in a great conflict between law and chaos instead of the standard good versus evil arrangement. You may want to change this. Anyway, I strongly recommend Mystara to new DMs just starting out and old DMs looking for a new campaign world, and suggest that you consider using this world rather than the other "standard" AD&D worlds, Greyhawk, Dragonlance and Forgotten Realms.

# Good Versus Evil in a Campaign World
## (Or: The Forces of Light and the Forces of Darkness and What the Difference Might Be)

by Daniel Nolan

Nearly every GM needs to grapple with issues of good and evil in a campaign. This can be difficult — after all, there are many competing accounts of what good and evil are, and if PCs are motivated to try to do the "right thing" (whatever that may be), the GM will have extra trouble working out when the PCs have strayed from the straight and narrow, and what the various NPC individuals and organisations are going to do about it. Good and evil also become relevant when the GM is designing NPCs, organisations, and so on. Exactly what will Secret Agent 0055 stoop to in order to prevent the PCs finding out The Truth? Will Captain Bicep talk to them now that they are accused of sleeping with underage aliens? The GM will need some idea of the moral values NPCs have (or lack), and what mechanisms and institutions there are in the game world to support and/or undermine such values.

GMs running fantasy campaigns have all of these troubles and many more. Entire races devoted to evil, gods who reward their followers' behaviour with riches and health and punish the tardy with lightning, undead sorcerers plotting something unspeakably hideous in every third shire and so on mean that the GM must pay even more attention to the nature of good and evil and their possible influences on the game world. I'm going to discuss three broad approaches a GM designing a fantasy campaign can take to dealing with good and evil. Of course, these three alternatives are not exclusive — mixtures of the three are of course possible, and GMs are of course free to ignore good and evil altogether if it suits them. The world can be too full of shades of grey, for example, or perhaps the GM might not even care about the motivations of PCs or NPCs at all, but be too busy designing the trap in the room at the end of the 50 foot corridor. The three approaches I will examine will be labelled the "metaphysical approach", the "factions approach" and the "personal approach".

### The Metaphysical Approach

This approach should be familiar to many readers of fantasy. Good and Evil are palpable forces in the world, and many creatures derive their power wholly or partially from their connections with these forces. Objects, places and rituals can be intrinsically good or intrinsically evil, and whole races may be filled with the strength of goodness or be corrupted with the power of evil. While there may well be some shades of grey in the middle, there will be many entities (non-human or human) who will be extremely good or extremely evil. Good and evil might not be the only powerful metaphysical forces in such a world, of course: TSR's Dragonlance books, for example, had Neutrality or Balance as a cosmic force as well.

There are several ways this metaphysical approach to good and evil might work. Good and Evil could be abstract cosmic forces which infuse

certain beings with power which those beings must use for the purposes of Light or Darkness. Another popular approach is for there to be an extremely powerful and good god (or group of gods) faced with an extremely powerful and evil one (or ones). A good illustration of this is Tolkien's world, especially in the First Age. On the other hand, Good and Evil could be semi-sentient powerful forces that even the gods must respect and obey. Finally, one approach that I do not know has been tried before but which might have some potential is a somewhat mechanistic one, where the universe is just set up so that certain good deeds and certain evil deeds systematically produce particular results. (You want the forest to grow well? Hmm, we'll need lots of dancing, singing and being nice to each other. Need a famine to strike the land or poisonous lizards to spontaneously generate in the ground? Better sacrifice a few dozen babies.)

This sort of approach has some good points and bad points. A good point is that the opposition between good and evil provides a useful focal point for the campaign world. Once you have worked out what the Powers That Be are trying to do to each other, and which monarchs are on the side of good and which are on the side of evil, and where the good humanoids (sorry, demi-humans) live and where the evil humanoids live, a lot of the politics, society and conflict in the campaign can fall into place fairly automatically. One downside of this, though, is that players can feel their characters are too much at the mercy of higher forces. After all, if the Archangels can't save the world, what chance have a warrior, a couple of thieves and a priest? There are of course plenty of ways characters can still be significant, interesting and fun in such worlds, but it does not suit some gamers' styles.

Another point that can be good or bad is that morality in such worlds is often an objective and clear-cut matter. This suits some, and such worlds are good for producing villains black enough to justify PCs going out and engaging in hearty slaughter, if that's your cup of tea. On the other hand, there is a greater risk of two dimensional characters — whole orders of paladins that are repressed prudes who preach at times of crisis, whole species of creatures that are mean, untrustworthy, vicious, cruel and backstabbing (but who strangely enough nevertheless manage to live packed like sardines in caves without killing each other). Of course, having metaphysical good and evil does not force inhabitants of the world to divide into two camps of psychological clones, or even necessarily means that people will agree about right and wrong, but it lends itself to this sort of uniformity.

The Factional Approach

One approach which certainly allows for more flexibility is the factional approach. In this approach, "Good" and "Evil" are names of sides, teams, or parties in the world. Hopefully the beings on the side of Good will, by and large, be just, benevolent, merciful, charitable, kind and so on, and presumably those on the side of Evil will often be the reverse. But other factors might be at play as well. Slobbering brain-eating monsters are unlikely to be welcomed into the ranks of the good, and peace-loving little

people are hardly going to march en masse in the legions of the damned. Often, when races are rent by warfare each side will end up on different sides, like the elves living above ground and the ones living below ground in many campaign worlds and in fantasy literature. It is no accident in such worlds that those creatures that enjoy or require human flesh are nearly all dumped on the side of evil.

Considering Good and Evil as political groupings rather than cosmic forces preserves much of the black and white nature of the metaphysical approach, but it will have some differences. Good and Evil may well have less cohesion, for one thing. Wood elves on the side of good may happily kill and eat trespassers regardless of whether the trespassers are good at heart, and the local ogre might have more of a "live and let live" attitude — sure, he'll kick you when you are down and carry your children off for lunch if you are not careful, but he need not be the corrupted psychopathic evil-doer you would expect to find in a world where ogres are the product of metaphysical evil. Many people might have fairly nominal connections with their chosen side (like the local demon-worshipper who is kind to animals and only goes to a ritual once a year, or indeed the local worshipper of Ping, God of Justice, who is miserly and unpleasant). Any many people will just be on the side that is most convenient (*you* try being a good orc when King Gutrip decides to launch a war on the dwarves!).

There may even be people on one side or the other whose character and motivation have little to do with the archetype of their side. The owner of Deathskull Castle, Baron Arnuld von Deathskull, Knight Commander of the Beelzebubian Deathknights, might be a man with a great sense of personal honour and of a gentle disposition, who is only a Deathknight because his father was a Deathknight and his father before him. And it is not *his* fault if his servants eat human flesh — after all, what else are the hereditary ghouls going to live on? He pays the undertaker of a nearby town well, and spends most of his time reading popular alchemy books. On the other hand, the Silver-Banner Paladin Sir Brightblade is a violent short-tempered fanatic, only happy when killing things of different, and therefore (to Brightblade) inferior, races. He's slaughtered 75 goblin warriors so far, and has their ears and testicles on his walls to prove it. His servants are loyal, hardworking, and above all quiet — they still remember the time he whipped one of the pig-boys half to death for startling his horse.

This approach still has the advantage of making it easy to settle at least the outlines of politics and society — the good guys will tend to work together against the bad guys, and vice versa. The characters still have the ability to boldly crusade against evil (or perfidiously infiltrate the good, defending on taste), though they need to be a little more discriminatory — just because someone is from the other side, it doesn't automatically follow that they must be stopped. While this style more easily allows for complexity and shades of grey than the metaphysical approach, some GMs and players might still find it produces social and psychological situations that are somewhat restricting (like any campaign where there are only two main sides, I suppose). The most realistic option is probably the third: the personal option.

The Personal Approach

The final approach is one most similar to the way the real world works. Good and Evil are neither all-pervasive cosmic forces, nor are there near-universal alliances along (at least theoretically) moral lines. Even if there is objective good and evil, no lightning bolts descend from the heavens to punish the guilty (or chasms open up in the ground to destroy the innocent, for that matter). Even people of good will and integrity often end up on different sides of disputes, and evil being usually have little incentive to cooperate with other evil beings they come across. The main social and political divisions are not, by and large, divides between the good and the evil, and people will often refrain from wearing their moral preferences on their sleeves. I call this approach to good and evil in a campaign world a "personal" approach because the main influence good and evil will have is on the motivation of individuals, rather than acting as independent cosmic forces or large-scale social institutions.

Such a world need not be amoral — far from it. Many people in it may be exceptionally good or exceptionally evil — there may even be large organisations devotes to ends which are altruistic or horrible (again, a lot like this world). There may well be gods and other supernaturals creatures that combine great power with great good or great evil. However, many of their beings in such a world will most likely exhibit shades of grey.

This sort of world is, to my mind, more realistic, and avoids the somewhat simplistic dichotomy that the other two approaches lend themselves to. Not that this is automatically an advantage. Some people play fantasy roleplaying games to play larger-than-life heroes facing palpable evil that can be defied and defeated in a relatively straightforward manner. Living in a world where a lot of conflict is between sides, none of which are clearly in the wrong, and where motivations are ambiguous and complex, does not lend itself to charging in on a white horse and suddenly making everything all right again. Struggling in a universe where half the people are out to get you might not be as depressing as struggling in a universe that by and large just does not care.

I have not tried to produce an exhaustive account of how GMs might approach issues to do with good and evil — this article does not even address many questions to do with morality. Nevertheless, the different approaches outlined do capture some of the important ways good and evil can be relevant to a game world as a whole. Each of these approaches have their pluses and minuses, and of course GMs can mix and match to a certain extent. Not surprisingly, I don't think that there is a "best" way to handle good versus evil in a campaign — I would be happy to run, or to play in, campaigns that employed any of these three general approaches. Variety is an often underrated virtue, especially when it comes to entertainment (for me the heart of roleplaying). So next time you are sitting down at the campaign drawing board, consider how you want to handle good and evil, and perhaps try something different.

# A Solution to the Paladin's Dilemma

by Taina Nieminen

## The Dilemma

Leslie is a beginning roleplayer. Because she wants to smite evil and protect the innocent, she decides to play a Paladin. Let's call him Arcadio. Arcadio's early adventures are straightforward fights against orcs and other monsters, and Leslie has great fun. Then Arcadio goes up against Dom Majesticus, the living embodiment of evil. After a hard-fought battle in the grounds of the Dom's castle against his evil minions, Arcadio engages in single combat with the Dom himself. Things are looking good for Arcadio. The lifeless bodies of the minions lie scattered about the stronghold; the Dom's faithless mage and lover, Cecilia, has fled the castle, taking the fabled Star of Alalakh the All-Powerful with her, and so preventing the Dom from summoning the demon Triskele to his aid; the Dom himself is down to his last hit points. Arcadio, still facing the Dom, is justly enraged.

Three different scenarios that Leslie could face here are:

(a) The Dom slips on his own blood. His sword flies out of his grasp and he falls to the ground, sprawled helplessly at Arcadio's feet.

(b) The Dom falls to the ground, injured seriously, but not fatally, by Arcadio's last blow. Again, he is sprawled helplessly at Arcadio's feet.

(c) The Dom throws away his sword and falls to his knees, begging for mercy.

Arcadio remembers the screams of the prisoners tortured for sport in the Dom's dungeons, and brings his sword down on the Dom's neck. Leslie is ecstatic at having defeated the Dom. Then Jim, her GM, tells her that because Arcadio has slain a helpless foe, he has lost his Paladin status. He is relegated to mere Fighterhood: no more Protection from Evil, 10 foot radius; no more laying on hands. Leslie is understandingly taken aback, and feels that Jim ought to have warned her beforehand. Confused and resentful, she opts for other character classes next time.

## The Problem

We've all heard similar stories. Maybe there are GMs out there who gleefully anticipate springing this trap on hapless, inexperienced players, but Jim isn't one of them. He genuinely regrets having to revoke Arcadio's Paladinhood, but sees no other option. There may also be players who try to evade the requirement that a Paladin be good, but Leslie isn't one of them. She sees Arcadio as a heroic protector and avenger, who did what had to be done to rid the world of an evil man. She sees Arcadio's actions as a justifiable choice between the lesser of two evils. Let's put aside the genuine problem of the rights and wrongs of the situation, and concentrate on the loss of Arcadio's Paladinhood. Leslie is right to perceive it as unfair, even though Jim did not intend it to be so.

The underlying problem is a failure of communication between Leslie and Jim. Arcadio sprang into existence fully formed, strapping sword by his side, ready to march off to adventure. He worships Mareeba, the lawful good Goddess of the Holy Smiting of Evil, and must give 10% of his treasure as a tithe to the temple. Other than that, neither Leslie nor Arcadio know anything about the Order of Mareeba. Jim knows what the standard of behaviour for lawful good entails, and *assumes that Leslie also knows*. He sees no need to explain to Leslie the standards of right and wrong in his campaign world—standards that are of material significance to characters such as Paladins—*because she already knows*. In fact, as we've seen, her ideas differ considerably from Jim's, but neither Leslie nor Jim realise this. It is inevitable that Arcadio will, sooner or later, run into trouble.

## The Solution

Jim explains to Leslie, at the beginning, those rules of behaviour for Paladins that Arcadio ought reasonably to know. He cannot, after all, be the first Paladin from his order to have faced the dilemma. His teachers have instructed him in the appropriate response for each of scenarios (a), (b), and (c). For instance, (a) may require Arcadio to carry out penance if he kills the Dom; (b) may allow him to slay the Dom without fear of losing Paladinhood; and (c) may cause him to lose his Paladin status irrevocably. Whatever Jim decides, and as controller of the campaign world it is ultimately his decision, he tells Leslie. To help Jim decide how much he should tell her, Leslie writes up a character history for Arcadio.

This history details what Arcadio has done in his life up to the beginning of the campaign, because he did not spring into life fully formed. He was born in the small village of Bye-Begones in the land of Hallstaat. His father died when Arcadio was only six, killed by a boar while hunting. His mother eked out a living as the local healer. She had not been born in the village, and after her husband died, was treated as an outsider. Arcadio grew up with a keen sense of the injustice present in the world. He swore at an early age to help make the world a better place when he grew up. The Order of the Knights of Mareeba the Holy were famed throughout Hallstaat and beyond, and wandered far and wide smiting evil and protecting the innocent. One day, a Knight of the Order rode through Bye-Begones and Arcadio knew at once where his destiny lay. He was eleven years old. Two years later, his mother, weakened from cold and malnutrition, passed away, and Arcadio left Bye-Begones for the lights of Akreybar, where Queen Jolimar XI held court and where the Head Temple of the Order of Mareeba was to be found.

Such was the fame of the Order that thousands clamoured to join, but only a single dozen were selected each year, after arduous trials. At the age of fourteen, and on his second attempt, Arcadio became one of the few accepted. From then on, he was schooled in the ways of the Order. He learnt the rules for daily living, and the laws that had been handed down by Mareeba herself when the Order was established. He was exhorted to follow the laws of whatever land he travelled through, but if they were in conflict with the laws of Mareeba, then he was to follow the latter or face expulsion

and the loss of Mareeba's favour. At the age of twenty-one, Arcadio was sent forth from the School to carry out the task of the Order.

Leslie's ideas must fit in with Jim's conception of the campaign world, yet it is also possible that Leslie's ideas add extra details to that world. Most importantly with respect to the Paladin's dilemma, Jim needs to tell Leslie the rules and laws of the Order as learnt by Arcadio in his seven years of schooling. Of course, it is always possible that the Order has got it slightly wrong, but Jim does not need to tell Leslie that. However, if the Order has got it wrong, and Arcadio loses his Paladinhood because of this, he should be able to regain his lost status. One way in which he could do this is by undertaking a quest to discover the real law and bring it back to the Order. Jim could make such a quest an important goal of the campaign, spanning a dozen or more sessions. Of course, if Arcadio chooses to break the rules of his Order, then he deserves his punishment. But at least Leslie can make the decision to do so.

The Paladin's dilemma can be experienced by any good-aligned character. It is essentially the problem of finding the right thing to do when faced with a helpless but evil foe. The forms it can take include what to do with Kobold eggs or Orc babies. These are living beings who have not yet committed any evil acts, but will almost certainly do so in the future. It is not an easy moral question. The point here is that a Paladin does not face the problem in a moral vacuum. He or she is usually a member of a lawful order, which will, in all likelihood, have rules of behaviour covering such occasions. What these rules actually are, I leave to individual GMs.

## A Structured Scenario Design Process

by Nick Lawrence

Scenarios are a very important part of roleplaying. The scenario starts and outlines the session, and the success or failure of the session thus depends in a large part on the quality of the scenario. The ability of the GM to direct a session and the skills of the players in participating are equally important factors, but will not be discussed here.

As a person with little experience in designing scenarios, I have asked several GMs I know to describe the process they use. The processes described to me have been rather vague, mainly consisting of the GM writing what they feel is best. Some scenarios are specific to a developing plot or a particular NPC, others can be slotted in anywhere in a campaign. Each GM has a different opinion about what should be considered when designing a scenario. A generally accepted structured scenario design process does not exist.

In this article, I am presenting my own ideas for a structured scenario design process. I do not believe that scenario design can be completely structured, but I do believe that certain processes of scenario design can be structured, and will benefit from being structured. This article deals mainly with those processes of scenario design that I feel lend themselves to a

structured approach. It is my hope that this article will provoke thought and generate comments and discussion.

During my years as a player I have experienced scenarios of varying degrees of quality. What struck me most was that when, in my opinion, a scenario failed it was not through a lack of creativity on the part of the GM, or through a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the players. Rather, it was a lack of comprehensiveness, the scenario did not fulfil a basic requirement of the player(s), the plot had holes or internal inconsistencies, the plot did not match or develop the campaign, the atmosphere was wrong, there was little opportunity for character development, or some other reason.

The common theme that struck me about these disparate problems is that they all could have been avoided with some forethought when designing the scenario. However, when I tried designing a scenario myself, I experienced first hand exactly how difficult it is to think of everything and keep everyone happy. Having realised this, I decided that perhaps it would be more efficient to develop a structured scenario design process.

Ideally, a structured scenario design process would allow the GM to determine what everyone wanted from the session, while remaining true to the existing campaign world and plotlines.

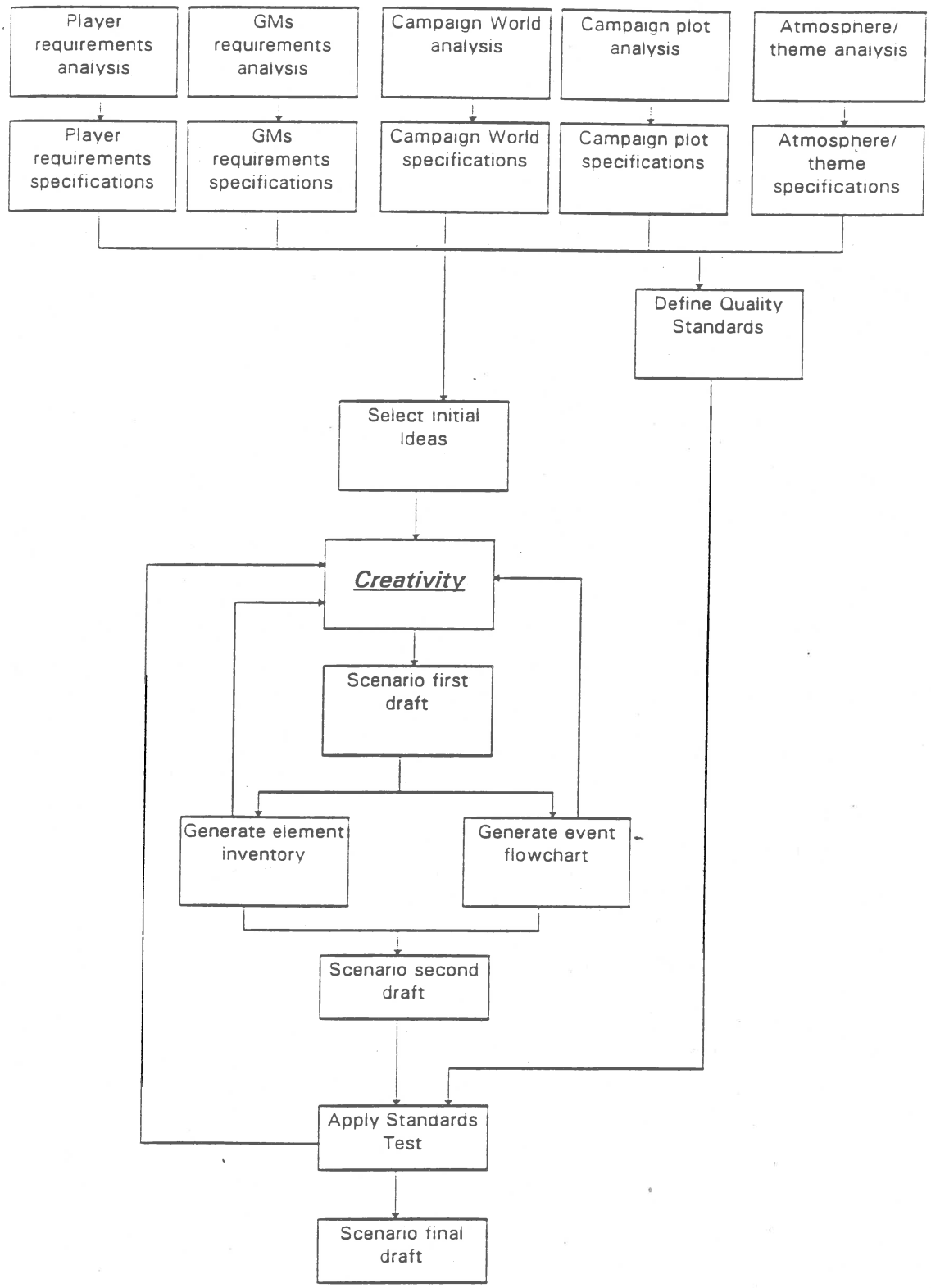
In searching for ideas for a structured scenario design process, I have been examining the design process used for developing software. There are some important similarities: the designer develops a product to satisfy certain user requirements, which is also compatible with existing software and operating systems. The important difference is that scenarios will be designed on a regular basis for the same players, while software design projects are normally one-offs.

Important themes I drew from the software design process are:

* user requirements analysis
* specification of standards
* testing if the product meets those standards
* inventory of important elements
* flow chart of events

What follows is a description of the steps outlined in the flowchart on the next page.

The first step of the structured scenario design process is analysis of requirements. The players, GM, and existing campaign all have requirements. Analysing these requirements involves asking questions, doing research and gathering information. This information would normally be close at hand or easy to acquire. The next step is defining the specifications. This involves translating the results of the analysis into terms appropriate for writing a scenario, i.e. elements or events that should be included, or ideas worth expanding on.


Player requirements analysis
GMs requirements analysis
Campaign World analysis
Campaign plot analysis
Atmosphere/ theme analysis
Player requirements specifications
GMs requirements specifications
Campaign World specifications
Campaign plot specifications
Atmosphere/ theme specifications
Define Quality Standards
Select Initial Ideas
Creativity
Scenario first draft
Generate element inventory
Generate event flowchart
Scenario second draft
Apply Standards Test
Scenario final draft

Player requirements analysis involves communicating with the players to determine what they want out of the campaign in terms of storyline, atmosphere, kill count, sub-plots, encounters, etc. Player requirements will be different for different players, for different characters, and even for different session times.

Player requirements specifications is a summary of the player requirements analysis. The player's requirements are translated into specific elements that the scenario should or should not include.

The GM (i.e. you) will also have requirements, and these will be different to those of a player. Analyse your requirements by writing them down. Then complete the GM requirements specifications by translating your requirements into elements of the scenario.

Analysis of the campaign world and campaign plot is done to ensure that scenarios fit into the existing world and plotline (even if the plotline is a simple one). Since these only change slowly over time, this step will only require minor updates between scenarios. It is here also that the flow-on effects from the previous scenario are analysed. The future plans of the surviving NPCs from the previous scenario should be worked out, and any possible future impart on the players defined.

The atmosphere or theme of the campaign is analysed so as to ensure that it is possible to maintain an appropriate atmosphere throughout the session. Specifications may include certain scene descriptions, NPC interactions, and types of encounters.

Once requirements analysis and specifications have been completed, the next step is to define quality standards. The purpose of a quality standards test is to provide a clear assessment of the quality of the scenario before it is presented to the players. In order to maintain the integrity and effectiveness of the quality standards test, the standards have to be defined before the scenario is written. Otherwise, one cannot ensure that the standards have not been unconsciously modified so that the scenario will pass.

Quality standards are drawn from the requirements of the scenario, taking the form of "is a specific requirement met?" Standards should be clear, yes-no questions, and should deal with specific indicators of quality instead of quality itself. Standards could therefore take the form of "is a specific element (e.g. opponent, item, scene, encounter, skill-test) definitely included?" or even "is a specific element (e.g. inappropriate technology, inappropriate atmosphere, inappropriate encounter) definitely excluded?" Standards might also involve approximate running time, or the inclusion of props. Such standards are clear-cut and deal only with the content of the scenario. Care should be taken in defining achievable standards; if they are set too high, the scenario might never pass. The delivery of the scenario also has a major effect on the quality of the scenario, but this is not part of the scenario design process and is not dealt with in this article.

The next step is getting ready to write the scenario itself. Writing a scenario requires creativity, which cannot be pinned down in a flowchart of structured steps. All I can suggest here is that you collate a list of initial ideas for the scenario from your list of specifications. You then do whatever it is you do to be creative and write the scenario. This is the most important and ill-defined step of the whole scenario design process and is given the central position. All other elements of the flowchart are there to focus and refine your creativity. The result is your first draft.

Having written your first draft, the next two steps are to generate an element inventory and event flowchart. Completing these steps will reveal flaws or inconsistencies that might exist. These steps are a fast method to help make the scenario comprehensive and thorough.

An element can be a person, object, place, or anything else that is part of a scenario. An inventory of elements will include a description, background, justification for existence, and relationship with other elements. This makes it possible to keep track of the important elements in a scenario and to ensure that each element has a good reason to be there and is useful in some way.

An event flow chart will describe events created by the scenario and the possible options available to the players. By examining the range of choices the players could take it is possible to detect those choices that are detrimental to the storyline. Contingency plans should then be designed that maintain the storyline, or a storyline, in a manner that does not overtly make the characters' decisions for them. In this way the plotline will be robust, while still maintaining an illusion of free will.

Should flaws be revealed in these two steps, the scenario can be re-drafted to correct them.

The next (and hopefully last) step is to apply the quality standards test. These standards should have been defined before the scenario was written and will indicate if the requirements have been met. If not, the scenario should be re-drafted, or perhaps the standards re-written at a more realistic level.

The draft that passes the standards test should be a scenario that meets all reasonable requirement and is comprehensive and robust. Writing such a scenario should be a good start towards delivering an enjoyable session.

Every GM I have asked has agreed that designing a scenario is hard work. It is an intricate task, requiring patience, determination and creativity. In business and industry a common approach to complicated tasks is to plan ahead by setting out the steps that need to be completed and providing a system of checks and balances. This is done with the goal of being more productive while spending less time. Perhaps if the same ideas can be applied to scenario design it would not be so much hard work.

## Discussion of "A Structured Scenario Design Process"

by Taina Nieminen

Instead of discussing Nick's scenario design process itself, I'd like to comment on some of the underlying assumptions he makes, particularly those about the relationship between players and GMs. Nick is clearly writing from a player's point of view, and seems to regard the role of the GM as providing a service for the player. He developed his design process to overcome problems that he had experienced as a player: the players are the main users of the scenario, which is written primarily to satisfy their requirements. The process is intended to improve the product the GM presents to his or her players; improving design efficiency is a secondary consideration. Nick recognises that roleplaying is about balancing the divergent interests of the people involved, but seems to believe that the needs of the players overwhelm those of the GM.

It is important, of course, that players be satisfied with the content of the campaign, and well-balanced, challenging scenarios that match their interests can go a long way towards this. However, a scenario, and even more so, a campaign, is more than a task given to the players and adjudicated by the GM. A campaign is a fantasy world, in many cases invented and detailed by the GM, in which the players interact with each other and with characters run by the GM. (I have been known to explain roleplaying to people as: I have an imaginary world filled with imaginary people, and my friends come over to play in it. There lies the crucial difference between GMing and novel writing.) Developing a campaign is also hard work, but something that many GMs find immensely rewarding. I realise that some people regard GMing as a chore to be passed around the group so that everybody has the chance to be a player, but other people GM because they want to. We do it because we get something out of it, and although I can only speak for myself, it is not to provide a service to the players.

Although he recognises that players may have different interests, Nick still assumes that given the correct design process, "all reasonable requirements" can be catered for. He does not address the question of what the GM should do if some of those interests are incompatible. For example, one player may want a simple adventuring story line punctuated by episodes of violence, mayhem and slaughter, and another, a complex plot involving diplomatic intrigue and detective work. A player who really wants SF is unlikely to be happy in a fantasy campaign. When conflicting requirements exist, a particular scenario will subordinate or even eliminate some. This means that some people will miss out, at least some of the time.

This may be what Nick is getting at when he specifies that a scenario should meet "reasonable requirements", but it begs the question of what is reasonable. My campaign, for instance, emphasises strategic problem solving, character interaction and development, and story telling. Players who want frequent combat will not be happy in my campaign and are best off finding a GM who shares their interests. That is not to say I believe their

requirements to be unreasonable—they are not—but simply at odds with what I—and the majority of players in my campaign—want.

If everybody has roughly the same interests, well and good. If not, problems will occur. If you're in the minority, you may need to settle for something less than you want. If you're not prepared to do that, and your fellow gamers aren't prepared to settle for what you want, you may need to find another group that does share your interests. Actually, this hardly needs stating—people will be happiest when their fellow gamers have similar interests—but I mention it because sometimes people make blanket statements about what other people should want out of roleplaying. Although this is understandable (maybe we want others to see roleplaying as the fantastic experience it is for us) it is judgemental. Different people want different things and none of these are "wrong". However, real problems can arise when people who want different things are in the same group.

Another assumption Nick makes is that GM requirements will differ from those of the players. I don't see why this should be so, but then, I don't know what Nick means by GM requirements because he doesn't give any examples. (Presumably campaign and atmosphere requirements are GM requirements to some degree.) This sets up a polarised model of player and GM, and encourages a view of roleplaying as a competition. At its worst, it's the GM with a dungeon in which his or her intention is to kill the PCs and the PCs' aim is to survive. That may be all right as far as it goes, but it doesn't go very far. Many of us roleplay for a lot more than killer dungeons, and a more rewarding form of roleplaying can be one in which players and GM co-operate. I try to make the tasks I set my players challenging, but I don't try to thwart them: I want them to succeed. I want to build a story together with my players, one in which the PCs are the main protagonists.

Nick also supports a view of players as very passive. He does acknowledge the importance of players' participation, but apparently only to the extent that the scenario requires them to do so. The GM is held responsible for the success of the design process: it is not incumbent upon players to communicate their needs to the GM, but only on the GM to ask the players. Over the past decade, I have had both happy and unhappy players. Sometimes I did not realise that players were unhappy simply because they did not tell me. For players who don't GM: if you don't seem particularly unhappy, and you keep coming back for more, your GM will almost certainly assume that you are satisfied with the quality of the campaign. If you're not, and you aren't willing to tell your GM, you should accept some of the responsibility for your own dissatisfaction. During the past two years, I have made a point of periodically asking my players if they are satisfied with the campaign, and what they want out of roleplaying. In doing this, I've found that although players are able to express discontent and point to specific incidents they did not like, they are less often able to say what they do want.

I now want to turn to a point more directly concerned with Nick's scenario design process: flow charts and linearity. A flow chart assumes that players will go through a scenario in a fairly logical and predictable

order, with a restricted number of choices. Such a flow chart could be drawn up for a dungeon scenario, with choices such as: turn left or right, fight the minotaur or run away. A linear scenario has little in common with the real world, where problems tend to be more complicated and the array of choices wider. I'll use a specific example to illustrate what I mean, by showing how the same idea can be developed into either a linear or non-linear scenario. The basic idea is a town suffering from a bandit problem.

If the group prefers straightforward scenarios with tactical problem solving and combat, a scenario can be developed in which the important elements are: a town suffering from a bandit problem that it cannot deal with by itself, a bandit group (with levels and hit points, and a plan of their stronghold), and an introduction in which the PCs enter the town and are hired to capture or kill the bandits. The focus of the session is on the tactics that the PCs use to defeat the bandits. There is nothing unreasonable about such requirements, but if the group wants something more complex, the idea can be developed further.

To produce a more complex, non-linear scenario, we can twist the initial idea a little: the bandits become the good guys and the local authorities are corrupt. The mayor is responsible for paying taxes to the king in the distant capital. He charges as much as he thinks he can get away with, and ships only the required sum to the king, keeping the balance for himself. This is known as tax-farming and is quite legal, not to mention common, throughout the kingdom. The bandits are a group of disgruntled locals, mainly idealistic young people who want to change the situation; older people are resigned to it as their lot in life. The local magistrate owes his position to the mayor and thus condones the practice. He is also under instructions to let off the mayor's friends when they commit crimes. The local spell caster, who is responsible for truth telling spells in court, fiddles the spells because the mayor has threatened her husband and children. The town guard sympathise with the bandits but can't do so openly. The captain knows that corruption extends throughout the government and is resigned to its existence. All he wants to do is keep his town quiet, and is in no hurry to go about catching the bandits.

The players are now given a scenario in which the PCs reach the town to discover that the local mayor is being terrorised by a bandit group and the town guard makes no effort to capture the bandits. It has become an exercise in strategic problem solving in which the PCs must gather sufficient evidence to decide who the villains are, and then do something about it. The range of choices available to the PCs is not reducible to a flow chart. They could talk to any number of people in town, in any number of ways, say, by getting them drunk or by threatening them. They could spy on people or break into houses to steal documents that may contain clues. They could try to find the bandit headquarters and either talk to them or kill them.

Whether the GM runs simple, linear scenarios or more complex ones depends on what the group wants out of roleplaying. People who prefer a black-and-white world to get away from the awful greyness of the real one may well prefer linear scenarios: on the other hand, people who find the

same greyness necessary for their enjoyment may be dissatisfied with simple plot lines. Neither of these desires is "better" than the other, but they are different, and a GM may well be unable to cater adequately for both within a single group. No one is culpable: it's just a case of different interests that cannot be reconciled. It reminds us that shared requirements can go a long way towards satisfaction with roleplaying. That is not to say that gaming with people who have different interests and attitudes cannot be rewarding, but it helps to be consciously aware of those differences, and to work at bridging them.

## A Comment on "A Structured Scenario Design Process"

by Timo Nieminen

The concept of using a proper engineering process for scenario design is sound. This will apply particularly to any scenario designed for users other than the designer (such as the ones for sale in the shops). Altogether too many gaming products are shoddy, just as too much commercial software is shoddy due to a poor design process.

Nick has presented what he feels to be a suitable scenario engineering process. Some readers will agree, some will disagree, and many will feel it can be improved (if so, write your own article!). Having just read Nick's article, I haven't yet decided into which group I fall.

One important point, though, is that vital parts of play in a long-term campaign are *improvisation* and *open-endedness*. A campaign can be engineered to provide these, but these factors are largely outside any scenario design process. Given a familiar game world and suitable players, the entire "scenario" can be determined on the spot by the players.

Thus, if you are designing a scenario for other users, or a non-campaign scenario for your own use, a coherent scenario engineering process can be very useful. If you are designing a continuing campaign, the way in which the campaign as a whole is engineered will be more important. If the campaign has already started, much of this design work will already be done.

So, let's see your comments on scenario design and campaign design appearing soon in this magazine!

THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE QUEENSLAND WARGAMER WILL BE AVAILABLE DURING O-WEEK. THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS IS FRIDAY THE SECOND OF FEBRUARY 1996.

HAVE A HAPPY CHRISTMAS!