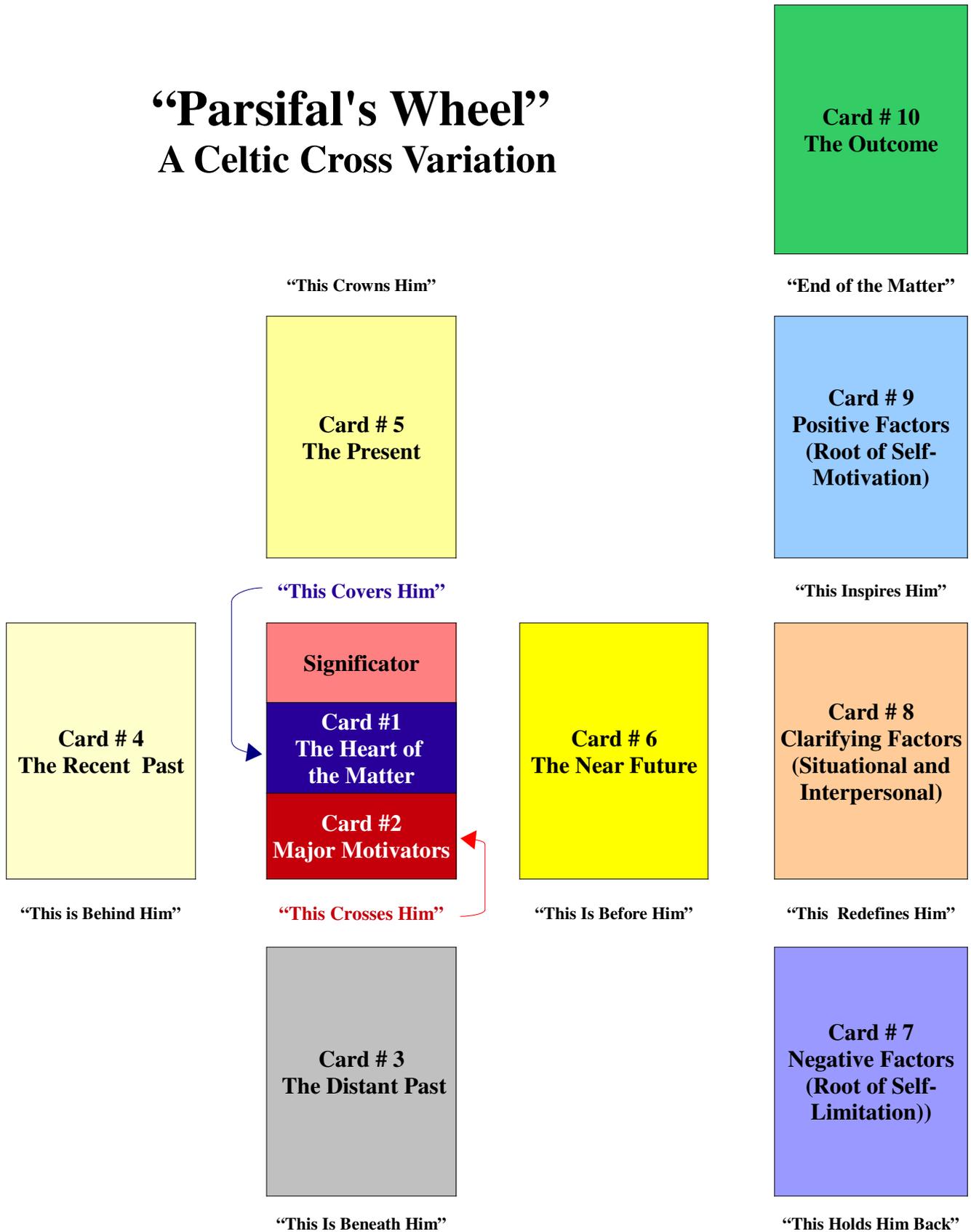


“Parsifal's Wheel”

A Celtic Cross Variation



Development of the Matter

Querent's Situation

Parsifal's Wheel: A Celtic Cross Variation

General Layout and Guidelines for Reading

The "wheel" metaphor comes from Eden Gray's method as published in *The Tarot Revealed*.

The Significator card, if used, lies at the "hub" of the wheel.

Cards 1 and 2 - the covering and crossing cards (here called "The Heart of the Matter" and "Major Motivators") - show the "environment of the question."

Card 3 at the bottom signifies historical aspects of the matter (the "distant past" or factors that are no longer subject to change).

Card 4 sits to the left and represents the recent past, which may still be actively shaping the querent's experience of the situation.

Card 5 - the "crowning" card at the top - shows the "present," which is the realm of possibilities and opportunities where emerging trends and the range of available options first become visible.

Card 6 at the right describes the "near future," suggesting what the querent will have to work with going forward.

This clockwise flow mirrors the diurnal motion of the Sun, from midnight (distant past, Card 3), through dawn (recent past, Card 4), then high noon (present, Card 5) and on to close of day (near future, Card 6).

Cards 1 and 2 show how things stand at the moment, including both underlying environmental factors (Card 1) and major challenges or opportunities (Card 2). The time-line begins with Card 3, which provides an historical perspective. Cards 4 through 6 are read as a continuum rather than as discrete blocks of time, since it isn't always easy to see where one phase leaves off and the next one begins; one flows into the other, the recent past informs the present and the present presages the near future. The "development of the matter" is the process by which the scope of the situation becomes clearer as it unfolds over the course of the reading.

Cards 7 through 9 reflect the querent's grasp of the matter as it evolves beyond the initial outlook (Card 6). They show responses to the situation as it takes shape and begins to impact the querent's life, ranging from confronting and conquering obstacles to regaining optimism and momentum, either encouraged or undermined by external influences. "What holds him back?" (self-limiting attitudes and behaviors - uncertainties, anxieties, lack of confidence, vacillation); "What redefines him?" (clarifying factors, including external environmental considerations and the influence of other people who have a stake in the matter); and "What inspires him" (self-enabling attitudes, behaviors, aspirations, goals, objectives, hopes and wishes that are all part of striving to achieve the best possible result). These cards reveal how the querent handles the current of change suggested by the "unloading of the wheel" at Card 6.

In all Celtic Cross systems, Card 10 represents the outcome, or "end of the matter," and provides long-term advice for successfully managing the situation.

Card 6 should be directly correlated to Card 10 to see how it is likely to mature or ripen; the intervening cards (7-9) modulate the course of events via the querent's actions and reactions in response to early developments. This is where "constructive advice" is often most valuable since the situation is still pliable and the querent can shape the final outcome with judicious intervention. So Cards 7, 8 and 9 are also a kind of continuum and an "experiential bridge."

I see both the "crossing" card and the card in the 7th position as "challenge" cards to those immediately preceding them. Card #2 seeks to alter the flow of the situation in a fundamental way, and Card #7 pushes back against still-emerging "near future" developments; it suggests "drawing a line in the sand" and establishing a personal stand or "beach-head" so the wave of the future doesn't just roll over you. As momentum gathers to simply drive forward toward the goal, it provides a cautionary impulse to "dig one's heels in" and take things more slowly.

In this model there is no direct correlation between Card 6 and Card 8, since the point of ingress for the wheel's "download" into the querent's subjective reality is Card 7. That said, Cards 4-1-2-6-8 may be read as a "line," with Card 2 as the focal point for pairs 4/1 and 6/8. The idea is to provide additional insight into the nature of any challenges that may be blocking growth in the matter, in which case Card 8 is interpreted more precisely as the "new environment." Cards 4 and 1 "anchor" the querent in past achievements or failures – the "old environment" - adding "fuel to the fire" or "grist for the mill" to the pivotal interpretation of Card 2, while Cards 6 and 8 show externalizing factors that lift the situation out of its impasse and nudge it toward resolution. This concept is fully expanded in the "Elemental Dignities" approach to the Celtic Cross, and also in the "Parsifal's Bow" personal destiny spread.

“Parsifal's Wheel” Celtic Cross Variation

Basic Position Meanings

- Significator: (Optional*)** This is the first card laid on the table, chosen to represent the querent according to various selection methods (astrological, elemental, qabalistic, traditional [sex, age and appearance], etc.)
- Card 1:** Represents the “environment of the question” as it stands; laid directly atop the Significator card. (“This covers him.”)
- Card 2:** Represents major motivators arising from Card 1, often but not always challenging; laid atop and perpendicular to the Significator card. (“This crosses him.”)
- Card 3:** Represents the established past in the matter, that which is not subject to change. (“This is beneath him.”)
- Card 4:** Represents that which has passed or is just passing, but which still features actively in the matter. (“This is behind him.”)**
- Card 5:** Represents the present; the realm of possibilities and opportunities. (“This crowns him; this is above him.”)**
- Card 6:** Represents the near future. If Cards 5 and 6 are complementary, Card 5 strengthens the probability of Card 6 manifesting. (“This is before him.”)**
- Card 7:** Represents the deepest part of the self, the “psychic basement;” negative emotional “baggage”: pessimism, fears, uncertainties, self-doubts, etc. impeding the querent from fully embracing the initial outlook shown by Card 6. (“This holds him back”).
- Card 8:** Represents the querent's environment and human relations, for good or ill. (“This redefines him.”)
- Card 9:** Represents the querent's basic self-interest and emotional stake in the matter (what may be gained or lost); goals and objectives, hopes or wishful thinking, optimism. (“This inspires him.”)
- Card 10:** Represents the final outcome. (The “end of the matter.”)

* Modern practice frequently dispenses with the Significator card, especially when reading face-to-face.

**Cards 4, 5 and 6 tend to be fluid regarding the timing of events: the Past may still be strongly felt in Present circumstances, while the most probable Future may already be visible as either a logical extension of the Past/Present dynamic or as an emerging new direction.

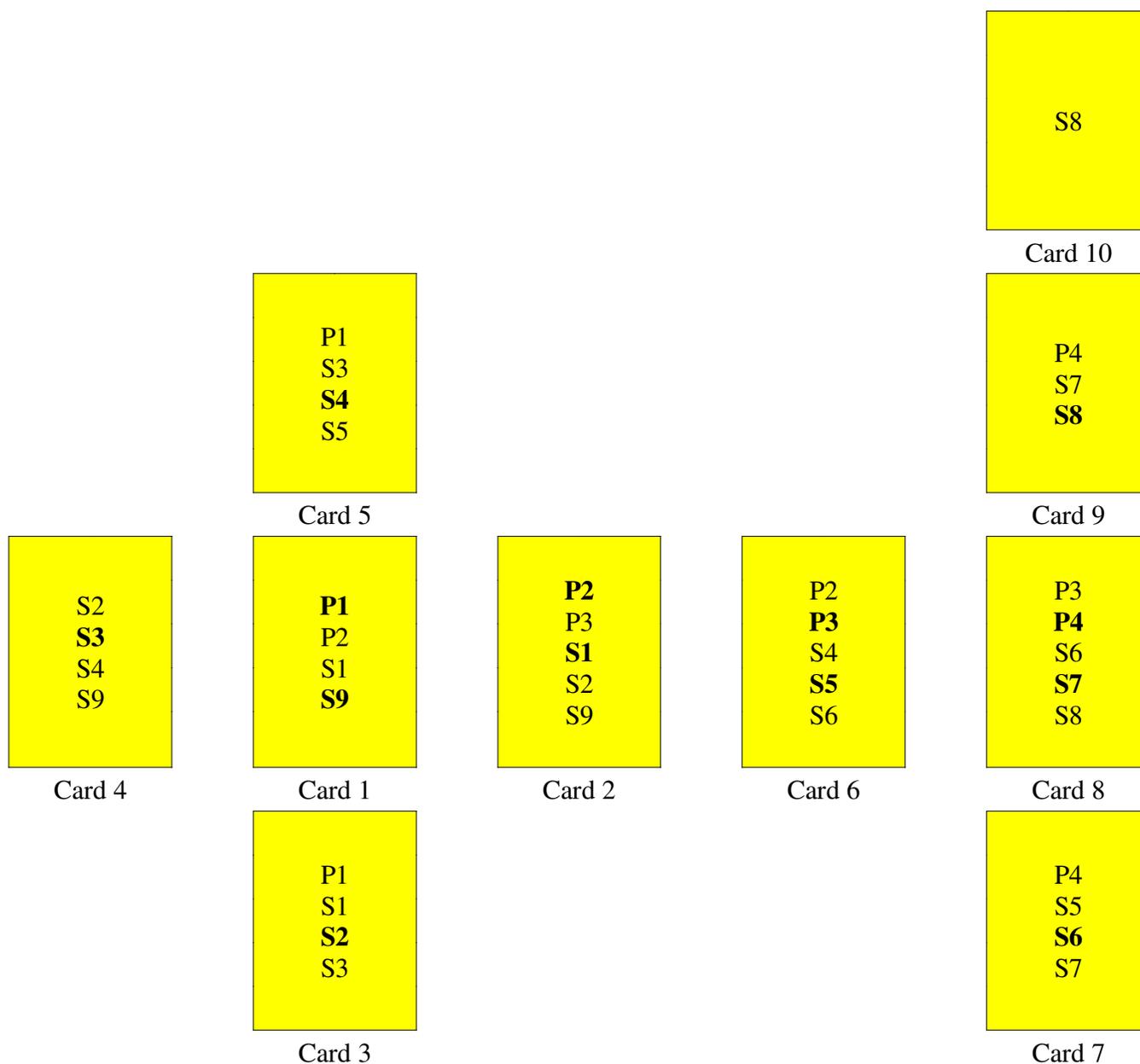
Note that the first six cards show situational developments in the matter over time, while the last four reflect the querent's circumstances and reaction to those developments.

Expanded Celtic Cross Position Meanings

The first six positions provide a "situational snapshot" and a time-line for advancement of the matter. The span of positions 4, 5 and 6 can be flexible, forming a continuum; conditions arising in the present may already be glimpsed as the recent past evolves, and the emerging future may be visible before the present completely unfolds. Positions 7, 8 and 9 relate to the Querent's personal, psychological and social circumstances as they variously affect or are affected by the "ripening" of the matter. Position 10, in addition to its individual card meaning as the last word in the matter, can be read as the narrative conclusion of the 9-chapter story that preceded it.

- 1 - **Primary Meaning:** The situation as it stands; the environment or circumstances of the question.
Secondary Meanings: The "heart of the matter;" that which caused the Querent to ask the question.
- 2 - **Primary Meaning:** Challenges and opportunities; what the situation lacks at this time.
Secondary Meanings: Major motivators or stresses (people if shown by the card) that affect progress in the matter; challenges that must be worked through to harness the opportunities they often present.
- 3 - **Primary Meaning:** The distant past (months to years); the history or "foundation" of the matter.
Secondary Meanings: Underlying factors that – while still influential - have been pushed into the background; that which the querent has accepted as fact and which is no longer subject to change.
- 4 - **Primary Meaning:** The recent past (days to weeks); developments in the matter that have just occurred and are now passing away.
Secondary Meanings: Prior situations or influences that are still fresh in the mind; the threshold of a change; the first inkling of the next step.
- 5 - **Primary Meaning:** The present; the situation coming to a head; the "light at the end of the tunnel."
Secondary Meanings: Developing trends; the realm of possibilities and opportunities; options available to move the matter forward; a chance to seize the initiative, gaining traction and momentum toward resolution; dawning realization about what may soon occur.
- 6 - **Primary Meaning:** The near future (days to weeks); a preview of coming events; advice for the early going.
Secondary Meanings: What the Querent has to work with going forward.; factors that set the stage for the eventual outcome; a foothold in the final result; an emerging reality that is still within the Querent's power to change over the long haul; early hints of ultimate success or disappointment (to be either nurtured or actively discouraged), and the degree of ease or difficulty anticipated along the way.
- 7 - **Primary Meaning:** What holds the Querent back; a dose of realism or healthy skepticism that puts the brakes on excessive zeal; unconscious urges that create resistance to change; an instinctive, reactionary push-back .
Secondary Meanings: Potentially self-defeating behaviors and attitudes; lack of self-confidence; second-guessing; mental/emotional blocks or upsets; misgivings; pessimism; "your own worst enemy;" the deepest part of the Self; the Subconscious; the "psychic basement" as a hotbed of negative reinforcement.
- 8 - **Primary Meaning:** What clarifies or redefines the Querent's grasp of the situation; immediate surroundings and personal contacts as stabilizing or destabilizing factors.
Secondary Meanings: The circumstances and condition of the Querent's "home base" and personal support system (or lack thereof); the influence of other people close to or in a position to affect the Querent; aid from supporters; resistance or competition from adversaries; suggests the need for a "coping strategy."
- 9 - **Primary Meaning:** What the Querent wants; conscious aspirations, choices and actions that are in the querent's best interests; advice that, if followed or ignored, could substantially alter the outcome.
Secondary Meanings: Last chance to shape the outcome "closer to the heart's desire; the Querent's emotional "stake" in the matter (what may be gained or lost); goals and objectives, both realistic and naive; hopes (well-founded or otherwise) and wishes (or "wishful thinking"); optimism, warranted or not as shown by the card.
- 10 - **Primary Meaning:** What the Querent gets; the final outcome, the "end of the matter;" long-term advice.
Secondary Meanings: The best that can be achieved at this time; the point of intersection for all prior inputs.

Celtic Cross Spread Configured for Elemental Dignities



Primary Triplet Focus Cards: Card 1, the Situation at Present; Card 2, Major Motivators; Card 6, the Immediate Future; Card 8, the new Environment that develops from their interaction. The Immediate Past (Card 4) is a secondary contributor to the chain of influences affecting the environmental outcome.

Secondary Triplet Focus Cards: The middle card in each 3-card set, from Card 1 to Card 9. In addition, Card 1 is the secondary Focus Card for the environmental set formed by Cards 4 + 1 + 2.

The “old-to-new” environmental development path (Cards 4 + 1, transitional Card 2, and Cards 6 + 8) includes four Primary Triplets and one Secondary Triplet. The “above” and “below” cards for each main environment card (Cards 1 and 8) strengthen or weaken their potency in the matter.

The standard narrative flow includes 8 Secondary Triplet Focus Cards, involving all but Card 10, which, as the summary for the entire spread, is not assigned a primary focus role.

Elemental Dignities and the Celtic Cross

The practice of Elemental Dignities (ED) assumes that the potency of any card that is bordered “fore and aft” by two other cards in a spread can be altered by blending the elemental natures of the cards: “friendly” elements in the adjacent cards strengthen the function of the central card; “unfriendly” elements weaken it; a mixture of the two may neutralize the influence of the opposing pair, or more likely will produce a third condition – for example, central Fire confronted by unfriendly Water on its doorstep could create figurative steam or fog, clouding the issue. Typically, spreads that separate easily into “triplets” (3-card subsets) are most amenable to the use of Elemental Dignities. Spreads with an even number of cards don't always fare well with ED since there are often “loose ends;” the Celtic Cross (CC) is one of the more problematic examples.

The attached layout template presents a unique way to read Elemental Dignities with the Celtic Cross, augmenting the standard positional narrative. In addition, a second major departure from conventional reading style has been introduced. Many years ago, it was brought to my attention in passing that the central horizontal axis of the CC might be read left-to-right (past-to-future) as a 5-card "line" showing the developmental path for the querent's environmental circumstances. I never went anywhere with this notion at the time, but lately my thinking has evolved. I now see this series (Cards 4 + 1 + 2 + 6 + 8) as showing linear movement from the "old environment" (Cards 4 + 1) to the "new environment" (Cards 6 + 8) through the agency of the "major motivator" (Card 2), placing that card into high focus as the facilitator or “transition point” bridging the old and the new. Card 1 is tempered by the influence of Cards 3 and 5, which form a kind of "mini-staff" suggesting the "heart," "head" and "feet” of the matter and showing whether its heart is in the right place, whether its feet are on the ground, and whether it has its head firmly on its shoulders or somewhere up in the clouds. Card 8 is adjusted for the influence of Cards 7 and 9, showing the effects of the querent's psychological state on his or her immediate environment.

Interestingly, the numeration for the 5 positions comes to 21, the number of the World card, a potent environmental signifier in its own right. For that matter, Cards 1 through 6 also add to 21, so what we have is the World as the emblem for both the environment of the question "in extension" and the querent's personal surroundings. This reinforces my perception that the CC is ideally suited for "situational awareness" readings of a practical nature.

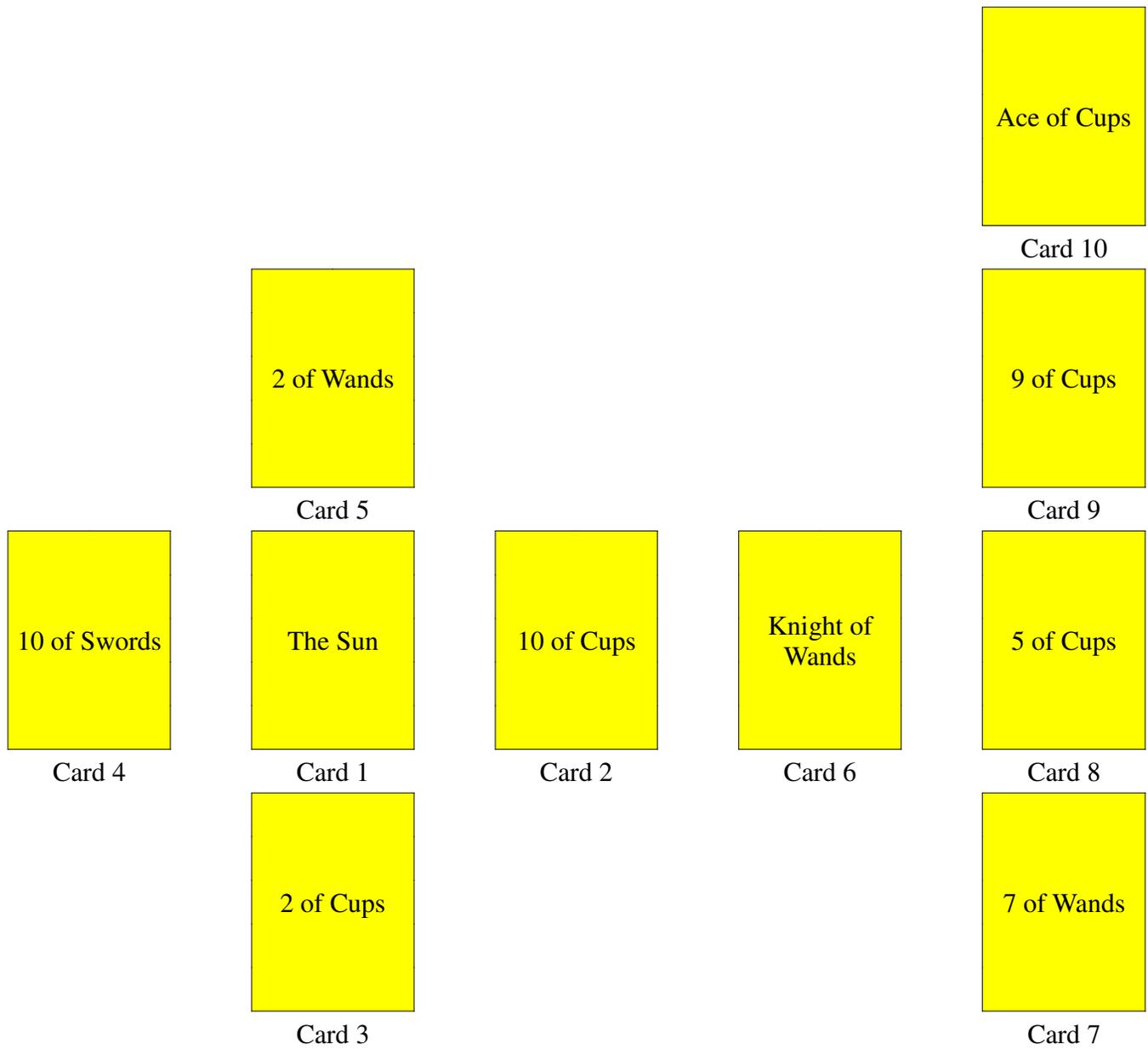
For this reconfigured layout, I decided that the ED triplets for the 5-card environmental development line should be the primary ones since they will serve to show whether preserving the situational status quo or pursuing the promise of a new chapter has a stronger hold on the querent's life circumstances and growth potential. The primary triplets to be read for Elemental Dignity are Cards 1 (focus card), modified by Cards 3 and 5; Card 2 (focus card), modified by Cards 1 and 6; Card 6 (focus card), modified by Cards 2 and 7, and Card 8 (focus card), modified by Cards 7 and 9. Card 10 (“Outcome”) is a passive product of all that preceded it, so it is read as a singleton with no ED focus role. In addition to the four sets of primary triplets involved in the 5-card line, preponderances can also be examined to gain a complete picture of the complexion of the situation.

The secondary triplet focus cards are the middle cards in the eight 3-card sets of the “normal” sequence, from Card 1 to Card 9. In addition, Card 1 is the secondary focus card for the environmental set formed by Cards 4 + 1 + 2. Because Cards 1 through 10 supply the main narrative flow for the reading, the EDs for those cards convey an added emphasis that underscores each of the ten "for good or ill."

It isn't nearly as complicated as it looks. Note that this approach works well for my arrangement of the CC positions but may not make sense when used with other versions.

Celtic Cross Spread for Elemental Dignity Analysis

Example Layout



Elemental Dignities and the Celtic Cross Example Reading

The attached diagram shows a typical spread that was analyzed with this technique. It was a general "life reading" scenario with no particular question in mind. The analysis covers only the elemental dignity aspect of the reading, which might then be applied to the normal card-by-card approach to Celtic Cross interpretation, by weighting the potency of each focus card accordingly.

The Sun at the "heart of the matter" looks like pure bliss (although it's radiance is slightly dimmed by its mixed elemental modifiers when both the primary and secondary triplets are considered); it is a powerfully benevolent Fire Trump bracketed by two low-impact, traditionally positive but static suit cards (the Twos), one Fire and one Water. The dominance of Fire gives the idea of "lightness" suggested by the evaporative action of intense heat on water.

The "Major Motivator" card in the middle of the "old-to-new" transition axis, the 10 of Cups, is flanked by two "unfriendly" Fire cards. The 10 of Cups is a benign, peaceful card, perhaps too placid for its role as a transformative conduit to the future here. It is being pushed vigorously forward by the Sun, and almost as strenuously resisted by the Knight of Wands (as shown by the "facing" of the two figures). It's caught in a squeeze between strong desires and may overheat in the process. It conjures up the idea of an emotional "steam bath" rather than a happy home. Not a place you would want to tarry long, but at least it is a transitional phase. However, the Knight of Wands is itself weakened by the third primary triplet, in which it is modified by two "unfriendly" Water cards, implying that the debilitated Knight will give way before the superior authority of the Sun and let the environmental retrenching proceed. The line itself is populated by an equal measure of Fire and Water, making for a somewhat "clouded" outlook; the 10 of Swords is shunted off impotently to one side and has no power to influence the adjacent Sun to any significant degree.

The "new" environment at the end of the series doesn't seem like a much happier place than the "old" one left behind with the 10 of Swords. But at least the 5 of Cups has something to work with. As the focal card in the primary "staff" triplet, it is emerging from a time of pitched conflict (preceded by the "unfriendly" 7 of Wands - maybe at war with oneself?) and reaching toward the magnanimous 9 of Cups. It looks like the two remaining full cups can be nurtured into the very rewarding "bumper crop" of satisfaction shown by the 9 of Cups, which is in a much more advantageous position than the 10 of Cups since the way forward is not blocked. The adjacent Knight of Wands is also "unfriendly" to the 5 of Cups, but it seems to have its hands full with the drama involving the Sun and the 10 of Cups.

The Ace of Cups as outcome is almost as ebullient as the Sun at Position 1. Following the 9 of Cups, it excels at creating an "overflow" of good feeling. The advice is to make the most of it (perhaps "wallow" in it) since it might be intense but brief.

Regarding the Elemental Dignity of the cards in the normal sequence (Cards 1-to-10):

Secondary Triplet S1: The 10 of Cups is of mixed dignity (Fire-Water-Water) but the triplet ends in two complementary cards, and, as noted above, the "unfriendly" card feeding it (the Sun) has a benevolent nature not unlike the 10 of Cups. As is often stated in the I Ching: "No blame."

Secondary Triplet S2: The 2 of Cups is moderately dignified (Water-Water-Air), since Air is “strengthening but neutral” to Water. The 2 of Cups is slightly enhanced by the combination, and should fulfill its promise without much interference from the anxious 10 of Swords.

Secondary Triplet S3: The 10 of Swords is moderately dignified (Water-Air-Fire), since Water is “strengthening but neutral” to Air while Air and Fire are “friendly and supportive.” Although it's importance has largely diminished, it will have a lingering influence on the matter.

Secondary Triplet S4: The 2 of Wands is of mixed dignity (Air-Fire-Water), neither substantially strengthened nor weakened by the combination. There will be no pronounced bias in its influence.

Secondary Triplet S5: The Knight of Wands is strongly empowered by its companions (Fire-Fire-Fire) and holds a dominant position in driving the matter forward into the future with energy and enthusiasm.

Secondary Triplet S6: The 7 of Wands is of mixed dignity (Fire-Fire-Water). It is forcefully motivated by the Knight of Wands but loses its resolve in the pensive 5 of Cups. Thus, the clashes arising from the personal conflict it implies will be somewhat muted going forward.

Secondary Triplet S7: The 5 of Cups is of mixed dignity (Fire-Water-Water); like the S1 triplet, the sequence ends in two complementary cards, opening the way for an improving trend in emotional gratification signified by the 9 of Cups.

Secondary Triplet S8: The 9 of Cups is highly dignified (Water-Water-Water), and is ideally situated for the Querent to take full advantage of its emotional largesse.

Secondary triplet S9: The Sun in this secondary triplet is of mixed dignity (Air-Fire-Water; it is modified from behind by the dour but "friendly" 10 of Swords and in front by the "unfriendly" but innocuous 10 of Cups. But the figure of the mounted child is advancing toward the future, shutting out the misery of the 10 of Swords and leaving it to wither in the past. Since Fire and Air are agreeable, the dominant Sun takes things firmly in hand. Also, because the Sun and the 10 of Cups are both "happy" cards, the elemental stress would not be expected to sap the Sun's brilliance in any meaningful way.

Elementally, this is a generally “pleasant” spread overall, with two highly dignified cards in key positions, two cards of moderate dignity, five cards of mixed – and essentially neutral – dignity, and only one debilitated card. The Sun infusing the “happy” 10 of Cups at the beginning and the Ace of Cups generously supported by the 9 of Cups at the end, point to an encouraging turn of events in the coming months.