

## The Universe as divine sanctuary

The Universe was conceived as an organized structure housing the gods and everything they created, reflecting a multi-faceted, complex creative process.

### Nun, “father of the gods”

Nun existed before the world was created. It was a body of water that contained divine entities whose potential had not yet been realized. There was darkness, inertia, and chaos. Egyptian creation tales describe the transition from a formless state to a structured one, thanks the appearance of a solid area on the surface of Nun. This phenomenon triggered a dynamic that culminated in the construction of the Universe by one or several deities, at which point the primordial waters receded to the edge of perceptible reality. These waters continued to surround the created world, threatening to overwhelm it and return it to an inert state. The material and immaterial structure of the Universe thus served as a rampart to prevent this apocalyptic cataclysm.

### A division of worlds

The few surviving Egyptian depictions of the Universe divide it into realms that more or less correspond to the nature of their inhabitants: the earth for living beings; the heavens for divine beings; and Duat, the Beyond, for deceased gods and humans. These realms were structurally interdependent, linked by passageways described as gates whether or not they could be crossed. Gods, kings and men worked jointly to insure the perpetuity of these realms, of everything found in them, and of the dynamics uniting them. Egyptian imagery thus functioned as one vector of the necessary and sufficient task of perpetuating the Universe.



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