

Arcane Knowledges

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The arcane knowledges are the supernatural codification of the natural and supernatural worlds. The AK schema is a system of classification that categorizes *objects* (things magic can affect) according to supernatural criteria (as opposed to natural or “scientific” criteria). Each individual AK is a specific category that defines what objects are included or excluded, based on their *characteristics*. Related AK’s are grouped into *spheres*, such as the Elements or the Essences.

There is an extensive body of knowledge concerning the *schema* itself: arcane knowledges, spheres of AK’s, and the relationships of AK’s (and AK spheres) to each other. This body of knowledge is represented by the *magical theory* skill.

Each arcane knowledge has an associated body of applied magical knowledge, which describes how to affect the objects of the AK with magical effects. This body of knowledge is represented by the individual AK skills (e.g. *darkness* or *life*).

The name of an AK describes what objects are within its scope. In many cases, the name doesn't fully describe the character and extent of the knowledge. AK’s are named in accordance with historical convention, and not all aspects of the knowledge are immediately obvious.

Much of magical research involves determining the limits of AK’s and categorizing newly discovered objects. Categorizing objects involves discovering objects, determining their characteristics, and placing them according to those characteristics.

The Arcane Knowledge categories are, to the extent possible, mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive. However, there are a number of objects that can be (and are) categorized into more than one arcane knowledge.

Glossary

Object: Anything that a magical effect can act upon. “Object” in this sense means the “direct object” of the spell, or its target. In general, all objects can be targets of a spell and anything that isn’t an object cannot be directly targeted by a spell.

Arcane knowledge: A grouping of similar objects, as determined by their supernatural characteristics.

Characteristic: An innate quality of an object that determines its nature. Ex.: what the object is made of, how big it is, or what state it is in.

Schema: The system of arcane knowledges and spheres of arcane knowledges.

Sphere: A group of similar arcane knowledges: the Elements or the Kindred.

The Arcane Knowledge Schema

The Prime Essence

The Prime Essence, known as *Quintessence*, is the undivided essence of existence from which all other arcane knowledges descend. Within it, it contains the potential and the extent of the other knowledges.

No known spells use Quintessence, and its existence is conjectural. Theoretical mages do study it, but differ as to its existence and capabilities.

Essences

The Essences represent the universal imperatives affecting existence: creation, destruction, stasis, and change. All lower knowledges, in one way or another, descend from the Essences.

Death: Death is the imperative of destruction. It encompasses the end of life as a process, event, and state. It is also the imperative of decay, corruption, adulteration, debasement, degradation, rot, and every other form of destruction or erosion, whether physical, spiritual, mental, or moral. In part, it represents entropy- the tendency of all things to break down, fall apart, or fade away. Whereas entropy is passive, Death is an imperative: it causes entropy to occur. Death seeks to reduce all things to nothingness.

Life: Life is the imperative of creation (and thus the opposite of Death). It encompasses birth, growth, vitality, creativity, regeneration, purity, and every other form of invigoration, including physical, spiritual, mental, and moral renewal. Creatures are alive because of the animating energy of Life. Life impels creatures to survive and reproduce.

Time: Time is the imperative of change. It encompasses the speed at which time passes or seems to pass (that is, the speed at which change

occurs or appears to occur). It also includes information about cyclical events, the state of the past or future, the chronological age of an object, location, movement, distance, the speed of a moving object, and other chronological phenomenon. As Time is change, it also includes information about conditions affecting an object, including the cause, nature, and duration of the condition.

The changes wrought by Time can be random or ordered, sudden or gradual, but they are always in accordance with the inherent character of the changed. Time cannot alter the essential qualities of a being (as those qualities are the domain of True Knowledge).

True Knowledge governs the innate ways in which something can change (such as the aging process) while Time governs the specific ways in which an individual has changed. Time cannot be used to travel to the past or make changes to it.

True Knowledge: True Knowledge is the imperative of stasis (that which resists change and remains unchanged). It encompasses the essential and immutable qualities of all that exists and maintains their integrity. True Knowledge encompasses capabilities and properties, the inherent characteristics of something.

True Knowledge includes information about an object's height, depth, length, weight, and mass. It also determines the characteristics of something- the ductility of metal, the melting point of ice, the corrosiveness of acid, the consistency of a substance, the chill of cold, and so forth.

True Knowledge determines the characteristics of a specific individual and the general characteristics of the group. It defines not only what something currently is, but the inherent limits of all such things. Each human differs in strength, True Knowledge determines the strength of any one human and how weak or strong all humans can be.

True Knowledge is static, as what it defines is immutable, but not perfectly static. Changes do occur, but they must occur in accordance with the inherent qualities defined by True Knowledge.

The Interplay of the Essences

All Essences are interrelated- the imperatives of each Essence can only exist and succeed with the aid of other Essences.

Time and True Knowledge seem to be at odds, as one is change and the other stasis, but the two work in concert. Time cannot change the essential

qualities of a being, nor can True Knowledge prevent a being from ever changing. Instead, the change of Time occurs in concert with the essential qualities of a being (as defined by True Knowledge).

Humans are born, grow from a child to an adult, and then age and die. This continuum is defined by change, but these changes are a result of, and are defined by, the unchanging qualities of a human being.

This cycle of change is a result of the dual imperatives of Life (birth and growth) and Death (aging and dying.) These changes occur over time, and wouldn't be possible in the absence of Time. Death and Life both define some essential characteristics of existence (without which True Knowledge couldn't exist) and they also define some ways in which existence does change (allowing Time to occur).

Domains

The Domains define and describe discrete areas of existence. Like the Essences, each Domain affects the world, but whereas the imperatives effect all of existence, each Domain affects (or represents) only part of existence.

The Domains arise from the interplay of the Essences, each Domain being comprised of aspects of all the various imperatives. Which aspects are present and in what strength determine the characteristics of the Domain.

Darkness: Darkness is the opposite of light, the negative illumination. It isn't the mere absence of light, but rather a force equal in strength and reality to light. Darkness is more than physical, however, it is also mental, moral, and spiritual.

Negative emotions and passions such as greed, lust, or hatred are Darkness, vice and corruption are Darkness, dishonor and treachery are, despair and fear are Darkness, as is cruelty. Darkness is confusing, concealing, and corrupting. It casts doubt and makes the immoral seem moral, by obfuscating truth and validating lies. Darkness aids Death by encouraging destruction and prompting opposition to Light.

Darkness is primarily Death, with lesser but equal parts of True Knowledge and Time, and a smattering of Life.

Light: Light is the force of illumination, it reveals, clarifies, and enlightens. It is the opposite of Darkness and like Darkness is also mental, moral, and spiritual in nature.

Positive emotions and motives are light, such as love, benevolence, and virtue. Honor and truth are Light, as is bravery, compassion, and empathy.

Light inspires, removes doubt and fears, brings peace, and consoles the grieving. Light aids Life by encouraging creativity and prompting opposition to Darkness.

Light is primarily Life, with lesser but equal parts of True Knowledge and Time, and a smattering of Death.

Thought: Thought encompasses the mind and the mental and emotional qualities and processes of the Living, including awareness, creativity, intelligence, memories, impulses, desires, emotions, thoughts, beliefs, addictions, personality, dreams, willpower, knowledge, viewpoints, and mental illnesses. The Living are distinguished from the Unliving by having a mind, and so Thought (in combination with Life) gives rise to the Kindred.

Thought is related to both Light and Darkness (as it is primarily Life and Death) but is morally neutral. Its capacities can be put to either virtuous or corrupt ends. Light and Dark influence the thoughts of the Living.

Thought governs the possible properties of all minds, while each Kindred Arcane Knowledge covers the characteristics of that Kindred's minds.

Thought is composed of equal parts of Life and Death, with lesser but equal parts of Time and True Knowledge.

Magic: Magic is the ability to affect the natural world through supernatural means. It involves the manipulation of supernaturally significant symbols to evoke effects. The effects evoked by magic are created and operate in defiance of causality and the laws of the natural world.

The Magic Arcane Knowledge covers the ways in which magic affects the natural world, including describing and defining the function and limits of the four magics and the characteristics of spells, rites, and all other magical phenomena. Magic also involves the ways in which magic can affect itself. Spells to detect magic, extend magic, and destroy magic all rely on this Knowledge.

Magic arises from the interplay of all four Essences in equal portion and partakes of all four Essential imperatives: creation, destruction, stasis, and change. The intermingling of the four Essences allows magic to create results that are at variance with any one: magic can change things instantly, violating Time and can change the essential nature of something, violating True Knowledge. It can also create and destroy, thus embodying (and defying) Life and Death. Deviations from the Essences are temporary; sooner or later the imperatives reassert themselves and the normal state of existence

returns.

Magic is not the fundamental Arcane Knowledge, but it is the central Arcane Knowledge. Mages often view magic as the most important Domain, very nearly on par with the Essences. Magic, however, is not an imperative, as it affects only part of existence, and so is classified as a Domain.

Energy: Energy is the Domain of the many forces (natural or supernatural) that affect the world. Such forces include heat, cold, sound, silence, lightning, wind, waves, magnetism, movement, and so forth. All energies or forces fall under this Domain, excepting a few which belong to others (such as light.)

Each type of energy is a distinct manifestation of a single, primal energy. Mages often use this pure force, instead of specifying which energy form is used in a spell.

Energy often manifests in or emanates from various materials, for example heat emanates from fire, wind from air, waves from water. Uranium would be an earth (or, if refined, metal) that gives rise to a type of energy (in this case, radiation.)

The energy of life arises from the imperative of Life, and thus falls under that knowledge, but it is an energy and can be affected by Energy as well.

Light and Darkness are forces, but their added mental, moral, and spiritual characteristics raise them above the level of other forces, into whole Domains.

Energy is primarily Time, with lesser but equal portions of Life and Death, and a smattering of True Knowledge.

Material: Material encompasses the stuff of which everything is made. Both incorporeal and corporeal objects are composed of various materials. Material covers the components of the bodies of creatures, the Non-living, and the Elements.

Material is primarily True Knowledge, with lesser but equal parts of Life and Death, and a smattering of Time.

Fortune: Fortune is the Arcane Knowledge of the flow of events. It is both chance and fate, order and chaos, good luck and bad luck, and deals as much with the past and present as the future. Fortune is random, as events can unfold in unexpected ways, but it is ordered as well, as destiny is foreordained.

Mages have little influence with Fortune, and spells are almost wholly useless. Fortune can't be dictated or controlled, and attempts to do so have

unpredictable outcomes. Most mages leave well enough alone and study more stable AK's.

Fortune is composed of equal parts of Time and True Knowledge, with lesser but equal parts of Life and Death.

Arcane Knowledge Chart

As in *Torg*, the Domains can be arranged in a chart:

Magic (central): All 4 equally

Fortune (opposite Thought): Time and True Knowledge, Life & Death

Thought (opposite Fortune): Life and Death, Time and True Knowledge

Material (opposite Energy): True Knowledge, Life and Death, Time

Energy (opposite Material): Time, Life and Death, True Knowledge

Darkness (opposite Light): Death, Time and True Knowledge, Life

Light (opposite Darkness): Life, Time and True Knowledge, Death

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