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# HUMAN NATURE

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By Randy Buehler

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Last week's topic generated a good bit of interest and a lot of healthy debate, but it also generated fair amount of confusion so I thought I would write a follow-up article. First I think I should summarize what I tried to say last week (now that all of us Americans are stuffed full of turkey, we're a bit groggy and it's good to take things a little slower):

I pointed out that **Magic** has slowly been moving towards a race-class model for creature types for civilized creatures and I told everyone to expect to see that model fully embraced in future years. Dragons will still generally just be creature type "Dragon," but the staple civilized tribes will have both a race (like Goblin or Elf) and a class (like Soldier or Wizard). Then comes the tricky part ... what should we do about the humans? From a logical point of view it seems like every race should work the same way and from a flavor point of view why can't you engineer a plague to affect humans anyway? On the other hand "creature - Human" seemed odd to enough people internally that I was interested in asking your opinion too.

Unfortunately the poll didn't work for much of the first day my article was up, plus I noticed from reading both my email and the message boards that there was a lot of confusion about what it would really mean if we were to switch to this new plan. Still, a bunch of you did get to vote and the results weren't particularly close:

*What do you think of Human as a creature type?*

Blech! Please no	2152	39.46%
I don't think I like it	1038	19.03%
Whatever -- I don't care what you do	381	6.99%

*What do you think of Human as a creature type?*

It seems fine to do it	1043	19.12%
I like it a lot	840	15.40%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>5454</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

I noticed an interesting trend in both my emails and the message boards--a lot of people were initially pretty opposed to the idea of printing creature type human on cards, but the more they thought about the issue the more they started to think it might actually be a good idea. Then again, it could be that since my poll was broken for twelve hours that these numbers already do represent everyone's calm, rational "I've gotten past my initial knee-jerk reaction and here's how I really feel" opinion. In either case, there were enough questions raised in the past week that I wanted to answer anyway that I'm going to ask a pretty similar question this week. Those of you who think I'm fishing for the answer I want should please let me know what that answer is, because I'm genuinely not sure what we're supposed to do on this issue.

The biggest confusion was about errata. We will not errata all the old cards that represented humans. You do not need to worry that there will suddenly be a million Humans running around, or that a bunch of cards function differently than their printed text says they function. So if we were to switch, it would only affect cards that are printed after the change. When we reprint cards where it's appropriate to add creature type "Human," we probably would add it then, but the only time we would mess with old creatures is if we reprinted them. (Note that we're already done working on *Eighth Edition* so whatever decision we make won't affect anything until next fall at the earliest and it wouldn't affect a base set until *Ninth*.)

Another big confusion was about the power-level of the new Human tribe. The basic line of thought here is "Humans are the only race that shows up in all five colors, so wouldn't it be overpowered?" In a word: no. We would print fewer humans if we switched to this model. They would probably still be the most common race if you add up all five colors, but within any one color they would be outnumbered by the other races that are specific to that color. In fact, one could argue that one advantage of switching to creature type Human is that it forces us to come up with more diverse and interesting card concepts because we can't do as many humans. (Personally, I don't count this as an advantage because we should be able to set the ratio of humans to non-humans to whatever number is best for the product whether we have a rule forcing us to do it or not, but having a rule certainly makes it more likely that the creative juices will be forced to flow.) Also, not every block is going to have as many tribal cards as *Onslaught* so that will help make it easier for us to keep things

balanced. Even in *Onslaught* I think we could have had Human as a tribe without breaking anything as long as we did it right.

Another power-level point: There will be no distinction in the rules between races and classes – they are both creature types and all creature types are treated the same in **Magic** (well, other than Legend and Wall of course).

The next issue is actually by far the most common email I got: This seems like a pretty good idea, but you really need a better word than “Human.” It's boring (or mundane or icky or too much like real life or distracts from the fantasy genre or any number of other laments). I was initially fairly sympathetic to this line of thought, but after talking to our creative guys about it, they convinced me that there simply is no better word than “Human.” What would the other word be? Terran? Earthling? Man? Some made-up word? All of those are worse. Most of the emails I got on this subject included a second paragraph where the author made a couple of suggestions that they themselves didn't like and then just said they wished we could come up with something better. Well, first of all, there isn't anything else that makes sense and secondly, I no longer think we would even want a different word. Maybe if there was some cool, flavorful synonym for human, but the English language just doesn't have one. We'd have to make one up, but that would inevitably be kind of lame and kind of confusing. Right now it's easy to imagine yourself as one of the human characters in the story – at a minimum you can at least identify with them, but if those characters are “some-made-up-word” instead of human then there's a barrier that makes the flavor a little bit less compelling. This argument may not be very convincing to those of you who like the idea but want a better word, but I can tell you that we did look for a better word and there just isn't one.

There was one other common variant on my initial proposal that I want to touch on briefly: “Do a bunch of subsets of human – like do Tolarians, Benalish, Keldon, etc.” I think in the long-run this strategy is just flawed. Part of what makes creature types (and race decks) cool in **Magic** is that you can play with cards that were printed years and years apart. But we change worlds every couple of years, so if each world's humans got a different race-word then you wouldn't be able to play with humans from several years apart. Yuck – that just misses the point of why we care about creature types in the first place. If we do this, the creature type is going to be “Human” (plus the relevant class).

I talked to Richard Garfield about this topic last Friday, by the way. He doesn't spend a lot of his time working on **Magic** these days (he's more interested in creating amazing new games and he trusts us to maintain this one), but he does come by with card and mechanic ideas fairly regularly and he still cares a lot about **Magic**. Anyway, Richard thinks we should make the switch. He acknowledged that there's some short-term pain because “Creature – Human Wizard” does look a little funny when you're used to

“Creature – Wizard,” but his take on the situation was that we'd all get used to it and five years from now we'd be glad that the flavor elements on the cards all made sense.

I think he's certainly right that we should make this decision by trying to look back on it from a vantage point five years into the future. So what do you see when you try that? We're not going to decide our course of action based just on your feedback, of course, but we do want to know what you think so we can consider that when we decide what we think is actually best for the long-term health of the game.

To summarize, here's the plan on the table: When we print new cards that are humans, they would normally get two creature types – Human plus whatever class is appropriate (Cleric, Wizard, Soldier, etc.) We would not mess with the creature types of old cards except possibly when we reprint them. We would do fewer humans than we do now and we would control the power-level of the Human tribe to make sure it doesn't get out of control. This would synch up the human race with the rest of the civilized races and add an air of coherence and aesthetic elegance to **Magic's** flavor.

So, all things considered, what do you think of Creature – Human [Class]?

**What do you think of Creature – Human [Class]?**Thumbs upThumbs down

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