

Life Force, Undead, Death and Religion

A supplement to Arduin Grimoire Rules

□ Erik Guttman, 2004

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Introduction

This supplement to the Arduin Grimoire game system describes an alternate interpretation of what undead creatures are and how they fit into an overall scheme. The major idea is that all living beings have Life Force – which depends on race, where undead beings have Antilife Force, which depends on undead type. These values can be used to explain many other factors that are otherwise puzzling in fantasy gaming. Why do some races live longer, need less sleep and sustain more damage before dying than others? Why do some undead creatures behave more independently and with greater will and purpose than others?

Life Force

Undead drains should reduce a living being's vitality, will and in general, their ability to survive. This is certainly not captured by a rule that reduces a character's experience level. A vampire's bite doesn't reduce a victim's knowledge or expertise. A revised system reducing a person's constitution or stamina due to life drain comes closer to what we want. These attributes indicate a character's health and endurance, in short, their vitality. Unfortunately, we are after an attribute that reflects the character's soul, which is what is actually being drained.

The attribute 'Life Force' describes the power of a living being's force of existence, the intensity of their living soul. This value has nothing to do with a character's power, size or religiousness. A higher Life Force indicates a character will live longer, be more resistant to spiritual domination and more robust to physical damage. Specifically:

Mobility

Beings with limited Life Force operate in a circumscribed area. Beings with greater Life Force may operate in a greater space than merely the physical plane.

Lifespan

The greater the Life Force value is, the longer the lifespan.

Survival

The greater the Life Force value is, the greater the amount of damage the being can sustain without dying.

Control

A higher Life Force value indicates that a being may resist control, confusion, psychic attack and so on. A lower Life Force value implies that a being is easy to dominate and control.

Rest

The greater the Life Force value, the less sleep the being needs.

Life Force points are not rolled; they are determined by race. The values could be elevated beyond their normal value, for example by drinking from a fountain of youth or divine. Life Force levels may be lost due to Life Drain, magical accidents and some serious illnesses.

Undead have negative Life Force. The greater the negative value of the Antilife Force, the better the undead being's characteristics are with respect to the characteristics described above (Mobility, Lifespan, Survival, Control and Rest). Greater Antilife Force also implies that a being exists to a greater extent on the negative material plane. Unlike living beings whose souls naturally strive for growth, reproduction and achieving their potential, undead seek stagnation and stability, peace in oblivion or the satisfaction of their grievance that is keeping them from dying.

Both living and undead beings seek to avoid death. Death is the zero point between Life and Antilife forces where a being has no destiny or future.

The following is a summary of living beings and undead, and their comparative Life Force ratings. The correlation in power between Life and Antilife Force is intentional.

| Life Force | Living Beings | Antilife Force | Undead |
|-------------------|---|-----------------------|---|
| 25 | Lesser Angels | -25 | Lesser Demons |
| 20 | Minor Angels, Elementals | -20 | Minor Demons, Valpyrs, Lash Lich |
| 18 | | -18 | Fiend |
| 16 | | -16 | Yoggon |
| 15 | Elves | -15 | Death Hydra |
| 14 | Dragons | -14 | |
| 13 | Shadowjacks, Trolls | -13 | Lich, Demon-Taur |
| 12 | Magic Monsters: Mantichore | -12 | Boogie Man |
| 11 | Lesser Magic Beings: Dwarves | | |
| 10 | Humans, Dolphins | -10 | Vampire, Psilorn |
| 9 | Phraints, Simple Sentients, 'Mule offspring' | -9 | Specter, Undude, Banshee |
| 8 | Complex Animals: Horses, canines, Felines | -8 | Wraith, Mummy, Ykar Spirit, Ghost Crab |
| 7 | Simple Animals: Lizards, Birds | -7 | Wight, Skullmonkulus, Morghoul, Gorgowraith |
| 6 | Insects | -6 | Phantom, Shade, Abominid |
| 5 | Simple Creatures: Mollusks | -5 | Zombird, Ghoul, Desercastion, Snow Ghost, Necrophage, Ghost |
| 4 | Protoplasms, Plants | -4 | Skull Warrior, Poltergeist |
| 3 | Only live in a special environment | -3 | Skeleton |
| 2 | | -2 | Zombie |
| 1 | Dying, on the threshold of death, as at the last moment following a fatal wound or terminal illness | -1 | Animated Corpse |
| 0 | DEATH | 0 | DEATH |

Living Beings and the Effect of Life Force Loss

| Life Force | Mobility | Lifespan | Survival | Control | CON, STAM |
|------------|----------------------------------|----------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| 25 | Interplanar travel | Immortal | 8x | I PS/CF/CH | |
| 20 | Lesser planar travel | Immortal | 4x | I PS/CF/CH | -1 |
| 18 | Ethereal & Astral | Immortal | 4x | I CH, R PS/CF | |
| 17 | Physical – no restrictions | Immortal | 4x | I CH, R PS/CF | -1 |
| 16 | Ibid | Immortal | 4x | I CH, R PS/CF | |
| 15 | Ibid | Immortal | 2x | I CH, R PS/CF | |
| 14 | Ibid | 1000s of years | 2x | +4 CH | -1 |
| 13 | Ibid | 500-2000 years | 2x | +3 CH | |
| 12 | Ibid | 200-500 years | 2x | +2 CH | -1 |
| 11 | Ibid | 75-200 years | 2x | +2 CH | |
| 10 | Ibid | 50-100 years | Normal | Normal | -1 |
| 9 | Ibid | 40-60 years | Normal | Normal | -1 |
| 8 | Ibid | 20-50 years | Normal | 'Easy to influence' +/-1 Reaction, -1 | -1 |
| 7 | Ibid | 5-25 years | Normal | 'Meek', +/-3 reaction, -2 | -1 |
| 6 | d6x100' from hive, bed, etc | D6 years | Normal | 'Cowed', +/- 5 reaction, -3 | -1 |
| 5 | Within grasp of body | 3d6 months | 2/3 | 'Acquiescent', no decision, -4 | -1 |
| 4 | Within reach without moving body | D6 months | 1/2 | 'Ser vile', no decision, -5 | -1 |
| 3 | None – may chew or speak | D20 weeks | 1/4 | 'Broken, no decision, -6 | -2 |
| 2 | None | 3d8 days | 1/8 | Ibid, no decision, -8 | -2 |
| 1 | None | 3d8 hours | 1 hit point | Ibid, no decision, -13 | -3 |
| 0 | D | E | A | T | H |

Notes:

Beings with greater than a 3 Life Force can reproduce.

Mobility: A limited mobility indicates that the animal will stay near its home or not move at all as its Life Force diminishes.

Lifespan: Beyond a 14 Life Force, beings are immortal.

Survival: Beings of great Life Force can sustain more damage than a human. This explains why frail Elves have more hit points than chunky robust humans, for example.

Control: Angels are immune to psychic attack, confusion, charm and so on. From Life Force 15-18, beings are immune to charms, etc and have resistance (varies) to psychic attack and confusion. Lower Life Force values indicate that beings have a reduced save against mental attacks. The modified reaction roll indicates that the being with the low life force can be dominated so that his or her reactions comply with the wishes of their master. Eventually the being cannot even hold opinions of his or her own. 'Charm' includes also suggestion, hypnosis, and other lesser mental attacks.

CON/STAM: When a being loses a Life Force level marked with a negative number, the being loses that number of Constitution and Stamina points. If either of these attributes fall to a zero value or below, the being dies.

Effect of a Life Force Drain: A character will suffer variously. Note the effect of the lowered attribute. The most severe effects include:

- A character with a lowered life force may have reduced hit points.
- Loss of Con will reduce hit points.
- A character will become susceptible to domination by another.
- A lower lifespan will result in a character aging much more quickly. Example: A human has his life force drained to 5. Instead of living an average of 75 years, the human will now live a year. This means, in effect, that the human will age a year every five days. Even if the life drain is restored soon, the character will suffer irreversible aging as an unrecoverable loss!

Undead Beings and Their Properties Based on Antilife Force

| AntiLife Force | Mobility | Lifespan | Survival | Control | Rest [why act?] |
|----------------|---|--|---------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| -25 | Interplanar travel | Indefinite | Specific Magic Only | I PS/CF/CH | Never [desire] |
| -20 | Ethereal & Astral | Ibid | Ibid | I PS/CF/CH | Ibid |
| -15 | No restrictions, possibly non-corporeal, to negative material plane | Ibid | Magic Attacks only | Free willed | Ibid |
| -12 | Ibid | Ibid | Ibid | Ibid | Ibid |
| -10 | No restrictions, possibly non-corporeal | Ibid | Ibid | Ibid | 1/2 [alert] |
| -9 | Ibid | Ibid | Ibid | Single Minded | 1/2 [need arises] |
| -8 | 100s of miles from body | As long as the body is OK | Ibid | Single Purpose (internal need) ** | 1/2 [disturbed] |
| -7 | Miles from body, generally always corporeal | Many years, till forgotten and undisturbed | Silver only | Single Purpose (external need) ** | 2/3 [one purpose] |
| -6 | 1000s of feet | Roughly a year | Ibid | Mania (self declared) | 5/6 [hunting] |
| -5 | 100s of feet | Months | Ibid | "Survival", sentient | Always [special reason] |
| -4 | 10s of feet * | Months * | Ibid | Functional, partially sentient | Always [forced to] |
| -3 | Locale of death * | Weeks * | Physical | Controlled, limited intellect | Ibid |
| -2 | Place of death | Days (decay) | Ibid | Ibid, mindless | Ibid |
| -1 | None | Spell Duration | Ibid | Ibid, mindless | Ibid |
| 0 | D | E | A | T | H |

At antilife force -25 and above, beings are considered demons. Antilife force -16 to -24 are the extreme far reaches of greater undead, bordering on demonic power. From -10 to -15 are Greater Undead. These are free-willed and can, if they choose to, continue to take part in events in the world due to their own choosing. From -5 to -9 are the Undead who exist in a limited way on the borders of the mortal plane, generally with a very passive or reactive role in the grand scheme of things. From -1 to -4 are Lesser Undead. (-4 is at the boundary, in some ways they behave as normal Undead, in others as Lesser Undead). These exist only temporarily, usually because they have been created or called into being by a Necromancer. They have almost no autonomy or intellect.

Mobility: Demons and extreme greater undead exist on multiple planes and may move between them. Greater undead exist largely on the negative material plane though they must still reckon with activity on the material plane as well. Normal undead have spiritually limits on the scope of their movement and activity to a certain distance from their corpse or place of death. Some powerful Necromantic magic may allay this. Lesser Undead have continued existence only in the direct proximity of the corpse or place of death, though often Necromantic force removes this condition.

Lifespan: The values given are only approximations, but there have to be reasons for exceptions to the rule. Usually those reasons include continuing Necromantic force applied to sustaining the (Lesser) Undead over time.

Survival: The higher the Antilife force, the harder it is to harm the undead being.

Control: Demons and extreme greater undead may only be controlled using special magical and religious techniques. Greater undead are under their own control. Other undead have limited will and sentience. Lesser undead are generally mindless and inert without there being something that triggers their activity.

Rest: The greater the Antilife force, the less rest is needed. The term in brackets explains why the undead being becomes active. Greater Undead act freely. Lesser Undead do not act unless forced to. For the others, action occurs for a limited range of reasons. The scope of their activity is limited based on their antilife force (thus, this value is sort of a destiny participation rating).

Notes:

* Lesser undead are merely haunting their graves temporarily unless they are bound and controlled by some other agency.

** Internal needs are desires, ideals, hatreds and so on. External needs involve objects, possessions, a location (gravesite, house), curses or unfinished business but without desire or passion being the direct source of the motivation.

For the most part undead have no active involvement with events unless a priest, greater undead or external force requires this. They stay, mostly inactive, very close to their place of death or body (whichever appropriate.) The goals of greater undead usually involve long-term accumulation of power to maintain order. This is

how greater undead achieve immortality: If nothing changes it is possible to spend eons in oblivious majesty. Lesser undead just seek peace.

Both lesser and greater undead seek to avoid death as much as the living do, though there is an important exception: Undead which are created by Necromantic force and maintained in thrall seek death and release from this bondage.

Antilife Force and Zones of Divinity

Undead are not able to exist in regions that have higher 'Zones of Divinity'. The following table indicates these limits.

| Zone: | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Antilife Force: | Turn/ Banish |
| -25 | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | 20/1 | 50/10 | 90/25 | 100/80 |
| -20 | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | 30/5 | 60/12 | 95/35 | * |
| -15 | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | 40/7 | 70/15 | 100/40 | * |
| -14 | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | 50/10 | 80/20 | 100/50 | * |
| -13 | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | 10/1 | 60/15 | 90/30 | 100/75 | * |
| -12 | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | 20/3 | 70/20 | 100/50 | * | * |
| -11 | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | 30/5 | 85/40 | 100/75 | * | * |
| -10 | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | 50/10 | 95/50 | * | * | * |
| -9 | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | 10/1 | 70/20 | 100/60 | * | * | * |
| -8 | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | 10/1 | 80/30 | 100/80 | * | * | * |
| -7 | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | 25/3 | 90/50 | * | * | * | * |
| -6 | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | 10/1 | 40/5 | 100/60 | * | * | * | * |
| -5 | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | 35/1 | 55/10 | 100/70 | * | * | * | * |
| -4 | -/- | -/- | -/- | -/- | 45/3 | 70/25 | 100/90 | * | * | * | * |
| -3 | -/- | -/- | -/- | 10/1 | 55/5 | 95/50 | * | * | * | * | * |
| -2 | -/- | -/- | -/- | 10/1 | 65/10 | 100/70 | * | * | * | * | * |
| -1 | -/- | -/- | -/- | 10/1 | 85/25 | 100/90 | * | * | * | * | * |

A '*' indicates that an undead monster that cannot depart instantly will be banished automatically.

If an undead being is 'turned' it must make every possible effort to exit the region, and under no circumstances may it enter.

An undead being ceases to exist on the material plane if it is 'banished.' Lesser undead simply cease to exist in this case. Other undead continue to exist but cannot reform for some time, or are possibly so diminished in power they will never be able to manifest again on the material plane. If a greater undead being's mortal remains or place of death itself becomes a zone of higher divinity such that the undead is banished, then the undead dies. This erases the undead being's traces from both the material and negative material plane.

This chart implies that lesser undead are only found in barrens, dungeons or where necromantic force has sufficient strength to keep them around. Normal undead may be found, if there is reason, into the barrens or even into godless domains - even cities, as long as no religious practice exists there, or those living there practice a religion 'friendly' to undead. Even greater undead cannot enter into civilization where there are religious followers, especially if the population is devout and have protective wards at the edge of their cities, at crossroads, at entries to buildings and even in each room. In such places the presence of a priest equates to sanctified ground. Entry into temples or standing in the presence of angels is possible only for

extreme greater undead or demons, though even these cannot withstand the presence of the divine, high temples or the presence of archangels.

Death

Each religion includes some plan for the afterlife. A religious being will follow that plan unless something unnatural occurs. For example – death caused by magic, particularly magic of a type inimical or alien to the religion of the deceased. Good examples are Necromancy, Demonic Magic and Undead drains are unnatural deaths for living beings.

Each religion has its own notion of 'heaven' and 'hell' (or one or the other or even neither!) The 'hells' in the Arduinian sense are related to these religious planes, but only indirectly. These relationships are specific to each religion and are described elsewhere

Beings of limited élan (for instance atheists) go to Limbo upon death, an ambivalent static realm where nothing ever happens.

Gods determines how nature works in the universe. The negative material plane is the denial of nature. For a few Gods, the inverse is true (Okthoz and Eldarin, for example). There are also the rare death cults that worship destruction for its own sake (Tokron is the Lemurian example). When an individual dies an unnatural death, he is out of his God's grasp. For example, when killed by an undead being, a Wavecrest follower enters the negative material plane with force equal to the power of the undead being that slew him and to some extent the momentum of his fate.

Resurrection is an ability granted to priests of certain religions to reunite the soul of a dead being with his body, restoring his life force to a natural level. The Gods notice when one of their followers dies. It is possible a God will not allow a follower to return to the world of the living. This depends on the religion and the fate of the person who died. Resurrection will not reverse destiny.