



The Elements

Greetings, fellow seekers of knowledge! The Librarian has commissioned me, the redoubtable sage and explorer Adolphus Quint, to provide here for you a brief primer into the elements which do affect us all so strongly in these times, and to hopefully answer some questions for you!

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Adolphus Quint



Allow us this discourse – informal, as friends and fellow seekers after truth. I will speak to you of the six elements which make up the world, the effects they have on each of us and the Affinities we hold towards them and share with each other, and hope that you leave here enlightened and informed!

What is an Affinity?

Ah! A question long debated by finer minds than mine! Indeed, this is one of those pressing unknowns which has inspired Humankind since we first learned to reason and gather together in bands to survive.

As may be expected, there is no definitive answer to this, although some truths are known and accepted by all, be they the rudest farmer or loftiest scholar. The first of these is this: There are six elements in total – Wood, Earth, Fire, Shadow, Air and Water. Each element exists in opposition and balance to another, and in harmony with the rest. It is this balance which drives the wheel of creation and destruction, life and death.

The second truth is this – that all things have an Affinity for one element. That is to say, that while all elements are in balance in all things generally speaking, each person has a particular link to one element over the others. This element itself has certain connotations and resonances with other things – personality traits; other things in creation; attitudes and opinions; and the like. By understanding these resonances, certain assumptions can be made





about people when you know their Affinity. Likewise, a person's Affinity can frequently be guessed by observing their behaviour.

The third truth is this – as all elements are in balance, so too can all Affinities be found in balance. No one element has significantly more or less people aligned to it than any other, and consequently even those poor folk who have been Shifted represent a reasonably equal percentage of each race.

The fourth truth, and one of the most important, is this – no one person can choose their Affinity. It is prescribed at birth by laws set down in time immemorial, and always have been so. It is a hard thing to hold a person's Affinity against them, and while some Affinities may lend themselves to, perhaps, undesirable personality traits, it is still something that must be seen with understanding. It is for this reason that those aligned to Shadow are tolerated and permitted in wider society, despite the connotations of their Affinity.

Even the Gods themselves do not escape this affiliation. Each of the Gods – both the Five Gods of Enlightenment and the dreaded Thalae – are aligned with one element, which they both have dominion over yet also has dominion over them. It is to the Gods one may look for the paragon example of how a member of that Affinity may act.



Wood

Wood is the element of life and the natural order. It is no surprise, then, that those with an Affinity for Wood often find themselves acting as healers in one form or another – priests, surgeons, and veterinarians. Their feelings towards the natural order also lends themselves to being woodsmen, trappers and animal trainers.

While most Wood-aligned folk do find themselves generally compassionate folk, they are not known for their garrulousness or fondness for social niceties – generally, they are bluff folk and frequently blunt to the point of rudeness. They also have, in my humble opinion, a somewhat unsophisticated sense of humour and an over-fondness for intoxication. That said, some of the finest brewers are Wood people, and the Hartwood Springs Meadery is truly a wonder of modern brewing innovation.

One thing that should be noted, as a trait pretty much constant across all Wood-Affinity people, different though they may be in all other matters, and that is a deep and abiding hatred for undead. Wood, as the element of life and the natural order views such things as unnatural perversions, and even the most





pacific Wood person will act in some way against it. It is probably no surprise, therefore, that the opposed element to Wood is Shadow, with all the sorrows that entails.

regardless of whether that is in fact the case – an attitude which is not always welcomed by the ones they seek to “defend”!

Those aligned to Earth generally prefer to work with their hands, and prefer what they term as “good, honest labour” over more cerebral pursuits. It is no surprise, therefore, that a goodly percentage of farmers and craftsmen share this Affinity. Earth is opposed to Air, which may also explain a disdain for scholarly pursuits, what with those aligned to Air often being more intellectual and intelligent than those content to work the fields.



Earth

Earth is the element of solidity and defence. Despite everything thrown at it, Earth endures. These traits are frequently reflected in those who have an Affinity with Earth. In my experience, they are patient and dedicated, prepared to take their time with any task and work on it until it is completed to perfection. Generally, those aligned to Earth weigh up all aspects of an argument before making a decision, which can make them seem slow and indecisive to others with a hotter temperament.

Another strand of personality which is generally found, in one degree or another, in those aligned to Earth is a strong sense of justice. More often than not, Earth-folk are protective of those who they perceive as weaker or needing of such protection,



Fire

Throughout our history, Fire has held many roles – as a saviour from the darkness and cold of ancestral times; as a force of creation and purity; as a drive towards creativity; and as a force of destruction. Even this last aspect, however, is seen generally in a positive light, for it is destruction with a purpose, to clear





away the old so that the new may flourish.

With affiliations so mercurial and varied, it is no surprise, then, that those with an Affinity to Fire are some of the most varied and interesting people in Corvantin. Fire is an inspiring force, and while those under this element may lack the dedication to follow their ideas possessed by those aligned to Air, they are still wellsprings of creativity and innovation.

Most Fire-aligned people are also highly social, preferring the company of others and even managing to raise a smile from the doughty Wood folk and the stoic Earth folk. They are true social chameleons, able to be all things to all people – for the duration of a conversation at least.

Opposed to Fire is the element of Water – stasis and entropy to their quicksilver innovation, deep and genuine empathy to their flickering personalities. Unlike many of the other oppositions, however, those with an Affinity to Fire will still generally make an effort to become friends with those with an Affinity to Water – this is not always reciprocated.



Shadow

Of all the elements, Shadow is the one with – fittingly – the darkest reputation and the most ominous connotations. This is, in no small part, due to the actions of the Goddess aligned to Shadow, Thalae, and those who wreak havoc and sorrow in her name. Shadow is the element of darkness, death, despair, and other negative things doubtless beginning with “D”.

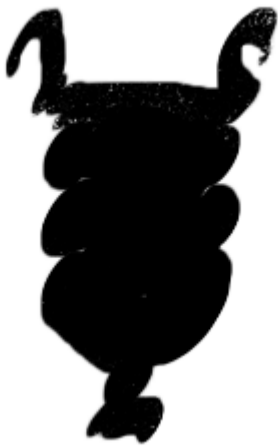
That is not to say that everyone with an Affinity to Shadow is some humourless, malevolent ghoul obsessed with death and decay – far from it! While there will also be a certain part of that in Shadow-aligned individuals, it can just as easily manifest in a wicked and dark sense of humour, a drive to dig into lost and murky secrets, or a genuine fascination with death in its forms. Despite the opposition of Shadow to the life-ascpected Wood element, many great leaps and bounds in the fields of medicine have been due to the post-mortem dissections of Shadow-Affinity surgeons; and for investigations into murders and mystery there are few finer.





Mister Colin Shackelford, noted Philanthropist and lover of Arts, has formed the Nice and Elucidated Committee for the Rehabilitation of Opinion of the Shadowed. (N.E.C.R.O.S.)

This image was produced shortly before the unfortunate incident.



Air

Those with an Affinity to Air are marked by a keen wit and insight, a mind tuned for learning and scholarly insight, and a predilection for intellectual advancement. While Earth make the best craftsmen, and Fire make the best artists, it is Air which drives the finest

scientists, historians and mages. A passion for secrets, a rapier-like sense of humour, and a flair for words are also frequently found characteristics of those with an Affinity to this element.

Given the soaring heights of understanding and insight which an Air-aligned person can reach, it is hardly surprising that the oppositional element is the slow and dusty Earth. While it cannot be denied that those who have an Affinity to Earth have their place, and it is readily accepted that they provide a solid bedrock, their inability to see indefinable futures and divine comprehension from the strands of fate mean that they are a foundation but unlikely to be anything more.





Water

Water is a curious element, all things told, sharing some aspects with a number of other elements. In common with Shadow is the entropy and dissolution that Water inevitably brings to all things, wearing down even stone in time. In common with Wood is a certain affinity for living things and even healing, although this manifests more as an empathy for people and their emotions, their mental states and troubles. However, whereas Wood-folk tend to feel a need to heal these wounds, Water have no such compunctions, and indeed tend to be highly skilled manipulators.

Another aspect which lends itself to Water – which is surprising, given the fluid and changing nature of actual water – is that of stasis, of things remaining the same. It is no surprise that many staunch conservatives and monarchists share an Affinity for Water, as do many revisionist historians desperate to preserve the status quo.

Those with an Affinity to Water do have a tendency towards manipulation, no matter how minor, and a certain need to remain in control of things. They make good leaders

and foremen, although they are not generally renowned for their ability to react rapidly in times of sudden change. This somewhat-rigid thinking is one of the ways their opposition to Fire can manifest, and it is no surprise that many Water-aligned folk become frustrated with the mercurial nature of their Fire-aligned comrades.

In Conclusion:

Well, brave and noble traveller, I hope that this humble document has opened your eyes to some of the truths which may well be obfuscated or misunderstood by the layman. It is clear that our Affinity has a great influence on our bearing, demeanour and personality, but I hasten to add that this is not the only factor which forges us, nor is it set in stone – merely a general guideline to enable you to identify features and traits within ourselves and our colleagues.

Aldolphus Quint, Purple Sage of Arador.