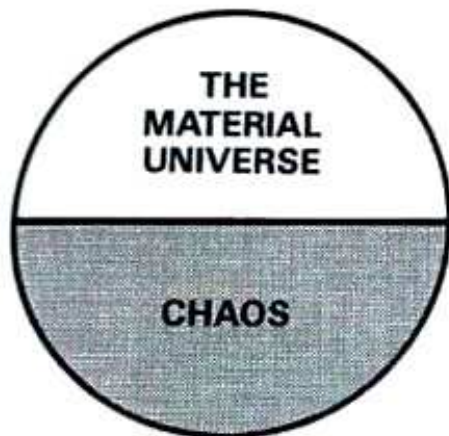


CHAOS

Guide to the fictional background of Chaos in GW games

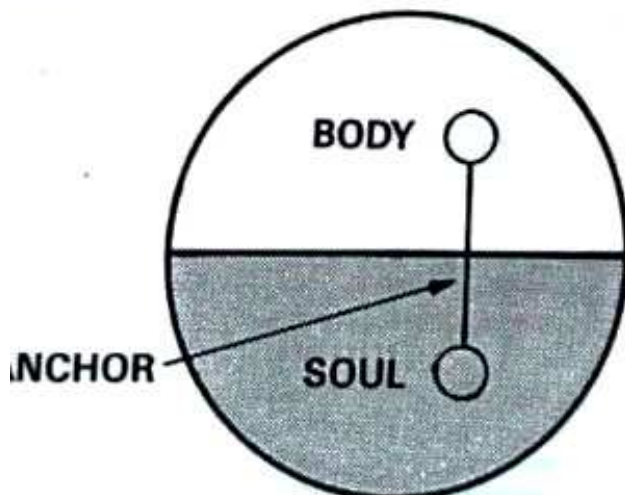
Chaos is easiest to explain in terms of a parallel universe comprising an endless sea of dissociated energy and matter. This is Chaos in its pure form, a soup of energy, unfettered emotion, random bits of memory, and potential existence. Within the sea its components well and drift, randomly coalescing and breaking apart, continually forming new mixtures. However, it would be overly simple to say outright that this is all there is to Chaos, although the image is a useful mental tool which will help us to explain how Chaos works.



THE RELATIONSHIP OF CHAOS AND THE SOUL

All living creatures exist in the Chaos Universe as well as in the material universe. Most are not conscious of the fact. Whilst a man's body inhabits the material universe his soul inhabits that of Chaos. Just as the body is part of the material universe and is made of matter, the soul is part of Chaos and is made from it.

The soul is not aware. It is simply a coherent lump of raw Chaos energy maintained whole by its anchor to the material body. It represents power, and can be drawn upon and used by wizards and psykers and unconsciously by individuals with these latent powers. All of us may draw unknowingly upon this power in moments of extremity.



THE LOST SOUL

When a creature dies the anchor holding its body and soul is broken. The raw material of the soul is cast adrift amongst the other raw material of Chaos. Most souls are weak and insubstantial, and soon dissolve back into Chaos and are lost forever. Because of this relationship, the universe of Chaos is sometimes called The Sea of Lost Souls or (because souls are recreated with every new birth) the Well of Souls.

THE DRIFTING SOUL

Other souls once deprived of their anchoring body remain substantial although still without consciousness. They retain an essence of the most deeply held emotions or thoughts that characterised them in life. Upon death the soul drifts freely until it meets and coalesces with other similarly inclined souls. Thus by an accumulation of drifting souls, greater wholes are created; coalescences of energy held together by common emotions and belief. In this way the emotions and beliefs of men affect Chaos itself. These accumulations of energy gain personality and individual character as they gain strength, eventually becoming fully aware entities. Such are the Powers of Chaos. The Star Child is a Power that has yet to be born, having not yet achieved full consciousness.

THE POWERFUL SOUL

In a minority of cases a man will build a powerful soul during his lifetime. Such people are primarily wizards and psykers, or those who have these latent abilities without ever learning how to use them. Such people unconsciously manipulate the energies, drawing power from one universe to the other. They are usually accomplished and powerful in their lifetime. When they die their consciousness is transferred complete to their soul. A soul which is animated by consciousness is referred to as a spirit.

A spirit in Chaos is a fully formed human personality lacking only a material body. It can move and act in Chaos, and may lead a spiritual life amongst the other entities of that universe. Most importantly, a spirit can continue to learn, and may attempt to communicate its knowledge via the developing souls of the living.

REINCARNATING THE SPIRIT

A spirit may be reborn (whether as a conscious decision or by some natural occurrence I don't know - possibly both) and will then live through a further cycle as a man. In most cases the reborn individual has no knowledge of his previous lifetime and only recovers this knowledge when his consciousness returns to Chaos upon death.

When the spirit reincarnates into a new body, the soul becomes insensible once more, but does not lose its power. Its original power is augmented by the new life, so the soul becomes more powerful still. The soul of a person who reincarnates through several lives grows increasingly powerful with every incarnation.

THE INCARNATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

A tiny minority retain partial or even full knowledge of their material and spiritual lives whilst in the body. Most often they gain this knowledge as they mature, or as it is revealed to them through spirit walking, magical practices, or through the medium of other incarnating free spirits.

A reincarnated person may be brought to full knowledge of their previous existences, both living and spiritual, by the use of a special drug called psythol. Background on this drug and its associated cult of Man Incarnate is discussed in the Confrontation game.

A reincarnated person may also be brought to the same knowledge if consciousness is traumatically shifted from body to soul and back again. This can be achieved to a degree by extreme ascetic and mystic or magical practices. However, these rarely give full knowledge but only hints and vague recollections of past experiences. Only traumatic shifts can have this affect, many people can shift their consciousness to their spirit but gain little or none of their past lives in the process.

Once a person has been awakened to his past lives, the knowledge is passed on to all incarnations from then on. The person thus becomes effectively immortal as his personality is transferred from body to body. Such people are Immortal Reincarnates.

FRAGMENTATION OF THE IMMORTAL REINCARNATE

Once a soul has grown sufficiently powerful it will always be able to survive dissolution at death unless it suffers some major catastrophe. As a result the number of reincarnating souls is always increasing.

However, the cult of Man Incarnate has discovered that some reborn spirits suffer fracturing, the spirit is reborn not into one but two or more people and the soul is divided amongst them. This is a great source of concern amongst those who have gained full realisation of their past lives, and who are now threatened with losing their identity through fragmentation.

Fragmentation occurs in WH40K because the number of living people is so vast. Every new birth draws upon the raw material of Chaos to form a new soul. Normally the quantity of raw Chaos energy is so vast that this poses no problem. But as the Chaos Powers have fed upon humanity's emotions and beliefs, so they have grown more powerful and more able to suck souls into themselves. The rise of a new Power, the Star Child, has placed added strain on the material of Chaos. There is still unfettered Chaos matter, but it no longer makes up the overwhelming majority of Chaos as once it did.

When a creature is born an anchor is cast into Chaos which lodges upon its unformed energy. It cannot fasten upon the soul of another living person, nor upon the Powers or their minions, but it can strike a spirit awaiting incarnation. As a result the spirit is fractured and weakened - aspects of its personality are sucked away by the Powers whilst its lives and experiences are shattered into many pieces. Consciousness is lost and the divided souls await further incarnation as several individuals each lacking any knowledge of their previous life.

REALISATION OF THE FRACTURED SPIRIT

Each part of the fractured spirit is liable to be incarnated, but the reincarnated person will not be aware of past lives. By means of psythol and mystic experience a character can be brought to recall his past lives and experiences, but only a portion of them as represented by that part of the divided spirit.

It is unlikely that a spirit, once divided, can ever be united. The proximity and strength of the Powers exerts a pressure which pulls away and may consume traits and experiences it deems appropriate to its own nature. Without these portions of memory and experience the spirit could never be truly whole, even if it were possible to unite the remaining divided spirits.

SPIRIT WALKING

As described a spirit is a soul imbued with consciousness. This can happen because the body has perished and consciousness has moved from mind to the soul in preparation for reincarnation. It can also happen whilst a person is alive.

A developed psyker or wizard can move his consciousness from his mind to his soul. His soul becomes fully conscious whilst his body lapses into coma. In this spirit form the individual may act just like a spirit awaiting incarnation, moving amongst other spirits and souls, communicating with others, and so on. This is called Spirit Walking.

If the character has already been reincarnated, but is not aware of his previous incarnations, then Spirit Walking may bring awareness of past lives. Unlike death, which immediately brings full knowledge of past lives, Spirit Walking only reveals disjointed glimpses of previous existences. So the Spirit Walker may experience confusing flashbacks, untraceable memories, and a sense of some things being important without knowing why. Constant Spirit Walking may lead to a full realisation of past lives and the establishment of an Immortal Reincarnate.

Spirit Walking is a quasi-mystic and quasi-practical process. We might like to say that theoretically a psyker could Spirit Walk and go looking for the soul of a still living person. He could then examine the state of the soul for indications which might point to a disease of the body, future misfortune, or the malific intent of others. He would also be able to gauge the power of the soul and hence know the fate of the person on death.

DANGERS OF SPIRIT WALKING

Whilst Spirit Walking a person remains connected to the material universe joined by the link that anchors body and soul. This is the person's life-line back to the material universe, if this is severed he cannot return to his body and his body will eventually die.

The Spirit Walker remains reasonably safe from hostile entities in Chaos because of his life-line to the material universe. However, there are entities which are capable of threatening this life-line whilst the spirit remains in Chaos. Part of a Spirit Walker's accomplishment is to recognise and avoid or defeat these entities.

THE VULNERABILITY OF THE SOUL

Whilst it remains anchored to a material body the integrity of the soul is in little danger from other denizens of Chaos. Souls anchored in this way remain somehow hidden from, or inaccessible to, hostile entities in Chaos.

The vulnerability of the soul may be increased if the character attracts the Powers of Chaos; whether deliberately or unwittingly. The worship of Chaos marks out the soul to a Power, so that even the souls of Immortal Reincarnates can be dragged away and slowly consumed by the Powers of Chaos. As a man's soul is consumed by whatever Power the individual worships, so the living body becomes corrupted and the character's mind becomes more and more a shadow of the Power himself. Eventually the character's soul is consumed, or absorbed, into the Power, and the person becomes wholly part of the Power. The individual has given his soul to Chaos. He has not, however, necessarily given his own sense of awareness.

Those who have given their souls suffer one of two fates. Upon death their spirit may be placed within a part of the Powers own soul and given immortal integrity as a Daemon Prince. Those whose personality has been destroyed by the corruption of their bodies become Chaos Spawn and when they die their existence is ended, their souls become an indefinable part of their master's being.

This mechanical processes of exchanging the soul for power, the subsequent corruption of mind and body, and eventual fate of Daemon Prince or Spawn, are discussed in Realm of Chaos.

THE POWERS OF CHAOS

The following comments apply only to non-reincarnating souls ie primarily to those who are not wizards/psykers. As the souls of the dead are cast adrift they dissolve into the strong emotions or beliefs that characterise them. Lacking individual consciousness these traits wander randomly amidst the Sea of Souls until they meet like-traits derived from other souls, when they merge into greater collective forces. As they merge these traits are reinforced (becoming more extreme) and their power grows - they become conscious entities. As they become conscious they can actively attract appropriately inclined souls and do not have to rely on random coalescence. Once they are powerful enough, they can exert power on the material universe to promote those behaviour traits they represent. This they can do by means of daemonic agents, by granting power to wizards, and by offering the easy road to power of the Champions of Chaos.

The strongest of these entities (of which there are many unnamed) are the Chaos Powers themselves - feeding upon the most prevalent aspects of humanity (and other intelligent races) and reinforcing them in turn. The Star Child is also a creature of this kind. As yet, the Star Child has not grown sufficiently powerful so that it is fully conscious.

DAEMONS

If a Power is vast in terms of the quantity of Chaos he represents, the Daemon is a fraction of that Power's material. The Power exerts his will over a little of his raw material - imbuing the Daemon with a full personality which mirrors aspects of its master and creator. A Power must have vast reserves of energy to do this - otherwise he would risk fracturing his own personality. In the case of the 4 Great Powers of Chaos this is hardly a problem. The Daemon has its own existence as an individual, and automatically draws a proportion of appropriately inclined souls towards itself - thus feeding its own power base.

A Daemon may also be formed from the soulless spirit of a former mortal worshipper. Upon the death of his servant, the Power gives the spirit a little of its own soul to inhabit.

A Chaos Champion may also attain Daemonhood without worshipping, and without the aid of, a specific Power. His soul dissipates into Chaos during his life and upon his death he forces his personality into a portion of Chaos itself - in effect he forges himself a new soul for his spirit to inhabit.

CHAOS AND THE WARP

Chaos and warp space, or the warp, are the same thing. The term warp was used in WH40K only to dissociate the game from black, spiky warriors at a time when Chaos was often taken to mean little else.

Spacecraft enter Chaos by activating their warp drives, and move through Chaos during their journey. Although craft can move within the warp, they still remain isolated from it - they are a little bubble of reality pushed around and moved by the currents of Chaos. Sometimes this bubble gets a little leaky, and the stuff of Chaos starts to flood the ship - Drifting Souls pass through screaming blood-curdling obscenities as they are drawn into the ship's wake. Daemons skitter upon the hull, but are hopefully unable to break the seal of reality that surrounds the craft. The movements of spacecraft may have implications for souls in their path - perhaps people experience strange sensations as their souls are pushed aside by the passage of a spacecraft - maybe the roar of engines fills their ears - maybe sometimes the line that anchors their body and soul is snapped and their severed souls are gobbled up by the Powers of Chaos.

THE EMPEROR

The Emperor was blessed with a virtually immortal body. During his ages long life his soul has grown immensely powerful. He is so powerful that he is almost a rival to the Powers of Chaos, and like them he too can grow by the absorption of the souls of others. However, Lost and Drifting Souls are already gathered (for the most part) by the Powers of Chaos. The Emperor can feed only on the remaining souls, those who would otherwise remain whole and reincarnate (ie psykers and potential psykers). The process relies on the proximity of the body of the sacrifice to the body of the Emperor - the soul-stuff

is sucked through some part of the Emperor's body or consciousness and joins with his soul in Chaos. The Emperor's body in turn draws power from his soul to maintain his existence.

The Emperor's soul in the warp forms the core of the Astronomican - the psychic beacon which shines through the entire warp allowing human navigators to follow its path. It does not of course shine with light, but as a steady stream of the souls of the Adeptus Astronomicus. Souls used in this way are diffused back into Chaos as their energy is consumed. The range of the Astronomican (50 thousand light years in the material universe) defines the point where the number of souls which have not already been drawn by the Powers, or fallen in another way, becomes insufficient for navigation in space.

Navigators can see this light and follow it by a form of Spirit Walking - they enter a trance and allow their spirits to follow the steady glow of burning souls, or plot their course relative to its ambience.

MAGIC AND PSYCHIC POWERS

The relationship of magic and psychic powers is straightforward. They are exactly the same - any difference is one of perception in a scientific culture. However, the Warhammer Known World is exceptional in that it is soaked through with Chaos. Magic works in a way directly related to this fact. Normal worlds are not so ridden with chaotic energy, so the process of using psychic/magic powers is more restrained.

MAGIC

This is explained in detail in our Colleges of Magic article. The presence of the Chaos warp gates means that the Warhammer World is the equivalent of a barn with its doors wide open letting in a constant gale of magic. The raw Chaos is drawn into the world like air into a vacuum. Here, it splits into the eight colours of magic dealt with in the Colleges article. Wizards can focus this raw magic to themselves in order to cast their spells. Daemons can move relatively freely between the material universe and Chaos via the warp gates.

PSYKERS

In the general universe the Warhammer World is an exception and magic/psychic powers are far rarer. Although a typical world has no major inlets into Chaos it still has minor lesions. People themselves act like tiny warp gates - because their own minds draw upon the power of their souls to one extent or other. Psykers and potential psykers do this far more than the mass of people, and psykers can do it consciously (although their understanding of the process may be semi-mystical or otherwise non-literal). The soul is depleted by the process, but expands back to its previous energy level by absorbing raw energy from the warp. This process is not normally risky because only a fraction of the soul's mass is replaced at once and the person's dominant character traits tend to colour any intrusive elements of raw Chaos. However, if a psyker depletes his soul too much he risks its corruption. As the soul and body are interconnected, this in turn corrupts the body, physical mind, and eventually the personality itself. Chaos will dominate the person's body and soul, eventually he will consciously embrace Chaos as its Champion.

This final condition is the state of Dark Wizards in the Warhammer World. Dark Wizards may also benefit from the direct allegiance of a Chaos Power. If a person's soul is already tainted with characteristics associated with a Power (such as extravagance in the case of Slaanesh), the Power can ensure that as the character draws upon his soul's energy, that energy is replaced not by the random stuff of raw Chaos, but by a part of the Power's own soul. The Power gives up a tiny fraction of his own energy, in the sure knowledge that he can one day reclaim the person's entire soul. The individual thus becomes more and more like his Power, and increasingly likely to do so the more he uses his psychic skills. In this way people, even the well intentioned, are corrupted by Chaos and the use of psychic skills.

DAEMONIC POSSESSION

The warp and material universe are connected at specific points like the Warhammer World, but also at many more points by the interface of body and soul. Souls and bodies are anchored together, the anchor links the two. So long as the soul remains anchored to the body, and hence to the material world, it retains its coherency and is in no danger of merging with other collective souls of Chaos (the Sea of Souls). A Daemon or other entity in Chaos could, theoretically, find and harm a soul as described below. However, specific souls are normally impossible to find, the search is rather like trying to find a single blade of grass amongst a whole prairie of grassland.

However, a soul which already betrays characteristic traits associated with a particular Chaos Power, exerts a natural attraction to that Power. Of course, there are so many souls that only those showing a significant attractive trait would be readily obvious. Moreover, so long as the person does not draw upon their psychic energy embodied by the soul, its tendency to attract attention will be very low. However, if a person draws upon their soul, the soul flares with a release of energy, and the energy runs down the anchor and into the material universe. A daemonic force, attracted by the initial flare, can follow the path of the energy as it passes along the anchor and thereby gain entrance into the material universe via the body of the individual. Normally a person capable of drawing upon their soul to this extent would be a psyker/wizard, but even ordinary individuals may do so under traumatic circumstances.

The mechanism of possession works as follows. The person draws upon their soul, sending a power surge from the soul to the body. Attracted by the flare of kindred-energy, the Daemon is drawn to the soul and along the anchor. As the energy passes into the material universe, a portion of the Daemon's soul energy is drawn along too, and enters the person. The individual is literally possessed, his own mind is driven back along the energy-path and takes refuge in the soul. Few people survive daemonic possession because they are unable to return their personality back to their bodies. To do this requires a tremendous effort of will as well as aid from entities in Chaos itself - notably the Star Child and benign spirits. Individuals who can return to their bodies gain knowledge of Chaos from the spirits that have helped them. These people are the Illuminati in the WH40K universe.

A possessing Daemon retains the vast majority of its soul in Chaos, only a small portion of its power seeps into the material world.

DAEMONIC MANIFESTATION

A Daemon can manifest itself bodily in the material universe by two means. Firstly, by travelling through a major warp rift, such as the warp gates of the Warhammer World. Secondly, as a more powerful version of possession where the energy-draw is sufficient to bring the entirety of a Daemon's soul into the material world.

This second means is the means described in Realm of Chaos for WH40K. It works as follows. The victim draws heavily on it soul energy via the anchor in a way comparable to someone sucking milk through a straw. This suction may be augmented by other people who have moved their souls in proximity to create a vortex of pressure by drawing on their own souls as well. This is the function of ritual summonation magic (the magic circle is part of the alignment - souls and bodies are moved into proximity together). The Daemon (a spirit of course) is drawn by the vortex of pressure and forced into the real world - the Daemon's soul becomes manifest changing from Chaos to matter. The energy suction or vortex is so great that the victim's body is carried back into Chaos and is reduced to raw Chaos becoming a part of the eternal Sea of Souls. The victims spirit is lost forever, and its soul is dissolved into its component emotions and beliefs.

The Daemon exists in the real world only so long as it can maintain the integrity of its body by effort of will. The natural inclination of the Daemon is to pull apart and return to Chaos. In the Warhammer rules this tendency is called instability, or daemonic instability. This inevitably happens eventually, and the Daemon becomes unstable and is drawn back to Chaos, changing from matter to soul in the process. This may be accelerated by damaging the Daemon, in effect reducing its power and hence its hold on the physical world.

If the Daemon suffers material damage in the real world this is reflected by a corresponding reduction of the soul that eventually returns to Chaos. This can affect the ability of the Daemon to remanifest. Traditionally a Daemon slain in the real world cannot return for a year and a day. Perhaps this is how long it takes the Daemon to reacquire sufficient power to hold itself materially together.

THE ORIGIN OF THE STAR CHILD

The Star Child is the name given to a particular entity in Chaos. This entity is characterised by qualities which show a side of human nature that is caring, responsible and humorous rather different from the mainstream emotions of the four Chaos Powers. The emotions have always been part of the human soul, and so have always been a part of Chaos. However, they only became sufficiently strong and numerous to coalesce into a single entity with the final defeat of Horus.

The conception of the Star Child happened during the Emperor's battle with Horus, when for the first time the Emperor realised the power of the force arrayed against him. We can imagine that the Emperor and Horus have a close relationship prior to Horus's corruption: they are both characters with tremendous loyalty, joy and sense of justice. The Emperor stares into Horus' eyes and sees that all the things which he had considered good and worthy have been destroyed or perverted by the Chaos Powers. At the same time he sees how these same qualities in himself will also become perverted because, even if he beats Horus, the pressures of leading humanity will drive him to it. The qualities of compassion and personal loyalty make it very difficult for the Emperor to kill his old friend - to do so and endure remorse would only drive him further towards bitterness and eventually to the same fate as Horus. It appears that the Emperor cannot win - if he kills his friend he begins to tread the same path that will doom himself and the whole of humanity.

As the two fight their battle, these realisations whirl around the Emperor's mind. As this happens the Emperor deliberately casts aside part of his soul and rejects part of his humanity. As compassion and personal loyalty leave him he plunges his sword in to Horus' breast and slays his old friend - perhaps enduring for the last time the emotion of regret for Horus and for his own lost humanity. The Emperor, mortally wounded, prepares to retire to his life-sustaining throne machine knowing that he must face thousands of years of endeavour without joy.

By casting aside his humanity the Emperor has done three things.

1. He has prepared himself so that he can cope with the future battle against Chaos - by removing those elements of himself that would cause him to turn to self hatred and regret for what he now knows he must do (repress psykers, genocide on tainted worlds, human sacrifice to maintain himself, etc).
2. He has turned lose a small independent soul composed of hope, personal loyalty, compassion etc. He knows that this small soul will grow by a coalescence of emotion and belief in the same way as the other Powers of Chaos. This is the core of the Star Child.
3. He has weakened his own soul - so that he knows he will perish within a few thousand years. During that time he must ensure humanity survives until such time as the Star Child awakens to full consciousness.

The Emperor has taken a great gamble with the future of mankind, but he really has no choice. The whole episode is of tragic proportions, the Emperor's responsibilities and powers can only lead him to this fate.

THE STAR CHILD

The Star Child is still very weak compared to the Powers because he has grown from less prevalent emotions. There are presumably a lot of these potential Powers, but the Star Child is the one we are interested in developing fully. He has grown from another side of human nature, a balanced and responsible side that abhors unnecessary violence and suffering. As yet the Star Child has not yet grown to full awareness, but he is on the verge of doing so. He is still, in terms of his kind, a foetus awaiting the birth of complete existence. His personality is being built from the souls of heroes of the kind portrayed by Errol Flynn in period adventures like Robin Hood, The Crimson Pirate and various other movies. Responsibility and personal strength would be a major part of his nature, respect for people the natural order and the environment, a dislike of necessary suffering in living things, and a revulsion of misrule and disorder. The heroes he is being built from are honest and easy going, perhaps playful or gently mocking but never vindictive and mindful of how other feel. They are generous with own time and ultimately prepared to lay down their own life in order to save others. Natural charismatic leaders, but also the followers of these people, good natured giants in the Little John mould, those who take delight in creating innocent music for others, the failed priest whose humanity and easy going nature stand in contrast to his fanatically minded brethren.

I've tried to identify these traits at some length because the Star Child's character hasn't been defined closely anywhere else like those of the other Powers. I've deliberately invoked the qualities of the Sensei - the Emperor's children who still preserve genetically many of the qualities of the Emperor prior to his battle with Horus.

THE ILLUMINATI AND THE STAR CHILD

The Star Child is not yet fully conscious but it has begun to awaken - if you like it is asleep but dreaming, and its dreams tell it much about the universe and what it must do. The Star Child is most aware of those souls (especially human souls) who share its own basic traits. When such souls are imperilled by possession, the Star Child can allow a little of its own power to flow into the victim. If the victim is strong enough he can shrug away the possessing Daemon. Individuals who manage to survive possession in this way are known in the WH40K universe as the Illuminati.

ILLUMINATI

The Illuminati are 'those who know' the secret of the Star Child. The power of the Star Child has flowed through them, and opened their eyes to its condition and the impending destiny of man. They have seen the threat of Chaos, the dark underbelly of the multiverse, and know also that they owe their very lives to the beneficence of the Star Child and that side of human nature it represents. Part of their knowledge is that they understand about the Sensei and what role they are to play in the growth of the Star Child. The Illuminati also acquire certain powers by their experience - their soul grows in the process and retains a little of the greater power of the Star Child.

THE DESTINY OF THE STAR CHILD

The Star Child will eventually gain awareness and become a force for good - the saviour of the human race itself. Such a creature would have the strength of a Power. Such a creature could be the 'Christian' Power in fact - it could even go as far as to use its energy to incarnate itself as a human being - no Chaos Power would do this because it has no motive, but companionship and leadership is a trait of the Star Child. Perhaps it could even find a way to weaken the other Powers by turning men away from their worship, eradicating the danger of Chaos and instead turning it into a force for good.

The scenario we envisage is that the Emperor is failing fast, but the Star Child is not yet ready to take up his position as shield of humanity. If the Emperor dies, humanity will fall totally to Chaos; souls will be devoured by existing Powers or combine to make a fallen Power of humanity that stands in parallel to Slaanesh the spiritual essence of the fallen Eldar. The Illuminati are working towards raising the Star Child to consciousness, which they do by manipulating the Imperium subtly from within whilst also encouraging and shielding the Sensei - the chief instigators of hope and the other Star Child associated emotions. The Illuminati plan to bring the Sensei together with the Emperor and to reunite the Sensei/Emperor/Star Child entity into a single whole.

SENSEI

The Sensei are the Emperor's sons and are, as we know, immortals. They mostly embody the qualities of the Star Child. They have no independent souls in Chaos, their collective soul is part of the Star Child. Their thoughts and actions do not build a soul, but feed the growth of the Star Child directly. This enables them to draw psychic energy directly from a much larger and more powerful psychic source than any one soul could hope to contain. Because their souls are protected from Chaos in this way they cannot easily be harmed.

The Sensei are humans who embody the qualities already attributed to the Star Child - they have a love of life and enthusiasm for living, a respect for others, they laughingly mock the pretentious, disarm the cruel, and generally behave very much like Errol Flynn.

The Illuminati know that to save humanity they will have to reunite the Emperor with his own lost soul - invigorated by the soul energy collected over the millennia and including those of the Sensei. What happens to the Sensei and the Emperor when this happens? We don't know for sure but we imagine all will be destroyed and a single physical body will emerge - the Star Child Incarnate. The Emperor's soul and that Star Child merge and become as one - the Star Child will become powerful enough to end the threat of Chaos and rule over a more tolerant universe.

Thus the small seed of hope cast into Chaos by the Emperor will have returned full grown to take the mantle of responsibility from his shoulders.

IN RETROSPECT

I've not tried to cover the Star Child, Sensei or Illuminati in depth here. They are only mentioned where I see a possible link or a colourful opportunity for adding depth to their rationale.

USEFUL METAPHORICAL STUFF

The metaphor I've used throughout here is that of Chaos as a sea, the soul is thus seen as anchored to the body and so on. We can extend the metaphor by talking of Chaos Powers as great maelstroms in the sea of Chaos, as the energy of Chaos fluxes we can talk about ebb and flow, tides and so on. I don't think we should make a meal of saying that this is just a metaphor of relationship between energies which are otherwise very tricky to grasp - but there are other ways of explaining the same thing that we can also allude to.

Something we have used in the past is the notion that a man casts a shadow in the warp. His emotions and feelings construct the shadow - the strength of the shadow reflecting his power over and in the warp. This is just a less mediocrally inclined view of the development of the soul. Shadows merge like souls, or can become Immortal Reincarnates, and some people can shift their minds to their shadows and move about purposefully in the warp. In a WH40k context it may be preferable to talk in these terms - think of the soul/spirit explanation as the bald truth and the shadow explanation as a more sophisticated metaphorical version. You can then pitch the Star Child as a Shining Light in the Darkness of Chaos that banishes and keeps shadows at bay etc etc. Good human qualities can be seen in terms of brightness, bad ones as blackness, most people have shadows which are obviously greyish - all comparisons of light and shade can be exploited.

You can also speak of souls and spirits in terms of the ka and egyptian mythology should you want - although the differences need to be emphasised as most people get ever so confused about ka (personality - your sense of what you are - bit more complex than this but yunno), ba (flies forth and comes back - like the personality moving twixt body and soul), akh (soul like I've described in many ways) khu (physical body). This is taking a few liberties but isn't actually far wrong.

LAW

It is important that, if we're to give the Powers of Law a place, turning to Chaos isn't portrayed as a fall to evil. It is, if anything, a lapse into failings of moral frailty, intellectual pride, vacillation, or an inability to firmly face and deal with problems or inadequacies. The Powers of Chaos feed upon human weakness and failing rather than on evil. Although evil may result from these failings, it may also result from their opposites, so there is no clear association between Chaos and Evil. Similarly, there is no association with Law and Good. A man who wanted to become a civic leader and turn his city into a paradise is still exhibiting ambitions which would be in tune with Khorne. Law is not good intentions - Law is essentially uncompromising, it cannot ignore a weakness of personality or morality. (What is perceived as) Law feeds upon order, social responsibility, justice, harmony, and other ideals held to be desirable in humans (and other races). Nature is naturally chaotic (life, rebirth, death, evolution as a random process). Man's Intellect is naturally Lawful (imposing systems, fixed relationships, cataloguing and labelling, empiricism).

The Powers of Law are entities which exist within Chaos just like the Powers of Chaos themselves. But they are built upon single-minded uncompromising ideas or ideals. It could be said that a Power of Law is a single aspect of a great Power of Chaos (which could well be the case) but I think this paradox would be a bit of a head-spinner for most of our readers. It should be reserved for exploration through only the more sophisticated media of novels.

Whilst the strict division of Powers into the two pantheons of Law and Chaos is little more than a question of perception by their worshippers, because Powers are creations of belief and emotion, they become what their worshippers expect of them. So the Powers of Law become adversaries of Chaos - and perceive of themselves as the opposite of Chaos. Their own souls are made from the same Chaos matter as other Powers, but are bound by a single ideal. They thus represent Law imposed upon Chaos and so might accurately be described as Powers of Law. Really, they are single minded manifestations of ideals held by their worshippers and closely identified with order and justice in society.

LAW POWER - SOLKAN

Solkan stands for vengeance, retribution, recompense, the return to order of things that have been upset - the forceful return to harmony to what has become disharmonious - the imposition of what is seen as natural world order. This is especially true where the disharmonious factor is Chaos itself. Retribution is the watch word. He is the natural patron Power of witch hunters, and with such puritanical fanatics feeding his being you can imagine he is a fairly strict and brutal Power in his own way. The bloody right hand of vengeance in fact, the dark angel of retribution.

Solkan is sometimes characterised by non-devotees as stern, humourless, intellectually uncompromising, unforgiving, and generally a rather miserable Power to worship. Followers and priests are not noted for their levity. All worship of Law would imply a certain single-mindedness, perhaps bordering on obsession, but this is truer of Solkan than of most. There is a strong flavour of Solkan placing revenge above all human feelings of moderation and compassion - this might manifest itself as revenge on a family or descendants who are individually innocent but who have benefitted from their ancestor's actions - a usurping noble family for example. Self righteous and xenophobic. This unpleasantness demonstrates how subjective is the moral distinction between Law and Chaos.

LAW POWER - ARIANKA ASTASIS

This is in effect only an idea - check before using or developing to see if we want to pursue it. This is the Power described as Arianka in the Kaleb Daark story - we don't want to use the name as we would like to avoid any irritation with the authors. She represents stasis - the force which mitigates against change. Although this has its rather unpleasant side - it is a powerful protective force to maintain existing good. It also maintains existing evil of course. Her worshippers' ideal is an eternity composed of a single ecstatic moment - although this often boils down to a middle class 'comfiest' philosophy that argues against intervention in unpleasant things happening next door. It is a head in the sand sort of approach. But it has its strong side too - and is perhaps associated with some very beautiful, magical places where Chaos cannot enter. She is perhaps the ideal Power for placing doors against Chaos, or keeping things safe - although like the Power herself in stasis, not capable of getting better.

MECHANIC POWER

This is no more than an idea - check before developing or using. A nice Law Power would be a patron of workmanship (as an imposition of order and the human will on the naturally chaotic material of mindless nature - yunno very Blakean) built upon the ideals of permanence embodied by craftsmanship and engineering. A Power of good, conscientious builders (OK I've never met one either but this is fantasy isn't it). This would be a good Law Power for practically minded types. We might imagine fortress builders being into this - followers of masonic type - master builders - a striving to build things that are perfect - a good metaphor for perfection of the soul itself.

TURNING TO CHAOS

Noble ideals that turn a man to Chaos:

Vengeance - avenging a deed is a good thing - but can be destructive - a self-righteous murder is a murder nonetheless. Vengeance feeds anger and the release of energy through anger - aspects of Khorne.

Solace - a person may take on more than he can cope with out of a sense of hard-work or altruism. So a noble straining to keep his peasants fed and safe may turn to drink, drugs or passion as a fleeting way of forgetting his responsibilities. The more difficult the duty the greater the temptations. The weaker the character the easier the fall.

Ambition - ambition is easy to understand in human terms - leadership and responsibility are noble goals. to be a first rate artist, a great, soldier, a statesman, a famous doctor or wizard - these are all noble ideals. Yet a man unable to fulfil an ambition through lack of intellectual ability, application, or whatever, may turn to derision of his rivals, hostility of critics. Failure requires great fortitude if it is to be borne without malice, many lacking such fortitude become bitter and resentful of the world. Such feelings grow in Chaos.

Politeness and reserve - repression or refusal to acknowledge petty horrors may induce a psychological fascination with dirt and decay. a self-conscious wallowing in disease which approaches a perversion.

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