



DRACONOMICON

by Nigel Findley, et al.

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Terminology

Several new terms are required before one can conveniently talk about dragons.

Throughout this book, the

word *dracoforms* is used to refer to dragons and their obvious kin. (Thus a wyvern is a dracoform, as is a gold dragon.) The word *draconic* is used as the adjective for matters relating to dragons (“things draconic”).

Draconic Origins

“. . . The World was still flat, here before the beginning of Time, before Asgorath the World-Shaper folded the cloth of existence into its final form. The World was flat, and above it hung the Crystal Sun that Zotha had wrought before Asgorath cast him down. Asgorath soared above the World and looked down upon it, and she saw that it was good.

“And so Asgorath bent her form around the Crystal Sun, and touched her breath to it. And the Crystal Sun burst into fragments that pierced the flesh of Asgorath, and her blood fell on the World. Where the drops fell, the Powers of the World and the Powers of the Crystal Sun came together, and the Spawn of Asgorath came forth upon the face of the World.

“Red, they were, red that would later depart from its purity. But here before the beginning of Time, their red was the pure red of the shattered Crystal Sun. They spread their wings and took to the skies, circling around the still, cold form of Asgorath. One after an-

other, score upon score, they bent their breath against the body of Asgorath, and the skies rang with their lamentations. Only one of the Spawn of Asgorath withheld his breath. Instead, he pulled a shard of the Crystal Sun from the flesh of Asgorath, and used it to draw blood from his own flesh, and this blood fell upon the face of the World.

“As before, there was movement where the blood fell, but the creatures that came forth from this blood were not of the pure red. Colored like the products of the World they were, like the unliving metals. And the Renegade raised his voice, and his voice was a trumpet: ‘I too have Created.’

“The form of Asgorath began to stir, as the Renegade knew it must. The Renegade spread his wings and flew, and the Spawn of the Renegade followed him into the farthest reaches of the world.”

—from the “Book of the World”

Excerpted from *The Origin Myths—A Treatise* by Dunkelzahn of Candlekeep, 1354 DR

Perhaps surprisingly, there are very few origin myths that relate directly to dragons. One of the few is a tome known as the *Book of the World*. Only one copy of this book has ever been found—and that in the land of Asram, about 100 years ago. The language of the book is Thorass—more correctly, an even more archaic form of Thorass than most samples of this language—but the script used is a simplified runic form. (No doubt the selection of runic script was necessitated by the construction of the book: it consists of 300 sheets of thin, flexible metal onto which the runes

have been scribed with great precision.) This combination of language and script explains the difficulties and delays involved in translating the tome.

From its content and the mythic forms used, it is obvious to scholars that the *Book of the World* is an example of holy literature—that is, it once was at the center of a body of religious beliefs. The nature of some of those beliefs can be inferred from the myths contained in the Book, but there is insufficient cultural context to confidently analyze the belief structure. (For example, it is not known whether the creation myths are symbolic or intended to be taken as absolute truth.)

The sheer volume of mythic material within the Book, and the relatively organized chronological and contextual structure used throughout, imply that it originated from a fairly sophisticated culture. This is paradoxical, since no cultures of sufficient sophistication apparently ever arose in Asram. The possibility cannot be overlooked that the Book was transported from elsewhere and abandoned in Asram, but that theory also has its problems. There is no modern culture that contains even the vaguest mythological or symbolic echoes of the Book’s content. Judging from the oxidation of the Book’s metal pages, the specimen under examination was probably no more than 500 years old. In that time, it seems unlikely that an entire religio-mythic tradition would vanish from Toril. But that seems to be the case here. (The wild speculations that the *Book of the World* did not arise in Toril at all are discounted by most reputable scholars.)

The Book provides a fascinating



origin myth relating to dragon-kind. From a close reading of the text, it becomes obvious that Asgorath the World-Shaper is a dragon. The implication—that a dragon created the universe, and that dragons were the first creatures to exist—is quite fascinating. A further point arises from the sentence that reads, “And so Asgorath bent her form around the Crystal Sun, and touched her breath to it.” In the original Thorass, the word “breath”—normally used as a singular or uncountable noun in this context—has been given a plural suffix (“breaths”). Is this meant to imply that Asgorath is a multi-headed dragon?

The text is clearer when it comes to the “Spawn of Asgorath.” There can be no doubt that these creatures are red dragons. The following sentences hint that this religion holds the red dragon as the most important species of dragon. All others would “later depart from . . . purity.”

When the Renegade (“bahmat” in the original Thorass) duplicates the actions of Asgorath, the dragons that arise are “not of the pure red,” but rather “colored . . . like the unliving metals.” The implication here is obvious: The Spawn of the Renegade are the metallic—and primarily good-aligned—dragons. What the *Book of the World* contains is not only an origin myth of dragons—which makes it important enough in its own right—but also one of the few surviving evil-oriented origin myths.

It is easy to speculate, based on this myth. The plural inflection of the word “breath” might be taken as implying multiple heads; the Thorass word for renegade is “bahmat.” It seems almost too

close a correlation—can Asgorath be Tiamat and the Renegade be Bahamat?

An interesting speculation has recently arisen. It has long been thought that the *Book of the World* represents a body of human, demi-human, or humanoid myth. Is this a short-sighted and humanocentric assumption? The key features of the origin myth—sacrifice, betrayal, and rebirth—are common to almost every humanoid ethos, but in all of those myth-bodies the central characters are anthropomorphic. In other words, humanoid myth-builders create gods in their own image. In the myth presented in the *Book of the World*, there is not a single humanoid character.

Might not the *Book of the World* present an origin myth that was originally developed by dragons—probably red dragons—their selves? At a later date, humanoids adopted the myth, and incorporated it into the Book—for the *Book of the World* is obviously a humanoid artifact.

Dragons have never been thought to be great mythographers. Does this statement tell us more about dragons or about the prejudices of researchers?

(The following is excerpted from an address to the Council of Sages by Kelmara of Arabel, 1346 DR)

Dragonkind represents some of the newest species on the face of Toril. My colleagues and I find the evidence incontrovertible: Dragons, as we know them now, arose no more than 10,000 years ago. (For comparison, our research indicates that humanity—the youngest of the humanoid races—

diverged from the great apes a little more than 17,000 years ago.) It is obvious, then, that the humanoid races once dwelt in a world without dragons as we know them.

How does that fit in with several ancient elvish myths—particularly the Parwiccan Cycle—that deal with “dragons” and “wyrms”? The key phrase is “dragons as we know them.” It is our contention that the creatures described in the Parwiccan Cycle are not true dragons, but dragon precursors. Our evidence indicates that these “pre-dragons” were considerably smaller than modern specimens, with little or none of the daunting array of powers shown by true dragons. In addition, it seems obvious that these creatures were not sentient; in fact, they probably had no more than animal intelligence, and hence the most borderline form of self-awareness. Thus, the “dragons” that figure so centrally in the Parwiccan Cycle are little more than large, winged lizards.

Although these pre-dragons were probably long-lived by human standards, we believe that their life spans were but a fraction of those of modern dragons. If their life span was even as short—relatively speaking—as 200 years, however, a question arises. Evolution proceeds at a rate directly proportional to the life span of the creature—or so our research indicates. How could the pre-dragons evolve into true dragons so rapidly? A climatic or other environmental upheaval of unparalleled



violence would be required.

The Parwiccan Cycle comes to the rescue again, with its talk, variously, of the “month of mist,” the

“seven-turn winter,” and “Tearfall.” It seems clear to us that Toril was struck by one of the large rocks that comprise the Tears of Selune, upsetting the world’s climatic balance. Such a global catastrophe could easily cause the extinction of some species, and the rapid evolution of others.

In response to the environmental upheaval, the pre-dragons quickly evolved into the multiple dragon species known today.

(The following is excerpted from a rebuttal by Verilux to the address by Kelmara of Arabel, 1346 DR)

Kelmara speaks with great assurance about the link between life span and evolution rate. Even if one were to accept fully the evolutionary theory—and I do not—it should be obvious to even the most addle-pated student that life span would have very little relation to evolutionary rate. More important by far would be the length of a generation, which I define as the duration separating a single creature’s sexual maturity and the sexual maturity of that individual’s first offspring. Depending on the species involved, dragons reach sexual maturity not much later than do humans. Thus a dragon generation is little longer than a human generation.

As to my learned colleague’s

speculations concerning a global upheaval, we all know well her liking for apocalyptic philosophies. And depending on the Parwiccan Cycle for substantiation is like walking on thin ice—your support may at any moment vanish from beneath you.

Take, for example, the phrases quoted by my learned colleague. A “seven-turn winter” certainly seems to be evidence of climatic upheaval; seven years of winter would, anyone must agree, be a catastrophe. But a little research undermines the certainty of this conclusion. At the time and in the language in which the Parwiccan Cycle was written, “turn” was used in varying ways by various groups. In some writings, “turn” refers to a circuit of Toril around its primary—a year. In others, however, “turn” refers to a circuit of Selune around Toril—a month. Still others use “turn” to refer to a single rotation of Toril around its own axis—a day. While a seven-month winter might be inconvenient, it could hardly be classed as a catastrophe.

“Tearfall” is a strong, emotive image, and I wish to congratulate my colleague on its selection. Watching your faces as she spoke, members of the Council, I saw the profound effect it had on you. How much would that effect be lessened should I tell you that the original word—*ileleste*—could also be translated as “falling rain”?

Nay, I fear my colleague has failed to convince me of her position. It seems obvious to me that dragons did not evolve on Toril as Kelmara wishes us to believe. They may, perhaps, have arisen from baser creatures, but this transcendence was not under the blind drivings of natural selection.

Their ascent was guided by powers beyond our ken. As evidence of this, take the fact that, in every world and in every sphere, and on every alternate plane we have yet explored, there are dragons. And these dragons differ not one whit from those native to Toril. Dragons are beyond the reach of our biology, I fear—even beyond such far-flung and ill-supported theorizing as that characterized by my worthy colleague.

(Kelmara’s response to Verilux’s rebuttal, in its entirety, 1346 DR)

Collops!

(The following is excerpted from An Ecology of the Planes by Garth of Suzail, 1354 DR)

The “diffusion theory” has often been invoked by philosophers to explain why creatures on planes totally removed from each other should be biologically indistinguishable. The most commonly held version of the theory asserts that each creature arose—whether this be by evolution or no—on a single world. Then individual creatures somehow were removed from their home plane and transferred to others, where they thrived. The necessary removal is speculated to occur by various means: spontaneously-opening gates (or “fistulae,” to use the term commonly in vogue), purposeful attempts at “cross-pollination” performed by plane-traveling sentients, accidental transfers (as when a pack animal or a pet escapes on an alien plane), or even divine intervention.

(There is a more extreme version of the diffusion theory that will be



discussed in more depth later in this text. It holds that one single plane is the source of all life, and that creatures diffused throughout the multiverse from this source.) At first glance, it would seem that the diffusion theory can be proved or disproved by close examination of the fossil records of several planes, searching for traces of a certain species. If evidence for the evolution of that creature occurs on one plane but not on others, then surely the diffusion theory would be proven. Unfortunately, however, there is not one explored plane where the fossil record is anywhere near complete. There are puzzling gaps, anomalies, and even apparent reversals of causal events, which make us question how much we will ever be able to learn categorically from fossils.

And here the conversation must turn to dragons, for in these species the diffusion theory seems to be the only suitable explanation for their wide-spread existence. Dragons are the only creatures for which there exist archetypal forms. In dragonkind, these forms are Bahamut, the Platinum Dragon, and Tiamat, the Chromatic Dragon. All of the “core” species of dragonkind—the good-aligned metallic dragons and the evil-aligned chromatic dragons (ignoring for a moment those fringe species like crystal dragons) seem to be pale reflections of their archetypal forms, displaying some but not all of that archetype’s characteristics. For example, a red dragon possesses some but not all of the characteristics attributed to Tiamat, while a gold dragon possesses some but not all of the characteristics attributed to Bahamut. Indulging in mathematical language for a moment, each species

of dragon seems to be a subset of properties belonging to one or other of the archetypes. Or, conversely, each archetype seems to possess a superset of the properties possessed by the appropriate class of dragonkind.

Some sages truly believe this observation to be representative of the truth of the matter. According to this theory, the very existence of the two archetypal forms—Bahamut and Tiamat—is responsible for the existence of dragons throughout the multiverse. In metaphorical language, dragons are the shadows that the archetypes cast across the planes. As shadows are, in a sense, subsets of the creatures casting them—as they must be, since shadows are two-dimensional—so are the “shadows” of the dragon archetypes subsets of those archetypes’ characteristics and powers. (The shadow analogy is actually quite an elegant one. At your leisure, examine the shadow cast by a simple object such as a cube. Depending on the viewer’s orientation to the cube and to the surface on which the shadow is cast, the shadow can take the form of a square, a rectangle, a parallelogram, or more complex polygons. This simple experiment shows how different shadows of the same source can be as different as a green and a red dragon.)

Is it any wonder that many dragons worship the archetypal forms? If this theory of shadows is true, then the archetypes truly are the creators of dragonkind, although the sense of creation is diluted in this case, since it seems to lack the aspect of an act of will.

What are the consequences if this theory turns out to be correct? One possibility arises from a consideration of the analogy used ear-

lier.

Eliminating a shadow—as by shining a light on it—has no effect on the creature casting the shadow. But what is the effect on shadows when the creature casting them is removed from the scene?

(The following is excerpted from Evolution and Creation by Terrance Balancehand of Scornubel, 1356 DR)

The case of dragons has been used as a major supporting point for both sides of the ongoing “creation versus evolution” argument.

The creationist argument wonders how evolution can explain the occurrence of dragons on virtually every known plane, and in virtually every crystal sphere of the universe. The fact that dragons—almost indistinguishable, biologically, from one another—can be found in Realspace, Greyspace, and other spheres *ad infinitum* is only explicable if one accepts that some Unitary Principle (i.e., god or association of gods) created them, simultaneously, throughout the universe. The problems with this position are that there is strong fossil evidence in several spheres for an evolutionary process, plus an undeniable evolutionary tree that explains how various dracoforms diverged from one another.

The evolutionary point of view plays heavily on the biological evidence for the kinship of dragons and dracoforms such as wyverns and drakes, and repeatedly touts



the fossil record that shows “dragon precursors” in various locales. Why would a Unitary Principle actively attempt to de-

clude its “children” by planting such evidence? The problem with this position is that evolutionists are at a loss to explain how dragons that evolved in Realmspace and Greyspace—two significantly different ecosystems—have evolved so convergently that it is impossible by any means (short of asking dragons) to determine their sphere of origin.

And so it is from these contradictory positions that I select dragon-kind as the ultimate support for my thesis.

Evolution and creation are not contradictory and mutually exclusive, as most sages would have you believe. The two are intimately and elegantly linked, two sides—as it were—of the same coin. I believe it is impossible to deny that dragons evolved to their present state in the Forgotten Realms. It is also impossible to deny that the same thing occurred in the world of Greyhawk, and in the many other spheres that have been visited by spelljamming vessels. How, then, can this quandary be solved?

The problem lies in the tendency to view creation as a single act in which a Creator says, “Let there be dragons,” and there were dragons. Such a kind of special creation seems somewhat arbitrary, and far from subtle (and I will admit that I view subtlety as one of the greatest attributes of divinity

in this or any world). How much more elegant for the creator(s) to set up initial conditions whereby the evolution of those very same dragons is inevitable according to the laws of nature, magic and, science? Some readers may be familiar with the game of “pockets,” which reputedly was widely played in the ancient land of Mulhorand. The purpose of the game is to strike a single “key” ball with a stick, in a very precise way, so that it contacts other balls on a table, and causes those balls to fall into holes or pockets positioned around the table. When one views the end result of the game—all balls but the key safely residing in the pockets—the most simple conclusion to draw about how they ended up there is that someone picked up the balls and placed them in the pockets. (This equates, in my mind, to the “special creation” theory.) It is certainly a simple way of reaching the end result. But how much more elegant it would be if—instead of placing the balls individually and somewhat arbitrarily in their eventual pocket homes—the same result were reached with a single striking of the key ball? Theoretically, a powerful and precise enough stroke of the key ball would cause all other balls to end up in pockets, creating a complex and artistically pleasing dynamic pattern as they did so.

Once the key ball is struck, all other motions of the balls are according to the laws of motion known to sages and mathematicians. If one did not actually witness the original striking of the key ball, one could come to believe that the eventual outcome was a result of those laws only, and not involving any act of volition at all.

This is how I view the creation versus evolution controversy. The worlds we live in arose from the act of will of a Unitary Principle. But after that initial act of will, all other developments were according to the laws of the world. Dragons—and elves and humans and orcs and the rest—did evolve, but only because the Unitary Principle created the initial conditions so it was inevitable that they evolve.

This explains how dragons—and other species too, of course—could have arisen in so many different places in the universe. The Unitary Principle—through the original, one-time act of creation—so designed the initial conditions in each of those diverse regions that dragons could not avoid evolving.

Creation and evolution are then, it becomes obvious, not contradictory theses, but merely different stages within the process that is the development of the universe.

(The following is excerpted from an inebriated tirade by Corkitron Allinamuck, member of Halflings Inc., of no fixed address, 1357 DR)

There’s always been dragons, and there’s always going to be dragons, that’s what I think. You want to know any more, why don’t you ask the darned dragons?

Evolution

The following theories related to the evolution and interrelationship of dracoforms are drawn from the writings of a group of sages known only as the “Club of Candlekeep.” These sages, although members of the Order of Candlekeep, are more interested