

**THE
ELEMENTS**

An Overview

by

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Introduction

The four Elements of Antiquity are namely, 'earth', 'water', 'fire', and 'air', and symbolise the energy substance of experience.

The fabric of the universe, including the various spirit planes, is hewn of eternal elements. These elements form the building blocks of existence, and all esoteric knowledge relates to the organisation and combination of the elements. The elements have been given the designations of earth, water, fire, and air. However, these designations refer to the 'esoteric' characteristic, and not the 'physical' component of the element. As the individual considers the principle of existence, it is through the experience of the elements that expansion of the individual's existence is effected. Since ancient times, the theory of the elements has been a golden thread through both the objective and subjective disciplines of man.

Element Constituents

The four universal elements are personified conditions of the four physical states of hot, cold, wet, and dry. Consequently the four elements can be identified as states of:

- Air - hot and wet
- Fire - hot and dry
- Water - cold and wet
- Earth - cold and dry

In this way, the universal elements of earth, water, fire, air can be seen as the 'energy substance of experience'.

I Experience...

Earth energy symbolises the physical world, and the ability to interact with it through the five senses of touch, taste, sight, smell, and hearing, and the three dimensions of length, breadth, and height. 'I am, therefore I sense.'

Water energy symbolises emotions, sensitivity, feeling response, love, passion, and empathy with others. 'I am, therefore I feel.'

Fire energy symbolises mentality that can perceive, analyse, create, and understand universal thought forms. 'I am, therefore I see.'

Air energy symbolises consciousness and spirituality, perception, and the ability to create, express, and operate within self-determined/created thought forms. 'I am, therefore I move and project.'

These concepts are strictly adhered to throughout the symbolism and interpretation of the White Tarot.

The Universal Elements And The Sphinx

The mystery of the four universal elements of earth, water, fire, and air is embodied in the esoteric symbol of the Sphinx.

An ancient legend tells of a Sphinx that sat outside the ancient Greek city of Thebes; and to all who passed by, the Sphinx posed a riddle. If the traveller answered the riddle correctly, they were allowed to continue on their journey. However, if they answered incorrectly, the Sphinx would destroy them.

The Sphinx was a mystical creature composed of four personified elements:

- The feet and tail of a bull (earth)
- The body of a lion (water)
- The wings of an eagle (fire)
- The head of a man (air)

Oedipus

Approaching Thebes, Oedipus, who was travelling along the road of life, was confronted by the Sphinx and its riddle.

The Riddle

The Sphinx asked, 'What is the ultimate expression of the universe, and goes on four feet in the morning, goes on two feet at midday, and goes on three feet in the afternoon?'

Oedipus thought for some time, and then responded, 'It's me! The answer is "man". As an infant, in the morning of his life, man crawls upon all fours. As an adult, in the noon of his life, he walks upon two feet. And finally, as an old man in the afternoon of his life, he walks with a stick and his two feet, and thus he walks upon three feet.'

The Sphinx said, 'That is correct.' Then, confronted with the correct answer, it destroyed itself by leaping off a cliff. Oedipus was then able to continue on his way without any further restriction.

Illumination

Esoterically, the Sphinx represents a point of judgement our journey of life. As cycles of experience are completed, we are confronted by the Sphinx, and are asked the riddle of life. Those who cannot declare the secret and purpose of life will have to undergo further cycles of experience to grow and thereby find the answer. Many will look to the Sphinx as God, or a guide, or a master, or a guardian, and will wait for him to direct them. However, the Sphinx remains silent and impassive, and the individual will have to undergo further cycles of experience to find the answer himself.

Only the individual, who correctly answers the riddle by declaring himself as the secret and purpose will move from uncontrolled universal cycles of existence to self-determined cycles. In other words, the unification of lower and higher self enables the individual to understand his full potential and thereby take full responsibility for his future expansion of consciousness.

When the individual realises, and declares, that he is the focal point of existence, and discovers the elements of the experienceable universe are but the personified energies of his own potential, yet to be experienced, the riddle of life is solved. Universally-determined cycles are understood and mastered, the sphinx (the barrier to self-determined cycles of expansion) is overcome, and the individual progresses onward in his evolution (the expansion of existence by experience). This process is presented in the symbolism of the 'Wheel of Fortune' tarot card, which is the door between universally-determined cycles and self-determined cycles.

Overview of the Elements

THE ELEMENTS (Hippocrates)	
Element	Overview
Earth (Sensation)	This element's energy reveals a synchronisation with the world of physical forms and practical ability to utilise and improve the material world. Associated with the element of earth is the 'gnome' elemental spirit.
Water (Feeling)	This element's energy symbolises the cooling, healing principle of sensitivity, feeling response, and empathy with others. Associated with the element of water is the 'undine' elemental spirit
Fire (Mentalisation and Visualisation)	This element's energy expresses the warming, radiating, and energising life principle that can manifest enthusiasm, faith, encouragement, and the drive to express self. Associated with the element of fire is the 'salamander' elemental spirit
Air (Spiritualisation and Projection)	This element's energy is correlated with the mind's sensation, perception, and expression, especially related to personal interaction and geometrical thought forms and abstract ideas. Associated with the element of air is the 'sylph' elemental spirit

Overview of the Elemental Beings

No discussion on the elements would be complete without an overview of the elemental spirits. Elementals (Gnomes, Undines, Salamanders, and Sylphs) are spirit beings who are linked to a specific element and are within all things throughout the universe. However, they are normally considered 'lower-level spirits' which are personifications of the four elements of earth, water, fire and air. Elemental spirits exist in all things, animals, insects, birds, rocks, and plants, and are often the 'causal movers of growth, expansion, experience, and evolution.

ELEMENTAL BEINGS/SPIRITS (o.e.v)	
ELEMENTAL (ELEMENT)	OVERVIEW
GNOMES (EARTH / SENSATION)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gnomes are the elemental beings/spirits associated with the element 'earth'. ▪ The Gnomes work with the formation and maintenance of our physical body, as well as that of the physical earth. This includes the bioplasmic/genesis field, that surrounds everything the physical world/plane/dimension, and through which the gnomes effect casual change. Without Gnomes, we could not function in the physical world/plane/dimension. Consequently, there is usually at least one Gnome who has elected to work with us and interfaces with us/our physical body through our etheric body via the bioplasmic/genesis field. ▪ Earth (from food substances) is be transformed into black bile (Hippocrates). ▪ All elemental work within the physical world/plane/dimension is done by reflex through the 'etheric' world/plane/dimension - 'as above, so below'. Thus, Gnomes are four-dimensional (encompassing both 'space & time') beings, with nothing to restrict their movements. Consequently, they are able to move through physical matter infinitely easier than we move through air.

ELEMENTAL BEINGS/SPIRITS (o.e.v)	
ELEMENTAL (ELEMENT)	OVERVIEW
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Various entities fall within the Gnome category, each with its own degree of consciousness and sphere of influence. Consequently, an individual who adopts a 'magical name' from nature that is aligned with the element earth can learn to communicate and work with Gnomes at the various levels. ▪ In nature, Gnomes are needed to form and maintain all physical reality, flora, and fauna. It is the Gnomes' task to 'tint' them, to make the minerals and crystals within the earth, and to maintain the earth so that we have physical world/plane/dimension to experience, and grow through. ▪ Those with a vowel of 'U' in their name have a strong potential to resonate with Gnome energy. <p>Note: All elemental spirits are affected by our actions ('cause and consequence'; 'as above, so below; as below, so above'; etc). Accordingly, if we abuse a body (including our 'spirit' bodies, we abuse the elementals who are associated with us. Conversely, if we respect our bodies, we are better synchronised with those elementals who are working with us, and each benefits more by mutual symbiosis.</p>
UNDINES (WATER / FEELING)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Undines are the elemental beings/spirits associated with the element 'water'. ▪ The Undines are associated with our etheric body, and have influence regarding the bioplasmic/genesis field mentioned above. There is usually at least one Undine who has elected to work with us, and interfaces with us through our etheric body. ▪ Water is 'transformed' into phlegm (Hippocrates). ▪ Wherever there is a natural source of water, Undines will be found. Consequently, all water in the physical world/plane/dimension - rivers, lakes, seas, oceans, tears, dew, mist, fog, rain, snow and ice, etc, has Undine activity underpinning and associated with it. Thus, the assimilation of water by all fauna and flora is an important part of the Undine function. ▪ Moreover, directly related to us, Undines assist with the functions of all fluids and humours within the physical body (by reflex – e.g. bioplasmic/genesis field). Thus, the four elements (earth, water, fire, and air) were acted upon by the elementals (using the 'life-force energy'), and consequently 'activated into the 'vital fluids' or 'humours' once they had been assimilated/absorbed into the [physical] body'. ▪ Those with a vowel of 'O' in their name have a strong potential to resonate with Undine energy.
SALAMANDERS (FIRE / MENTAL- ISATION)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Salamanders are the elemental beings/spirits associated with the element fire. ▪ The Salamanders are associated with our mental body (and link down with our etheric body), and have influence throughout the physical world/plane/dimension in all of its expressions of heat and transformation by heat. There is usually at least one Salamander who has elected to work with us, and interfaces with us through our mental body. ▪ Heat or fire is transformed into yellow bile (Hippocrates). ▪ The 'fire' and the 'heat' of the Sun, and its influence upon the entire planet, is also part of the domain of the Salamanders. ▪ Moreover, directly related to us, Salamanders assist (by reflex – e.g. bioplasmic/genesis field) with the function of the circulatory system, and the maintaining of proper physical-body temperature. Thus, they are active both externally (physically – physical body) and within the mind (mentally – mental body). ▪ Fire is an expressive spiritual vibration which has the power to transform at all levels of existence. Consequently, Salamanders are the foremost agency for transforming 'nature', and have the ability to evoke powerful 'emotional', 'mental', and 'visionary' currents in humanity. Thus, they stimulate the fires of idealism, change, transformation, evolution, and

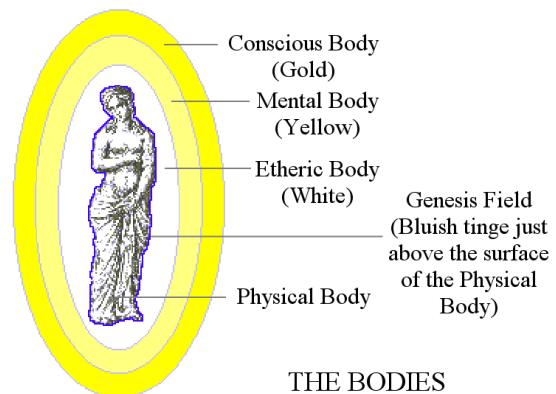
ELEMENTAL BEINGS/SPIRITS (o.e.v)	
ELEMENTAL (ELEMENT)	OVERVIEW
	<p>revolution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Salamander energy is very refined, and it takes tremendous 'mental/spirit' ability/attunement to communicate with them, and to synchronise with them for the most creative results. Salamanders have a strong love for music, and all 'vibrations' (including frequencies in the spirit bandwidth). ▪ Those with the vowel 'l' in their name have a strong potential to resonate with Salamander energy.
SYLPHS (AIR / PROJECTION)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sylphs are the elemental beings/spirits associated with the element air. ▪ The Sylphs are associated with our conscious body (and link down to our mental and etheric bodies). They have influence throughout the physical world/plane/dimension in all of its expressions of air - from the gentlest breeze to the mightiest of tornadoes and hurricanes. There is usually at least one Sylph who has elected to work with us, and interfaces with us through our mental body. ▪ Air is absorbed through the lungs and 'transformed' into blood (Hippocrates). ▪ Further, Sylphs are more closely aligned in consciousness to the etheric beings we call 'angles', than the other elemental-beings/spirits. Consequently, Sylphs often work with 'angels', 'guardians', and other 'etheric beings', and serve as messengers between the etheric realm and us (physical realm). ▪ Moreover, directly related to us, Sylphs assist (by reflex – e.g. bioplasmic/genesis field) with the function of oxygen assimilation from the air we breathe. They also work for the flora process of creating oxygen, and also for the maintenance of the earth's atmosphere. Additionally, they work to cleanse and uplift the thoughts and intelligence of all conscious entities. ▪ Many Sylphs are of the 'highest' intelligence/consciousness, and have much to do with humanity - particularly in assisting with pain, disease, and suffering. Sylphs often serve as 'temporary guardians' until we draw to ourselves the 'one' from the etheric plane who is our elected/chosen guardian/guide/teacher. Further, Sylphs help in the directing and transmutation of our thoughts and visualisations ▪ Those with the vowel 'E' within their name have a strong potential to resonate with Sylph energy. ▪ Note: Almost all elemental-beings require and enjoy, contact with humanity, and there are some who need humanity to help them with their own 'evolutionary' progress. Consequently, it is important, that we establish harmonious relationships with these forces. A synchronised relationship with elemental beings/energies not only reveals to us the true 'magic' of the physical world/plane/dimension, but also assists those wonderful beings.

Spirit Body

What does the individual's spirit body look like?
Where is the **bioplasmic field** located?

The 'complete' spirit body appears as concentric bands of light surrounding the physical body. These bands of light are often referred to as 'the aura'. There are four component parts to the spirit body, namely the genesis field, the etheric body, the mental body, and the conscious body.

The **bioplasmic field** or 'genesis field' (as it is also called) appears as a bluish tinge on the surface of



THE BODIES

the physical body, and the etheric body appears as a band of white light. Next comes the mental body as a band of yellow light, and finally, the conscious body appears as a band of gold light.

Band depth varies from person to person (can also be affected by constitutional type), and the order, from inner to outer, is always genesis, etheric, mental, and conscious.

ELEMENTS, DIMENSIONS & BODIES		
Element (Hippocrates)	Dimension (o.e.v)	Body (Plane) (o.e.v)
Source (Primum Initium)	Existence (Being)	Existence (Consciousness)
Air	Projection (Spirit)	Conscious body (Conscious Plane)
Fire	Visualisation (Mental)	Mental body (Mental Plane)
Water	Feeling (Emotion)	Etheric body (Etheric Plane)
Earth	Sensation (Physical)	Physical body (Physical Plane)

The Elements and their relevance to medicine and parts of the Body

This early theory about elements took on a relevance to medicine when Hippocrates, of Cos, proposed the idea that the four elements (earth, water, fire, and air) were acted upon by the 'vital force' (life-force energy), and were consequently activated into 'vital fluids' or 'humours' once they had been assimilated/absorbed into the body.

Hippocrates defined the four vital fluids (or humours) as 'blood', 'phlegm', 'black bile', and 'yellow bile'. Further, he taught that air absorbed through the lungs would be 'transformed' into blood; water would be 'transformed' into phlegm; earth (from food) would be transformed into black bile; and heat or fire would be transformed into yellow bile. In this process, we can see the 'medical link', and also how the elements become 'part of the body'.

VITAL FLUIDS & ELEMENTS (Hippocrates)	
Vital Fluid (or humour)	Transformed from Element
Blood	Air
Yellow Bile	Fire
Phlegm	Water
Black Bile	Earth

Thus the doctrine of humours or temperaments dates back, at least, to classical Greece, and was also associated with, and developed further with the 2nd century physician, Claudius Galen. He took Hippocrates and Aristotle's theories to the next level by linking the vital fluids (or humours) with the tissues of the body. From this arose the preposition that the vital fluids (or humours) could be linked to the 'temperaments of man'. Consequently, four temperaments were identified, namely, 'sanguine', 'phlegmatic', 'melancholic', and 'choleric'.

Temperament	Quality	Element	Humour	Seat
Sanguine	hot & moist	Air	Blood	Liver
Choleric	hot & dry	Fire	Yellow Bile	Gall Bladder
Phlegmatic	cold & moist	Water	Phlegm	Lungs
Melancholic	cold & dry	Earth	Black Bile	Spleen

The humour/temperament-hypothesis proposed that nature was made up of combinations of four elements (earth, air, fire, and water) and four qualities (hot, cold, wet and dry). Regarding the human body, it had four essential fluids (blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile), which are seen as the determinants of the prevailing temperament. The four temperaments (sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic, and melancholic) were characterised by both the fluid element and its physiological and physiognomical effects. The dominance of a humour indicated a characteristic disposition: blood meant sanguine; preponderance of phlegm meant phlegmatic; preponderance of yellow bile meant choleric, and preponderance of black bile meant melancholic.

These traditions continued, and were largely medical/therapeutic, and they enjoyed a wide popularity across Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They were used to explain susceptibility to disease and prominent character traits. Recognising the temperaments was also part of Johann Caspar Lavater's '*Physiognomy*' in the early 1780s.

HUMOUR/TEMPERAMENT CORRESPONDENCES					
		SUMMER			
AUTUMN	CHOLERIC Dry & hot Digestive Sensation Bile / yellow Practical / irritable (Extraverted & unstable)	FIRE Hot Heat expanding Incandescent Catalyst (Fast)	SANGUINE Hot & moist Cardio-vascular Intuition Blood / red Optimistic / prideful (Extraverted & Stable)	SPRING	
	EARTH Dry Solid / stable Substantial Precipitant (Steady)	Attraction LIFE FORCE ENERGY Repulsion	WATER Moist Liquid / sinking Malleable Solvent (Slow)		
	MELANCHOLIC Dry & cold Respiratory / nervous Intellect Black bile / purple Analytical / pensive (Introverted & unstable)	AIR Cold Gas rising Volatile Oxidant (Erratic)	PHLEGMATIC Cold & moist Lymphatic Emotion Phlegm / white Clear fluids / white Sympathetic / tearful (Introverted & Stable)		
		WINTER			

MATTIEU WILLIAMS – THE TEMPERAMENTS	
‘The temperaments ... depend upon the constitution of particular systems of the body.’	
Temperament	System
Nervous [Melancholic] temperament	The brain and nerves
Sanguine temperament	The lungs, heart, and blood vessels
Bilious [Choleric] temperament	The muscular and fibrous systems
Lymphatic [Phlegmatic] temperament	The glands and assimilating organs

Mattieu Williams, in his book, *A Vindication of Phrenology*, (1894), describes the four temperaments:

There are four temperaments, accompanied by different degrees of strength and activity in the brain—the lymphatic [phlegmatic], the sanguine, the bilious [choleric], and the nervous [melancholic]. The temperaments are supposed to depend upon the constitution of particular systems of the body: the brain and nerves being predominantly active from constitutional causes, seem to produce the nervous temperament; the lungs, heart, and blood vessels being constitutionally predominant, to give rise to the sanguine; the muscular and fibrous systems to the bilious; and the glands and assimilating organs to the lymphatic.

The different temperaments are indicated by external signs, which are open to observation. The first, or lymphatic [phlegmatic], is distinguishable by a round form of the body, softness of the muscular system, repletion of the cellular tissue, fair hair, and a pale skin. It is accompanied by languid vital actions, with weakness and slowness in the circulation. The brain, as part of the system, is also slow, languid, and feeble in its action, and the mental manifestations are proportionally weak.

The second or sanguine temperament is indicated by well-defined forms, moderate plumpness of person, tolerable firmness of flesh, light hair inclining to chestnut, blue eyes, and fair complexion, with ruddiness of countenance. It is marked by great activity of the blood vessels, fondness for exercise, and an animated countenance. The brain partakes of the general state, and is vigorous and active.



The fibrous (generally, but inappropriately, termed the bilious [choleric]) temperament; is recognised by black hair, dark skin, moderate fulness and much firmness of flesh, with harshly expressed outline of the person. The functions partake of great energy of action, which extends to the brain; and the countenance, in consequence, shews strong, marked, and decided features.

The nervous [melancholic] temperament is recognised by fine thin hair, thin skin, small thin muscles, quickness in muscular motion, paleness of countenance, and often delicate health. The whole nervous system, including the brain, is predominantly active and energetic, and the mental manifestations are proportionally vivacious and powerful.'

A Vindication of Phrenolog'y. (1894), Mattieu Williams

THE TEMPERAMENTS (Claudius Galen)		
Temperament	Overview	Vital Fluid Element Quality
<p>Sanguine <i>(optimistic; excitable)</i></p>	<p>In the sanguine, the nervous system dominates, and thus the astral body dominates (because the astral body expresses itself physically in the nervous system). Sanguines surrender themselves in a certain sense to the constant and varied flow of images, sensations, and ideas, since in them, the astral body and nervous system predominate. Only the circulation of the blood restrains the nervous system's activity. That this is so becomes clear when we consider what happens when a person lacks blood or is anaemic, in other words, when the blood's restraining influence is absent. Mental images fluctuate wildly, often leading to illusions and hallucinations.</p> <p>A touch of this is present in Sanguines. Sanguines are incapable of lingering over an impression. They cannot fix their attention on a particular image nor sustain their interest in an impression. Instead, they rush from experience to experience, from precept to precept.</p> <p>This temperament is generally considered excitable, impressionable, impulsive, and sometimes unreliable. The individual can sometimes appear frivolous and thoughtless to others.</p> <p>The sanguine's fun-loving nature is fine until he has to face up to situations that require depth and reflection.</p>	<p>Blood</p> <p>Air</p> <p>Hot & Moist</p>
<p>Phlegmatic Also called, 'lymphatic' <i>(stolidly calm; unexcitable; unemotional)</i></p>	<p>This temperament derives from the etheric or life body. The result is a sense of inner well being. The more human beings live in their etheric body, the more they are preoccupied with their own internal processes. They let external events run their course while their attention is directed inward.</p> <p>This temperament is generally considered fussy, somewhat obsessional, practical, however the individual hates the limelight.</p> <p>The phlegmatic's calmness can be a great stabilising influence but the other side of that is the frustrating ability to 'switch off' when he needs to get involved.</p>	<p>Phlegm</p> <p>Water</p> <p>Cold & Moist</p>
<p>Melancholic Also called, 'nervous' <i>(pensive; sad; depressed)</i></p>	<p>This temperament is generally considered cautious, serious, industrious, and solitary. However, individual has a tendency to become depressed.</p> <p>The melancholic's sensitivity can be used constructively when he reaches out to other people but that same sensitivity becomes very destructive when the Melancholic turns it back on himself damaging his own self-esteem which in turn harms relationships.</p> <p>In the melancholic the physical body is master over the others. Melancholics feel that they are not master over their body, that they cannot bend it to their will. The physical body, which is intended to be an instrument of</p>	<p>Black bile</p> <p>Earth</p> <p>Cold & Dry</p>

THE TEMPERAMENTS (Claudius Galen)		
Temperament	Overview	Vital Fluid Element Quality
	the higher members, is itself in control, and frustrates the others. Melancholics experience this as pain, as a feeling of despondency. Pain continually wells up within them because the physical body resists the etheric body's inner sense of well being, the astral body's liveliness, and the ego's purposeful striving.	
Choleric Also called, 'bilious' or 'fibrous' (<i>irascible; angry</i>)	<p>When the ego predominates, a choleric temperament results. Choleric come across as people who must always have their own way. Their aggressiveness, everything concerned with their forcefulness of will, derives from their blood circulation.</p> <p>This temperament is generally considered confident, irascible, touchy, and proud. The individual's ambition is usually well developed, and there may be arrogance.</p> <p>The choleric's ability to set goals is an obvious asset, unless it is so 'narrow-visioned' that they fail to take others with them.</p>	<p>Yellow bile</p> <p>Fire</p> <p>Hot & Dry</p>

Recognising the temperaments:

The signs of a **choleric** temperament include:

- of the body - hot in touch, dry, lean, hard, and hairy.
- of the colour of the face - yellow.
- of the month and tongue - a natural dryness.
- of thirst - great and frequent.
- of the body - activity and inquietude.
- of the pulse - hard, swift, and often beating.
- of spittle - bitter.
- of dreams - mostly of yellow things, of brawls, of fights, and of quarrels.

The signs of a **sanguine** temperament include:

- of the body - hot in touch, fleshy, soft, and hairy.
- of the colour of the body - fresh, sanguine, and lively.
- of the face - a natural and constant blush therein.
- of the pulse soft, moist and full.
- of the spittle - sweet.
- of dreams - most commonly of red things, of beauty, feasting, dancing, music, and all jovial and pleasing recreations.
- of habit - a continual pleasantness and affability.
- of disposition - to be often affected with jests, mirth and laughter.

The signs of a **phlegmatic** temperament include

- of the body - cold and moist, in touch soft, fat, gross, and not hairy.
- of the face - constant natural whiteness or wanness therein.
- of the pulse - soft, slow, and rare.
- of thirst - little, and seldom desiring drink.
- of dreams - usually of white things, floods, inundations, and accidents belonging to water.
- of sleep - much and frequent.
- of the body - slowness and dullness to exercise.

The signs of a **melancholic** temperament are:

- of the body - in touch cold, dry, lean, and smooth,
- of body colour - dark, dull, gloomy, and leaden.
- of spittle - little in quantity, and sour.
- of the pulse - little, rare, and hard.
- of dreams - often of black and terrible things, as of spirits, ghosts, dreadful apparitions, choking, and beheading; mad beasts, as oxen, wolves, and tigers, ready to devour the dreamer.
- of anxiety - great oppression from fear.
- of strength - stability of mind, and constancy in the performance of the thing intended.

End

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