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Dungeons and Dragons

Just like my pop culture file on *Star Wars*, this file has developed into a longer booklet on the concept of mythology. So, you can see the Star Wars file as part one, and this file as part two, on my view of mythology seen in relation with popular culture.

While Netflix series *Stranger Things* is full of similarities with '80s movies, TV shows and book references, what you might not have realized is that it's actually the series' clever use of role-playing game Dungeons & Dragons that explains the most about many of the main characters and plot. In D&D there are a bunch of different base character classes and once you take a look into the traits of each of the D&D characters, it seems as though the roles of many of the characters in Stranger Things were modeled on one of these classes.

Dungeons & Dragons is a fantasy tabletop role-playing game first published in 1974. It is a popular activity with Mike, Lucas, Will, and Dustin from Stranger Things, who play the 1983 Expert edition of the game in Mike's basement. They use the game’s elements and monsters to describe and explain the otherwise unknown forces that plague Hawkins, the town in which they live.

In the same way as childhood game-playing is a preparation for adulthood, it is my claim that D&D can function as a map over the spiritual journey through the dream-labyrinth of life and death. It has an ability to unambiguously describe and explain both dangers and pitfalls, as well as pathfinders and trail markers. So, the game can in that way prepare the players (train their minds) for a deeper spiritual quest for the dreaming tracks and songlines in the artwork of their own lives.

In the preface to the fifth edition of The Player’s Handbook Mike Mearls writes:

*Once upon a time, long, long ago, in a realm called the Midwestern United States – specifically the states of Minnesota and Wisconsin – a group of friends gathered together to forever alter the history of gaming.*

*It wasn’t their intent to do so. They were tired of merely reading tales about worlds of magic, monsters, and adventure. They wanted to play in those worlds,* rather than
observe them. That they went on invent Dungeons & Dragons, and thereby ignite a revolution gaming that continues to this day, speaks to two things.

First, it speaks to their ingenuity and genius in figuring out that games were the perfect way to explore worlds that could not otherwise exist. Almost every modern game, whether played on a digital device or a tabletop, owes some debt to D&D.

Second, it is a testament to the inherent appeal of the game they created. Dungeons & Dragons sparked a thriving global phenomenon. It is the first roleplaying game, and it remains one of the best of its breed.

To play D&D, and to play it well, you don’t need to read all the rules, memorize every detail of the game, or master the fine art of rolling funny looking dice.

None of these things have any bearing on what’s best about the game.

What you need are two things, the first being friends with whom you can share the game. Playing games with your friends is a lot of fun, but D&D does something more than entertain.

Playing D&D is an exercise in collaborative creation. You and your friends create epic stories filled with tension and memorable drama. You create silly in-jokes that make you laugh years later. The dice will be cruel to you, but you will soldier on. Your collective creativity will build stories that you will tell again and again, ranging from the utterly absurd to the stuff of legends.

The Dungeons & Dragons roleplaying game is about storytelling in worlds of swords and sorcery. It shares elements with childhood games of make-believe. Like those games, D&D is driven by imagination. It’s about picturing the towering castle beneath the stormy night sky and imagining how a fantasy adventurer might react to the challenges that scene presents. Childhood games of make-believe is an important element in my own Peter Pan Project and the art of seeing life as a play without reason. Neverland is a fictional location featured in the works of J. M. Barrie and those based on them. It is an imaginary faraway place, where Peter Pan, Tinker Bell, the Lost Boys and other mythical creatures and beings live. Although not all people who come to Neverland cease to age, its best known resident famously refused to grow up. The term is often used as a metaphor for eternal childhood (and childishness), immortality, and escapism.

Unlike a game of make-believe, D&D gives logical and ethical structure to the stories, a way of determining the consequences of the adventurers’ action. Players
roll dice to resolve whether their attacks hit or miss or whether their adventurers can scale a cliff, roll away from the strike of a magical lightning bolt, or pull off some other dangerous task. Anything is possible, but the dice make some outcomes more probable than others.

In the Dungeons & Dragons game, each player creates an adventurer (also called a character) and teams up with other adventurers (played by friends). Working together, the group might explore a dark dungeon, a ruined city, a haunted castle, a lost temple deep in a jungle, or a lava-filled cavern beneath a mysterious mountain. The adventurers can solve puzzles, talk with other characters, battle fantastic monsters, and discover fabulous magic items and other treasure.

One player, however, takes on the role of the Dungeon Master, the game’s lead storyteller and referee. The Dungeon Master creates adventures for the characters, who navigate its hazards and decide which paths to explore.

The game has no real end; when one story or quest wraps up, another one can begin, creating an ongoing story called a Campaign. Many people who play the game keep their campaigns going for months or years, meeting their friends every week or so to pick up the story where they left off. The adventurers grow in might as the campaign continues. Each monster defeated, each adventure completed, and each treasure recovered not only adds to the continuing story, but also earns the adventurers new capabilities. This increase in power is reflected by an adventurer’s level.

The many worlds of the Dungeons & Dragons game are places of magic and monsters, of brave warriors and spectacular adventures. They begin with a foundation of medieval fantasy and then add the creatures, places, and magic that make these worlds unique.

The worlds of the Dungeons & Dragons game exist within a vast cosmos called the Multiverse, connected in strange and mysterious ways to one another and to other planes of existence, such as the Elemental Plane of Fire and the Infinite Depths of the Abyss.

In Stranger Things, Mike, Lucas, Dustin, and Will played Dungeons & Dragons from at least 1979 onward, according to Mike. They played their "Elder Tree" campaign in 1979, for which Mike’s sister Nancy dressed up as an elf.

They ran a ten-hour campaign on November 6th 1983, from about 10am to 8pm. Mike, acting as Dungeon Master, summoned an army of troglodytes before continuing to summon the Demogorgon, the Prince of Demons. Will was urged by
Lucas to "fireball" and attack it while Dustin advised him to cast a protection spell. Will attempted to fireball it, but he only rolled a seven when he needed a thirteen or higher. This meant Will's character was defeated by the Demogorgon. In an eerie coincidence, Will was abducted by a monster in real life shortly after the campaign ended.

Why is it that the images, which especially the fantasy genre work with, have such a haunting effect on us? Is it superfluous entertainment? Is it a waste of time? Is it dangerous? Is it good? And what has it to do with philosophy?

All fans of The Lord of the Rings have probably dreamt of being a part of that universe themselves. I’m sure many have said to themselves: I wish I could be there. That’s the whole idea with D&D: to be there yourself as far as this is possible. But why is it so fascinating?


*Inspiration for all of the fantasy work I have done stems directly from the love my father showed when I was a lad, for he spent many hours telling me stories he made up as he went along, tales of cloaked old men who would grant wishes, of magic rings and enchanted swords, or wicked sorcerers and dauntless swordsmen... All of us tend to ample helpings of fantasy when are very young, from fairy tales such as those written by the Brothers Grimm and Andrew Lang. This often leads to reading books of mythology, paging through bestiaries, and consultation of compilations of the myths of various lands and peoples. Upon such a base I built my interest in fantasy, being an avid reader of all science fiction and fantasy literature since 1950.*

Fantasy is rooted in mythology. And mythology is rooted in the deepest aspects of the human life. Your thoughts are words and images, which work in this stream. It is Heraklit’s River, it is the River of Time.

As the Indian philosophy claims, then this stream not only contains your personal history, it also contains a collective and universal history – together a history, which consists of images. These images are form-formations of energy, creative up-tensions, a kind of matter, though on a highly abstract plane. These images exist in other words in the actual movement of the matter, and therefore not only in your mental activity, but also outside you in nature. So, your thinking rises from an endless deep of images, which flow in the actual movement of nature.

The Indian philosophy claims, that the movement of time in itself is a negation-power. Time is one great negation of the Now´s unmoved being, which is the
unmanifested, the actual source: the Good, the True and the Beautiful (God, Brahman). The negation-power is in that way the power behind the world’s manifestation. This manifestation, the Indian philosophy claims, has arisen on the background of a mighty universal vision, which originates from past universes. In this way, the future arises, and an outgoing creative movement; a movement, which can be compared with what they within science call The Big Bang. In the outgoing movement, the great vision becomes, because of the negation-power, shattered in many images, which now become a kind of memories about the great vision. In this way, the past arises, and a longing back towards the origin, the unmanifested. And then a destructive backmovement is created.

In that way, the movement of time consists of two universal movements, which we could call the outgoing movement and the backmovement. Future and past, creation and destruction. These two movements are reflected throughout the universe in a multiplicity of different lifecycles; they are Samsara’s wheel of up-cycles which are followed by down-cycles and vice versa (for example life and death, success and fiasco, joy and sorrow) – all this which lie behind the law of karma and rebirth. This universe is for example considered to be a reincarnation of a past universe, the same way as a human being is considered to be a reincarnation of a past existence.

So the images in the movement of time is shattered reflections of the great vision of the universe, and are background for the manifestation of the holy scriptures of India, the Vedas, which are claimed to have been ”heard” by wise men (the so-called Seers) in the dawn of time, and by word of mouth delivered over oceans of time. They are shadows, dreams, masks, mirrors, fables, fairy-tales, fictions. The Vedas therefore both include the most sublime and difficult available philosophy, as for example in the Upanishads, and good folktales as Ramayana and Mahabharata (with the famous Bhagavadgita), which with its clear ethical messages is told in village temples, to the children as bedtime stories, and which is inspiration for great poets like Rabindranath Tagore.

The Seers are background for myths about that in the beginning the gods, heroes, or demigods walked among men. And I think this is a good explanation of how myths as such has arisen. Our fascination of fantasy is in that way due to a longing after the great vision, which existed in the dawn of time. Karen Blixen referred to this longing as a longing after the “ancient.”

But, can’t there be a danger that the fascination which drives D&D, can result in that the players can’t discriminate between fantasy and reality? That question will be a main part of this article, and the explanation of how D&D is related to philosophy.
In *Stranger Things*, the Dungeons & Dragon game becomes a part of “real” life. But *Stranger Things* is still a fiction. There are situations though, where a Dungeon Master is a real-life figure. An example is Karen Blixen. Karen Blixen seems, in line with the greatest artists, to be an aesthetical borderfigure between the realized and the lesser realized transmission of energy and consciousness. This is especially coming to expression in the oddity, that what she in her letters refers to as the Devil, she in her stories refers to as God. This is shortly said the strange paradox involved in her effort to mix fiction with reality, or to make her life into a piece of art. In *Stranger Things* there is a lot of references to music, as for example David Bowie, who also was a master in this (see my pop culture on [David Bowie](https://www.example.com/david-bowie)).

Karen Blixen’s novel *Out of Africa*, is in short about finding the universal images behind everything, the original, as she calls it, the ancient, where you live in accordance with yourself, with God’s plan with you.

When Karen Blixen was lying in her sickbed, and after having realized, that this maybe was God’s plan with her - she made a pact with the Devil, that she from now on could change everything into stories. And in her stories, and in her following life as a storyteller, she realized the dreams she had had as a young woman in Africa.

All her following stories, for example *Seven Gothic Tales*, are reflections of her own experiences with destiny. They are all about how to find the dreaming tracks and songlines in the artwork of your life - God’s plan with you - and about people who live in accordance with these power lines, and about people who don’t live in accordance with them (see my article [What is karma?](https://www.example.com/what-is-karma)).

These themes continue in Karen Blixen’s storytelling ever after.

And Karen Blixen herself became, in her pact with the Devil, an embodiment of the same demonical element, which fascinated Milton, Romanticism, Baudelaire, etc. The Devil haunted in her, and around her, just like he haunted in figure of Prospero in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, as Mefistoteles in Goethe’s *Faust*, or as Conchis in John Fowles’ *The Magus*; all examples of Dungeon Masters making life into stories.

The Devil haunts in the change of Karen Blixen’s looks, the change of the beautiful, brightly dressed woman, into the blackdressed witch-like woman. Karen Blixen even liked to speak about herself as a witch (in D&D: a sorcerer or wizard), since she considered a witch as someone, who has contact with the deep, ancient secrets and powers (in D&D: arcane magic). And this is not only something symbolical. Karen Blixen’s access to the collective time's astral worlds, her transformation into a witch,
her paranormal abilities, are something completely real, which several times have been depicted by people, who were close to her.

She created an energy-mandala around herself, a magical circle. You can directly feel the magic just by reading her books. It waves out of her stories, just like it also can be felt in books, which are written about her.

The magical circle of poets and men of letters (among whom Thorkild Bjørnvig, Aage Henriksen, Jørgen Gustava Brandt and Jørgen Kalchar), who moved around Karen Blixen on Rungstedlund, were after own statements, in works and scriptures, grabbed by a strange indefinable magic. They were lovers, but however clearly not lovers in ordinary sense. They were in apprenticeship, but not in apprenticeship in ordinary sense; they were in pact with, and weaved together with Karen Blixen, and at the same time they came deeper in towards their own creative potentials (in D&D: the collaborative creation). They were drawn into the collective time. Both in their being together with Karen Blixen, and in their works, they melted together with a world of archetypes, primordial images, myths and dreams. All of it was changed into stories.

What she referred to as God´s plan with you, she also referred to, as that to find your role in the story, and since she herself was the storyteller, she didn't mind forcing the circle around her to find their roles in her story. To adhere to God´s plan with you, just like the man in the story about the stork, she could also refer to, as that to keep the author's idea clear. And the author was herself. The roles in this play she referred to as marionettes (in D&D: characters). The good marionettes are rewarded, not with well-being or a special kind of happiness, but with a fate, an image that was remembered, for example a stork (in D&D: higher levels). They would get to see the dreaming tracks and songlines in the artwork of their lives – God´s, or the author's plan with them.

She could in other words refer to herself as God himself, or the Devil himself. The witch. She could do this, because she apparently was conscious about herself manifesting an universal image. She referred to herself as being 3000 years old and of the same age as the prophet Esajas, whom she had an intensive, conflict-accented relationship with. And all of it, her own fate, the relationship with her students (or role-players), can be found reflected in her stories in a fount of variations. Reality and stories are melting together.

The initiation ritual into this magical circle was the same for each of them. She told the individual person the story of her disease, and that she in her sickroom had a visit from the Devil, which she entered into the pact with, that she from that moment of
would be able to transform everything that happened to her into stories. Furthermore that if they mixed blood with a witch, they would get access to the same ancient, deep secrets and powers, which she herself possessed. They would get an image, they would get to see the dreaming tracks and songlines in the artwork of their lives – God’s, or the author's plan with them.

That Karen Blixen herself, through her fate and her distinctive attitude to this fate, opened her mind to the collective time's polar relationships, is without any doubt. That she radiated an enormous witch-like eros and at the same time a dramatic tragic fate, is also without any doubt.

This, not only personal creative power, therefore constellated - in its quality of collective - a circle of highly intelligent and sensitive men, who together with Karen Blixen, constituted this fascinating energy-mandala-phenomenon.

How demonical was it? It is an open question, because as already mentioned, what she in her letters refers to as the Devil, she in her stories refers to as God. She keeps on being an aesthetic borderfigure between the realized and lesser realized transmission of energy and consciousness. As Kierkegaard says, then God’s nature always unites the opposite.

So, Karen Blixen is a real-life example of genius collaborative creation. And my concept of Lucifer Morningstar is based on precisely the paradox which is so central in Karen Blixen: the paradox, that what she in her letters refer to as the Devil, she in her stories refer to as God. Lucifer Morningstar is a kind of alter ego, and his collaborative creation is based on a Hoax of Exposure, something which ought to bring people into thinking for themselves. In the context of D&D he is certainly a Dungeon Master, and his story, or campaign, is the Matrix Conspiracy. The villains are of course the Matrix Sophists, and the monsters are the paranormal phenomena explained by the concept of spiritual crises.

The whole hoax is based on that Lucifer Morningstar is going directly into the fantasy world, and using the same methods as the villains in order to fool them. This is especially happening through his monster The Ghost Rider and his Penance Stare. The Penance Stare is a supernatural ability that incapacitate victims and is only performed by the Spirits of Vengeance or Ghost Riders. When in close combat, the Ghost Rider locks eyes with his opponent and induces self-mortification by imposing him or her every negative actions, behavior and sensation, from sins to the pain of others, that that individual has ever committed in their lifetime. The Ghost Rider is The Mirror, which I talked about in my Matrix Dictionary entry on Spiritual Placebo. In a world he conceives as pure illusion and a product of our inner eye, Lucifer
Morningstar raises the question of whether the part he plays means he has become illusion incarnate. And this triggers the question in the viewer’s mind of whether what is apparently a fake character actually hides a deeper truth.

The Ghost Rider is in many ways a pop culture version of Raguel. Raguel (also Raguil, Rasuil, Rufael, Raquel, Reuel, and Akrasiel) is an angel mainly of the Judaic traditions. He is considered the Angel of Justice. His name means "Friend of God".

Raguel is almost always referred to as the archangel of justice, fairness, harmony, vengeance and redemption. He is also sometimes known as the archangel of speech. In the Book of Enoch, cap. XXIII, Raguel is one of the seven angels whose role is to watch. His number is 6, and his function is to take vengeance on the world of the luminaries who have transgressed God's laws.

Raguel's duties have remained the same across Jewish and Christian mythologies. Much like a sheriff or constable Raguel's purpose has always been to keep fallen angels and demons in check, delivering heinous judgment upon any that over-step their boundaries. He has been known to destroy wicked spirits, and cast fallen angels into Hell (called Gehenna in the Hebrew Old Testament and called Tartarus in the Greek New Testament). Read more in my book Lucifer Morningstar – a Philosophical Love Story, and Lucifer Morningstar’s blog.

Nothing of all this has anything to do with Satanism, only with the acknowledgement, that the Devil is real, also inside ourselves. Something anybody of a spiritual quest sooner or later must face (I will return to the controversy and notoriety connected with D&D).

When seen in the light of all this: is D&D superfluous entertainment for the bored and lazy, and therefore a waste of time? No! Most certainly no!

_The Right to be Lazy_ is an essay by Cuban-born French revolutionary Marxist Paul Lafargue, written from his London exile in 1880. The essay polemicizes heavily against then-contemporary liberal, conservative, Christian and even socialist ideas of work. Lafargue criticizes these ideas from a Marxist perspective as dogmatic and ultimately false by portraying the degeneration and enslavement of human existence when being subsumed under the primacy of the "right to work", and argues that laziness, combined with human creativity, is an important source of human progress.
He manifests that "When, in our civilized Europe, we would find a trace of the native beauty of man, we must go seek it in the nations where economic prejudices have not yet uprooted the hatred of work...The Greeks in their era of greatness had only contempt for work: their slaves alone were permitted to labor: the free man knew only exercises for the body and mind...The philosophers of antiquity taught contempt for work, that degradation of the free man, the poets sang of idleness, that gift from the Gods." And so he says "Proletarians, brutalized by the dogma of work, listen to the voice of these philosophers, which has been concealed from you with jealous care: A citizen who gives his labor for money degrades himself to the rank of slaves." (The last sentence a quote from Cicero.)

However, Marx himself condemned these ideas.

In his essay The Abolition of Work, the anarchist Bob Black argues for the abolition of the producer- and consumer-based society, where, Black contends, all of life is devoted to the production and consumption of commodities.

Attacking Marxist state socialism as much as market capitalism, Black argues that the only way for humans to be free is to reclaim their time from jobs and employment, instead turning necessary subsistence tasks into free play done voluntarily – an approach referred to as "ludic". The essay argues that "no-one should ever work", because work – defined as compulsory productive activity enforced by economic or political means – is the source of most of the misery in the world.

Play, in contrast, is not necessarily rule-governed, and is performed voluntarily, in complete freedom, as a gift economy. He points out that hunter-gatherer societies are typified by play, a view he backs up with the work of Marshall Sahlins; he recounts the rise of hierarchal societies, through which work is cumulatively imposed, so that the compulsive work of today would seem incomprehensibly oppressive even to ancients and medieval peasants. He responds to the view that "work," if not simply effort or energy, is necessary to get important but unpleasant tasks done, by claiming that first of all, most important tasks can be rendered ludic, or "salvaged" by being turned into game-like and craft-like activities, and secondly that the vast majority of work does not need doing at all. The latter tasks are unnecessary because they only serve functions of commerce and social control that exist only to maintain the work-system as a whole.

These ideas are important in my own philosophy of idleness. If I should mention a modern English idler, which promotes all the qualities of an idle way of life, you could mention Tom Hodgkinson (born 1968). His philosophy, in his published books and articles, is of a relaxed approach to life, enjoying it as it comes rather than toiling
for an imagined better future. Together with his friend Gavin Pretor-Pinney he founded *The Idler* which is a bi-yearly British magazine devoted to promoting its ethos of 'idle living' and all that entails (read an additional account on idleness in my pop culture files on *The Hobbit* and *The Big Lebowski*).

Ronald Hutton’s book *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700* demonstrates how the festive culture of the Middle Ages was gradually eroded by the Reformation and the Puritans. It was in this merry time the legend of Robin Hood was formed. Robin Hood is a heroic outlaw in English folklore who, according to legend, was a highly skilled archer and swordsman. Traditionally depicted as being dressed in Lincoln green, he is often portrayed as "robbing from the rich and giving to the poor" alongside his band of Merry Men. Robin Hood became a popular folk figure in the late-medieval period, and continues to be widely represented in literature, films and television. In *The Hobbit* we discover that this idea of *gift economy* is shared by Bilbo Baggins, who gives most of his treasures away. Also it is seen in the hobbit custom of giving presents when they celebrate their birthdays, instead of receiving them.

And Max Weber’s book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* shows how the competitive Protestants booted out the co-operative Catholics; it shows how a new ethic based on work and earning a lot of money came to replace, in the eighteenth century, the old medieval ethic, which was based on mutual aid. The medieval culture (which wrongly are depicted as a dark age by the Protestant work ethic) combined a love of Jesus, who preached idleness, and a love of Aristotle, who argued that contemplation led to happiness. (I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to banish their guilt around work).

A lot of the elements in D&D has to do with philosophy as an art of life, or philosophy seen as a play with life.

In Indian philosophy the highest being, as for example the before-mentioned Seers, are the first who are awakening when a new Universe is born. This is an important aspect in Dream Yoga: the yoga philosophy which especially are dealing with the concept of dream and sleep. The concept comes from Tibetan Buddhism, but the philosophy of dream and sleep is present in all spiritual traditions.

In Zen it is for example said about this process of awakening: "In the beginning mountains are mountains, and woods are woods. Then mountains no longer are mountains and woods are no longer woods. Finally, mountains are again mountains, woods are again woods."
This refers to the three forms of states the wholeness can be in: sleep, dream, awake. When the wholeness is sleeping, mountains are mountains and woods are woods. This is the reality of the ordinary consciousness (the Ego-consciousness). The ordinary consciousness can sleep in three ways: 1) the dark sleep which is the Ego’s deep nightly sleep; 2) the grey sleep, which is the Ego’s nightly dreams and other dreams; 3) the light sleep, where the Ego is awake.

The three forms of states the wholeness can be in, can also be described as the personal time, the collective time and the universal time. These three states can further more - when we talk about going through them in a spiritual development process - be said to reflect the structure of the novel of development (or novel of formation). The novel of development is especially known from Romanticism. With concepts collected from Goldschmidt’s ”The Homeless” (1853-57) the development process of the novel can be characterized in this way: at home – the homeless – home. Although great parts of the course of the novel, are about the homeless phase, we know, that the person very probably shall arrive ”home” again. A more or less pronounced model for all novels of development in Romanticism is Goethe’s ”Wilhelm Meister” (1795-1829) – and which actually, in a very symbol-satiated form, describes a spiritual development process. Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings is another example on a description of the spiritual development process.

When the wholeness begins to dream – and this happens only, if you set yourself existentially into the process of awakening – then the Ego, or the inner thinker, experiences himself as a flower, which begins to open itself towards the collective time: the thoughts will be lit through, whereby their collective components – sound, symbol, colour, structure – will be visible and make themselves current in the image of reality. The clearness from your dissolved and evaporated thoughts and content, will expand the consciousness out towards the borders, behind which the collective common human structures exist.

The thoughts become in other words less personal, more common, more collective, deeper, more philosophical. And these, common deep thoughts of mankind, your consciousness can see, by force of its increased clarity, as visions (primordial images, religious images, symbols, teachers, higher worlds, other dimensions etc.). Your consciousness then observes a world-aspect of vibrant, sound-filled energy-fields, which shimmer in symbols and colours. It observes a world of auric colours, archetypical symbols and yantric, or other, energetical structures. It begins to sense karmic phenomena.

Reality expands itself, all things seem different than before, people shine as transparent onions; plants and animals vibrates, cosmos is alive: mountains are no
longer mountains, woods are no longer woods. This is the opening of the collective time, which lies on a so-called astral plane.

But in a spiritual practice it is the form of the dream-consciousness it is about, not its content.

On the plane of the universal images, and therefore on the Now´s plane, the central is the form of the consciousness - the actual consciousness and its clarity and openness. Not the content of the consciousness. In spiritual practice, the spiritual, and spiritual active, is the consciousness´ course towards its source (the Now, the Otherness). What the consciousness and the mind and the senses are filled by, is of less crucial importance.

But the collective time is a very dangerous intermediate area. It is mainly from here our fascination of the fantasy worlds comes. The temptation to here, either to become afraid, or to experiment with various possibilities (astral projection, clairvoyance, telepathy etc. etc.) is great. It is a very forceful state. Goethe and Dante write about the collective time in ”Faust” and in ”The Divine Comedy”. Tolkien about it in ” The Lord of the Rings”, Ursula Le Guin in ”The Wizard Ged”. The shamans had to dare the journey to the underground kingdoms with their shadow-inhabitants, demons and dead. And they had to handle the journey to the heavenly regions, where gods and goddesses, heroes and heroines, accomodated. The mystics had to experience the descent to hell with its belonging devils, fire and sulphur and torment and suffering. And they had to get off heavenly hosts of angels and light-creatures, if the temptation was as difficult to resist as the sexual impact of the devil.

The creativity, and the reality-creating ability, is in the collective time set free in fascinating degree. However, you are, in this astral state, still on the plane of the collective images of time, which work in sequences in past and future, and you are in danger ending up in a spiritual crisis. A spiritual crisis is an expression of, that you, with your ego, have followed the fascinating path out in the collective time, without having done the philosophical preliminary work; that is to say: the realization-work and the ethical training. The Ego will then make you lose your way in the collective time.

A spiritual crisis can be expressed in two ways: 1): as suffering, often called The Dark Night of the Soul, or 2) as Ego-inflation (inflammatio).

1) If the borders to the collective time is broken down or being exceeded out of hand, for example through LSD or through one-sided development techniques, or in shock, the consciousness and the personality will slide crucial out of balance and therefore it
will suffer. The Ego will sideways with its personal identity and life-situation, suddenly experience break in of tremendous astral energies, clairvoyant abilities, visions of mythological beings, good and evil forces, various demons and angels, death and themes of rebirth, unusual light phenomena, messages from supernatural beings, memories from past lives. These experiences will, because that the Ego´s nature has not been realized, be characterized by unreality and division, anxiety of going mad and anxiety of death, or the experience of a total meaningless and dark extinct world.

2) The personality can receive informations through the break in of astral and collective energies, images and symbols: information about, what approaches human beings from outside (from other people, from chance, destiny, life etc.). However, informations through collective images are contradictional and split. Many have therefore been seduced by these colourful experiences and have remained there, with the ability to see the aura, with the ability to create images, to create in reality. When the collective time is used spiritual in genuine sense, then the Ego, in its egoistic isolating and self-affirmative function, steps aside. However, the same forces can be used for other intensions. It can be creative, Ego affirmative, political, demonical and so on. The forces which in spirituality are given to others´ disposal in healing, energy transmission and spiritual information exchange, the same forces can themselves be turned in through the Ego-structures and open creative channels, create super Egos, create political leaders and popular seducers. The problem, or the danger, does not consist in using creativity or auric abilities. It is actually a good idea to formulate the experiences creatively; the danger is, whether the Ego grows and becomes swollen on the world´s positive responses. And if the Ego gains strength, takes the honour, or blows itself up, the transformation-process of consciousness stops, the growth forward towards the goal: illumination and later enlightenment.

Spiritual crises are my explanation of paranormal phenomena; they are the dark inter-dimensional gates between worlds (see my article Spiritual Crises as the Cause of Paranormal Phenomena).

The pain-body is - through the inner evaluating ego, which the pain-body is constructed around - connected with the more dangerous depths of the astral plane´s collective history, which also are a kind of dark, ancient inertia which opposes any change of the ego. The energies found here are unfathomable, and when you direct them into your pain-body, you are really facing problems. That is what is happening in a spiritual crisis.

The ego-religion and the ego-exercises are the ego´s incessant confirmation or denial of the ego: “it is no use with me!”; or: “Wonderful me!”. Both, either the denial or the
confirmation of the ego, maintain the ego-process, the ego-identity, and the ego-
centralization. The ego´s religion and exercises are the ego´s needs and longings and
will: I want to, I think, I believe, I feel, I wish, I hope, I think, I believe, I feel, I wish,
or, in its most common core: I, I, I...Me, Me, Me... Therefore a spiritual crisis can
both be “negative” and “positive” – the Dark night of the soul, or ego-inflation.

Your ego, and your pain-body, is in other words the inter-dimensional gate where
collective energies, and astral beings, can enter into your world (note that I also think
that both things and places can have a pain-body). When you in a selfish way use the
powers from the collective history of the astral plane, and which demonical astral
beings will help you with (because the ego phenomenon is their magnet of attraction),
you can create personal power and material glory. That is the essence of Black
Magic. The ego is a demonical structure, and it attracts demonical powers and
energies, which also have been created by the ego phenomenon (see my articles The
Ego-inflation in the New Age and Self-help Environment and The Emotional
Painbody and Why Psychotherapy Can´t Heal It).

True spiritual practice is about leading people around the areas/experiences of the
collective time, into the universal time where the wholeness is awake. Enlightenment
simply means to be awake, to have realized the nature of the wholeness. The whole
thing reminds about waking up from sleep and dreams.

So, the reason why it´s necessary to lead people around the collective time, or shorten
the passage through it, is because that non-physical entities from these areas are using
people or cults (collective energy processes in mass phenomena: religious, spiritual,
political, sports, wars, or other type) as psychic channels, working inter-
dimensionally to create all sorts of “experiences” in people; experiences that seems
dazzling and/or extraordinary – but with the purpose to use their energy as food. That
is: a kind of vampires, or even worse: demons (about the Devil, demons, and
vampires, see my book Lucifer Morningstar – a Philosophical Love Story).

In his book The Hero´ s Journey the mythologist, Joseph Campbell, the monomyth, or
the hero´s journey, is the common template of a broad category of tales that involve a
hero who goes on an adventure, and in a decisice crisis wins a victory, and then
comes home changed or transformed. This monomyth explains spiritual crises in the
light of mythology (one of the types of spiritual crises is in fact called Spiritual
Crises as a Hero´s Journey), but it of course also fits perfectly into the D&D
universe.

Campbell's concept of monomyth (one myth) refers to the theory that sees all mythic
narratives as variations of a single great story. The theory is based on the observation
that a common pattern exists beneath the narrative elements of most great myths, regardless of their origin or time of creation.

The central pattern most studied by Campbell is often referred to as the hero's journey and was first described in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. An enthusiast of novelist James Joyce, Campbell borrowed the term "monomyth" from Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. Campbell also made heavy use of Carl Jung's theories on the structure of the human psyche, and he often used terms such as "anima/animus" and "ego consciousness".

As a strong believer in the psychic unity of mankind and its poetic expression through mythology, Campbell made use of the concept to express the idea that the whole of the human race can be seen as engaged in the effort of making the world "transparent to transcendence" by showing that underneath the world of phenomena lies an eternal source which is constantly pouring its energies into this world of time, suffering, and ultimately death. To achieve this task one needs to speak about things that existed before and beyond words, a seemingly impossible task, the solution to which lies in the metaphors found in myths. These metaphors are statements that point beyond themselves into the transcendent. The Hero's Journey was the story of the man or woman who, through great suffering, reached an experience of the eternal source and returned with gifts powerful enough to set their society free.

As this story spread through space and evolved through time (as we already have investigated as the negation-power with the outgoing movement of time and the backmovement), it was broken down into various local forms (masks), depending on the social structures and environmental pressures that existed for the culture that interpreted it.

The basic structure, however, has remained relatively unchanged and can be classified using the various stages of a hero's adventure through the story, stages such as the Call to Adventure, Receiving Supernatural Aid, Meeting with the Goddess/Atonement with the Father and Return.

These stages, as well as the symbols one encounters throughout the story, provide the necessary metaphors to express the spiritual truths the story is trying to convey. Metaphor for Campbell, in contrast with comparisons which make use of the word like, pretend to a literal interpretation of what they are referring to, as in the sentence "Jesus is the Son of God" rather than "the relationship of man to God is like that of a son to a father". For example, according to Campbell, the Genesis myth from the Bible ought not be taken as a literal description of
historical events happening in our current understanding of time and space, but as a metaphor for the rise of man's cognitive consciousness as it evolved from a prior animal state.

In the 2000 documentary *Joseph Campbell: A Hero's Journey*, he explains God in terms of a metaphor:

"God is a metaphor for a mystery that absolutely transcends all human categories of thought, even the categories of being and non-being. Those are categories of thought. I mean it's as simple as that. So it depends on how much you want to think about it. Whether it's doing you any good. Whether it is putting you in touch with the mystery that's the ground of your own being. If it isn't, well, it's a lie. So half the people in the world are religious people who think that their metaphors are facts. Those are what we call theist. The other half are people who know that the metaphors are not facts. And so, they're lies. Those are the atheists."

Campbell describes 17 stages of the monomyth. Not all monomyths necessarily contain all 17 stages explicitly; some myths may focus on only one of the stages, while others may deal with the stages in a somewhat different order. In the terminology of Claude Lévi-Strauss, the stages are the individual mythemes which are "bundled" or assembled into the structure of the monomyth (see my full article on *The Hero’s Journey*).

So, we have seen the possible danger when we mix fantasy with reality, or rather: when we mix fantasy with the Ego. The question is then: does D&D fertilize this?

Dungeons & Dragons was first released in 1974. The game assigns each player a character, and those characters then form a party that undertakes quests, while a Dungeon Master acts as the game's storyteller. Aside from dice, little equipment is needed to play D&D, though the boys in *Stranger Things* did incorporate the use of figurines.

As D&D grew in popularity in the '80s, it became the center of controversy. In 1982 an anti-D&D group was formed by Patricia Pulling who claimed the game was to blame for the suicide of her son. Pulling formed "Bothered About Dungeons & Dragons" (B.A.D.D.) after her son Irving committed suicide by shooting himself in the chest on June 9, 1982. Irving was an active D&D player, and she believed his suicide was directly related to the game.

The grieving mother first filed a wrongful death lawsuit against her son's high school principal, Robert A. Bracey III, holding him as responsible for what she claimed was
a D&D curse placed upon her son's character shortly before his death. She also filed suit against TSR, Inc., D&D's publishers. She appeared on an episode of 60 Minutes which also featured the above-mentioned Gary Gygax, co-creator of Dungeons & Dragons, and which aired in 1985.

Pulling founded B.A.D.D. in 1983 after all of her lawsuits were dismissed and began publishing information circulating her belief that D&D encouraged devil worship and suicide.

B.A.D.D. described D&D as "a fantasy role-playing game which uses demonology, witchcraft, voodoo, murder, rape, blasphemy, suicide, assassination, insanity, sex perversion, homosexuality, prostitution, satanic type rituals, gambling, barbarism, cannibalism, sadism, desecration, demonsummoning, necromantics, divination and other teachings."

At various times in its history, Dungeons & Dragons has received negative publicity, in particular from some Christian groups, for alleged promotion of such practices as devil worship, witchcraft, suicide, and murder, and for the presence of naked breasts in drawings of female humanoids in the original AD&D manuals (mainly monsters such as harpies, succubi, etc.). These controversies led TSR to remove many potentially controversial references and artwork when releasing the 2nd Edition of AD&D. Many of these references, including the use of the names "devils" and "demons", were reintroduced in the 3rd edition. The moral panic over the game led to problems for fans of D&D who faced social ostracism, unfair treatment, and false association with the occult and Satanism, regardless of an individual fan's actual religious affiliation and beliefs.

Dungeons & Dragons has been the subject of rumors regarding players having difficulty separating fantasy from reality, even leading to psychotic episodes. The most notable of these was the saga of James Dallas Egbert III, the facts of which were fictionalized in the novel Mazes and Monsters and later made into a TV movie, starring Tom Hanks. Research by various psychologists, the first being that of Armando Simon, has concluded that no harmful effects are related to the playing of D&D.

The game was also blamed for some of the actions of Chris Pritchard, who was convicted in 1990 of murdering his stepfather.

The idea of Dungeons & Dragons players acting out real-life sessions in dangerous locations like steam tunnels, and losing touch with reality became ingrained into the cultural consciousness, inspiring movies such as Mazes and Monsters. The perceived
link between Egbert's disappearance and Dungeons & Dragons was one of several controversies linked to the game during the 1980s.

Dangerous locations for children to act out their games should of course not be encouraged, but I know for sure from my own childhood, that such places were great playing grounds. Furthermore, just think about the catacombs in Rome as a location for a real-life D&D adventure. Or, the Odessa catacombs, one of the world’s largest labyrinths running up to 2,500 kilometers; well, in fact, it hasn’t even been fully mapped. With its incredible stories, it could be a perfect playground for a real-life D&D adventure. I know that if I had been a kid on such places, they would work mesmerizing on me, and my parents would really have to keep me on the leash.

Anyway, Stranger Things is on the background of bad events consciously set in late 1983, when the anti-D&D groups were in full swing. And it is clear that this series precisely are dealing with all of this controversy and notoriety. But the series deal with people who precisely try to get out of the mix of fantasy and reality, which is more real than we think. Because the source of our fantasy comes from the collective images of time, which as explained, is real. No one in the series want monsters and evil to rule. And precisely the D&D game is helping them in discriminating, in using logic and rational thinking as a weapon against evil.

The work carried out by psychologists in order to find out whether D&D (and other role-playing games) are causing players to become more violent, or lose contact with reality, is in my view incredible naive. These psychologists could just take the above-mentioned Christian groups into consideration, and try to carry out an isolated investigation of whether the Bible is dangerous or not. The Bible contains just about all of the same elements as in D&D. You could probably find precisely the same results in just about any cultural phenomena. Just take the daily news.

But, D&D finds itself in the company of many other things alleged to cause bad behavior, including video games, pornography, certain works or genres of literature and film, rock music, and even (gasp) jazz. There have been a few high-profile cases in recent decades in which a person committed suicide, or became seriously mentally ill, and in the search for an explanation, someone pointed to that person’s involvement with D&D. So, it’s claimed, D&D puts players at increased risk of suicide or mental illness.

There’s a famous literary example of this sort of thinking. In 1774, the German writer Goethe published a novel called The Sorrows of Young Werther. Soon after, it became fashionable for young men to adopt the fashion style of Werther, the novel’s protagonist. The novel was so powerful that it allegedly further influenced many
young men to follow their literary role model by committing suicide in the same way that Werther did in the book. “The Werther Effect” refers to the wave of imitative suicides that follow a highly publicized suicide. But again, the crucial question is this: do the data support such a hypothesis? The first thing to notice is that if there were a causally significant Werther effect from literature, it would be surprising that Goethe’s novel is one of a very small number of examples given. Considering how many literary works there are that depicts suicide, we should in fact see a lot more suicide if the Werther effect is genuine! In fact, this effect has been studied by psychologists, and the most reliable and extensive studies show no such effect. Lacking support from the data, the appealing explanation of the post-Werther suicides – that the book led to the suicides of mentally healthy young men – now looks as an example both of a post hoc fallacy (“Since Y followed X, X must have caused Y”) and confirmation bias (choosing the evidence that supports your favorite hypothesis, while ignoring evidence that weakens it).

The very same analysis holds for the other suspects standing in the line-up: music (even that wicked jazz!), video games, pornography, and D&D. while the alleged causal link between the enjoyment of these things and bad behavior might seem plausible, the data simply don’t support the causal linkage. Not only have repeated scientific testing of the causal link hypothesis in all of these cases shown no significant correlation, given how popular all of these things are (yes, even jazz) it should be a great surprise that we haven’t seen a great more bad behavior. What seems to be going on in all these cases is that something new and unfamiliar is blamed for something bad. Understanding the causes of suicide, say, is hard work. How much easier to blame a game, or a musical genre, or a book! But the data just don’t support the easy explanation, so responsible investigators need to look more deeply and carefully elsewhere.

Now for the good news. We humans are excellent pretenders. It’s a central part of our enjoyment of games of make-believe, of literature and film, or humor, and sometimes of sex, too. Normal adults, and even small children, are shockingly good at distinguishing the real from the make-believe. And it is my claim, that D&D actually can fertilize this ability of discrimination. It can do this because of its use of logic and its ethical alignment system.

As mentioned: the worlds of D&D are fascinating, and storytelling seems to be a part of our nature. The drive to find personal meaning or significance in impersonal or insignificant coincidences (Subjective validation) may be related to the powerful “natural” drive to create stories, narratives that string together bits and pieces of information into a tale. Of course truth matters most of the time, but many of our
narratives satisfy us regardless of their accuracy. This tendency to connect things and create plausible narratives out of partially fictional items is called Confabulation.

A confabulation is a fantasy that has unconsciously replaced events in memory. A confabulation may be based partly on fact or be a complete construction of the imagination. The term is often used to describe the “memories” of mentally ill persons, memories of alien abduction, and false memories induced by careless therapists or interviewers (see my article Regression psychotherapies).

Have you ever told a story that you embellished by putting yourself at the center when you knew that you weren’t even there? Or have you ever been absolutely sure you remembered something correctly, only to be shown incontrovertible evidence that your memory was wrong? No, of course not. But you probably know or have heard of somebody else who juiced up a story with made-up details or whose confidence in his memory was shown to be undeserved by evidence that his memory was false.

In my book A Portrait of a Lifeartist Confabulation is a central issue. I here show how memories are constructed by all of us and that the construction is a mixture of fact and fiction.

Confabulation is an unconscious process of creating a narrative that is believed to be true by the narrator but is demonstrably false.

Young Earth creationists (YECs) provide an excellent example of Confabulation mixed with Motivated reasoning. To maintain their position, YECs must reject nearly all science and confabulate new laws of nature and rules of logic and evidence, and subject themselves to ridicule for their willful ignorance and irrational adherence to the myths of an ancient, pre-scientific people. The same we see within the postmodern intellectualism on Universities, which therefore justifies the tendency within Management theory and New Age to confabulate stories which are not true (see my article Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry).

As management theorists say: “It is not facts, but the best story that wins!”

So, in our time with the spreading of subjectivism and relativism - and therefore Magical thinking - we are seeing how Confabulation somehow gets a justification. There is in fact - as I claim in my article The Matrix Conspiracy - a New World Order emerging: the world of Alternative History, Alternative Physics, Alternative Medicine and, ultimately, Alternative Reality.
Communal reinforcement is a social phenomenon in which a concept or idea is repeatedly asserted in a community, regardless of whether sufficient evidence has been presented to support it. Over time, the concept or idea is reinforced to become a strong belief in many people’s minds, and may be regarded by the members of the community as fact.

Often, the concept or idea may be further reinforced by publications in the mass media, books, or other means of communication. There is no doubt about that The Matrix Conspiracy (which is a strong advocate for the use of hypnosis and hypnotherapy) will be made propaganda for through mass media phenomena such as Transmedia Storytelling, Alternate Reality Games (for example The Blair Witch Project), Viral Marketing/Internet Hoaxes and Collaborative Fiction.

The phrase “millions of people can’t all be wrong” is indicative of the common tendency to accept a communally reinforced idea without question, which often aid in the widespread acceptance of urban legends, myths, and rumours.

The new New Age product called the WingMakers Project is an attempt to create an alternative history. It is not directly an example of Confabulation, since the creators of the website hardly believe their story to be true, but it will certainly create confabulation in others (see my article Time travel and the Fascism of the WingMakers Project).

Alternative history or alternate history is a genre of fiction consisting of stories that are set in worlds in which history has diverged from the actual history of the world. Since the 1950s this type of fiction has to a large extent merged with science fictional tropes involving cross-time travel between alternate histories or psychic awareness of the existence of “our” universe by the people in another; or ordinary voyaging uptime (into the past) or downtime (into the future) that results in history splitting into two or more time-lines.

WingMakers is also a so-called secret history. A secret history (or shadow history) is a revisionist interpretation of either fictional or real (or known) history, which is claimed to have been deliberately suppressed, forgotten, or ignored by established scholars. Originally, secret histories were designed as non-fictional, revealing or claiming to reveal the truth behind the “spin”. Today we see how secret history sometimes is used in a long-running science fiction or fantasy universe to preserve continuity with the present by reconciling paranormal, anachronistic, or otherwise notable but unrecorded events with what actually happened in known history; for instance in the fictional time travel theories. The WingMakers story combines this with the urban legend and alternate history from the Ong’s Hat myth. Though the WingMakers website tries to avoid critique by saying it is a modern mythology
(where urban legends are considered as a modern folklore) it also keeps on, precisely as in urban legends, to insinuate that the story is true. It is therefore a piece of pseudohistory.

Pseudohistory is purported history such as Afrocentrism, creationism, holocaust revisionism and the catastrophism of Immanuel Velikovsky. Pseudohistory should be distinguished from the ancient texts it is based on. The sagas, legends, myths and histories, which have been passed on orally or in written documents by ancient peoples are sometimes called pseudohistory. Some of it is pseudohistory, some of it is flawed history and some of it isn’t history at all.

Pseudohistory should also be distinguished from historical fiction and fantasy. Anyone who cites a work of historical fiction as if it were a historical text is a practising pseudohistorian. There are also writers of historical fiction who intentionally falsify and invent ancient history. A technique to do this is to claim to find an ancient document and publishing it in order to express one’s own ideas. An example is The Celestine Prophecy. A variation on this theme is to claim that one is channeling a book from some ancient being, e.g, The Urantia Book, Bringers of the Dawn, and A Course in Miracles (see my article Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with channeling).

New Age is permeated with references to vibrations and energy, advices to avoid the negative (you can tell good people by their eyes), stop doubting, follow your intuitions and premonitions, flow with coincidences, believe in the purposiveness of everything, join thousands of others on the quest, turn into your feelings and evolve to a higher plane. Follow your intuitions and dreams as you go through your spiritual evolution. Fact or fiction, it doesn’t matter. Truth is what you make it. Life’s too short and too complicated to deal with reality. Make your own reality.

This New Age subjectivism and relativism encourage people to believe that reality is whatever you want it to be. The line between fact and fiction gets blurry and obscured. Subjectivism shuts down people’s critical faculties, making them suggestible for any Ideology. It involves making people quit thinking critically in order to open them up to thinking Magical about that Subjective validation and Communal reinforcement lead to bliss. Hypnosis is in New Age directly used as a means for inducing in people certain worldviews (see my article Hypnosis, hypnotherapy and the art of self-deception).

The subjectivism in the WingMakers Project can be seen in the question about whether the WingMakers material is fact or fiction. The introduction to the project says as follows: “It is fact wrapped in fiction otherwise known as myth.” So here we
see how subjectivism is used as an attempt to get the line between fact and fiction blurry and obscured. It is also an attempt to avoid critique. Without success, because the story, as mentioned, ends in pseudohistory.

The main creator of the WingMakers Project, James, says himself that the WingMakers´ content “is disconnecting people from the established fabric of the New Age and acquainting them to new energies that are present within themselves, not the New Age.”

This is actually a typical trait of New Agers: to claim they are unique free thinkers without any connection with New Age. James is namely discussing the Urantia Book, extraterrestrials, 2012, the Shining Ones, DNA activation, Jesus, who he says is a member of the Lyricus Teaching Order, metaphysics, Remote Viewing, chakras, the Christ, the Galactic Federation, the Eternal Watcher, Zeti Reticuli, teachers of light, ascended masters and so on and so forth; all of which are standard New Age subject matter. He promotes ideas such as all existence derives from one source of divine energy, and that everything is universally connected. He talks about energy fields and personal transformation by means of guided imagery and meditation that will ultimately help bring about global transformation. He promotes positive thinking (which the WingMakers website also has (had?) a link to, explained as a metaphysics link), and quantum mysticism including the subjectivistic notion that thought creates reality. He discusses multidimensional reality, Multiverse and multidimensional beings. The Matrix is introduced as a “Hologram of Deception”, “supported” by the Simulation theory. He claims to be a reincarnation of famous historical figures. All the WingMakers´ associated music would only ever be classed as New Age Music.

My character lucifer Morningstar is a caricature of all this. And isn´t D&D all about that, especially magical thinking? No. Lets go deeper into it.

In Out of Africa Karen Blixen somewhere describes the magic of the words. The natives named for instance an European after an animal, and a human being, who through many years, by all his surroundings, has been named with one animal-name, finally happens to feel himself related to the animal he is named after; he recognizes himself in this animal.

In the natives´ ability to create myths they don´t discriminate between the word and the thing, the name and the named. The white men are really, in the eyes of the natives, both humans and animals. In the same way with their linkage of spirits and machines.

Karen Blixen tells about how the natives, because of this mythical “gift”, can put experiences on humans which they can´t defend themselves against, and not get out
of. They can make humans into symbols. She tells that it is a kind of magic which is used on you, and that you later never completely can disentangle from it. It can be a painfull, heavy fate to be exposed as one or the other symbol.

But also in the Western civilizations we become exposed for such a magic. It is not something which we have come over. Now it is happening through one or the other kind of religious or political propaganda - and in particular through the media storm, which transforms humans into consumers. ”You are what you eat!” It is also this magic George Orwell describes in his novel 1984, with the language called NewSpeak, a language created by the rulers in order to control thinking. We all know it more or less. If you by your surroundings constantly are being induced some kind of image, you will in the end begin to believe in it, even if it is not true (Subjective validation). Especially in family relations we see how family members are being induced roles which are incredible difficult to disentangle from, because family relations also have with love to do.

All this is magical thinking, and there are a lot of thought distortions built into it, for example the thought-distortion Arbitrary inference which means that you make a causal linking of factors, which is accidental or misleading, and Communal reinforcement which opens you for the power of suggestion. When you use an Ideology (a system, an image), or other limited thought-constructions, to explain everything, you end in an Endless split of the thought.

The main reason for the rise of magical thinking is that you don’t discriminate between image and reality, the map and the landscape, subject and object. Such an discrimination is central in critical thinking, but it does not involve an ontological dualism, so that you can’t experience nondual, mystical states of mind. It involves a so-called epistemological dualism, or gnoseological dualism, as Niels Bohr has pointed out.

Critical thinking is the cornerstone in logic, and you can’t get a long way on a D&D journey without using critical thinking and logic. That’s my point. D&D is simply training the players mind in using critical thinking and logic.

The precondition for the use of logic is unambiguous description, both in thoughts and in everyday language. What is the core in that?

In accordance with Bohr quantum mechanics is a generalization of classical physics and the complementarity viewpoint is a generalization of the classical causality principle. The theory of relativity is also a generalization in another direction of classical physics.
Nor can you – in Bohr’s opinion – replace classical physics with quantum mechanics, because the validity of classical physics is a necessary precondition for, that you can describe the quantum mechanical phenomena and make account for the macroscopic (“classical”) experimental arrangement. Bohr is writing in a famous discussion contribution against Einstein, who didn't want to accept that the causality principle has no validity in nuclear physics:

”…the account for all experiences – regardless how far the phenomena are lying outside the reach of classical physics – must be expressed in classical concepts. The reason is simply that we by the word ”experiment” refer to a situation, where we can tell others what we have done and what we have learned, and that the experimental device and measuring results therefore must be described in the usual language with appropriate use of the terminology of classical physics.”


Note, that Bohr here speaks about the usual language (everyday language) supplemented with the terms of classical physics. This is due to, that he regards the concepts of classical physics as a more explicit formulation of everyday language. In that sense everyday language is a necessary precondition for all natural scientific realization, and nor can everyday language be replaced by an unambiguous and formalised, logical scientific language (read more in my article Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr).

My professor in philosophy David Favrholdt has developed this important theme in Bohr’s epistemology further in his own philosophy. He works with, what he calls The Core in everyday language.


_The phenomenalist/idealistic_ [that’s the New Age position] claims that we only with certainty can know, that the here italicized concepts stand for something real; that is to say: something from the concepts different: _Time_ – _object_ – _space_ – _logic_ – _body_ – _person_ – _subject_ – _experience_ – _memory._

_The materialist_ claims that we only with certainty can know, that the here italicized concepts stand for something real; that is to say: something from the concepts different: _Time_ – _object_ – _space_ – _logic_ – _body_ – _person_ – _subject_ – _experience_ – _memory._
Favrholdt claims that since these concepts are interdependent, they all represent something. Together they are what he calls The Core in everyday language. That they are interdependent means that they have to be used in a certain way in relation to each other, if we at all want to talk meaningful. The relations between them are not established by arbitrary definitions. We have discovered that we shall respect the relations between them, if we want to describe something, whether we want to describe, that there is lying a phone book on the desktop, or that we have an experience of the phone book, or to describe what is happening during a D&D adventure.

What we must say is as follows: When we as ordinary people – before we have heard anything about philosophy – orientate in life, we form a concept about reality. We associate with humans and animals and plants and non-living things in our daily lives, and we learn to discriminate between what is dream and reality - and what is lie or illusion, and reality.

Any human being understands what we mean by saying that the witness explained in the court, that the thief had a pistol, but *in reality* the thief was unarmed. We also learn to talk about the poetic reality, about the experienced reality etc. We learn to talk about things which exist, despite that no one experiences them, or have consciousness about them. When they found the Golden Horns at Gallehus, they found something which no one knew were there. But they *found* them. Is wasn’t so that they *arised* because they were experienced. In the same way with D&D. You can’t control the game through your experiences (your thoughts, will, wishes etc.). It doesn’t obey you, you must follow its rules. Well, in fact, there wouldn’t be much fun if you completely could control the results.

Then certain philosophers are coming and saying, that we don't know whether there is anything behind our experiences. What can you do but ask them what they mean with ”experiences”. Then they explain this. But it turns out that they only can do this by using the whole of The Core. And in this set of fundamental concepts is included the concept ”object” or ”thing” which represent ”things, which exist whether they are experienced or not”.

This is included as a necessary precondition for that we can define or explain what we shall understand by experience. So because they have explained what they mean by ”experience” - so that we know the correct use of this concept - they have already accepted that we in our description of reality must assume a correct use of the concept ”things which exist whether they are experienced or not”.

Why the conceptual relations in the The Core not are conventional or accidental, but unavoidable as the relations in the number theory, is precisely because reality - the
from our experiences and mind independently existing reality is included in the determination of how we have to use our concepts in order to be able to realize it, and describe it.

We can choose not to describe it and instead soak ourselves in Hinajana Buddhistic meditation (or music), but if we want to describe it, if we want to find out what is subjective and objective, if we want to achieve realization within physics, biology, psychology, and in D&D, then we must use our fundamental concepts in a correct, non-arbitrary way.

This involves, not an ontological dualism, but an epistemological, a so-called gnoseological dualism. Unambiguous description has the distinction between subject and object as a necessary precondition. And the fact itself that we have to discriminate between subject and object in order to communicate unambiguous, actually indicates that both materialism and idealism (subjectivism, relativism) are mistaken points of views.

And the same is the case in order to think clearly. Critical thinking is about spotting thought distortions created by dualistic unbalance, both in yourself and in others.

So central in critical thinking is the discrimination between subject and object, dream and reality - and what is lie or illusion, and reality.

And discrimination is also a central virtue in true spirituality. The Dominican mystics call this steps discriminatio, the ability to discriminate between how the energy is used temporal or religious. And despite that magical thinking actually can create something magical, then in true spirituality it is still something temporal, or relatively (black magic/occultism), which will create negative karma if practised. The Orientals call it viveka, discrimination, the ability to use your will on that part of the energy, you can steer yourself, and steer it towards exercises, prayer, mantras, meditation, instead of towards career, worldliness, self-unfolding, as for example New Thought does.

It is clear enough that the Netflix series Stranger Things is playing with all this. Not only with the use of rationality and logic in relation with paranormal phenomena, but also in connection with conspiracy theories, for example Hawkins National Laboratory. Here the series also is inspired by real-life incidents.

The Montauk Project: Experiments in Time, is a book published in 1992 that supposedly provided the germ of the idea for Stranger Things. The story is a virtual Rube Goldberg machine for conspiracy-theory buffs, replete with secret government
experiments, kids with supernatural powers, time-travel portals, and scary monsters — all said to be carried out at an Air Force base on the tip of Long Island.

It’s widely believed that government experiments of some kind really did happen at a military base in Montauk known as Camp Hero. But no one can say what happened for sure. And yes, there is definitely a connection between this spot and Stranger Things: When Netflix first announced the forthcoming series created by Matt and Ross Duffer, it was called Montauk and was going to be set on the eastern end of Long Island. The setting was eventually shifted to the fictional town of Hawkins, Indiana, and the show’s title, of course, was changed too.

In addition to The Montauk Project, a docu-drama called Montauk Chronicles was released in 2011. The film features interviews with three men who “were brainwashed and forced against their will by a clandestine organization to take part in secret experiments,” the filmmakers say. They “tell tales of experiments that were conducted on nearly one hundred thousand people over the course of about ten years. Kidnappings, murder, torture, time travel, mind control, and extra terrestrial contact are all said to have occurred at Camp Hero.”

Inspiration for Stranger Things can also reportedly be found in the so-called “Philadelphia Experiment,” a sister conspiracy to The Montauk Project, in which World War II-era military experiments were supposedly conducted with the goal of making naval ships invisible to the enemy. A movie based loosely on the conspiracy, entitled The Philadelphia Experiment, was released in 1984, the year the Duffer brothers were born. (The entire movie is also streamable on YouTube, and the opening credits are show in blood-red type that’s eerily familiar to the Stranger Things logo.)

In my article Time Travel and the Fascism of the Wingmakers Project, I explain all of these conspiracies. On Lucifer Morningstar’s blog you can see how he has adopted The WingMakers Project (click here). The paradox in the Matrix Conspiracy is that it here is the conspiracy theorists of popular culture (as for example the above mentioned conspiracy theories) who are the leaders of a Shadow Government; the Men in Black (MIB), who seek to destroy the best tools we have for finding truth, namely philosophy and science (see my Matrix Dictionary entry on Anti-intellectualism and Anti-science).

In that way the Matrix Conspiracy is an ideology. Now, if we continue with discrimination, logical and critical thinking, you could say that the kids in Stranger Things, by using D&D as a main guideline in their quest, actually learn some basic
logical and ethical principles that teach them about the difference between philosophical education and ideological education.

Philosophical education has its basic objectives, first, the disposition to seek truth, and, second, the capacity to conduct rational inquiry. Training scientists, for example, requires the inculcation both of an ethic of inquiry – do not fabricate or distort results, take care to prevent your hypotheses (or desires) from affecting your observations – and the techniques of inquiry appropriate to the discipline (my book *A Dictionary of Thought Distortions* is a manual in rational inquiry, or critical thinking).

There are of course many different forms of philosophical education, corresponding to the numerous ways in which truth may be pursued (my own method is philosophy seen as an art of life – see my articles *What is philosophy?* and *Philosophical Counseling as an Alternative to Psychotherapy*). Nevertheless, these forms of education share two key features. First, they are not decisively shaped by the specific social or political/religious circumstances in which they are conducted, or, to put it the other way around, they are perverted when such circumstances come to have a substantive effect. There is no valid distinction between “Jewish” and “Aryan” physics, or between “bourgeois” and “socialist” biology; truth is one and universal.

Secondly, and relatedly, philosophical education can have corrosive consequences for political (and/or religious) communities in which it is allowed to take place. The pursuit of truth – scientific, historical, moral, or whatever – can undermine structures of unexamined but socially central belief.

Ideological education - (today through what I call The Matrix Conspiracy) - differs from philosophical education in all these respects. Its purpose is not the pursuit and acquisition of truth, but rather the formation of individuals, who can effectively conduct their lives within, and support, their political (and/or religious) community. It is unlikely, to say the least, that the truth will be fully consistent with this purpose. Nor is ideological education homogeneous and universal. It is by definition education within, and on behalf of, a particular political (and/or religious) order. Nor, finally, does ideological education stand in opposition to its political (and/or religious) community. On the contrary, it fails – fundamentally – if it does not support and strengthen that community.

Ideology altogether is a psychic disease. You are not in doubt about, that ideology is a psychic disease if you look at its collective manifestations. It appears for example in the form of ideologies such as Communism, Liberalism, Conservatism, National Socialism and any other nationalism, or in the form of rigid religious systems of faith, which function with the implied assumption, that the supreme good lay out in the
future, and that the end therefore justifies the means. The goal is an idea, a point out in a future, projected by the mind, where salvation is coming in some kind – happiness, satisfaction, equality, liberation, etc. It is not unusual, that the means to come to this is to make people into slaves, torture them and murder them here and now; or, as in Stranger Things, making horrible experiments with children and reality.

That a thought-system has developed into an ideology shows in, that it is a closed system, which is shared by a large group of people. Such a closed system has especially two distinctive characters: 1) It allows no imaginable circumstance to talk against the ideology. 2) It refuses all critique by analysing the motives in the critique in concepts, which is collected from the ideology itself (an ideology always thinks black and white, and therefore always has an anti-ideology, an enemy image, which it attribute on to everyone, who don´t agree).

An ideology is therefore characterized by, that it is not able to contain, or direct refuses, rationality and critical thinking. We all know how dissidents have been killed, jailed and tortured under totalitarian ideologies.

Ideologies are using propaganda in order to get their “truths” forced through. In that connection they use thought distortions. Thought distortions are “techniques”, that, unconscious or conscious, are used from an interest in finding ways of getting on in the world, rather than an interest in finding ways of discovering the truth. Thought distortions are the background for poor reasoning, diversionary ploys, seductive reasoning errors, techniques of persuasion and avoidance, psychological factors, which can be obstacles to clear thought.

Critical thinking, or philosophy, is in opposition to thought distortions. Critical thinking is about spotting thought distortions, and examining them by presenting reasons and evidence in support of conclusions.

In philosophy you focus on, what co-operation and conversation require of you in order to that you at all can exist: that you speak true (don´t lie), that you are prepared to reach mutual understanding and agreement (don´t manipulate), don´t make an exception of yourself (but treat others as equals). From this rises the eternal moral values (as for example that it is wrong to lie), and generally our ideas of right and justice: the so-called human rights, the idea about the individual person´s autonomy and dignity: you shall treat the other not as a mean, but as a goal.

The kids in Stranger Things are precisely focusing on all this; all in relation to the D&D game. In a scene, Eleven flipped the game board upside-down to explain that
Will was trapped in an alternate dimension, which they later dubbed the Upside Down. As we have seen, the ego is constructed around the pain-body. This is the inter-dimensional gate between worlds. The one who wants power is the Ego. The Ego wants. The backside of this Ego-centredness is radical Ego-sovereignty. So the Ego, the desire, the power, and the inevitable resulting violence, are combined in the dark collective primordial images and fantasies. This is the circle of the One Ring, as I explained in my pop culture file on *The Lord of the Rings*.

Dustin compared the Upside Down to the Vale of Shadows from the game: "a dimension that is a dark reflection, or echo, of our world. It is a place of decay and death, a plane out of phase, a place of monsters. It is right next to you and you do not even see it." Eleven used the Demogorgon figurine to explain that the monster was present within the Upside Down like Will was.

After Will's return, the boys ran another campaign on Christmas Eve. In the story, the characters encountered a "lost knight", a "proud princess" and "weird flowers in [a] cave". Eventually, Mike summoned the fearsome Thessalhydra, but this time Will triumphed over the enemy, fireballing the beast with success. Lucas's Knight cut off the beast's seven heads, with Dustin's Dwarf storing them in his bag of holding. Mike wrapped up the campaign with a medal ceremony, in which "King Tristan" thanked the heroes for their bravery and service. However, the boys complained that the campaign was "way too short" and that Mike had failed to tie up the story in a satisfying way.

So, we now have a pretty good rundown of what class the youngest characters embody:

*Mike* = Paladin. A paladin is a fighter who acts in the name of good and order (Mike is the Dungeon Master in the show, but in character he's a paladin).

*Will* = Rogue. A rogue is very stealthy and good at hiding, skills that enabled Will to survive in the monster's lair while Barb died.

*Dustin* = Bard. A bard has a great way with words, and is also very smart, and diplomatic. Dustin used these skills to keep the group united and focused many times.

*Lucas* = Ranger. A ranger is an independent and skilled hunter who uses their wilderness skills to hunt down enemies, this was shown when Lucas split from the group and undertook his own efforts to find the gate.
Eleven = Sorcerer. A sorcerer is innately able to use spells and magic without having studied it, they also have skills in concentration, which is something El frequently displays when using her powers.

Antagonists = the Demogorgon.

The Demogorgon was a powerful demonic monster, famous for being one of the toughest foes in the game. Mike used it as an antagonist in one of the campaigns he ran. Will tried to cast "Fireball" against it, but he only rolled a seven, resulting in the Demogorgon defeating his character.

Mike has a miniature of Demogorgon, which shows the demon's form: it is huge, with a reptilian body, two Mandril heads, a tail and arms ending in long tentacles.

When Mike, Dustin and Lucas learned from Eleven about the existence of a real-life monster from another dimension, they called it Demogorgon.

When another mysterious monster from the Upside Down emerged as a threat to Hawkins, Dustin and his friends used another Dungeons & Dragons-based analogy to help explain and unambiguously describe their situation. Dustin equated the new monster with the Mind Flayer, an evil and sadistic being from the 'Underdark' realm.

Dustin gave this description of the Mind Flayer:

“It's a monster from an unknown dimension. It's so ancient that it doesn't even know its true home. It enslaves races of other dimensions by taking over their brains using its highly-developed psionic powers.”

When asked about the Mind Flayer's motivations, Dustin gave this reply:

“It views other races, like us, as inferior to itself. It wants to spread, take over other dimensions.”

In these descriptions, with the help of D&D, he is using The Core in everyday language.

So, the game is used as a self-referential plot device in the series. The first campaign in "The Vanishing of Will Byers" foreshadows the events of Season One with the Demogorgon appearing and taking Will as the monster did in the following scenes.
In real life, the "Vale of Shadows" is not an official part of D&D canon - however, a chapter from the 2002, D&D-inspired video game "Icewind Dale" shares the name. The "Vale of Shadows" could also be an alternative name for the location known as Shadowfell.

In the Christmas 1983 campaign, Lucas's player character cuts off "the Thessalhydra's seven heads". However, the Thessalhydra is said to have eight heads.

In Season 2, Max proposes to be the group's "zoomer", lacking understanding of the game. Mike believes Eleven to be a Mage.

Conclusion:

All in all: my basic claim is that D&D is an excellent training in logic and ethics.

**About logic in D&D:**

We have talked about the mazes in D&D as well as the upside-down, the relation between fantasy and reality, magical thinking, thought distortions, the use of discrimination and *The Core* in everyday language. That’s the basics of logic, which the game trains the players in using.

If one should mention a great author who also plays with these elements it is Jorge Luis Borges. To the common consciousness, or the common cognition - that is to say: sensation and thinking - life could very well be thought to be a mix of fantasy and reality. The wholeness could possible be sleeping. You could here very well imagine the validity of the above problems, but you end up in a lot of logical problems. It is precisely these logical anomalies, paradoxes, and problems, which create Samsara’s wheel of eternal repeating up-cycles which is followed by eternal repeating down-cycles and vice versa (for example life and death, success and fiasco, joy and sorrow) – as well as the ignorance and the suffering when you are caught into this wheel, for example in the experience of nightmare and anxiety.

All Jorge Luis Borges’ small stories are about these logical and philosophical problems. His stories are filled with mirrors, masks, endless series and regresses, labyrinths, parallel universes, other dimensions, puzzles, doppelgängers, time travel theories, solipsism and dreams; all of which players of D&D work with.

(In my book *A Dictionary of Thought Distortion* I have examined these logical and philosophical problems, especially in the thought distortion I call Endless split of the
thought. In my Matrix Dictionary entry *Simulation Theory* I have debunked the idea of that life entirely could be an illusion or dream).

It is by no means that I have chosen Lucifer Morningstar´s place of home in Venice, Italy. Venice is the real-life analogy of mazes, masks and mirrors, which double in endless alleys and inter-dimensional gateways. See for example Lucifer Morningstar´s blog page *A Venetian Grandmother*, a story by Hugo Pratt about his childhood in Venice; a story fictitiously told to a party in Lucifer Morningstar´s palazzo.

Time is not just the personal history, but also the collective and the universal history, and therefore the contents of time and it´s images are unfathomable. An absolute fascinating perspective, and dangerous. With Borges you could try to illustrate this fascination by comparing it with the fascination the Western nations got, when they discovered the Orient. As Borges says, then you, in this connection, can talk about the ”the Consciousness of the Orient”. And in this way you can compare the fascination of time and it´s unfathomableness, with the fascination of a sapphire from the Orient. That is: an oriental sapphire filled up with Thousand and one Night. Something magical, something enchanting. And it is exactly such a kind of fascination many people get over the phenomena in the different types of spiritual crises.

In Italo Calvino´s book *Invisible Cities* Marco Polo sits and tells Kublai Khan about all the cities he has visited during his journeys in the Orient. However the whole thing is one big fantasy-game, one big play with time and it´s images, which endless content can flow out everywhere, for example in the labyrinths of Venice – because all the invisible cities Marco Polo is telling about, is a description of one single, complete, city: Venice. A description, which, because of the limitation of language, ends in an endless description of the negations of Venice, the invisible cities within Venice.

When Borges uses the concept Thousand and one Night, then he often refers to the circumstance, that the word ”thousand” almost is synonymous with ”endless many”. To say thousand nights is to say endless many nights, the many nights, the countless nights. To say ”Thousand and one Night” is to indulge one more to the endless many. The conception about something endless is similar in nature with Thousand and one Night.

To create an opening where time and it´s images can begin to flow in through, is like opening an endless book. But the thought´s fascination of this can transform itself into something nightmarish, because the thought - which by nature is limited - is
seeking to play with the unlimited. The thought, which by nature is expelling, is seeking to understand the all-inclusive.

It ends up in a feeling of endless split. Everything has a negation which itself has another negation, etc. You open up for an endless book - or you can try to think about these Chinese balls within which there are other balls - or of the Russian dolls.

In Thousand and one Night Sheherazade is putting the Sultan off with stories, which never have any ending. With stories, which are inside other stories, she produces a mighty effect, almost of something endless, which gives a kind of dizziness.

Thus also in Lewis Carroll’s books about Alice in Wonderland, or his novel Sylvia and Bruno, where there are dreams inside other dreams, which branch and multiply themselves (see my pop culture file on Alice in Wonderland).

As Borges said one evening under a talk, then Thousand and one Night is such a mighty book, that it is not necessary to have read it, because it is a part of our memory, which already exists, and also were a part of that evening, where he said those words. Thousand and one Night’s endless time is still going on – it continues to grow, or reproduce itself. It is created of both the personal, collective and universal time, which we all are parts of through our thinking, through our minds.

About ethics in D&D:

In Dungeons & Dragons, a character’s moral personality is represented by alignment. A character’s alignment isn’t the whole story of her personality, but it gives us a rough idea of how the character sees the world and her place in it. In the original D&D, characters were lawful, neutral, or chaotic. Advanced D&D added suffixes of good, neutral, or evil, giving us nine possibilities (lawful evil, chaotic good, and so on). In the Fourth Edition, alignment has been simplified a bit, and characters can occupy one of the five points along a spectrum from lawful good, good, unaligned, evil, and chaotic evil.

Alignment gives us a simply way of identifying a character’s values, so it provides some guide to what actions a character will choose.

A central phrase used by Eleven is: “Friends Don’t Lie!”

In the description of the difference between philosophical education and ideological education we saw how you in philosophy focus on, what co-operation and conversation require of you in order to that you at all can exist: that you speak true
(don´t lie), that you are prepared to reach mutual understanding and agreement (don´t manipulate), don´t make an exception of yourself (but treat others as equals). From this rises the eternal moral values (as for example that it is wrong to lie), and generally our ideas of right and justice: the so-called human rights, the idea about the individual person´s autonomy and dignity: you shall treat the other not as a mean, but as a goal.

This is called **Deontological ethics**, the normative ethical position that judges the morality of an action based on rules. This is of course quite central in D&D. Such rules can create direction in the mind.

But rules are not enough. D&D also contains what is called **Virtue ethics**. The western tradition's key concepts on virtue ethics derive from ancient Greek philosophy. These concepts include arete (excellence or virtue), phronesis (practical or moral wisdom), and eudaimonia (flourishing). The idea is to start with the agent, not the action. If we knew more about the traits, emotions, and thoughts of the ideal moral agent, this exemplar would give us a standard of right action. The virtuous agent, the one who exemplifies this ideal, gives us our best insight into what to do. The idea of character (in the sense of personality) is fundamental, while right actions are simply the ones that virtuous persons would choose.

The appeal of this idea is that while rules will botch morally nuanced situations, the virtuous person has the wisdom and insight to get them right. The virtuous agent will tell us to avoid lies most of the time but not always, for example, because sometimes lying is necessary to protect innocents from evil. Virtue ethics has to do with the ancient concept of *Knowing Thyself*, and therefore the spiritual training of mind and heart. But for the one who isn´t skilled in this, rules are good (that´s why I, as a starting point, recommend people to find a religion and some basic rules to live after – see my article *[The Value of Having a Religion in a Spiritual Practice]*).

Like everything in D&D (except the incredible innovation of providing formal mechanics for role-play itself), the alignment system is an amalgam of content originating in twentieth-century fantasy novels. The philosopher-Game Designer Chris Bateman claims in his article on D&D, *Chaotic Good in the Balance* that while Good and Evil date back at least as far as the prophet Zoroaster, the root of the axis of Law and Chaos lies in Paul Anderson´s novel *Three Hearts and Three Lions*, and even more so in the work of Michael Moorcock, who developed Anderson´s ideas. Moorcock is famous among fantasy fans for the Elric saga which forms a small part of his epic Eternal Champion cycle, although he has become an accomplished literary novelist in recent years and is cited as an influence by Neil Gaiman, Alan Moore, Greg Keyes, Michael Chabon, China Miéville, Hiroyuki Morioka and many others. In
non-fiction works such as *Death Is No Obstacle*, Moorcock has explained some of the metaphysical concepts behind his version of Law and Chaos, and appreciating his perspective offers a new way of thinking about alignment in D&D.

In Moorcock’s fantasy stories, Law and Chaos are manifested as two competing pantheons of deities – the Lords of Chaos and the Lords of Law, or collectively as the Lords of the Higher worlds. The two sides are held in check by a metaphysical power that exceeds the strength of either faction known as the Cosmic Balance, and Moorcock’s Eternal Champion characters (such as Elric) are fated to fight on the behalf of the Cosmic Balance, although they often do not know it. Elric, who first appeared in the 1961 short story “The Dreaming City”, was born to the race of Melnibonéans who are bound by ancient pacts to Chaos. However, in the final Elric story, *Stormbringer*, Elric turns against his patron god Arioch and fights against Chaos in order to restore the balance.

However, as Bateman continues, the thematic material behind Law and Chaos that Moorcock has discussed in books such as *Death Is No Obstacle* reveals them as representing two competing, necessarily political ideologies, which broadly correspond to the liberal and conservative forces in politics. Moorcock’s view is that either of these forces, if given absolute free reign, becomes destructive. Law (conservative tendencies) becomes stifling, drains away creativity and freedom and becomes ultimately toxic to life, especially when the commitment to the rule of law becomes a charter to commit violence. Chaos (liberal tendencies) risks carnage and random violence or harm. But either of these tendencies can be beneficial when it is used to combat the other – the chaos of a warzone can be calmed by the application of law; the dogmatic lawfulness of tyranny can be liberated by the chaos of rebellion. These themes are explored in Moorcock’s work at many levels.

Bateman claims, that it is out of this construal of Law and Chaos that the original D&D alignment system emerges – and it’s because Moorcock sees Law and Chaos as definitely distinct from good and evil (which he also believes in) that the D&D system ends up with its ninefold system. Central to Moorcock’s ethical agenda is the idea that those who are capable of seeing the true nature of Law and Chaos are compelled to fight for one side of the other according to the needs of the circumstance. In his later works, he adds to this idea a set of heroic figures who are precisely committed to support whichever side of the Cosmic balance needs to be addressed. This idea of the Cosmic Balance is another part of Moorcock’s metaphysics with crucial relevance to understanding alignment, as it goes to the heart of what Neutral is supposed to mean in the original D&D system. Neutral means being of and for the balance.
Within this framework, Bateman claims, the nine alignments that classic D&D deployed provide a unique perspective on ethics, one neatly arranged into clearly defined boxes, ideally suited to tabletop role-playing.

Each human being is constituted of many masks, and within the wholeness they create unbalance. What apply for the individual, also apply for the collective and for nature. You can therefore also observe the energy-law of the wholeness (The Cosmic Balance) in groups, societies, world-images, yes, in all Mankind, and in the Universe. You can observe it in everything, which is movement and not unmoved being.

For example: right now Mankind is in an egoextreme. This is reflected in numerous fields. Too much energy is invested in armament. Too many atomic weapons. Too much pollution. Too much unequal distribution of the treasures of the Earth. Too much unequal distribution of the food and fruits of the Earth. And first of all: too many people are too focused in their ego; they accumulate energy to their ego, to themselves; or to the family ego; or to the national ego.

This is the energy in one extremity. With necessity the energy will, in order to bring the energy back to the balance of the middle, swing over in the opposite extreme, just like a pendulum. And this will not happen in a quiet way, when you consider the enormous moment, that is in the actual extreme, and it will happen quite simple: through pollution of the environment, through illness (aids, cancer and other), through crises, warfare, terror, through inner mass-psychotic collapses, and through natural disasters. In that way the energy-law is neutral, neither good, nor evil. And it is clear that unbalances can´t be balanced if someone begin to play a neutral evil character in real-life; that is: a character of war, terror, illness, etc. But it certainly is possible in a game like D&D. But note that this is only successfully possible if the players understand the true nature of Law and Chaos. Therefore both deontological ethics and virtue ethics are necessary.

And when it comes to the individual it could be wise to play out the masks we have repressed. D&D is an ideal toy for training this. But, as mentioned, it can´t be applied to real-life. The above-mentioned ethics doesn´t allow this. But it is for example a central part of the self-regulating system in dreams. The Ego-weakening, and the dreams´ connection with the body, causes, that the energy-laws of the wholeness work much better in the dream state. In other words: dreams balance the energetical swings of the thoughts. And dreams seek to finish unfinished situations. If you follow your dreams you will see, that wherever and whenever the Ego´s awaken life - on the background of evaluations made from opposites - has slipped out in one extreme, then the dream-process seeks to balance this imbalance by insisting on the opposite extreme. If you awake were too gentle, the dreams depict the more stubborn and
unfriendly sides in your personality (and reversely). If you were too negative, the dreams seek to bring the positive aspect into light (and reversely). And each and every time the Ego in the awaken life reacts on the challenges of the various situations, by using your past (the pain-body), an unfinished situation is left behind. The dreams seek to finish this as good as possible. As you know you can have the same type of dreams again and again – until you begin to examine yourself, and change and restructure your thought-patterns, so that you can let go of the situations. This is your compensatory karma.

So, firstly the dreams have a developmental function through their synthesizing symbol-function, which is condensed messages from the wholeness (progressive karma). Secondly the dreams function with reference to bodily andenergetical balancing and regulation of the swings of the thoughts (compensatory karma). This, the self-regulating system of the dream-process, is a Sisyphean task though, as long as you in the awaken life don’t help. This is the whole idea of Dream Yoga (see my article What is Dream Yoga?).

A part of making dreams lucid, is to try to control the dreams as far as this is possible and lead them towards higher states, as we already have examined in relation with magical thinking and the art of discrimination. Control is possible within the area of compensatory karma. But in order to do this it is precisely necessary that you discriminate between dream and reality. If you are completely identified with a dream you are just a helpless puppet. You don’t know you’re dreaming. When you know you are dreaming, while you’re dreaming (as in lucid dreams) you know that this is not reality. You discriminate between dream and reality. From that comes the art of controlling the dreams. A part of this control could be, for example, to play characters, which represent repressed aspects of your personality. But again, this is a thing you of course shouldn’t do in the real-life awaken state. Keep a long distance from dream interpreters who try to convince you that dreams tell you about things you should do in your awaken life. But in dreams, or in a game, such role-play is balancing unbalanced aspects of your personality.

The progressive karma is the inexplicable things happening to you that are out of your control (that’s why you shouldn’t try to interpret dreams either). This happens when you have reached a considerable degree of balance in your personality. Here the concept of divine grace comes in (read more in my article What is Karma?).

D&D is a splendid game where you can make some simple training exercises in all this.

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