

Potential Pantheons

In Fantasy Adventure RPGs

These are just a few sets of divine beings I've used or found kind of interesting in D&D-esque fantasy RPGs.

Settings:

- [Dragonstar](#) - This was a third-party *D&D + space opera* setting published by Fantasy Flight Games for the D&D 3rd Edition. Probably my favorite iteration of this concept so far.
- [Owl Light](#) - This was my general purpose fantasy setting. Mostly centered in the empire formed when refugees from another plane of existence form a kingdom in a world that was decimated by a catastrophic war several hundred years in the past.
- [Winterwold](#) - This is a bleak, wild, and haunted vaguely-northern-european world, with a healthy fear of the strange and supernatural.

Dragonstar - Locals, Unification Church & Dualist Heresy

Dragonstar is not my own creation, but the idea of competing views of the divine order in a fantasy setting influenced my thoughts on future works.

In Dragonstar there are sort of three broadly categorized ways that "gods" are viewed:

Local Interpretation

This is generally construed to be at a planetary level, but realistically would be any isolated region or community within a planet.

This is simply view of god-like powers and cosmic forces in the universe which developed organically in a given location. Each area is likely to have its own set of deities based on culturally important things in the area.

This might be based on a complex mythology, a well thought out theology, or a hodgepodge of spiritual insights or physical concerns.

Unification Church

The main feature of this setting is that most dragons on every planet got together and formed an interstellar empire across the entire galaxy. The official religion of this empire, imposed on all client worlds, is the Unification Church. The Church has a canonical list of twelve deities, which are viewed as universal archetypes.

The Empire tends to intentionally syncretize or subsume local interpretations of divine beings into the Universal Church pantheon, construing them as just reflections of the official archetypes. Presumably many locals are less than pleased with this imposition.

The gods of the Universal Church are:

- **The Destroyer**
- **The Father**
- **The Judge**
- **The Lovers**
- **The Magus**
- **The Merchant**
- **The Mother**
- **The Reaper**
- **The Smith**
- **The Stormlord**
- **The Trickster**
- **The Warrior**

The Dualist Heresy

Not officially supported, some within the Empire eschew the official pantheon and subscribe to a dualist tradition. These believe in only two, more universal, deities:

- **The Creator**
- **The Adversary**

Owl Light - The One & the Ten Thousand Spirits

The world of Owl Light is cobbled together from regions snatched from many other worlds several hundred years ago during a catastrophic event. This led to war, strife, collapse, and isolation. In the current era of the setting, is shaped significantly by the arrival of refugee/colonists from another world, and trying to establish a more secure, organized civilization (The Dawn Kingdom) amid the ruins and fragmentary, pre-existing old populations.

The refugees who comprised the Dawn Kingdom arose from a monotheistic culture (believing in “The One”) and an extremely polytheistic culture (venerating one or more of the vaguely defined “Ten Thousand Spirits”), united in a political alliance for practical reasons. Some within the Kingdom hold one or the other belief system. Others have various rationalizations of how both The One and The Ten Thousand work together and compliment each other.

Communities existing before the Dawn Kingdom are likely to have whatever gods and spiritual practices existed on the world their ancient ancestors were ripped from. The Dawn Kingdom generally does not impose any specific religion on client states. However, most within the Dawn Kingdom would probably rationalize locally venerated deities as being reflections of either The One or The Ten Thousand.

Winterwold - Patrons & Spirits

[Note: Within the roleplaying system used for Winterwold, a “Patron” is the term for any external entity (gods, ascended saints, cosmic principles, etc.) which grants powers or fulfills requests for less powerful beings (e.g. humans, elves, etc.). Classes similar to clerics, warlocks, or druids, would all gain their abilities from a Patron.]

This is the spiritual cosmology I’ve put the most detail into.

There are a number of powerful beings commonly viewed as gods or deities within Winterwold. Syncretism is not uncommon, and cultures have found many ways to justify reverence, worship, or alliance with various combinations of mystical patrons.

The Forty Companions

These are beings more traditionally thought of as “gods”. They are powerful entities, generally with a grand anthropomorphized appearance, and each representing a particular concept, profession, or insight.

Although they may squabble among each other and sometimes work at crossed purposes, the term “Companions” arises from the sense that any true crisis brings them together so their strengths and aims compliment each other.

The exact nature of each Companion is a bit murky though, with different individuals receiving different names or attributes in various regions. The total of 40 may have some numerological significance, but is certainly used as a moderately large number intended to obscure the exact membership of the Companions.

The World Spirit

The idea of an overarching spirit representing the natural world, or the world in general, is fairly common. Depending on the community, this spirit may be associated with indifference, balance, wilderness and the impermanence of civilized institutions, fate, or the ever-changing quality of life.

Some seek wisdom in observing workings of the World Spirit. Others see this as a waste of effort.

The Transcendence

The Transcendence is construed variously as a being or mode of existence which goes beyond the world and mortal concerns, beyond what is understandable or knowable. Some see this as approachable through primal innocence, others through elaborate rules and ritual. In general it seems to uplift and better all things.

The Adversary

The Adversary goes by many names, all of them reviled. It is rarely worshiped, and is consistently viewed as the antithesis of the Transcendence. Often the Adversary is conflated with various evil beings which the Forty Companions are portrayed contending against.

The Fae Lords

These were powerful magical beings of old, who largely retreated into the Faerie Realms and became something more timeless. Their natures tend to be somewhat more odd, specific, or mercurial than accepted by mortal standards in the current era. Each may be an ally or enemy depending on the situation, their precise nature, and how they are approached.

The Lesser Powers

These are beings which are sometimes given worship or attention of their own, but more frequently considered merely as minor entities in association with the greater powers. Their numbers are innumerable vast, but a few broad categories frequently mentioned include:

The Spirits

These tend to be more specific or localized than other patrons. They may be the essences of specific creatures, places, ancestors, or objects. Some may be hostile, others innately friends or allies to the Four Folk (humanoids of the setting). Many are simply wild or indifferent, unless a mortal takes their fancy or crosses into their demesne.

When spoken of in aggregate, “The Spirits” are often conveys some idea of nature or collective wisdom and may sometimes be synonymous with The World Spirit.

Celestials

This broad category includes every type of angel, saint, Valkyrie, minor avatar, or exemplar associated with benevolent Greater Powers. Celestials are most frequently portrayed as working with The Forty Companions, The Transcendence, or, in some philosophies the World Spirit.

The Lesser Fae

This includes all manner of odd spirits and creatures of place, nature, season, and mood. They inhabit the Faerie Realms over the border of this world, but some spring up in abandoned areas, ruins, hedges, and corners of dimly lit rooms. These lesser fae include goblins, pixies, undines, dryads, satyrs, and a host of others.

The Lower Planes

While technically among the above mentioned “Lesser Powers”, philosophers and metaphysicians tend to class creatures associated with negative regions of the psyche as originating in the “Lower Planes” specifically. Devils, Demons, and Fiends are the primarily acknowledged lower planes entities. However, although these three groups of beings are strongly defined by their distinctly different motives, terms and descriptions of them are often mistakenly conflated and misused by common folk.

Abyssal Demons

These are beings each governed entirely by the urge to see some specific thing within existence destroyed. In many cases the evil of these hungers is particularly blatant, as in the desire for the ruin of mortal life and souls in particular, or perhaps the breaking of friendships specifically. In other cases the danger of a demonic compulsion is less obvious, as with demons hungering to destroy lies or end injustice. Some mortals even summon demons to assist in goals they're aligned with.

However, as with fiends, a demon will always take things too far: For example, a demon defined by hatred of murder will not be satisfied with having all perpetrators of unjustified homicide destroyed. It will turn against anyone who kills another even in self defense, and eventually need to get rid of all thinking creatures entirely, since they have the potential to one day murder. And, ultimately, all existence must be ended, so that creatures capable of murder can never arise.

The Adversary is sometimes said to be the "First among Demons". And certain spirits of wild and harmful nature are seen as demons as well, even if they lack the complete tenacity of hatred that true demons display.

Infernal Devils

These are beings which strive with all their capacity to achieve power for the sake of power and control over others. Their relationships are constrained by rigid systems of hierarchy, tyranny, deceit and scheming. And their deals tend to be magically binding and loaded with loopholes and consequences others do not expect. A devil can never be truly satisfied until all beings have fallen under their control, and all those under their control are cowed into complete helplessness, anguish, or despair by their circumstances.

The Adversary is sometimes said to be the "Chief among Devils". And certain devious fae are seen as having diabolical association as well.

Fiends of Depravity

A Fiend is defined by their overwhelming desire for a particular thing and their interest in cultivating similar desire in others. This desire can never be satiated no matter how much of the thing is present. Even if the object of their desires is generally considered a net positive or good thing, a Fiend will cultivate such an abundance of it, or go to such extreme lengths to get it, that it somehow turns out the worse for everyone involved.

Fiends occasionally spawn in the Ethereal plane near regions where covetousness and desire are prevalent. And under certain circumstances other beings can turn into fiends. Metaphysical researchers point out a strong similarity between Fiends and certain types of ghost or wight, and it seems certain demons or devils have grown a fixation strong enough to become a Fiend.

Fiends tend to migrate (or be banished) to Perdition (sometimes known as the Planes of Depravity). This is a region where all hungers are present in excess, and pleasures are granted in every manner, even beyond what is desired. Yet somehow even the constant churn of pleasures in Perdition can never satisfy, and many seek a means to explore their hungers in the wider universe once again.

The Others

This is simply a catch-all term for every manner of strange being which fits no other category. Some appear to be powerful alien concepts from beyond the walls of this world. The nature of others can not even be guessed.