

Sample file



MANUAL OF THE PLANES

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Introduction

This book is about elsewhere.

It is about heaven and hell. It is about the building blocks of the universe and the palaces of the deities. It is about glowing portals and paths through mist and shadow.

It is about the universe and the cosmology that holds it all together. It is about the planes of existence.

The idea of “elsewhere”—realms and domains more powerful and more strange than our own—has always been a part of our mythology. Orpheus descends into the land of the dead, and deities dwell on Olympian mounts. Beings both fair and foul are summoned from far-off realms to do the caster's bidding. Terra incognita. Lands unknown. Here be monsters.

Manual of the Planes is more than just a listing of the homes of the devils, demons, celestials, and elementals. It provides the tools that you can use to create your own universes and cosmologies. You can customize the layout of your planes just as you do the nations and cities of your adventures—and the planes have infinite potential for expansion.

Manual of the Planes requires the use of the *Player's Handbook*, *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, and *Monster Manual*. With it you can build your own universes and turn your players loose in the other planes of existence.

Go explore!

MANUAL OF THE PLANES

This book presents information for both the Dungeon Master and players, taking them on a grand tour of the planes. *Manual of the Planes* is primarily for DMs, though players can read through its pages as well. If your DM is creating a unique cosmology, you won't spoil any surprises by reading this book.

Nature of the Planes (Chapter 1): This chapter answers the basic questions: What is a plane, and what do we do with them? It explains planar traits, the building blocks of your cosmology. It's a do-it-yourself guide to building your own dimensions and universes.

Connecting the Planes (Chapter 2): Having built your worlds, this chapter delves into stringing them together. How do you move from plane to plane, and what are the access points?

Characters and Magic (Chapter 3): This section presents new options for characters, including prestige classes (divine agent, gatecrasher, planar champion, and planesifter) and new spells such as *ether blast*, *reality maelstrom*, and *shadowfade*.

The Material Plane (Chapter 4): This chapter begins a grand tour of the planes by discussing the plane you probably call home. The Material Plane is usually the core of your campaign and the start of all stories.

The Transitive Planes (Chapter 5): These are the planes that take you elsewhere, planes of transportation and movement. They are the glue that holds the other planes together, but each has its own perils.

The Inner Planes (Chapter 6): This chapter explores the raw elements and energies that make up your cosmology. They are the most hostile of the planes, and powerful elementals call them home. They are raw power without direction.

The Outer Planes (Chapter 7): The deities themselves call these planes home, as do other extraplanar powers that meddle with mortals and the Material Plane. They are the homes of pantheons and deities.

The Demiplanes (Chapter 8): These are minor planes, bits of folded reality shaped by their creators. On the demiplanes, the DM can throw away the rules and create anything imaginable.

Throughout these chapters, examples are provided for the “Great Wheel”—the D&D cosmology. The Great Wheel is a representation of the planar arrangement described in the D&D rulebooks and the one most players are familiar with. But these examples are presented only as a handy starting point for those who want something to use immediately. DMs are encouraged to create their own cosmologies that reflect the needs of their own campaigns. Using the Great Wheel is fine for a typical fantasy campaign, but it might not be the best choice for a campaign that is closely connected to a specific culture such as the ancient Greeks or the Norse.

Monsters (Chapter 9): Here you'll find monsters and creatures that live on these planes. These include both full monster write-ups and templates that allow the DM to give an otherworldly aspect to creatures from the Material Plane.

Appendix: Finally, we offer examples of different types of planes and planar arrangements that are not part of the Great Wheel. These demonstrations of “cool stuff you can do” stress that, even though *Manual of the Planes* presents the D&D cosmology, you can do whatever you like for your own adventures. Inside you'll explore such interesting places as the Elemental Plane of Wood, the Plane of Mirrors, and the Outer Plane of Faerie.

Now, with the tools provided within this book, you can build your own mythic universes and turn your imagination loose on the wonders of many universes.

May it take you elsewhere.

Lighter Gravity

Enhanced magic trait:
fire spells maximized.

Illus. by A. Sneed

NATURE OF THE PLANES
CHAPTER ONE

The door was unlike any that Lidda, Tordek, and the others had seen before. Its frame was made of carved rose quartz, and its keystone was a blood-red gem as large as Tordek's head. Deep runes had been carved into the gem, warning of dire peril to all who opened the portal. The door itself was made of iron and warm to the touch.

Straining at a huge door ring threaded through a gargoyle carving, Tordek pulled the door open. Lidda's ears popped as the great door swung open.

Beyond the door spun a universe filled with great spinning disks. As far as the eye could see, these interlocking gears turned against each other, each resting on others for support. At first it looked like something was growing on the disks, but the heroes soon realized that these growths were entire cities, populated by strangely shaped beings. As they watched, the air rippled within the clockwork universe and an efreet appeared out of nowhere, flying toward one of the clockwork cities.

"Face it, guys," said Lidda. "This is a whole new ball game."

The planes are new worlds, alternate realities, and other dimensions that may exist just next door to the places that the characters are already comfortable with. But these are places where the basic rules every adventurer takes for granted no longer apply, and the safety of the characters' hearth and home is far away indeed.

Other planes may exist just behind that magical mirror, on the other side of a fearsome portal, or beyond

a rainbow-lighted waterfall. These gateways let Dungeon Masters (DMs) take their campaigns into literally a new dimension, creating new lands for the players to explore.

The planes can also be the homes of powerful entities, both malevolent and benign, who will challenge the characters. In their native lands, the characters may already have encountered creatures from other dimensions, such as demons or elementals. But the monsters have a "home turf" advantage on the planes, and they're backed up by even more powerful figures undreamt of on the Material Plane.

The planes, and the connections among them, are unique for every campaign. They may be as organized as a celestial bureaucracy or as chaotic as a system where planar portals open and close randomly. The arrangement of the planes might be well known to the characters, or a mystery that they must solve.

In this book, we provide the Great Wheel planar arrangement for the D&D game as an example. However, other campaign settings may have their own planar arrangements that vary from the ones presented here.

The core planar arrangements are provided as an example, and you should choose which

parts to keep and which parts to create anew. The center of the Great Wheel is Oerth, the core world for the D&D game. Around it lie the Inner Planes of fire and water, earth and air, and positive and negative energy. Beyond are the planes of good and evil, law and chaos. The white mists of the Astral Plane connect it all.

You can use the tools within this book to create your own cosmology. If you do so, you should inform your players that this is not a book-run cosmology. Then let them discover all the nuances of the planes for themselves. This adds to the excitement, mystery, and sense of wonder, and it reminds everyone at the table that not all the answers can be found in rulebooks.

INTRODUCING THE PLANES

This book contains a vast array of possibilities for an ongoing campaign. We highly recommend that you do not dump this entire body of information into your campaign at once. As your characters gradually grow in power, so too should they gradually become aware of the power of the planes and the challenges they pose.

Introducing the Planes: The best introduction to the planes for low-level characters is through creatures summoned by means of spells such as *summon monster I*. Here the characters first meet such creatures as the celestial eagle or the fiendish dire rat. Stress how these creatures seem nobler (for the celestial creatures) or more frightening (for the infernal ones) than the ones found in the natural world. At this point, all you have to do is hint at worlds beyond the one characters already know.

Meeting More Monsters: As the characters advance in levels, they start to encounter more monsters that call other planes home. They may battle salamanders from the Elemental Plane of Fire or demons from the Abyss. As they face and defeat these creatures, they learn that not all monsters of the other realms are scary versions of familiar creatures. Many have unique abilities that should keep the characters on their toes.

First Journeys: The characters' first expeditions to other planes may be with help from outside forces, or even involuntary (a trap set off, a doorway walked through). The players may find a portal leading into another plane or be sent on a mission by a wizard. They may stumble across the entrance to a tiny demiplane.

Regardless, the players may find themselves in another dimension and discover that traditional rules (such as gravity) no longer automatically apply. Some of the planes are not only hostile but downright deadly to the uninitiated. Be sure your players are up to the challenge not only of the planar creatures but also of the planar terrain itself. Within the Great Wheel of the D&D cosmology, the Outer Planes (homes to the deities) tend to be more hospitable than the Inner Planes (where elements exist in their raw, untamed forms).

During this middle period, the DM can control the level of access characters have to the planes by the number of portals available, the nature of the traps, and the whims

of the nonplayer character (NPC) wizard who sent them into the plane of Limbo.

Freedom to Travel: Eventually, however, the players gain magic items (such as a *cubic gate*) or spells (*ethereal jaunt* and *plane shift* at 5th level and *astral projection* at 9th) that allow planar travel. At this point, the characters have the freedom to move among the planes and the experience necessary to stand up to the hostile terrain and the potentially unfriendly inhabitants. Throwing them into an Outer Plane against their will no longer works. They just use magic to return. The characters need reasons to travel to the planes, and adventures that engage their interest and keep them there. The characters start setting their own planar agendas: treasure, glory, or just the thrill of exploration.

Finally, the characters may reach a point where they want to settle down in another plane, perhaps a demiplane of their own construction or a carved-out kingdom within an existing Outer Plane. The planes are wide enough and wild enough to cater to every style of adventuring. There is always room for more on the planes.

WHAT IS A PLANE?

The planes of existence are different realities with interwoven connections. Except for rare linking points, each plane is effectively its own universe with its own natural laws. The planes are home to more powerful variants of familiar creatures and unique monsters, all of which have adapted to their strange environments.

The planes break down into a number of general types: Material Planes, Transitive Planes, Inner Planes, Outer Planes, and demiplanes. These types aren't exclusive (you may find deities on the Transitive Planes, for example), but most planes fall neatly into one category.

Material Planes: These planes are the ones most familiar to characters and are usually the setting for a standard D&D campaign. The Material Planes tend to be the most earthlike and operate under the same set of natural laws. The D&D rules are designed with Material Planes in mind. Most campaign settings have only one Material Plane in a campaign setting, and the Material Plane is the "home base" for that campaign.

Transitive Planes: This mixed bag of planes are grouped together by a common use: getting from one place to another. The Astral Plane is used to reach other planes, while the Ethereal Plane and the Plane of Shadow are both used for transportation within the Material Plane they're connected to. These planes have the strongest regular interaction with the Material Plane and are often accessed by using various spells. They have native inhabitants as well.

Inner Planes: Also called planes of power, these realities are incarnations of the basic building blocks of the universe. They are made up of a single energy or element that overwhelms all others. The natives of Inner Planes are made of these elements as well.

The Inner Planes can be divided into two groups: elemental planes, which symbolize the physical properties