Ranalite (my Medianworld)

This is a document describing my medianworld. If you don't know what a medianworld is, go here:
https://glowficwiki.noblejury.com/books/glowfic-events-and-trends/page/selftopias-trend

Some of the text in the document is just quotes from Discord discussions (and so tends to repeat some things in different words). Some is only written here. Don't know if I need to signify that somehow.

Contains discussion of sex and suicide.

There is a complication in that the concept of "what a medianworld even is" is ambiguous.
A medianworld can be "the world that would produce you the way you are". But this world produced me fine (half through trauma). I don't think a world based on me would traumatize me that way.
It could be "the kind of civilization that would result if you made all people based on you" (the more mainstream, interpretation).
But what exactly "i" means here? Which version of me?
If it's literally the version of me writing the words right now, with all the specific traits I have…then the people in the selfworld would not survive at all. Because I am basically nonfunctioning, gradually losing all the rationality skills I previously developed, becoming stupider each day, and barely have energy to write to the things I am writing now.
But that all may be result of *physical* chronic illnesses, and some specific events that happened to me. Nurture rather than nature. It's easy to imagine a version of me that was perfectly physically healthy, and also had a slightly different life (I think "wasn't forced to go to school when I couldn't" would solve 90% of the problems), and that

version would still be very much me. Maybe more so. And of course, if I am imagining an alternate world of people similar to me, they by definition would have different life circumstances, and the version of me from that world would be recursively closer to the "pure nature" of what I am, if such thing exists.

A civilization of people like this would still not survive. Not because they can't, but because they wouldn't want to.

One of my traits that I think was always there, from birth, and is inseparable from who I am, is a complete lack of ability to form emotional connections to anything (despite otherwise having a lot of emotions) [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cosDzsAK6bISS-xpqjCh5g1-RrF7PUgb].

People of my world, if they would have this trait, would be asocial, far less able to enjoy anything (not completely, but far less), and would not have any attachment to life as something inherently good, or feel love or friendship, or feel happy because they are loved by others (even if someone does love you, why does it matter? Doesn't affect your feeling at all), and almost all would rationally choose suicide, because a life that is even a little hard is worse than non-existence, "existing is exhausting" (and they wouldn't have time to develop enough that life would have more pleasant than unpleasant things on net). They would also be deeply, pathologically altruistic, on account of being so impartial they don't consider themselves more worthy of help and happiness than anyone else (arguably less, because "I will not be happy and am planning to die anyway, might as well make others more happy", which is my real approach to life. Reversed utility-monster)…except if all of them are like that, to a big extent, than there isn't a point to help others, rather than just collectively die. If they survive enough to actually have a civilization with coherent beliefs, their coherent belief would be negative utilitarism (not the forced kind, though. They would not decide for people who disagree, and try to, I don't know, survive long enough to develop technology that destroys the universe. They would all just peacefully die). Just like Lovecraft said https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/9402702-it-is-good-to-be-a-cynic--it-is-better-to (and some other people, just none that I remember and can link to).

So, any civilization that actually exists can't be directly based on me, even in different life circumstances. But there could be a civilization of people with normal human traits where out of all normal human traits, they would have the traits most similar to mine, that would still allow for a civilization to actually exist.

Specifically "like me but much more attached to life" would probably be enough. Even plausible in the evolutionary sense (if we assume that attachment to life/desire to live is heritable. I have no idea, I am not a biopsychologist), as only the small fraction that wanted to survive the most survived, repeatedly.

(If I wanted to build a "self*topia*" I would declare them to be magical immaterial spirits, because being an immaterial spirit is what I would enjoy the most. But I am trying to keep things grounded and human-like.)

How would such a civilization look like?

Similar to dath ilan, in many ways. Though certainly less technologically developed, and less smart.

They are obsessed with rationality, with thinking coherently and being correct about the world. No special focus on *curiosity*, if someone else knows why the pink elephant is in the room, you can spend your energy on doing something else.

They are careful, obsessed with doing things such that no action ever leads to harm to anyone (which everyone knows is impossible, but they try).

They are obsessed with efficiency and productivity, such that no energy is wasted and no action is pointless, everything must have some benefit.

Obsessed with commensalism, finding ways for any situation to be somehow beneficial to someone.

Somewhat impartial to groups. Family, countries, gender, anything. Not completely, they do have some emotional attachments to those concepts, but less than Earthlings, and probably any other selfworld. Though they do care a lot about conscious self-definition, groups and categories that align with their values (rather than just "this group is mine so I like it").

Don't have a lot of regard for tradition, but do care a lot about morality. Never feel embarrassment, but often feel guilt.

They are probably very open about sex, but actually have sex relatively rarely.

Are heterosexual with very rare homosexuality (but very common asexuality spectrum), but don't have that much social implications to gender unless it's physically relevant.

Generally have "Earth 0" (in the terms of Abigail Thorn https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koud7hgGyQ8) view of reality. Which is good for not having stereotypes and prejudice, but bad for statistics and reasoning. "You could look at correlations and make conclusions about what traits are common for what situations, and if you see 10 black cats, the chance that the next cat you will see is black will be higher" is very unintuitive to them, and needs to be taught at schools as a skill.

Altruistic, but rarely proactive in it, willing to accept sacrifices, but wouldn't decide on them themselves, will rarely protest if something is taken from them, but will not give it on their own initiative.

Not especially good at *coordination* per se, not organized, but are easy to persuade with "if you slightly inconvenience yourself now, it will really help someone else". "Coordinated by Virtue of being Good rather than Lawful", sort of.

Good at avoiding bad ideas, but not at coming up with good ones.

They tend to be extremely good in one field of understanding the world, and very stupid in all others, to the point of having special social-epistemological rules for discussing things you know about but don't really understand, and having specific people marked as "a person who actually understand topic X and should be asked questions about it" (a Specialist).

Partially as consequence of that, they have very particular culture of logical disagreement.
A great focus on sharing information, and arguing with people if they are wrong (if someone is objectively and provably wrong, many in Ranalite would consider proving it to them as a basic moral responsibility), but also focus on "agreeing to disagree" of several distinct kinds (otherwise the civilization wouldn't have survived).
They have specific words for "value disagreement that is purely subjective and pointless to argue about", "value disagreement that is subjective but important enough for people to actively be enemies", "disagreement focused on the best way to achieve an outcome we agree is good", "disagreement about factual observations of events" (which In turn has subtypes like "disagreement about definitions that doesn't change the facts on the Territory" ("Wakalix"), and "disagreement about facts that doesn't have any way to be proven of observed, despite being an objective part of the Territory", as opposed to facts that can actually be proven and are useful to prove).
Also "terrible problem in the world that could be easily solved, which is good for everyone, if everyone just agreed to do it" (literally – "second summer"), and "problem that is terrible but complicated, doesn't have a clear obvious solution, and people repeatedly arguing about it just wastes energy they could have used to solve something else" (literally – "eastern republic"), and a proverb about how many things that look like the former are actually the latter.

Very obsessive about not ever doing anything that might harm someone, and unlike on Earth the culture of metamorality (link: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HqdF1eXfdZy31JDrC-KqpiXprfzRYDC1) is universal (i.e. something everyone heard of even if they don't always agree with it), they know "just don't do anything YOU view as a problem" isn't enough and can't be enough, but fortunately they are very hard to offend, and very open about things that bother them, so there is just also a culture of very quickly establishing very legible boundaries and preferences. Though "people being mutually overly-self-sacrificial at each other" is a known and common failure state.

As result of not caring about tradition, wanting to understand everything relevant, and never harm anyone, they try to have as few unwritten rules as possible, though whether that means "having less rules" or "having more of the rules written" varies (and is a topic of heated debate).
They have specific customs about obviously indicating what traits they have and how they want to be treated, to prevent misunderstandings or actions-of-the-kind-a-specific-person-doesn't-like. The customs are legibly written, and often reviewed and discussed to prevent them making it easier to harm people instead of harder (as it often happens with etiquette rules on Earth).

They highly value preservation of information, even if it's not important for anything. Highly respect people with good memories, and the learning of mnemonic techniques. Treat destruction of knowledge as a terrible crime (and consider death bad more because the person's memories will not exist anymore, than because the person itself can't experience things). When an internet equivalent was/will be created, put an insane amount of effort into making information on it easy to preserve and to find. If there is any technology in Ranalite better than in other more advanced median worlds, maybe even dath ilan, it would be their Google and/or Wikipedia.

Kinda bad at aesthetics, probably. Except for rare cases, most either don't care almost at all about how things look, or care and have the preference "it should have as much color as possible".

I still declare, by authorial flat, that they are not, on average, as bad as me at painting and writing descriptions of events (though still not as good as Earthlings, on average), because my bad visual processing seems to just be a trait I happen to have, rather than a fundamental trait inherent to my personality and who I am. Also because without it art in Ranalite would be really really terrible (they are already inevitably bad at acting, not having readable books is just unthinkable).

As said previously, don't fear death. Do dislike death as something that separates a person from the community, prevents them from doing cool and useful and important things. It is sad a dead person would never sing or write books or cook food or tell jokes. It is not sad they don't exist. That this person isn't dead but is an afterlife (or something) would not make it meaningfully less sad (unless the thing they do in the afterlife would still affect other people and culture). And something like severe dementia would be fully equivalent to death, in that regard.

An ancient philosopher, and the advisor of a king, said something loosely translated as "when I die, it would be terrible, because I couldn't give you advice. But if you, or someone else, could know what I would say, and act on it, my Heart/Soul will still live, and nothing would be terrible then".
That concept of "a specifically-this-person-shaped impact on the world" is the only Ranalite concept close to "Soul".
(But actually having good enough models of people to simulate them like some people speak about in rationalist circles would be extremely rare. Ranalites are bad at modeling other people.)

It is common philosophy to live mostly because you want to maximize utility to other people, rather than because you like living (though it isn't universal. If it was universal the civilization would just have committed collective suicide. See also later point about childhoods). If someone still chooses to die, it is obviously their choice, and it would be unthinkably selfish (something done possibly by villains in fictional stories) to try

convincing them to live because you want them to, after they already made the decision that It is not enough.

Suicide the way it happens on Earth is extremely rare, though. Mostly, people who decide (after enough time to think. And psychological consultation. Not something done on a whim) they don't want to live (or that they consider maximizing utility far more important than life and decided they don't have a way to do it enough by living) become Given (or Relinquished, or some similar terms), which are people that gave away the right to own their own mortality, and do various dangerous things, too dangerous for people who want to keep living.

You can stop being Given at any time. Most Given also become Given in the first place because their existence is hedonically net-negative, so it is usually important for the things they do to not be painful or extremely unpleasant despite being dangerous. But there are different laws and customs in different places in Ranalite about how exactly Given work.

"Not having Given at all" is not an idea anyone contemplates outside thought experiments.

Not sure how high the percentage of Given actually is. But probably above 3%.

Ranalite settlements tend to be built (or at least people *try* to build them) in shapes like the New York grid, or circles surrounded by a main street, and have signs everywhere, because Ranalites tend to be bad at navigation. Not so bad that they are lost everywhere, but bad enough that it is a problem for most people, that is worth a lot of effort to solve.

("You are here" signs are rare, because 50%+ Ranalites are not actually capable of looking at a map and then figuring where real things are on that map.)

The world is separated into city states, much smaller than what we consider a country, but still relatively big. Sometimes they unite or separate. People migrate between them often.

Ranalite have a very weak feeling of group identification, but a strong feeling of categorization. If a certain city state has a specific culture, or described at "the city where people are X", people who are X and like/share the culture will want to live there. This is not exactly precise, and a common way to think of things is "aspirational traits of a city state" vs "stereotypical traits of a city state" vs "factual-measureable traits of a city state".

Being a citizen is like being a member of an ideological movement. though more complicated because you have to physically move to a place, and can't live in several

places at once (you can be a citizen of several at once, but it's not very meaningful igf you are not actively living there).

Ranalite doesn't have one single language. And most languages aren't intentionally constructed.

But most languages do share some basic common sense terms, because if they don't, people create those terms and try to enforce their usage.

Ranalite has a clear distinction, when talking about "truth", between "the thing I said was not intentionally misleading", "I tried to communicate information in optimal manner maintaining epistemological standards" and "the statement accurately corresponds to reality".

When you say something "might happen", there are different words for "it could reasonably be expected to happen " and "it is a thing that is not fundamentally impossible and so could happen".

Ranalite is not a monoculture. Different city states don't have the same laws or traditions. There isn't even anything like the UN, or agreements anyone abides by.

But there is a set of logical principles that everyone (with the exception of some specific handful of city states that are really weird) agrees are self-evidently true, or sees the use in following. Those include metamorality, the principles of empirical science and research (which include the "everything is either true and verifiable, or false, or subjective, or Shaman stuff which is kind of outside the system"), and a unified system of measurements everyone uses because it's more convenient (there are several mathematical notations around the world, but they all describe the same underlying units), and other similar stuff. Fitting is not part of it, Fitting is a concept too abstract and philosophical for people to recognize, or describe as a standard different cultures recognize, just like "some things are big and some things are small" (or, for a better metaphor, "this shape is Bouba and this shape is kiki") are a standard that needs to be followed or recognized.

There is a constructed language that was made in a similar ideological drive, to offer everyone precise definitions of scientific and philosophical terms. It's commonly used, but is not part of the same universal standards.

(This part was originally conceptualized while reading the thread "the invisible dragon in our garage is not impermeable to flour", and so written as a response to Ozytopians and their conception of Logos, even If that is suboptimal for the document)

Fitting is a philosophical concept that is central to Ranalite culture(s).
Summarized in shortest form, Fitting is "when different things fit together correctly". But it's of course far more complicated.
Originally, Fitting was mostly a social and economic concept.
Different people are good at different things. Circumstantially, because of where they live, or what they chose to specialize in; but also inherently, people are born good at different things and wanting different things.
It is better that a person do a thing that they are good at, so they can create more value.
It is important that a person do the things they want to do, because, as it universally known (with the caveat of current experiments in interuniversal neuropsychology, which Ranalite didn't start but was the most enthusiastic about) if a person is forced, whether by other person or by pure circumstances, to put too much effort into something they don't want to do, they inevitably Break.
So, while it is very hard to ensure in practice, it is obviously good and important when people are in circumstances where they can do the thing they want to do and are good at, and when that thing is useful to other people, and those other people can also do something necessary for the first people.
That is what a good society is.
(One important step in the social development of Ranalite was realizing that, because of how different people are, and everyone doesn't Fit with something, it is impossible to find someone who Fits to be responsible for Fitting itself. No single person can decide how everything works. Singular rulers were pretty rare in Ranalite history, even if democracy was a very late development.)
And people being good at different things also means being bad at some things. You can't expect people to be good at everything. People will not fit some circumstances.
And some people will not get along with other people, no matter how wanting-positive-things all sides are.
And tools, and external circumstances, are never good themselves, they are good when they Fit, and bad when they don't Fit. All value is derived from circumstances.

(Which may be such a profound insight only for Ranalites. Thing is, most Ranalites have an instinct to categorize what things are better than other things, and make a thing, any thing they are doing, the best way possible, far more than they usually care about the outcome of the thing and effect on the world. When taught mathematics and introduced

to money (both things that were pretty universal at a pretty early point), Ranalites start to quantify all the value they see in the world. But unless taught otherwise, almost all quantify value as inherent and external. People living in cold places, for example, treat "more heat" as something obviously and inherently valuable, and think you should be able to trade "more heat" for "more food" or "more years of life". When actually, and according to Fitting, heat isn't good by itself, but only because of its effect on people, and more heat isn't always good. There is a specific range of temperatures in which humans can live, and being outside of it is harmful in either direction. You can't trade heat for food not only because metaphysics don't work that way and magic isn't real, but also because there is nothing that makes heat better than coldness. And you can't trade tasty food for more heat than untasty food, because the tastiness of the food is subjective and depends on you.

Ranalite has mystical traditions/fiction, where magic works as a kind of objective Equivalent Exchange, because the concept is intuitive and obviously-true-feeling to almost all Ranalites. But this is clearly not how things work in reality, they can't, and even fictional stories about equivalent exchange are about Fitting, and how the exchange creates value even if it's equal, because value is actually circumstantial.)

One famous philosopher decided to make a visual representation of Fitting, and designed a series of wooden objects with various patterns of holes in them, interlocking together to create a single big shape (essentially a jigsaw puzzle).

Several decades later another philosopher declared the first philosopher's idea "unbelievably stupid, and a complete misrepresentation of Fitting, resulting from a hopelessly flawed understanding of the world", because it creates a perception that Fitting is one singular thing, there is only one way for things to Fit, and there is only on place for every single piece. Which is clearly wrong. And then built a new model, in contrast to the old, with differently shaped pieces that don't interlock, but still have to be arranged together (essentially a non-computerized Tetris). This model shows that some overall configurations are obviously good, and some overall configurations are obviously bad, but there are many ways for the good ones to be good, and they don't depend on each piece being only in one predetermined place. Theoretically there are versions where the existing pieces don't all fit together, and then you have to figure out how to make a configuration that has the minimal amount of left out pieces, and minimal amount of empty space, even if completely avoiding it is impossible. Some see that as a metaphor for metamorality, and how not all values can be fulfilled even in ideal conditions.

(There is a small minority that does still conceptualize Fitting as a jigsaw puzzle, and has a Lilo-and-Stitch-like belief, often mystical, that everything has one specific place in the world where it Fits. An even smaller minority inside that minority applies this to

relationships and believes in soulmates, but that is an extremely fringe belief, absurd to Ranalite culture.)

It is right, good and beautiful when things Fit. Especially if they Fit by accident, you were just walking through life and suddenly found exactly what you need, that you didn't expect finding, or didn't even know you needed. (In some Ranalite languages, "sudden Fitting" is very close in meaning to "miracle"). And people are very happy about it. And it can, from a very abstract perspective, be described as "the will of the Fitting making things good for me", or as "gratefulness" to Fitting for the event. But people don't really do it.

Ranalite does have a concept of Personifications, "what if the X we interact with all the time was a person?" is a pretty simple thought. Though they don't really worship personifications. And there are stories, especially newer lowbrow stories, where the Personification of Fitting is a character. But it's there just to tell people in advance which thing Fit. Or to represent natural coincidences and luck. (Which is a very reductive and simplistic approach to what Fitting is, that being the reason why it only happens in stories that don't try to be very smart or meaningful)

Now, the scale of what counts as Fitting evolved a lot from its original conception. When you notice a cool coincidence, that is Fitting. When you suddenly realize that some unconnected things feel meaningfully connected (apophenia), that's ~~numberwang~~ Fitting.

(When you look at painting, or at a perfectly cooked dish, or hear music, and feel "this is just Right, it's exactly how it should be", that's also Fitting.)

Some neurobiologists speculate that "recognition of similarities" is actually the main function of the brain, with everything else being a side effect, and in that sense it could be said, if you really want to stretch definitions, that "Fitting is the thing that makes thought possible". But no one really does.

Is mathematics a form of Fitting, or can be interpreted that way? Maybe, I don't know, I don't really get mathematics. (And while Fitting is connected to logic, it's a consequence *of* logic, rather than source.) But physics almost certainly is. There are a lot of very basic particles, and simple laws of how they can behave, and they behave in the only way they can, interacting with each other, and create the interactions of the world as we know it.

The existence of life as we know it requires very specific conditions. And those conditions are the ones that are true in the reality we find ourselves in. because if the conditions were different, we couldn't find ourselves in this reality. life exists because it Fits the conditions of reality. And that can be phrased to say "Fitting created the laws of physics" or "Fitting created life". But it's unintuitive and kind of pointless from the perspective of most Ranalites.

And there is no logic proving that the personification of morality has to love people. Morality is a set of guidelines on how to achieve good things, and/or the desire to do

those things. So a personification of morality would necessarily be a good person. But that has nothing to do with love. A lot of Ranalites have a very strong drive towards being good people, and a good understanding of morality, without personally loving anyone.

It is certainly possible to imagine a Ranalite for whom it will be relevant. Someone who cares deeply about Fitting, about the beauty of the universe, and the way mathematics are structured and life is evolving, and who feels a deep emotional connection, actually conceptualizes Fitting as a person[1], and is grateful for everything Fitting made better in their life, and believes Fitting loves them. And conceptualizes "trying to be a good person" as "connecting to the shard of Fitting inside you". That's not a usual thing, but it's possible. Many people have abstract-incommunicable-beliefs. But they, by definition, shouldn't have a significant impact on society. Opinions are either logically valid factual observations about the world, and can be proven, or are statements of value that are important but do not observe anything about the world, or are wrong and should be opposed, or are abstract beliefs that do not imply any factual disagreement about the territory. And abstract beliefs are hard to define exactly.

And the teachingsphere seems as if they pay more attention to the valid but not very important observation of what things count as Fitting (which is perfectly valid), and all share some abstract metaphysical [2] beliefs about Fitting, and maybe an institution dedicated to it, and…somehow failed to realize those are abstract beliefs rather than facts? And think that a specific philosophy is inseparable from things like math and ethics, which it isn't, and those sciences and systems do not make sense without it (which they do. You don't technically need to know what Fitting is to understand how physics work, or to understand that life exists in the kind of reality where life can exist). And they are factually wrong about some things, like Fitting/Logos and morality.

(Fitting is connected to morality only in that the configuration of rules and actions that is metamoral depends on all the people in society, and so needs to Fit them, rather than Fitting itself being the source or principle of morality, let alone objective one (it isn't. *People* decide what is good, not some external objective measurement). And it can't be the source of moral impulses people have. It just…doesn't work that way. That's an obvious logical mistake that is easy to prove.)

Some Ranalites try meditations suggested by the Techingsphere to Anomaland, and see some results, but it's a known fact that while internal experiences are real, as all feelings are, they do not always directly correspond to real phenomena. Or rather, that the phenomena they correspond to are not always the ones that seem obvious (a known historical example, seeing a monster in your room and feeling it bite you doesn't always correspond to having a monster in your room, it probably corresponds to taking hallucinogenic drugs, or poorly ventilated rooms).

And some specific impressions are similar to things some groups of shamans deal with? But shamans are already controversial, not everyone believes in shamans. And of

course it's impossible to define what makes shamans into shamans. But the thing shamans are supposed to do is easy explained and factual, it's to choose courses of action that fulfills a given goal and maximizes a specific utility function. Shamans who only have abstract beliefs/feelings and claim to interact with immaterial beings or unseen levels of reality wouldn't survive as an institution in modern Ranalite if there wasn't a concrete, easily explainable thing they are doing for society.

And also there are some completely unrelated things. One of the "sermons" about the Logos is marveling at how big the universe is, and the relative size of humans and cities and the sun. Which is certainly a cool thing (this same concept, except duodecimal, is present in Ranalite. And many other worlds, turns out), a form of positive emotion you can experience based on abstract thought. But it doesn't have anything to do with Fitting. There is nothing here that Fits anything else. At least after a minute of thought by an average person.

(Two philosophers, inspired by the debate, try to humorously one up each other by proving that increasingly bizarre, extremely specific or extremely global things are actually Fitting. The competition ends after they conclude that the attempt to connect everything in the world to Fitting is itself a form of Fitting.)

[1] Which is described as not the real meaning, but for Ranalites the mode of engagement seen here (where you can be grateful to a thing, and the thing can love you) is more like "treat concept as person" than "consider it very important", which are…the two possible ways to deeply care about a concept? Philosophers that deal with people deeply and emotionally caring about concepts certainly exist somewhere on Ranalite, but were not found on short notice, because no one thought that is the thing needed to comprehend alien value systems.

[2] (Ranalite languages do not have the word "supernatural". They all have a word that means "belief about reality that should be objective, but its objectivity is impossible to verify" (with some clarifying the difference between that and "not just impossible to verify, but too abstract for there to be a coherent way for it to be true or false").

And different words which all refer to one concept, but literally translate to different things such as "sacredness", "metaphysics", or "fundamental mystery". (The whole point of it is that real things can't be metaphysical, but thoughts and impressions can.)

They separately also have a word for "something that is impossible according to known laws of physics" (like infinite energy, or unassisted-flight), but such things are not necessarily fundamentally-mysterious. Very similar (as some people on Ranalite will

discover after the interworld contact) to the dath ilani terms "economic-magic" and "conceptual-magic".

Shamans.
The thing Shamans do, the core thing, and the only thing in modern Ranalite, is give advice on things you are unsure of, about how to act, and which of the possible facts is true. Because they have good intuition, that is better than random chance.
It doesn't mean they are always right. You should always listen to a Specialist on any topic before a Shaman. Or, if the Shaman themself have any kind of real understanding of the topic, they will tell things in their capacity as Specialist, not as a Shaman.
It is believed by some (but not everyone. Even not all the Shamans) that their source of intuition is magical ("impossible according to known laws of physics"), that they hear spirits, or see the future, or something. No one knows.
Technically speaking, no one knows what quality Shamans have exactly that enables it. Other shamans recognize it and train you as a Shaman. Which could mean they were wrong, and some people who are officially Shamans don't have it.
And there are different groups of shamans, with different beliefs about what it means to be a shaman. Some shamans are completely agnostic.
No one is sure about anything.
But practice shows that, on average, it seems that they are wrong less than they are right, and "relying on a Shaman" is not a *terrible* option. So they still exist around the world (not in all countries), in small number, and people sometimes listen to them. Or not.
If magic actually exists, then they are magical and have supernatural awareness of things. If it doesn't, they don't. It depends on the specific story being told about Ranalite ("Flexpoint", as Jenna Moran calls it. "Black Canon", as Mailanka calls it).
There is no way to tell from the outside, the shamans *do* the same things either way.

There is another important ancient philosophy in Ranalite. The literal translation of its name is something like "be careful" or "better safe than sorry".

It's sort of like Confucianism in that it is a humanist and :bug:not-abstract:bug: philosophy made by some people as a set of rules to be a good person, and live in a better society.

It is also very similar to Rabbinic Judaism in that 1) The core of it is not just a set of rules, it's a huge amount of different philosophers arguing with each other, and commenting on each other's words and opinions for hundreds of years, and studying all that is expected of you if you follow the philosophy;

2) With time it acquired several layers of "this thing is fine, but if you do it too much that might cause X, which is bad, so it's better to avoid the general thing too", on top of each other, resulting in a lot of very complicated prohibition too many aspects of life.

In modern Ranalite, after formulating and popularizing approaches to Fitting and Metamorality, people mostly agreed that both "having to study 5+ different opinions of philosophers to justify the decisions you make in your life" and "avoiding doing anything that might cause a bad result" are not actually practical guidelines to living a good life or improving the world.

The philosophy is still a great part of the cultural/philosophical foundation of Ranalite, and people still study and discuss it, they just usually don't take all its rules and prescriptions seriously. Though some, of course, still do.

In terms of laws and morality, any action can be separated into 5 loose tiers (though of course there are sub-tiers if you care enough about the detail): "serious crime", "non-serious crime", "legal, but still a dick move", "reasonable behavior for a normal person", and "being a saint".

Almost every sort of actively altruistic action falls under "being a saint". You are never **expected** to be one, but it's very encouraged (you **are** expected to behave like a normal person and not a dick, even if it's not illegal).

Ranalite doesn't really have the concepts "honor", "insult", "offense", "dignity", or "respect" (do have "reputation" and "decency", though. Just like "truthfulness" and "morality").

"If you say to people things that are considered bad, they will be emotionally hurt" is the kind of bizarre concept that is treated like "people are killed because they have red hair". It doesn't really exist outside of thought experiments and sci-fi dystopias.

They have a little of the "superhappies" quality in that way, the life in most human worlds would seem intrinsically horrible to them.

Some people have specific triggers and topics that are scary or disgusting for them. You should tell people that you have them (or have them written inside the door of your house, or something. Or displayed on your internet page, when Ranalites at some points create an internet. How exactly to achieve it is one of the things that varies between cultures), so that people know to avoid it.

But for something like that to be universal; to be acknowledged as the obvious correct state of affairs; for the "insulted" emotion to be common; for same topics to be considered sacred or disrespectful; for words to be disrespectful; for l*ack* of action rather than an action be impolite (at some point in history, someone in Ranalite came with an absurdist idea of rules for society that are impossible to follow, and it was the same as straightforward Japanese etiquette); for people to be able to be insulted by accident because they thought something bad was said to them when it wasn't…that never happens on Ranalite, and *can't* happen.

Unless you are intentionally provided with false information. That's epistemological dishonesty. Some people would possibly be *angry*. Frustrated if somehow had incorrect information about them. Not emotionally hurt, though.

There is a concept of *defamation* on Ranalite, telling wildly false information about a person with high certainty (speculation doesn't count. There are specific epistemological standards). It is bad because it goes against truth, makes people have incorrect information about reality. And also because this untrue information would make a person's life worse for no reason, as people act differently, due to making updates based on unreal information (and technically speaking, Ranalite views false *positive* information nearly as bad as false *negative* information. Though negative is obviously worse and does more damage).

But while there is *reputation*, a person wouldn't (usually) feel any special bad emotion about being viewed badly, as distinct from "this is untrue and therefore unfair".

A person who actually did something bad would feel worse because of practical consequences, and if they are selfish, that's it. If they are median or slightly below median selfish, they would feel terrible *guilt* about doing anything bad. Not shame, though.

Guilt is an internal emotion, feeling bad about yourself in relation to yourself. Shame is an external emotion, feeling bad yourself because of how you look to others. Ranalites don't really care about how they look to others, beyond the practical part. Which would have been a huge problem if they weren't so altruistic.

It is important for Ranalites for facts about them to be acknowledged, especially about being good at something. It's harder to do a thing when people don't agree you are good at. It's frustrating. But that's it.
(And people not acknowledging your flaws, and not working around it, is just as frustrating.)
Ranalites feel good about achieving things, which can be translated as "pride", but it's not (usually) social external pride, that relies on other people agreeing that what you did is cool.
No one in Ranalite wants to be "famous", beyond doing something that requires being known to work. If you write a book, for the book to be useful and have an impact it should be read by as many people as possible. But it's not usually important whether people know it was you or not.
It is not unheard of on Ranalite to actually want recognition deeply, to really deeply care (that is to say, as much as Maslow's pyramid says it is normal to care for average Earthlings) about people knowing about your accomplishments and agreeing that your accomplishments are very good, and no one else could do it, wanting to be *respected*. But that is very rare, and mostly seen as a character trait of fictional villains (because it's not a trait real people are expected to have, even if they are selfish. It's intuitively obvious to Ranalites that the more selfish you are, the less you care about other people and what they think about you).

Jealously doesn't really exist in Ranalite either. There is "really wanting something you don't have", and "having the opinion that given someone's resources/position etc. you could do better". And thinking a person is bad at their job. Or a bad person generally. But those are all unconnected emotions.
There are the opinions that economic inequality is too big, and that is inefficient and immoral (i.e, "not the situation which leads to the optimal world for all people"). There are ideas on how to address it.
(There is communism. A bunch of communes were created by the kinds of people who would want to live in communes. Some of them later regretted it, and restructured. Some are doing fine, though the communes as a whole are all poorer than other places as a whole (which is a universally acknowledged fact. They just don't consider it a priority). Children decide to move from communes far more often than from other places, though. But also a lot of children who grow up in other places move to communes, so it's mostly a wash.)

Ranalites tend to be extremely altruistic, but also weak willed and hedonistic, very dependent on the things they have comfort in, hating to bother with anything. They often feel deeply obligated to solve a problem, but don't technically *want* to do it at all, and most Ranalite languages have a word (or several) that basically mean "this thing must be done, it is important to me, i can't be the person i am if i don't do it, but also hate doing it and deeply wish for any possible world where this thing was not necessary to do" (the best cultural translation for that term might be "Mundum").

They want to help everyone and always, but are not really capable of that, and tend to burn out very fast when they take too much effort and responsibility on themselves. And also feel guilt not doing it, and "put a lot of effort into helping people" is a very basic and instinctive response to "there is a problem and i have a theoretic ability to help".

So there is a conflict between those two extremes, and an important part of resolving that conflict is teaching everyone the economic and quasi economic principles of :bug: effective altruism :bug:, and that you should put effort into helping people only when this effort has a good :bug: input to output ratio :bug:.

Ranalites on average have extremely low empathy (though it's hard to say of the three kinds of empathy it applies to specifically). But they do have a very strong sense of morality conscience. It's very important for Ranalites to Do The Right Thing (and for that, to know what the right thing is). Which is one of the reasons for the strong impact of the Becarefulism – even people who disagreed with it felt the need to justify explicitly why they disagreed (and it was a basic and encouraged part of the practice).

And that is the reason (well, one of them) Ranalite does have wars and murder and a lot of crime, despite the strong altruism – if a Ranalite is convinced that killing you is the right thing to do, they will do it with no remorse, and appealing to their empathy will not change that (philosophical arguments might. Or they might not. "discuss the ethics of harming" is the standard Ranalite equivalent of "begging for your life").

Metamorality is so good precisely because it allows Ranalites to have a foundation of trusting their reasonable actions to be right, without also limiting them too much from the (reasonable) things they want to do.

Ranalites tend to believe in (when they have the Slack) making the effort of changing their approach or habits in ways that are hard now, but will surely be better after some time passes, instead of being stuck in local optima. Such as various law, tradition, and measurement reforms.
They rarely do that, though. Because everyone always keep introducing new alternate way to restructure everything, and it is very hard even for Specialists on the topic to determine and calculate which of those potential reforms will work and is actually worth it. As with Pascal's Wager, the question is not "are you ready to pay a cost now to make things better in the future", but "which of the possibilities you are going to pay that cost for?".
Many of those questions end up being "Eastern Republics", and the status quo mostly remains.
Most Ranalites going around life knowing they should improve the world, that there are a lot of things that need improving, but they better focus on the things they know they can fix, instead of things that feel more urgent but you have no productive way to address.

Ranalites are pretty consistent in their beliefs and behavior.
Ranalites often do change their mind, but it happens in response to specific information and circumstances, not randomly.
When Ranalites realize that they no longer something they wanted, and maybe the thing they wanted was bad, they will not realizing it earlier, but they will not regret doing what they wanted before, and would not be disappointed in anyone who helped them do it.

The idea of a world where people who want to kill themselves are regularly stopped by first, and then are grateful for those who stopped them, because death was something they wanted temporarily and do not endorse, is pretty alien to Ranalite culture(s). to be so inconsistent and unreflective about your goals, you need to have some very serious and rare neurological problems…or be a child.

Children are, admittedly, a problem.
People should never be allowed to harm others, but they can never be prevented from harming themselves. There is no way to morally justify that according to any of Ranalite moral philosophies.
But children are inconsistent, and often do something they will terribly regret immediately, or maybe 3 years later. And are bad at comprehending that consequences exist.
So one thing a lot of people in Ranalite dedicate their lives to is developing the best methods for teaching children old enough to make decisions, but young enough to really understand them, to better understand them. To understand their actions do have consequences, and while they may do almost anything, they shouldn't do everything they can. Learning that is much more important than teaching children stuff like sciences (and if it's interesting they would be good at learning it by themselves. That's how Ranalites are).
Another thing some people do is to limit the information available to children about dangerous things with bad consequences. Because children should get everything they want, but they can't want things they don't know exist.
Whether it's actually a good way to achieve metamorailty and self-determination for children is disputed (including by the people who were raised that way).

An interesting thing about children is the common knowledge that children can get Excited about things easily, much more than adults. And that is very good. Children should have the opportunity to do stuff they are excited about. For the obvious reason that it's Fitting for people to do what they like, and they would be better at it than doing something they don't like. But also for the complicated reason that for most people, this ability will later be lost forever. And the same things will feel meaningless and boring. Children also have a tendency to see things as metaphysical/mysterious, and drive enjoyment from that perception. A lot of thought has been put into how to teach children to see the world in a way that is accurate, and prevents factual mistakes, but doesn't negate the enjoyment derived from metaphysical perception.
If children are excited about some sort of science or information, it's also notable that discovering too much too quickly might make them lose interest. So it's customary to

provide information gradually, and only when asked, with the common warning "if you keep thinking about the idea yourself, the idea might keep being Bright for a month. If you read the answer in a book, it will be Brighter, but only for today". Though it's still important to provide the option. One recent famous quote is "I would be the best mathematician on Ranalite today, if someone told me what algebra is when I was 6". this is vaguely reminiscent of dath ilani customs around sex-spoilers and hiding gravity from people, except much more sane because it's opt-in, and also you don't need to print newspapers in cypher. (Though it's very easy to comprehend from Ranalite perspective, and not surprising. "Ah, they took a common sense thing too far.")

And of course, not even dealing with special interests and excitement, children are much more likely to Break than adults, which is why it's important to force them to do things as rarely as possible, and put as little responsibility on them as possible (when it is in fact possible. Everyone agrees the time before the industrial revolution was terrible). While still encouraging them to start works of projects of their own free will. Many would say that the nature of life is to enjoy being a child, and then when you grow up return the favor by working to improve society and ensure other children will also enjoy being children.

In Ranalite there is no such thing as spicy dishes.
There are people who like spice, and so add pepper to the food they eat. But no "this dish is always made spicy and supposed to be that way".
This is not true about sweet dishes and savory dishes. Not sure about salty ones and sour ones.

There is no such genre as "horror". Stories are never meant to scare people. Some stories have topics and themes that are scary or stressful or heavy, and some people are fine with that and some aren;t. But you never see someone say "this movie really scared me, that proves it was a good movie". If something significantly scared you, that is probably evidence of it being unfitting to you (unless you are a less-than-1%-rare weirdo whose quality of life is not reduced by being scared).

Tragedy is a common genre. Stories about cases where people and/or society fail to act in the optimal way, and bad things happen. Being familiar with tragedies help people avoid such situations, and be ready to face things that happen in reality, understand the suffering of other people even if you never suffered in the exact way yourself.

They are not always didactic, in that the author doesn't need to know how the bad situation could have been avoided, but "tragedies exist to teach people to avoid the bad things described" is a universal implicit assumption. Tragedies are not just stories where the characters feel bad and make the audience feel bad. Why would the audience want to feel bad if it doesn't contribute to being better at life-wisdom and problem-solving?

I don't think they have video games yet, certainly not wildly available ones. But they have a lot of things resembling roleplaying games. More common are not the ones where a group of people improvises an interaction together (though those exist), but closer to what is called "solo journaling games". Or to the internet thing often called "CYOA", but isn't actually a choose your own adventure story, that is less commonly but more accurately known as MYC. Sometimes very complicated MYCs, including various dependencies and points and printable cards.
Often MYCs are based around everyday events, and they are common enough that a lot of people would understand what you mean by "i need to spend 3 Time and 2 Fun to be able to do a task worth 1 Effort", and such (something i, in my real life, can almost do but not exactly. And therefore average Ranalites find obvious and useful).

Ranalites also often love answering various surveys, and some surveys are structured as sort of games/MYCs to make them more engaging.
For many people those feel the same cultural niche as "morning crosswords".

Songs and music are popular. Just as on Earth? More? I don;t know where i fall on love for music compared to the Earth average.
It's very rare for people to not care or notice the words in a song. It is common to like and sing music that doesn't have or need words.
Changing the words of a song (a "song parody" other than the fact it doesn't need to be funny) to be different, often singing random words describing your current situation, is so common that most songs are not written "as songs", but as a template (music, rhythm, and theme) for a song to be written in.
(This might be a bit hard to understand for someone who doesn't see such a common situation in our home as "me singing to my mother that i went to store and there was no milk using Ode To Joy music".)

Ranalite has a lot of "sets of personality traits people identify with", but they are not "gender". Gender is only important as a matter of "what things i find sexy in people?". Which is by itself also not uniquely a question of gender, Ranalite mostly doesn't see fundamental difference between sexual orientation, fetishes, and sense-of-aesthetics-as-applied-to-people.

(There's is a distinction between "sense-of-aesthetics-as-applied-to-others" and "sense-of-aesthetics-as-applied-to-myself", but the latter is pretty rare on Ranalite.)

There is a difference between sexual and non-sexual things in Ranalite. It's just that the spectrum of "sexual things" is very wide (and not very similar to what is considered "sexual" on Earth, considering that Ranalites are both mostly asexual, but often also very kinky (which I recently learned is described by the term "acekink")).
Going to a strip club is very different from going to a restaurant. It is only slightly different from going to a gallery (visual aesthetic appreciation of objects), and not at all different from going to ballet (visual aesthetic appreciation of people. Dancing people, even. Just the genre is different).
There is a big difference, though, between strip clubs (or theater) and prostitution (or messages. Or "free hugs", for that matter). The difference being that one thing is visual, and the second requires touching. The only objective from the outside difference.
The exact laws and customs on how "touch involving interactions" work is one of the things different between various Ranalite cultures.

Ranalites are often aromantic, asexual, horny, and kinky. Not always all 4, but commonly.
Usually experience the desire for sex, but not attraction; they don't have a strong connection between "people i am very close to" and "people i have sex with".
(And, seriously, finding someone who both Fits to live with, and Fits having sex with in an extremely specific way (as anything Ranalites enjoy in life is almost always extremely specific)? You have the people you play games with, the people you talk philosophy with, the people you cry on when life is hard, and people you have sex with, which might be the same people, or completely different ones. It *can* happen, but you can't expect that to happen, it's real life, after all. So it would probably be different people).

Technically speaking, a lot of things that i refer to here as sex are not sex from an Earthling perspective. Actual normal sex that results in pregnancy is like, half percent of the sex Ranalites are having (though they do have a lot of it).

(There are a lot of specific categories and definitions, for the people who care about Fun Theory and "how exactly humans like and want things". For most people, there is the general "activity that is physically enjoyable", which is divided into "doing by yourself" and "as interaction with others", with interactions being "involve touch" "doesn't involve touch".)

They are also not very strong on biological family, because statically speaking, there isn't any reason to think that parents will be psychologically and socially compatible with a child, probably more than half children everywhere are adopted.

"How does evolution result in it"? There was too much noise from all the suicides to select against people adopting children instead of having them.

They might have the same problem of dath ilan with doms/sadists vastly outnumbering subs/masochists? And they possibly just solve it with polyamory.

(Later expanding on the previous point)

Ranalites do not have strong familial bonds, certainly not ones based on blood. Also, being genetically part of a family does not insure personal compatibility, so the normal principles of Fitting apply here as they do everywhere. People do not care much about the distinctions between biological parents, step parents, and adoptive parents (though the distinction still exists).

Children do not have much more freedom from the authority of their parents than on Earth, but children have the choice to decide whose authority they want to be under, and parents are encouraged to transfer their authority to a person if this person is clearly far more compatible with the child than they are. Though often you need some permissions or certifications to be able to accept such authority, or there are several "levels" of authority and not all of them can be transferred.

Ranalites barely have a sense of privacy. (Which i have, but it is 100% a learned reflex and i would be much happier without it.)

They lock their doors so thieves don't take anything, because the "i have **stuff** that is **mine** and **no one** should take it" instinct is strong. But it is not a problem that people know things about me, why would that be a problem? Unless they will use it to harm me, but if they want to harm me that's the actual problem, and they can probably do that anyway.

But information should be shared freely, that's why it exists. As long as epistemic hygiene standards are maintained and citations are provided. "If i came up with an idea, everyone who discuss it should know it came from me" is the informational equivalent of "i have my stuff and no one should take it", rather than Bella's "my thoughts are mine so no one else should see them".

There are topics some people don't want to hear about (like disgusting medical details), and you should avoid talking about them in public (details on how exactly differ between cultures, because "what exact norms we should have in society, and whether politeness should exist" is a topic of heated debate), but that's to avoid (slightly) harming other people, not to protect your own sense of privacy.

And the main reason to wear clothes, other that weather and aesthetic preferences, is the same politeness thing, because surprisingly many people in Ranalite are deeply disgusted by seeing naked bodies. But being naked doesn't in any way harm *you*. And there are a lot of nudist places, as one example of the "people who have a problem with this don't come here, so here it isn't a problem" principle in Ranalite.

And speaking of thieves.

Theft is common on Ranalite. Because not everybody is as altruistic as the median. But also, even people who are altruistic, who do have a goal of increasing the amount of value in the world, sometimes believe, as part of the belief in Fitting and value being a result of circumstances, that they need stuff more than another person, and that taking it for themselves is a way to increase the amount of value in the world.

But they still prefer to cause less harm to the people they steal from. And there certainly are many attempts in Ranalite (which i don't have the details of because i don't have enough INT and only come up with outlines) to coordinate towards Something Else Which Is Not That, specifically that things are stolen only if they have :bug: universal :bug: value, and not if they have great value for the owner but not the thief.

(Inspired by a case where my mother's purse was stolen, which included some money that wasn't that important, and also a conversation (not sure if a voice recording or a collection of letters) with a pretty obscure author she was friends with, who died soon afterwards, and was worth the world for her but was certainly worthless for the thief.

And like, the world doesn't have to be that much better for the thief to want to return this worthless thing and find a way to do it safely, right? Or at least to have a norm of only stealing things marked in a specific way in the first place. Which some people will still break, obviously but hopefully most won't, right?)

The answer to the question "is there distinction in Ranalite between X and Y?" is always yes. But most such distinctions are made by the people who specifically seek to classify obscure stuff, and are often disputed. So they are "generally-distinguished" in Ranalite.

Ranalites really love going to the meta level. The thing is important, yes, but what is the thing, how do we approach the thing, why do we care about the thing? That's even more important. And after that there is the meta-meta. Which does mean often missing the object-level thing. But that is a very known failure state with many ways to compensate for.

Written by RationalMoron/lord buss
Other published Google drive pages (with long and short essays on various weird topics):
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Wnk9CP7qrFzV0nzNbKapc7b4u_QJeqZN
(maybe I will post them to a blog at some point)

Contact me at:
lordbuss@gmail.com
lord buss (Mage of Rage)#9845 on discord