

Elements, Polarities and Modalities

The signs of the Zodiac can be broken down into three basic components that create the qualities and attributes of the signs. They are polarities, elements (aka triplicities), and modalities (aka quadruplicities). They also describe how a planet will act when it is residing in a sign of the zodiac.

The Polarities describe the gender of a sign, i.e., whether the sign is male or female, Ying or yang, active or receptive. The masculine energy has more speed and is more forthcoming, so they are associated with swifter actions and circumstances happening in a fast fashion.

The feminine energy is slower, more introverted, and draws things to it, so they are associated with having slower actions and circumstances happen in a slower fashion. The masculine signs seek to make things happen and create change. The female signs, nurture things, and build security.

The elements (triplicities) of the signs describe a sign as either being fire, air, earth or water. They are the roots or basic substance of a sign. The Fire element is hot and active, it inspires others, it radiates, and is enthusiastic. The air element is moist and wet and is about the mental side of things, it's objective, and about ideas, sharing, and communication with others. The Earth element is dry, it's about stability and foundations, it's grounded and practical. The water element is cold, and concerned with emotions, it wants to connect deeply, and is intuitive.

The Modalities (quadruplicities) tell us how a sign takes action. The cardinal (tropical) signs are about starting things, they get things going and create an initiating force. The cardinal signs are when the sun enters a sign at the start of a season and so are associated with beginnings. I.e., in the northern hemisphere when the sun enters Aries, it signals the start of spring.

The fixed signs are indicated by when the sun enters them in the middle of a season. I.e., when the sun enters Taurus it's the middle of spring in the northern hemisphere so, fixed signs keep things going, they keep things stable and do things in a slow steady way.

The mutable (bi-corporeal) signs are indicated by when the sun enters a sign at the end of the season. I.e., when the sun enters Gemini, it is the end of spring in the northern hemisphere. So mutable signs show change, and flexibility and make new connections, it also does things in an indirect way. The mutable signs can also show two of whatever is going on.

Below is a list of the signs and their components.

Aries: Masculine, Cardinal and Fire

Taurus: Feminine, Fixed and Earth

Gemini: Masculine, Mutable and Air

Cancer: Feminine, Cardinal and Water

Leo: Masculine, Fixed and Fire

Virgo: Feminine, Mutable and Earth

Libra: Masculine, Cardinal and Air

Scorpio: Feminine, Fixed and Water

Sagittarius: Masculine, Mutable and Fire

Capricorn: Feminine, Cardinal and Earth

Aquarius: Masculine, fixed and Air

Pisces: Feminine, Mutable and Water

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