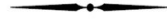


## HOLISTIC TAROT SUPPLEMENT

This text is offered as a supplement to *Holistic Tarot: An Integrative Approach to Using Tarot for Personal Growth* (North Atlantic Books, 2015) by Benebell Wen.



### Elemental Dignities and Affinities

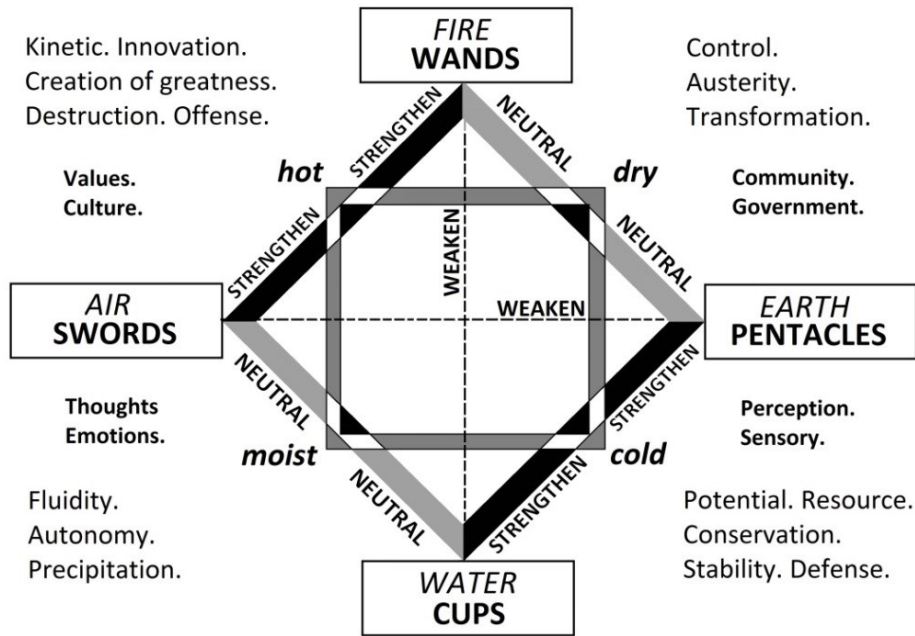
To understand elemental dignities is to understand the metaphysical chemistry of tarot. Each card is made up of a unique composition of properties and is activated when drawn into a tarot reading. Upright and surrounded by empowering elements, the activation is dignified. Reversed or surrounded by attenuating elements, the activation becomes ill-dignified, which does not necessarily mean negative. The study of elemental dignities is the study of how the fundamental element in one card interacts with the elements of other cards

**Dignity** as used in this context is defined as external manifestation of the card's innate properties. It is the state of being activated with the full potential of its essence.

An **Elemental Dignity** describes that state with more specificity—it is the external manifestation of a tarot card's innate elemental essence, given that each card is governed innately by one of the four elements, Fire, Water, Air, or Earth, and thus has the potential of fully embodying the traits associated with that element. (Note however that the card's energies would further be modified by the numerological correspondence and other factors.)

When a card from the suit of Wands is said to be **dignified**, it means it is fully charged and activated with the energies of its corresponding element. A dignified Ace of Wands is the Ace of Wands appearing upright in a tarot spread during a reading (as opposed to its non-activated state in the deck on a table, not in use). When the Ace of Wands appears upright in a tarot reading, it is charged and activated with all the corresponding energies and traits we associate with the Ace of Wands. Thus, its elemental energy of Fire is dignified.

If, say, that Ace of Wands appears in reverse in a tarot spread during a reading (assuming reversals are read), then the reversal itself has changed the energies of that card in some way. The energy of the reversal is interacting in a particular way with the general elemental energy of the Ace of Wands. That reversal is said to (1) weaken the essential state of the Ace of Wands, (2) invert the essential state, (3) negate the essential state, or (4) delay the manifestation of the essential state (the WIND mnemonic from Chapter 15, p. 429). Which of the four possibilities applies will of course depend on the reading itself, on a case by case basis. As a result of that adjustment, the elemental energy of the card, its Fire energy, is now said to be **ill-dignified**.

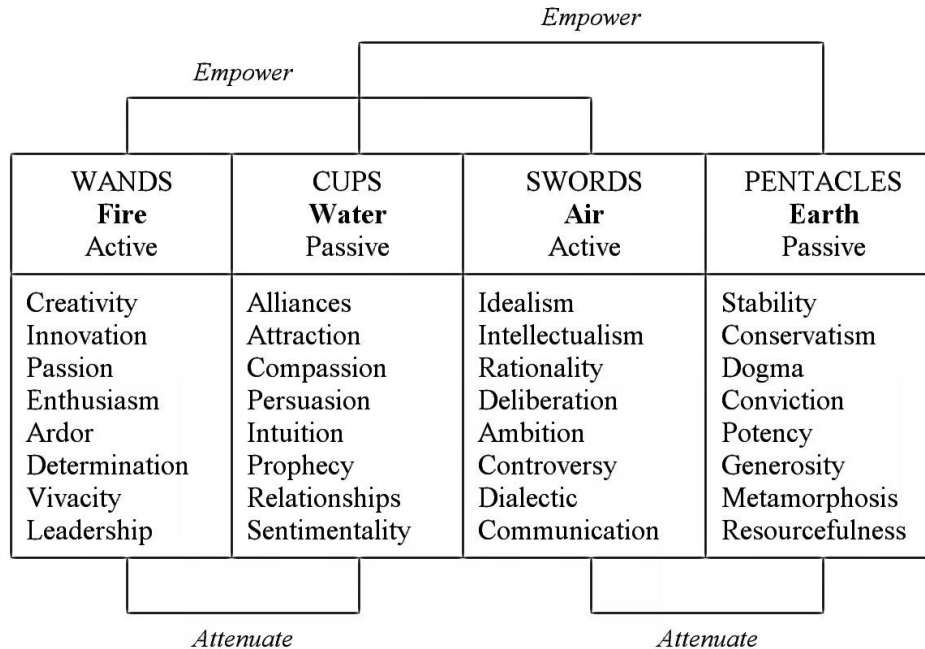


*Elemental Dignities Diagram, from Chapter 15, p. 445.*

In the Minor Arcana, the suit of Wands is governed by Fire; Cups by Water; Swords by Air; and Pentacles by Earth. In the above diagram, the elements “facing off” (e.g., Swords vs. Pentacles, Wands vs. Cups) tend to weaken one another’s dignities when they appear in juxtaposition in a reading. The solid black diagonal bars illustrated in the diagram connecting Wands to Swords and Cups to Pentacles indicate elements that strengthen one another’s dignities when they appear in juxtaposition.

Innate Dignity <i>(reading with card reversals)</i>	UPRIGHT CARD	REVERSED CARD
	Element is <b>Dignified</b> .	Element is <b>Ill-Dignified</b> .

Interactive Dignity <i>(“Elemental Dignities”)</i>	WATER <i>Cups</i>	EARTH <i>Pentacles</i>	FIRE <i>Wands</i>	AIR <i>Swords</i>
	Elements are <b>Dignified</b> . <i>Energies amplified &amp; strengthened.</i>		Elements are <b>Dignified</b> . <i>Energies amplified &amp; strengthened.</i>	
	EARTH <i>Pentacles</i>	FIRE <i>Wands</i>	AIR <i>Swords</i>	WATER <i>Cups</i>
	Elements are <b>Neutral</b> .		Elements are <b>Neutral</b> .	
	FIRE <i>Wands</i>	WATER <i>Cups</i>	AIR <i>Swords</i>	EARTH <i>Pentacles</i>
Elements are <b>Ill-Dignified</b> . <i>Energies weakened in conflict.</i>		Elements are <b>Ill-Dignified</b> . <i>Energies weakened in conflict.</i>		



The preceding diagram offers some general insights on the energies that manifest when two elements combine. When Swords and Cups meet in co-dominance, for example, the Seeker may be a free-thinking, free-spirited, progressive individual, likely a poet, writer, or philosopher. When Wands and Pentacles meet, there is thriving activity in the community, government, institutional work.

Analyzing elemental dignities in a tarot reading means that the practitioner will compare the elemental essences of two juxtaposed cards in a spread to determine whether, together, the cards provide a dignified or ill-dignified energy. Dignified energy means the two cards, due to their interaction, strengthen one another's essences. Ill-dignified energy means the two cards, due to their interaction, weaken one another's essences or modify the way that essence manifests in that particular Seeker's situation.

## Exercises from the Intermediate Study Guide: Dignities

1. Seeker wants to know what her romantic prospects are for the year. *Two-Card Reading*: Two of Wands and King of Cups.

### Author's Approach:

The Two of Wands corresponds with Fire and the King of Cups to Water. Fire and Water tend to conflict and thus weaken one another's dignities. However, here the King lords over the Two, and so the King of Cups is dominant. The emotional plane wins out over the physical plane. Her romantic prospects are good.

2. Seeker wants to know whether to change careers. *Two-Card Reading*: Three of Cups and Ace of Swords

**Author's Approach:**

The Three of Cups corresponds with Water and the Ace of Swords to Air. Water and Air have a neutral effect on each other. Thus, we read the cards outside the framework of elemental dignities. The Ace is auspicious for a career change and new beginnings; the numerological attribution of three suggests manifestation and fruition.

3. Seeker wants to know whether to change careers. *Two-Card Reading*: Key 17: The Star and Queen of Pentacles

**Author's Approach:**

Key 17: The Star corresponds with Air and the Queen of Pentacles to Earth. Air and Earth attenuate one another and thus result in a weakening effect. On one hand, the Seeker is optimistic, hopeful, but maybe even a bit wishful, whereas the Queen represents stability and security. Changing careers now could result in some instability with the Seeker's financial situation, due to The Star and Pentacles juxtaposition. However, overall, the cards are positive for change. Also, at this point the author would also note the Seeker's date of birth and whether the Seeker's innate element is compatible to the Queen. If the Seeker is an Earth, Water, or Fire sign, then the change could be very good. For an Air sign, issues of stability will definitely be in question.

4. Seeker wants to know whether to change careers. *Three-Card Reading*: Key 3: The Empress, Ace of Cups, and Ten of Pentacles

**Author's Approach:**

Key 3: The Empress corresponds with Earth, the Ace of Cups to Water, and the Ten of Pentacles to Earth. Earth and Water dignify each other and thus strengthen and amplify. This reading is a very positive omen for a career change with very little reservation.

5. Seeker wants to know what her romantic prospects are for the year. *Three-Card Reading*: Key 15: The Devil, Four of Swords, and Nine of Swords

**Author's Approach:**

Key 15: The Devil corresponds with Earth, the Four of Swords to Air, and the Nine of Swords to Air. Earth and Air attenuate, and thus weaken each other. There may be tempting prospects, but overall, heartbreak and disappointments are more likely. Romantic prospects for the year are not good. Seeker is encouraged to take the time to focus on personal development and other areas of her life.

6. Seeker wants to know whether to change careers. *Celtic Cross Reading*: Key 20: Judgement and Key 0: The Fool are the only Majors; in Minors, there are 4 Wands, 3 Cups, 1 Swords, and 0 Pentacles

**Author's Approach:**

Note that the author's personal approach is to assign Water to Key 20: Judgement, but another and perhaps more prevailing approach is to assign Fire. If the author had pulled these cards with her deck, which would have Key 20 programmed to Water, then the effect of Water on Air (Key 0: The Fool) would be neutral. If, however, the prevailing approach is followed, then Key 20 and Key 0 strengthen one another because Fire dignifies Air and vice versa. With the suit of Wands dominating among the Minors, per the prevailing approach, a career change is very promising, because career relates to Fire. Even using the author's approach of Water for Key 20, the reading is promising for a career change, with the main difference being a stronger undertone of emotional fulfillment, from the stronger presence of Water energy.

7. Seeker wants to know what her romantic prospects are for the year. *Celtic Cross Reading*: Key 7: The Chariot, Key 16: The Tower, and Key 18: The Moon are the Majors; in Minors, there are 2 Wands, 3 Cups, 1 Swords, and 1 Pentacles



**Author's Approach:**

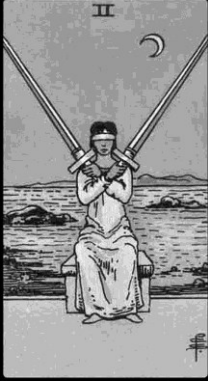

Key 7: The Chariot corresponds with Water, Key 16: The Tower to Fire, and Key 18: The Moon to Water. Water and Fire attenuate each other and thus there is a conflict. Note that among the Minors, Cups or Water energy dominates, but with Fire energy coming in at a close second, the tension is still compelling. Of course the interpretation of the reading will hinge on what the Minor Arcana cards are, which are not given in the exercise, but examining the elemental dignities only, relationships may be entered into hastily and just as quickly end. It will perhaps be a better use of the Seeker's time to focus inward.





## Elemental Dignities and Card Reversals

When a card appears in reverse, its energy is modified by the reversal. In other words, the dignity of its element is changed and becomes ill-dignified. Now a reversed card, now ill-dignified, interacts with the elemental dignities of the other cards in a spread is referred to as **interactive dignity**. The following exercises help to illustrate interactive dignity analysis.

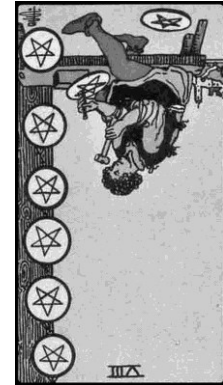
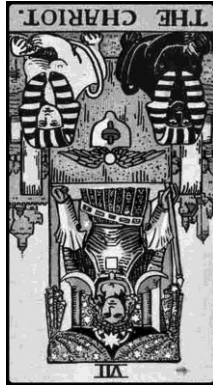
<p align="center"><b>Exercise 1:</b> Two-Card Reading</p>		
<p><i>Card Description</i></p>	<p align="center">The Lovers</p>	<p align="center">Nine of Pentacles</p>
<p><i>Elemental Essence</i></p>	<p align="center">Air</p>	<p align="center">Earth</p>
<p><i>Innate Dignity</i></p>	<p align="center">Dignified</p>	<p align="center">Dignified</p>
<p><i>Interactive Dignity</i></p>	<p align="center">Ill-Dignified</p>	
<p><i>Elemental Dignities Analysis</i></p>	<p>When Air and Earth face off, they tend to weaken one another and thus the manifestation of the cards in a tarot reading will be ill-dignified, or changed. Here, the interpreted meaning of The Lovers card is going to be attenuated by the meaning of the 9 of Pentacles. However, note that the Air card is a Major while the Earth is a Minor. Majors tend to vibrate with stronger external forces than Minors, so in this case, what The Lovers card bodes will likely prevail over the challenge of the 9 of Pentacles.</p>	

<p align="center"><b>Exercise 2:</b> Two-Card Reading</p>		
<p><i>Card Description</i></p>	<p align="center">Two of Swords</p>	<p align="center">Nine of Wands</p>
<p><i>Elemental Essence</i></p>	<p align="center">Air</p>	<p align="center">Fire</p>
<p><i>Innate Dignity</i></p>	<p align="center">Dignified</p>	<p align="center">Dignified</p>
<p><i>Interactive Dignity</i></p>	<p align="center">Dignified</p>	
<p><i>Elemental Dignities Analysis</i></p>	<p>When Air and Fire meet, they empower one another and push higher the manifestation of one another's elemental essence. In</p>	

this particular example, however, both cards tend to be more defensive. The Two of Swords indicates an intellectual choice, the weighing between two equal burdens in the Seeker's thought plane. The Nine of Wands suggests resistance, feeling overprotective of one's territory, yet lacking the motivation to expand further beyond one's present territory. The elemental dignities here suggest a Seeker heavily weighed down by inertia. Thus, in this particular example, while the elemental essences of the two cards dignify one another, that dignity results in further aggravation and aggression in the matter at hand.


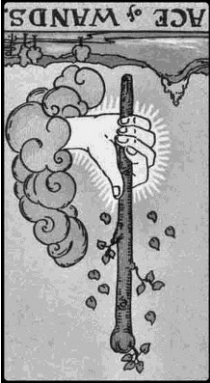

<p align="center"><b>Exercise 3:</b> Two Card Reading</p>		
<p><i>Card Description</i></p>	<p align="center">The Emperor</p>	<p align="center">The Empress, Reversed</p>
<p><i>Elemental Essence</i></p>	<p align="center">Fire</p>	<p align="center">Earth</p>
<p><i>Innate Dignity</i></p>	<p align="center">Dignified</p>	<p align="center">Ill-Dignified</p>
<p><i>Interactive Dignity</i></p>	<p align="center">Neutral Effect</p>	
<p><i>Elemental Dignities Analysis</i></p>	<p>When Fire and Earth meet, there is a neutral harmony. They neither strengthen nor weaken one another. They simply coexist. Here, The Emperor, the Fire energy, is dignified because he appears upright, while The Empress, the Earth energy, is ill-dignified because she appears in reverse. The reversal weakens the Earth energy somewhat, and so even though generally Fire and Earth are neutral, here in this specific example, the interpretive value of The Emperor will prevail over the interpretive value of The Empress, reversed, since her energy is going to be weakened, inverted, negated, or delayed by other forces, perhaps even by The Emperor himself. While the interactive dignity of the two cards is neutral, the meaning of The Emperor card as applied to the Seeker's inquiry will manifest itself more prominently in the Seeker's life than the meaning of The Empress card.</p>	

**Exercise 3:**  
Three-Card Reading



<i>Card Description</i>	The Chariot, Reversed	The Hierophant	Eight of Pentacles, Reversed
<i>Elemental Essence</i>	Water	Earth	Earth
<i>Innate Dignity</i>	Ill-Dignified	Dignified	Ill-Dignified
<i>Interactive Dignity</i>	Dignified		
<i>Elemental Dignities Analysis</i>	<p>First to be noted to the Seeker is the strength of the reading from two juxtaposed Majors. Although The Chariot appears in reverse, rendering its innate dignity ill-dignified (the interpretation of the card should change slightly from what it would be otherwise upright), its interactive dignity with The Hierophant is dignified because Water and Earth strengthen one another. Thus, any weaknesses in The Chariot energy caused by it being ill-dignified from the reversal will be strengthened, supported, and supplemented by the energy of The Hierophant. The energy is further supported by the Earth energy from the Eight of Pentacles, even though it appears in reverse. The Hierophant, with the supplemental energy of the Eight of Pentacles, assists The Chariot, reversed, and so it is more likely than not that the meaning of The Chariot upright, or dignified, will apply to the Seeker's future because of The Hierophant's support. Thus, in a <i>WIND</i> analysis of The Chariot card reversal, the most likely application is <i>D</i> for <i>Delay</i>. And the Eight of Pentacles in reverse may explain why: Seeker is not exerting enough effort and is letting a lot of talent go to waste.</p>		



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Exercise 4:</b> Three-Card Reading</p>			
<p><i>Card Description</i></p>	<p>Three of Cups, Reversed</p>	<p>Ace of Wands, Reversed</p>	<p>The Magician</p>
<p><i>Elemental Essence</i></p>	<p>Water</p>	<p>Fire</p>	<p>Air / Earth *</p>
<p><i>Innate Dignity</i></p>	<p>Ill-Dignified</p>	<p>Ill-Dignified</p>	<p>Dignified</p>
<p><i>Interactive Dignity</i></p>	<p>Dignified</p>		
<p><i>Elemental Dignities Analysis</i></p>	<p>Two cards, the Three of Cups and Ace of Wands, appear in reverse, causing both cards to be ill-dignified. The meaning of the Three of Cups will be modified, specifically weakened, inverted, negated, or delayed. Same with the Ace of Wands. The double reversals suggest a great deal of uncertainty ahead, but on the positive side, the interactive dignity weakens one another's ill-dignified energies, potentially with the future result of a positive outcome. The third card, The Magician, brings a potent and strong energy to the reading, very likely overpowering the Three and Ace.</p> <p>Note the divide among practitioners over the elemental dignity of The Magician. The majority of practitioners attribute The Magician to Air, though the author's approach is to attribute it to Earth. For more on the discrepancy, see Chapter 5, p. 37 and end note 16 for Chapter 9, p. 824. If Air is ascribed, then it lends strength to the Ace of Wands, dignifying it and allowing it to overpower the Water energy from the Three of Cups. However, if Earth is the association, then The Magician lends its strength to the Three of Cups because Earth and Water strengthen. Here is where the practitioner's own personal programming of his or her tarot deck is critical. However, in either case, Air or Earth, The Magician card amplifies one of the two Minors in the spread and so the interactive dignity remains the same: dignified.</p>		



## Elemental Affinities

Each suit of the Minor Arcana is considered dignified with one of the four ascribed elements: the suit of Wands is dignified with Fire, the suit of Cups with Water, the suit of Swords with Air, and the suit of Pentacles with Earth. Within each suit, each card is ascribed its own affinity, a sub-element that modifies the elemental dignity just slightly. The approach to elemental affinities espoused in *Holistic Tarot* follows the work of Papus, the pseudonym for Gérard Encausse, a physician and well-known occultist from the late 19th century.

<b>FIRE</b> Active <i>Labors, Passions, and Physical Plane</i>		<b>AIR</b> Active <i>Social Sphere and External Self</i>	
Ace	Seven	Three	Nine
Four	King	Six	Knight
<b>WATER</b> Passive <i>Emotions and Relationships</i>		<b>EARTH</b> Passive <i>Material Manifestation</i>	
Two	Eight	Ten	Page
Five	Queen	---	---



### Exercises from the Intermediate Study Guide: Affinities

A. **Ten of Wands.** The elemental dignity for the suit of Wands is Fire, which corresponds with our labors, passions, and physical plane and the elemental affinity for ten is Earth, which corresponds with material manifestation and our resources. Thus, the Ten of Wands expresses the use of our resources on our labors and passions.

*Note.* The numerological significance of the number 10 is the pinnacle of something, whether that is the pinnacle of bliss and success or the pinnacle of trials and tribulations. See Chapter 15, "The Significance of Numbers," p. 434-435. The number ten amplifies power and given the elemental dignity and affinity of the Ten of Wands, it is understandable how and why the card has become associated with the notion of being overburdened or exhausted.

B. **Queen of Cups.** The elemental dignity for the suit of Cups is Water, which corresponds with emotions, intuition, and relationships and the elemental affinity for the Queen is Water, which corresponds with the same. Thus, the Queen of Cups expresses amplified energy in the emotional and intuitive realms.

C. **Six of Pentacles.** The elemental dignity for the suit of Pentacles is Earth, which corresponds with material manifestation and our resources and the elemental affinity for six is Air, which corresponds with communications, the external Self, and the social sphere. Thus, the Six of Pentacles expresses the use of our resources to express ourselves in the social sphere and in our community.

*Note.* The numerological significance of the number 6 is harmony, spiritual balance, and compassion, with a strong desire for acknowledgement or appreciation. *See* Chapter 15, "The Significance of Numbers," p. 434. Considered in the context of Earth energy, indicating the material plane, assets, and resources, along with the Air affinity of six, the Six of Pentacles has come to be associated with charity, giving alms, philanthropy, and sharing one's resources with others.