

# clearerther!

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MEMO TO E. GARY GYGAX

## MEMO TO E. GARY GYGAX

Thanks for your comment on my alignment discussion. First of all, feel free to address me in the first person. Secondly, we all got a chuckle over your thinking *my* matching good/lawful and chaotic/evil was strange. You admit in an article fo *Strategic Review* that you originally matched them; and I know of *no one* in Southern California who splits morality and alignment as you do. But there's about to be one.

Right after I pubbed that last zine I started Moorcock's Elric series. I suddenly realized that the alignment/morality split could result in enjoyable complexity rather than ethical confusion. Naturally, my scientist-bent took over and I began exploring the possibilities.

After I worked out my version of alignment perpendicular to morality, I sought out your version. Fortunately, Steve and Sandy (McIntosh) had a copy of the February 1976 *Strategic Review*. To my amazement, we were over 50% in agreement. Perhaps even more, but I leave open the possibility that you may not see concurrence where I do.

In the next section I define and describe what I see as the most self-consistent alignment/morality coordinate system, define extremities and personify them, and give examples. Following that, I compare and contrast your proposed graph with my thesis.

I noted your statement that you wanted to "skip it," so do not feel compelled to reply, though I am certainly interested in your analysis.

I do not know if I have conveyed it in previous publications, but I have considerable respect for your gamesmanship. Inundated with all the variants of Southern California, I have plowed through to become a die-hard Gygaxian on magic-use, and tend to be fundamentalist towards the Seven Testaments. You implied that you have not fully hardened in that *Strategic Review*, at least concerning this question; as for me, my total reversal on this alignment question has been greeted with denunciations of heresy.

For truth and a good game,  
SEK3

## NOT ALIGNMENT, AGAIN!

Is obedience to law good? Is it even Lawful? That depends on what is meant by law and by Law. As a matter of fact, based on both logic and on fantasy reference, the answer to both questions is no.

Everybody obeys Natural Law, even the Christian omnipotent God. Contradiction cannot exist: for example, regardless of one's desires or alignments, magic, whether powered by entropy flow or spirits cannot both be and not be. And so forth.

What Moorcock and others mean by Law is "Order"—physical, crystalline order—the minimisation of entropy. *Obedience to Natural Law is irrelevant to entropy flow.* If I should smash a structure which causes violation of natural law, I would be entropic ("Chaotic") but "Good."

I won't belabor the point. Let us then put morality (Natural "lawfulness") orthogonal (as the mathematician would say) to alignment (physical order). Now let us explore the four *bases* defined, which can be pictured as four axes of an X-Y graph.

As we head indefinitely "upward" on the Y-axis, we approach a concept of infinite good, like the Judeo-Christian God in its less contradictory forms. What is the attitude of very "pure" Good to Law/Chaos? According to Moorcock, balance is desired by the Good so that the world will neither be frozen in crystalline stasis (pure Law) or randomised in heat death (pure Chaos). Hence *pure* Good is completely Neutral.

Similarly, one can proceed negatively (downward) on the Morality axis and find pure Evil could care less whether the world perishes by freezing or burning. Hence the Christian devil (and probably Zoroastrian Ahriman, etc.) is also Neutral in alignment, as are his minions.

Now let's try the X-axis (alignment). Put Law on the Left and head out towards pure Law. Personify it by a god, say Lex. Lex wishes imposition of patterns of order, reduction of degrees of freedom, and prefers crystalline states to random solids to liquids to gases and so forth. Good and Evil are irrelevant to Lex; he is an amoral, monomaniacal computer-type, programmed for Law.

Of course, Chaos is equally Amoral. Elric calls the god of Chaos Arioch, and Arioch cares not for the validity of Elric's actions, merely whether it will serve Chaos. Entropy must be maximised; structures must disperse.

No humans will be found at these infinite points, only those locked in their morality and their alignments by their Nature—their fundamental inability to change.

Now let's bisect the angles, and look at the four "corners" of the graph. Those are finite, unlike the coordinates, since there *is* a limit to how Lawful/Good one can be since attempting to be more Lawful requires committing evil acts, and always serving Good means occasionally breaking down structures, controls, and so on.

Assuming symmetry, we can draw a square (though one could argue for a circle or ellipse), and we have four corners: Law/Good, Law/Evil, Chaos/Evil, Chaos/Good. For other points of interest use the intersections of the square's sides with the four axes: Law(max), Chaos(max), Good(max), Evil(max), where (max) = maximum possible for sentient beings such as humans.

Let's personify these corners with gods. First, what would Good/Law be? It would be a position of defending Law by only Good means. Coercion, except in self-defense, is Evil, so the Lawful/Goods would seek a Natural Law without coercive regulations and controls. Harmony, as Frederic Bastiat defines the term, fits the position perfectly, so let's call the goddess *Harmonia*.

What about Law/Evil? Clearly Law would be imposed by force, slavery, slaughter, plunder, whatever Evil works. Statism, preferably totalitarianism, would dominate the culture, and hence wars of conquest. A war god would be close to representing this, but that still lacks the implication of the domestic tyranny and oppression. Call him *Archos*, the Ruler at any "price."

Chaos/Evil would entail violations of laws for its own sake. Perversions and mindless destruction would be encouraged, though restrained for the possibility of greater destruction and fouller Evil. *Dementia* would be an appropriate goddess.

Chaos/Good would entail attacks on regulations, controls, and states to smash Evil structures and free Good. Robert Anton Wilson's Discordians fit this category very well, so let's make Eris the goddess, or to keep the names similar to those of the other corners, *Discordia*.

Suppose the four High Priests of the corners should meet? What would their motivations be for action? Needless to say, the Discordian would see the Archist as the embodiment of everything he despised, and the feeling is mutual. So will the feelings run twixt Harmonian and Dementist. The Harmonian might attempt to deal with or neutralise the archist as a lesser, not immediate threat, and the Discordian would act towards the Dementist accordingly. A one-on-one battle would result, generating two pairs.

But suppose the Archist was not present? In that case, the Discordian would be motivated, at the very least, not to interfere in the battle between Harmonian and Dementist. In fact, he might act, and if so, for the Harmonian. The reason is clear: should he aid Evil, he would plummet toward Evil himself. On the other hand, aiding Law is only a small compromise of his Chaos alignment, one element or act among many, and could be reversed by a few acts afterward. One can make the same case for the Evil corners facing one of the Good ones, simply by moral inversion.

OK, so much for limiting cases. Now as you move "down" from the Discordian corner, the Chaotic/Good will be less likely to assist the Lawful/Good against Chaotic/Evil, though would definitely assist, say, a Neutral/Good Patriarch against any Evil. Amoral/Chaos will assist all Chaotics over all Lawfuls, and be Neutral to Neutrals, regardless of morality.

Moving "left" from the Discordian corner, the entity will tend to fight for "Good" of any alignment over Evil of any alignment, and this will be an imperative when one reaches Neutral/Good.

One can work out the other three corners the same way.

Heading "inward" along a line between the "origin" and the Discordian corner, one will remain basically Discordian, but less intense in both alignment and moral conviction. Finally, one reaches the center, the intersection of the axes, Neutral/Amoral.

Elementals, who are basically controlled or uncontrolled and not involved, are good examples of the Neutral/Amoral. On the other hand, although Druids are

Neutral, I would place them slightly above or below the Amoral line, or oscillating, since they *do* make moral choices. Rather than "Amoral," one would better describe them as "Mixed Premises." They are Neutral because they defend the Balance of Nature (which takes on a whole new meaning now) and hence are enemies of both Law and Chaos.

Most Patriarchs and Evil High Priests will now tend to be Neutral, but one could have sects for the for "corner" goods. Paladins should be Neutral/Good. Fighters are all nine possibilities.

A special word about Magic-users. Mages can be Good or Evil, but their Powers arise from the amoral forces. In short, Mages will attempt to tap the field strength of entropy flow between Lex and Arioch. A Wizard should, in a conflict with a mage of opposite alignment, appeal to the god of his (pure) alignment for additional intensity to overwhelm the defenses of the other. Since it would serve the god to have an agent of his opponent eliminated, he may grant it.

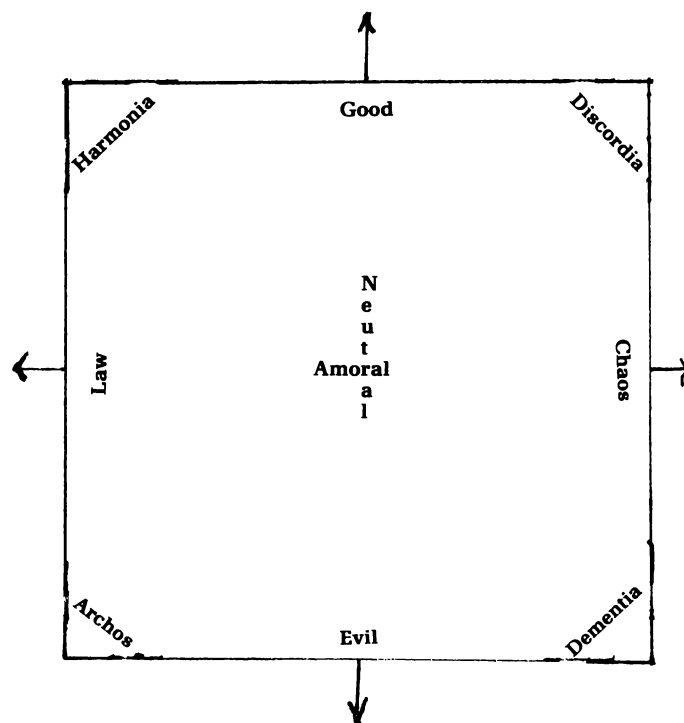
("Help me now, Arioch, and I dedicate his soul to you," cried Elric many times.)

Fine for Lawful and Chaotic mages, but what about Neutral magic-users? Basically, they would be sitting in the center of the "magnet" and could tap the lines of force between the poles, but could not appeal to either pole without becoming aligned.

Furthermore, enchanted monsters and monsters of fixed alignment will tend to assist humans of similar alignment and oppose those of opposite alignment (assuming amoral or weakly moral), though this would be true of fighters and thieves as well.

There is now no reason why Thieves cannot be Lawful—just not Good.

ALIGNMENT/MORALITY GRAPH



To sum up, Good and Evil will tend to defend the balance of nature (i.e., balance of entropy) and Law and Chaos will strive for Order/Entropy regardless of moral considerations. There are four "pure" positions, beyond the limits of fallible, choosing beings such as man. There are four "corners": positions of maximum Good and Law, maximum Chaos and Good, maximum Evil and maximum Chaos, and Law/Evil. There is a ninth position, Neutral/Amoral, dead center, and also all the area enclosed.

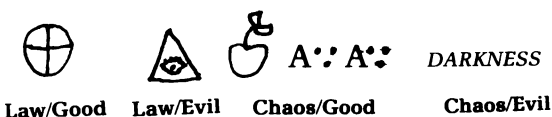
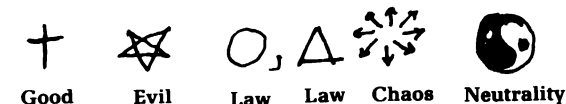
Human beings can be any morality and alignment; enchanted and created creatures will be aligned and benevolent/malevolent according to the nature of their creation. Other creatures, monsters, swords, artifacts et al. will simply be defined accordingly at creation by the Clerics/Mages.

How will this affect present D&D play? Only testing will tell, so my next dungeon, *Wargrypt*, will be inviting Southern Californians and visitors to try it out. It should be ready in January. But one obvious new possibility is having parties of mixed alignment (but same morality) or mixed morality and same alignment.

*Your fighters got the jump on a fighter wearing the symbol of arrows radiating from the center. Before he can get the obviously enchanted blade into play, he is slain by two mighty strokes. Your fighter, a Lawful, looks longingly at the Runesword beneath his feet, than calls over his friend, who wears the Golden Apple on his shield.*

*Your fighter points out the booty. "Praise Eris," he delights, and rifles through the Chaotic treasure and claims the sword. Off you go to the next nasty. Meanwhile, the sword slowly begins to extend the Evil control over your Discordian friend as its ego overrides your fighter's ally. How much more enjoyable than controlling that wishy-washy follower of Ariocho . . .*

## SYMBOLS



## COMPARISON OF "GYGAXIAN" ALIGNMENT TO THE ORTHOGONAL MORALITY/ALIGNMENT SYSTEM

First of all, Gygax and I put our axes perpendicular. But where he puts Neutrality in a little box in the middle, I have a straight line—the Good/Evil axis. Obviously, that will lead to conflict.

The use of Nirvana and Limbo (I am referring to Fig. 1 of the Gygax article) as endpoints of Law and Chaos fit my positions without too much trouble. The distinction between Heaven and Paradise and Hell and Hades is no clear distinction to me; if anything, I would reverse them and have Heaven for Neutral/Good, Hell for Neutral/Evil, Paradise (a lawfully-inclined heaven) for Harmonians and Hades (a Lawfully inclined Hell, I suppose) for Lawful-Evils. Elysium sounds all right for Discordians, and The Abyss fits Dementists to a T. So far, no major problems shifting from one system to another.

Checking down the Law/Chaos tables above his Illustration II, we have a severe semantic problem. Anarchy is put under Chaos—yet it is extremely "lawful" in both morality and economics. *Both* Harmonians and Discordians could be anarchists; neither Archists nor Dementists could be.

Come to think of it, why did Gygax put Anarchy on the list but not statist? Or any other political label?

Leave it out and the rest seem to fit. The statement that "Chaos is complete anarchy" is wrong; here I am forced to pull rank as an expert on anarchy.

I think if Gygax had stuck to more scientific terms such as "uniform" and "irregular" he would have no argument.

No argument exists in his Good/Evil list of terms, and I think he was wise to leave the selfishness/altruistic problem out as he states.

As for the monster positioning in Illustration II, I can live with all, though I am particularly bothered by "Good" liches since Undeads are supposed to be all Evil. I can accept Paladins as Lawful, but just as likely Chaotic, and most likely Neutral/Good. Similarly, anti-Paladins should be usually Neutral/Evil.

In the following paragraphs to the close of the article, I am in almost complete agreement. But where Gygax may choose to suppose the final battle is between Law and Chaos, one can just as easily assume a conflict between Good and Evil *beyond* the resolution of the struggle between Law and Chaos. Whether the entropic struggle will outlast the moral, or whether one postulates a spiritual one either surviving the physical or even contiguous, matters not for D&D.

The game is, realistically, finite; hence, all decisions outside the "Finite Square" that we have both defined remain speculative for both players and characters.

Thus, to sum up, I believe the Orthogonal Alignment/Morality system is largely compatible with the Revised Gygax version, is self-consistent, and is in tune with our fantasy literature basis for *Dungeons & Dragons*—hence slightly more rigorous. Is it playable? Experimentation will confirm that. Come to Wargrypt . . .

## EN GARDE AT THE RIPOSTE OFFICE Alarums & Excursions 15

**Glenn F. Blacow** My understanding is that Mayans did not indulge in human sacrifice, but Aztecs did. But let the Latin American history experts settle the matter. ¶ No point in arguing your view of my view of alignment, since I've just reversed my stand. But if you believe that stateless people are easy to conquer, ask the English how long it took them to subjugate the Irish. ¶ Thanks for your comments—all appreciated.

**John Boardman** Hi, John. Wondered when you'd turn up. You're correct that said laws need not work—but to change the social and economic laws you and I'd have to change human nature. Personally, I have more fun with human and humanoid characters. ¶ Have you heard about the Objectivist vampire? Living an ethical life as vampire *qua* vampire, of course. ¶ Your misrepresentation of Rand's position is similar to that which has consumed reams of *APA-L* off and on for years. Let's leave politics out of *A&E* unless necessary, OK? After all, what does the denizen of the average dungeon know from Karl Marx?