

Reconsidering the Astrological Correspondences for the Major Arcana

From time to time I revisit the Golden Dawn (GD) astrological correspondences for the Major Arcana since there are a few I still can't warm up to no matter how much learned support I uncover for them. Recently, I took a few minutes to organize my thoughts on the subject. I created a table (attached) that moves a few things around, and color-correlates the signs to their ruling planets in ways that more closely link Trumps having other obvious affinities. At this point, it's mainly an intellectual exercise, not a working model, since the GD correspondences are generally satisfactory for their purpose, as shown by long experience. But it's fun and surprisingly rewarding to shake things up a bit and hunt down a new paradigm for those that seem ripe for it. (Note that this scrambles the GD alignment of the Trumps to the Chaldean decans.)

In practice, I keep the original correspondences in the background as the "bedrock" on which the GD system was built, and treat my own ideas as a philosophical extension of those. For example, traditionally the Chariot is Cancer and the Wheel of Fortune is Jupiter; both carry the symbolism of a "wheel." Like many people, I've never been entirely convinced by the Cancer assignment, although the Jupiter match-up makes sense. But taking a broader view, Cancer and Jupiter are entirely compatible; Jupiter is exalted in Cancer, and as the Greater Benefic it brings the ideas of improvement in fortune, favorable increase and "winning" in general, while Cancer carries the imprint of the highly changeable Moon, similarly suggesting transient conditions and the opportunity for increase or decrease. Swapping them around caused me no heartburn whatsoever, and I like the Chariot/Jupiter connection much better, while the Wheel of Fortune/Cancer one has its own redeeming charms.

The assignments I left alone were:

The Magician = Mercury (the quintessential planet of the Intellect and mental gymnastics in general)

The Emperor = Aries (Aries is the "head," and so is the Emperor)

Strength = Leo (the applied power of the Sun)

Justice = Libra (the Scales say it all)

Death = Scorpio (the sign traditionally connected with Death as transformation)

The Tower = Mars (the God of War is all about destructive force)

The Star = Aquarius (the idea of the starry "firmament" aligns well with Fixed Air)

The Sun = Sun (no explanation needed)

I swapped the following pairs:

Moon = Moon; High Priestess = Pisces (if the Sun can be the "Sun," why can't the Moon be the "Moon?" They're the two most important astrological bodies, and Pisces as the most mystical and nebulous of signs certainly suits the secretive, ephemeral nature of the High Priestess.)

Chariot = Jupiter; Wheel of Fortune = Cancer (Jupiter fits the mobile, wide-ranging, victorious nature of the Chariot, while the Cancer glyph embodies the "yin-and-yang" symbol that echoes the dualistic nature of the Wheel of Fortune.)

I made the following reassignments:

Empress = Taurus (the most fertile of signs) and the Lovers = Venus (the Goddess of Love)

The Hermit = Capricorn (Crowley's goat leaping upon high places, suggesting the applied wisdom of Saturn; the Hermit is also withdrawn and ascetic, befitting the reserved Capricorn)

The Devil = Saturn (the etymology and religious mythology seem to support this one)

The Hierophant = Sagittarius (the sign of traditional religion, philosophy and higher learning)

Temperance = Gemini (the goal of hermetic alchemy is mental transmutation and exaltation of the mind, so Temperance represents the philosophical side of Mercury)

The World = Virgo (the idea of "harvest" seems to be at home in this card of completion and success)

I assigned the three modern planets to replace elemental Air, Water and Fire according to the prevailing qabalistic viewpoint:

Fool = Uranus (Spirit as an extension of elemental Air)

Hanged Man = Neptune (elemental Water)

Judgment = Pluto (elemental Fire)

The color-coded table links the updated correspondences in interesting ways:

The Magician, Temperance and the World are connected by their relationship to Mercury (The Magician and The World are associated with the four elements, and Temperance with their admixture)

The Empress, the Lovers and Justice are joined by their connection to Venus (agrarian Taurus seems obvious for the Empress, having a slight edge over the sensual-but-exalted mythological Venus, whom I can see standing in for the presiding angel in the Lovers rather than her son, Cupid - the most common modern interpretation of the Lovers seems to lean that way; Justice partakes of the "evaluative" side of Venus, a higher expression of the Taurean preoccupation with values, and the crucible in which many relationships are tested)

A further word on the Emperor and Empress: assigning Aries to the former and Taurus to the latter creates an obvious convergence of ideas: the Emperor goes to war while the Empress maintains domestic stability. Earthy Taurus for the Empress seems to make more sense than the higher vibration of Venus, which has a refined, airy side to it. Also, the Sun is exalted in Aries and the Moon in Taurus, bringing together the two luminaries in the same way the Emperor and Empress are paired.

Astrologically speaking, then, the Trumps fall in line this way:

Aries = Emperor (Cardinal Fire) (IV)

Taurus = Empress (Fixed Earth) (III)

Gemini = Temperance (Mutable Air) (XIV)

Cancer = Wheel of Fortune (Cardinal Water) (X)
Leo = Strength (Fixed Fire) (VIII)
Virgo = World (Mutable Earth) (XXI)
Libra = Justice (Cardinal Air) (XI)
Scorpio = Death (Fixed Water) (XIII)
Sagittarius = Hierophant (Mutable Fire) (V)
Capricorn = Hermit (Cardinal Earth) (IX)
Aquarius = Star (Fixed Air) (XVII)
Pisces = High Priestess (Mutable Water) (II)
Sun = Sun (Fire) (XIX)
Moon = Moon (Water) (XVIII)
Mercury = Magician (Air) (I)
Venus = Lovers (Earth) (VI)
Mars = Tower (Fire) (XVI)
Jupiter = Chariot (Fire) (VII)
Saturn = Devil (Earth) (XV)
Uranus = Fool (Spirit as a sublimation of Air) (0)
Neptune = Hanged Man (Water) (XII)
Pluto = Judgment (Fire) (XX)

The Fire/Earth/Air/Water series of the first twelve Trumps pairs cards that are mutually supportive by elemental dignity. It breaks down in the last ten cards when the planetary correspondences are introduced.

The angular series would be: Emperor, Wheel of Fortune, Justice and Hermit

The succedent series would be Empress, Strength, Death and Star

The cadent series would be Temperance, World, Hierophant and High Priestess

Revised Astrological Correspondences

Fool	Uranus
Magician	Mercury
High Priestess	Pisces
Empress	Taurus
Emperor	Aries
Hierophant	Sagittarius
Lovers	Venus
Chariot	Jupiter
Strength	Leo
Hermit	Capricorn
Wheel of Fortune	Cancer
Justice	Libra
Hanged Man	Neptune
Death	Scorpio
Temperance	Gemini
Devil	Saturn
Tower	Mars
Star	Aquarius
Moon	Moon
Sun	Sun
Judgement	Pluto
World	Virgo