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EVIL: LAW VS. CHAOS

The *DUNGEON MASTERS GUIDE* contains a fairly detailed section regarding the various alignment characteristics. On reflection, however, I began to wonder if enough had been said about the different approaches to *evil*. Now, if one clearly defines the *lawful evil* and the *chaotic evil* characteristics, the *neutral evil* path becomes evident as the middle road between the two opposite approaches to the precept of banefulness. Considering the confusion regarding alignments, it cannot but help to say a few more words on the subject.

For those of you who have not as yet read the *DMG*, evil is typified by the desire to advance self over others, by whatever means are possible, and always by the foulest of means possible — and more on that later. Whatever causes the most harm is typically the most desirable course to follow. Pain and suffering are meat and drink to the creatures of evil. Slavery and oppression of all weaker creatures are considered as natural, for these exist only to serve and satisfy the demands of the stronger.

Lawful evil believes that the only way to impose the tyranny of their alignment over all creation is to follow an ordered course of action. Their evil society is rigidly structured, each being knowing its place and cruelly dominating all beneath this station, while being just as bullied from those above. Each creature in this hierarchy strives to follow the orders from the stronger most painstakingly — both to avoid punishment and in hopes of bettering its position in the order. To those beneath each is as harsh and cruel as possible: fearful of failure in its tasks, of being replaced by an underling. The evil ends desired might be better obtained by actions which are actually less vile than other options, but the order of lawful evil will generally perceive the most useful course rather than merely the most baneful in the short term. Hell and its environs hate chaotic good most vehemently, for they see threats there to both the structure of their social system and their proposed course. What worse than both total freedom and happiness brought about only by individual achievement and character? Therefore, lawful evil would certainly not hesitate to ally itself with virtually any other cause if this helped to abridge the scope and influence of those creatures typifying the chaotic good. Similarly, a devil would attempt to influence and possess principally those humans who were powerful and influential leaders of ordered communities, organizations, and states, i.e. *lawful* individuals not already committed to evil ends.

Chaotic evil certainly has the common denominator of banefulness with those creatures who follow the ordered path of woe. They likewise oppress and enslave, torture and kill for the pure pleasure of seeing suffering and death. But while lawful evil sees these activities as part of the structured course towards a world ruled by evil, those of chaotic evil alignment see such activities as an end in themselves. While the weaker chaotic evil creatures fear and often hate the stronger, they are ruled by them only insofar as the reach of the stronger extends — and possibly only as long as the stronger has interest in so doing. The individual evil is more important than the collective one. Let each evil being do its best to spread evil and chaos, and the ultimate result will be a cancerous spread of the alignment. Order is next to good in undesirableness, so *lawful* good is the antithesis of chaotic evil. Yet creatures of this alignment will not long associate to combat their hated foes, except lesser creatures under the leadership of some mighty demon or in extreme situations where the very structure of chaotic evil is threatened by some great

coalition of good. A demon is not interested in ruling nations but in spreading evil as it alone sees fit. Therefore, possession by a creature of chaotic evil is typically of an unstable individual who will run amok for short time, or of some singular figure who will be in a position to send out many such individuals.

The differences in tendencies and philosophies are reflected in the personal involvement of devils and demons in the affairs of the Prime Material Plane. The rulers of the Planes of Hell (devils) will seldom involve themselves in worldly affairs directly. Archdevils operate through their organizations to influence the course of events on the Prime Material Plane. Because of the strict order that devilkind adheres to, intervention of even lesser devils is rare, as the rulers make pacts with, humans and other agents. These arrangements assure that lawful evil is spread upon the Prime Material Plane, even though the Tiers of Hell are smaller than the Layers of the Abyss, for example, and there are far fewer devils than there are demons. While there is rivalry betwixt the Dukes of Hell, it is a prescribed and ordered contest wherein the rivals recognize limits and the need for mutual cooperation in order to insure that their collective realm remains strong and inviolate.

The very nature of demonkind, however, dictates a far more direct involvement in activities on the Prime Material Plane. Lacking extensive organizations, each demon lord must become personally active if he or she desires to meddle in the affairs of humankind, *et al*. It is not making a virtue of necessity on the part of demons to point out that they prefer such personal involvement. Thus, this or that demon lord will be encountered in material form, directing the activities of whatever group of followers he or she has gathered to spread disorder and woe upon the earth. Each powerful demon (and there are scores and scores of them) competes bitterly with all others in a deadly rivalry for supremacy — both in the Abyss and on the Prime Material Plane. The chaotic nature of demonkind dictates that mutual cooperation is unlikely at best, and any alliance between two demon lords will be one of mistrust and betrayal, doomed to a very short lifespan.

Neutral evil, as typified by daemonkind, follows the middle course between the rigidly ordered society of the Nine Hells and the anarchy of the Abyss. Yet this alignment has neither the organizational capability of lawful evil nor the great multitudes of chaotic evil, so all told it is weaker than either. The flexibility of neutral evil creatures enables them to survive and remain relatively free of rule by either Hell or one or more demon lords. The daemons and other inhabitants of Hades (and Gehenna and Tarterus as well) will as often as not become personally involved in activity on Prime Material Plane if they see it as gainful to their power and prestige or particularly enjoyable. In like manner, they will join in diabolical or demonic enterprises to further their ends, evil and personal.

Lawful evil has more common cause than those of lawful neutral bent than it does with demonkind, just as chaotic evil has more fellowship with chaotic neutrality than it does with Hell. Both alignments, the chaotic and the lawful evil, despise those who take the neutral course, seeing this as fence straddling, so to speak. The demons are too disorganized to enslave these creatures, however, while Hell desires a buffer and uses daemonkind as tools as well. For their part, daemons play off the Abyss against lawful evil to insure their freedom, power, and continued importance.

In summation, lawful evil, through its orderly arrangement and structure, wields great influence throughout the Prime Material Plane, even though devils seldom take a personal role, and the number of the dwellers in the Nine Hells is not overwhelming. Chaotic evil, on the other hand, while represented by a far greater number of powerful creatures taking a direct part in the affairs of the world, has no greater influence or power — perhaps less even — because of animosity between demons and the chaotic tendencies which preclude organization and assurance of purposes carried out by lesser beings under direction. Hell works carefully to bring its evil yolk over all the world, while demonkind attempts only individual forays to aggrandize some lord or other, increase the fame and glory of a particular prince or princess of the Abyss, or merely to bring a few decades of foulest pleasure.

The lawful evil character, then, is bound to follow a course which is strictly ordered. The path he or she follows is one of evil, but also one which attempts to bring formal rule to the world under the auspices of Hell. The character must obey and strive for the purposes of lawful

evil — furthering his or her own position in the process, of course. Those of you who have read Fred Saberhagen's *CHANGLING EARTH* will recognize that the Emperor John Ominor ruled a lawful evil realm — although he apparently served no diabolic master.

In contrast, the chaotic evil character serves only him or herself, but always towards evil ends. But the chaotic evil character recognizes no master, save out of fear and necessity, and even in the event that such recognition is necessary, he or she will always strive to gain the upper hand and dominate. If lawful evil can be likened to a mountain chain, with the highest peaks being the Dukes of Hell, and the lowest foothills the menial servants, then chaotic evil is a series of islands and islets in a vast sea — numerous but connected only tenuously by underwater ridges.

The lawful evil character will certainly cooperate with others in order to extend the sway of his or her alignment — seeking advantage by lies, trickery, and deceit while adhering to the letter of the bargain, naturally. The chaotic evil character will rule but seldom cooperate for long. As soon as he or she sees a possible advantage accruing through abandonment or betrayal — or perhaps simply because he or she has grown tired of the pact — the chaotic evil character will be true to the precept of his or her alignment!

Players can assume the role of a good or an evil character without undue difficulty, but in my experience the orderly or disorderly tendencies are another matter altogether. Law and chaos seem to be more ingrained in the actual personality of a player, and these bents are thus not as easily acted out. While you, as DM, will order the NPCs of lawful, neutral, or chaotic evil alignment, your players will tend to assume alignments which actually fit their personalities as respects order versus anarchy, so you must observe such activities quite closely. It is common for players to seek the best of both worlds by claiming the benefits of one alignment while using the processes of the other in order to gain power. Thus, a player might well claim to be lawful evil in order to receive the assistance of an archdevil, and thereafter blithely go about setting up a totally independent and free-wheeling empire of evil which has nothing to do with the aims of Hell. Such liberties cannot be allowed

Out on a Limb (con't from pg. 48)

six months later three or more so-called "improved" designs are on the market? I feel that it is symptomatic of a lack of daring and ingenuity on the part of the industry as a whole that one or two companies should do all the trail blazing and inventing, only to have the rest of them jump on the bandwagon made popular by those that took the risks.

If you want a world that is dominated by goblins, instead of having men be the dominant race, that is up to you. Unless they are somehow PC's it is ludicrous to advance lower races, and serves no useful purpose. If the lower orders were capable of advancement, man would not be the dominant species.

Having printed all of this, in context, I wouldn't want to bet on who received any favor. I'm sure that the readers have enough evidence to make up their own minds now — Ed.

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