

THE BLACK TAROT

Path of Spiritual Empowerment

By: Jason Sorrell

Creative Oddities Studios

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*We cannot know where we are going unless
we know from where we have been.*

The Black Tarot provides a unique look at the Tarot not as a tool for divination, but rather a tool for introspection. The altruistic symbolism and mythology which surrounds the Tarot is unabashedly stripped away, revealing a means for the student to gain a greater sense of self. Through The Black Tarot, the individual is encouraged to discover who they truly are and to seek independence and understanding which is rare amongst the mundane masses. Coupled with this rare perspective is the artwork of Jason Sorrell, bringing forth a vision of the Major Arcana that is fresh, dark, and disturbingly legible to even the inexperienced. Indeed, the primal energy behind these powerful images gives the reader a reason to pause, and take a fresh look at the Tarot and its purpose.

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AN INTRODUCTION

Or

How *The Black Tarot* Came to Be

I was given my “first” set of Tarot cards in 1992. I say “first” because I had purchased numerous sets of varying quality since the 1980’s and had been studying the Tarot for much of that time. A friend and fellow student of the occult gave the cards to me as an inside joke; part of the mythology around the Tarot involves the cards not working properly unless they are given to you as a gift. She and I both understood that this, along with many of the myths surrounding the Tarot, was pure bunk. I was already an accomplished reader of the cards and my understanding of their function allowed me to provide advice to those who sought my skills that was impressive in its accuracy and value.

Of course, I feel anyone who shares in my understanding of the Tarot and its function will always get similar results as my own.

I am an artist by trade, and it is through art and fantasy that my interest in the occult came about. The Tarot is an integral part of the occult in western society, and nearly every student of the occult that I know has owned at least one Tarot set in their lives. I became a collector of Tarot sets not because of any quest for greater understanding of their function but rather for the beauty of the artwork. Over the decades since the Tarot became a part of popular culture, numerous sets have been produced. This has created a myriad of options for the student of the Tarot,

catering to nearly every taste and personality. These various sets all have their proponents and critics, all hailing one set or another as “the set of choice.” This is another part of the mythology that is bunk; any Tarot which adheres to the core structure of the early sets is of value to the student, regardless of the artwork or source.

Over the years, many of my friends and admirers have sent me Tarot sets as gifts, bolstering my collection of not only cards, but material on those cards. Many of the sets in my collection are either designed by popular artists or are adaptations of their artwork fitted into the Tarot format. Artists like Salvador Dali, HR Giger, and even Manara have had their work produced as Tarot cards. Sometime in 2001, I began to re-examine the Tarot from a design standpoint and took my first serious steps into designing my own set. In that time, my goal was simply to create a modernized version of the Waite Tarot in my own style. Some of those early images made it into The Black Tarot, but most were dropped. I found that, in studying the various sets and structures of the cards, as well as their many interpretations, the imagery for many of the cards was contradictory, or even completely disassociated with the meaning behind the image. This provided no end of frustration for me in the design process, and I found I could not put my heart fully into what I was doing.

After several more years of study, I brought back into the daylight the images I had designed, and decided to take on the project again. By this time, my understanding of the Tarot and its design was more concrete, and the goals of the project had changed. While I would produce modern images, I decided against basing them on the popular Waite

cards because of the inherent flaws built into the Waite set. Instead, I looked to Italian and French sets from the 17th and 18th centuries or earlier, if such images were available. I chose also to examine more closely the structure in relation to the interpretation of the images, as opposed to the image itself, and to focus more on the meanings of the images when placed in order, instead of their traditional, divinatory interpretations. This resulted in much of the Christian Iconography being stripped away from my images, creating a more pagan set of cards. Finally, I imposed my own perspective on the images themselves, given the cards a greater sense of self-focus and pragmatism rather than the altruistic twist that has been inherent in most interpretations to this point.

The results, of course, are here for you to see.

In this effort, I compiled a great deal of information which I think will be invaluable to the student of the Tarot, information that one would be hard-pressed to find elsewhere. The Tarot has developed into an institution, complete with its own dogmas and agendas which often blunt the potential of the cards for the purpose of “touting the party line.” The information I present, however, is not meant to be taken as absolute. On the contrary, it is merely one more theory, one potential interpretation of the information we have. This book is written not to re-educate, but rather to offer another perspective which will hopefully deepen the reader’s understanding of the Tarot and increase their appreciation of the cards. I am, admittedly, merely one more seeker of knowledge on the path, and one other voice added to the cacophony.

I took great pleasure in producing this set of Tarot images. The Black Tarot was a labor of love, one which I take pride in sharing with the world. It is my fondest wish that you will enjoy my effort.

Jason Sorrell
February 22nd, 2006

TAROT AND THE LEFT HAND PATH

The Tarot has suffered a rather dubious reputation amongst followers of the Left Hand Path. This is due to the altruistic dogma which has been built up around the Tarot and its practitioners since the mid-1960s, and the Christian Iconography which has been a part of most traditional sets imagery. These factors have not only obscured the more practical use of the cards, but also put off the more practical-minded occultists.

The values preached by the purported “experts” of the Tarot have always focused on the cards as a means for divination and suggested that readers of the Tarot have a responsibility to use the information they divine for the benefit of their fellow man. This has obviously not kept these experts from attempting to turn a profit through the Tarot, either in their readings or through writing books (I am going to provide a strategy for earning money from reading the Tarot for others later in this book). Making a little money from a developed skill is perfectly acceptable, but it is hypocritical to also promote the idea that, as a reader of the Tarot, you owe something to society. If anything, the proof that the Tarot does work as they would claim should be in the reader’s knack for improving their station in life through its use. The idea of practicing Tarot divination for altruistic reasons is simply a means of limiting the field of potential readers for profit and their competition.

The Christian Iconography which has become embedded in many Tarot sets is simply a hold-over from simpler times. The Tarot has little to do with Christian Mythology, and the symbols which are meant to represent the divine are often out of place or pointless altogether. The Lovers image, for example, traditionally has a cherub representing divine influence toward the preferable choice. The choice being made, however, is an internal matter, and the figure in the image clearly already indicates the preference for the more alluring and less cautious option. The cherub, frankly, has no purpose in the image. The Tarot, as a tool, is meant to develop the self and the individual's control over their own lives. Divine influence plays no role in this process.

When the Tarot is removed from the realm of divination, and defined by its more practical purpose as a tool for introspection and personal development, the connection to the Left Hand Path becomes clearer. After all, the Left Hand Path is the path of pragmatism and self-development. The imagery of the Tarot describes the steps and potential pit-falls of spiritual development and self-awareness. The Black Tarot is an attempt to illuminate this purpose and reclaim the Tarot as a true occult tool, instead of a feel-good novelty marketed to the masses. As is typical, it is once again up to us fellows of the Left Hand Path to strip away the sugar-coated delusions and reveal the truth at the core of the subject. The Tarot, once fully understood as a tool for personal development, reveals its true value.

TAROT HISTORY

The history of the Tarot is a hotly debated issue amongst Tarot enthusiasts, despite its having little bearing on understanding or reading the Tarot itself. The Tarot has endured numerous issues throughout the history of the system that we are aware of and continues to amaze and enchant, even without a clear understanding of its origins. Despite this, some authors and students seem fixated on establishing a glorious occult history behind the Tarot in order to validate the system.

There have been attempts to attribute the Tarot, either in its modern state or the basis for its symbols, to ancient cultures, such as that of Egypt. Modern interpretations of the Tarot have even gone as far as reworking the symbols to directly make this link. However, there is no hard evidence that this is the case. The only tentative connection that can be made between the Tarot and the practices of ancient Egypt is through the reflection of occult ideas which may have had their origins in that culture, carried forward in time in many forms, and eventually expressed in the Tarot system. This is akin to saying that the French Lear jet was of American origin, because the Wright Brothers first accomplished flying a motorized manned vehicle at Kitty Hawk. Even more fanciful explanations, such as originations in Atlantis, should be totally disregarded. The Tarot history and mythology is muddled enough without further confusion from other myths. The Tarot is, of course, an allegorical system. Those symbols, however, are universal in nature,

and thus can easily be attributed to a variety of cultures. That is the beauty of the Tarot; the images can be accurately interpreted by nearly anyone, no matter what their nationality or level of experience in the occult.

In actuality, no Tarot cards exist which predate the 14th century. The images themselves have a medieval flavor, reflecting structural symbolism that was prevalent in those times, and imagery which was common in medieval life. If Tarot images had predated this era, we should expect to find some evidence of their existence, even if reflected in the imagery used in later designs. The original designs reflected the imagery of the times, thus we can assume that the designers, having nothing from the past to draw from, instead drew from the world around them.

As the Tarot developed, Renaissance imagery was added, reflecting the contemporary models of the image represented. It is doubtful, however, that the Tarot arose whole and complete in the 14th century. A working system would take decades to develop into the format which was then familiar even in the 14th century. It can logically be assumed that the Tarot could have begun as early as the 11th century, with the modern form with which we are familiar coming into existence no earlier than the mid 12th century. The earliest known cards link the Tarot to an Italian origin but did not become readily available to the general populace until the mid 1700's.

A.E. Waite was one of the first cartomancers to attempt to create a unified system for Tarot design. His system, however, was full of flaws, made obvious to anyone who understood the spiritual evolution expressed by the ordered Major Arcana. These flaws, such as the transposition of the

8th and 11th card, may have been purely accidental, or it may have been an intentional effort to obscure the potential of the Tarot in the hands of the uninitiated. Waite further obscured the meaning of the Tarot through his overt effort to attribute Egyptian origins to his images. Sadly, most modern students begin by investing their money in the Waite set or one based upon it, and either give up the Tarot in frustration or discover the truth.

Aleister Crowley goes largely unmentioned in most histories of the Tarot, despite the invaluable information he brought to light about the system. Crowley publicly corrected many of the Tarot mistakes made in the Waite systems, which, along with his reputation, might explain why most experts on the Tarot choose to overlook his contributions. The Thoth Set brings to us its own flaws, with renditions of the images; while beautiful, often so full of obscure occult references that the meaning of the original image is hopelessly lost. This would prove to be the case with many future renditions of the Tarot; the original designs would often be completely abandoned in order to suit the perspectives of the designers.

Numerous other sets have since been designed and books written on the Tarot, with no more light being shed toward its origins. In modern times, other divinatory systems have been added to the Tarot format, or even created outright and hailed as the next, best thing. This process, while making a wonderland of images and sets for the collector, has done little for the Tarot and its students.

A Theory of Origins

Numerous theories about the Tarot's origins have been suggested, some fanciful, some practical. Others have attempted to suggest a great occult link between the Tarot and ancient civilizations as a means to validate the Tarot as a tool. These suggestions range from ascribing, with some difficulty, origins in Ancient Egyptian history and mythology to completely fantastic origins in Atlantis or other mythological societies. More practical minds suggest that the Tarot is nothing more than an extension of typical playing cards, a theory itself as unlikely as one of Atlantean origins. The Tarot is a tool created for a purpose, and understanding that purpose could help illuminate the Tarot's value.

In ancient Rome, Christianity was an outlawed cult. Christians were forced to practice their religion in secret, often in the guise of other, similar religions, going as far as adapting the symbols of those religions to their purposes. This was a common practice for outlawed cults in numerous societies, taking the symbols of an authorized practice and using it to obscure the practices and beliefs of the non-sanctioned religion. Christians often adapted symbols and stories of Apollo to reflect the allegorical tales of Jesus of Nazareth. The symbols of the Apostles are themselves alchemic symbols of the four elements. This practice of obfuscation allowed the Christians to practice their beliefs in secret and deny any wrongdoing when discovered. It also helped convert Pagans to the fledgling religion, as they would find their former beliefs reflected in the stories of that religion.

The oppression of other religions became even more radical when the Christians came to power in the Roman Empire under Constantine. Pagan religions all over Europe were driven underground, and the followers of those beliefs were forced to either adapt or be destroyed. In many cases, the practices and symbols of those cultures were also adapted by the missionaries in their attempt to convert the Pagans to Christianity, just as during the conversion of Rome. Those cultures would often continue to practice their beliefs and customs, openly and in secret, through the cross adaptation of their religious symbols. Christian religious practices are immersed in this process, from the conversion of Pagan Gods into saints to the blatantly Pagan symbols in Christmas celebrations.

It has been suggested that the Pagan religions are less valid than Christian or other major religions because they lack any common documentation delineating their beliefs and practices. Pagans do lack any great religious written work. This is not difficult to understand with the majority of Pagan cultures being illiterate and their histories being oral. It is interesting to note that those who make this argument would also invalidate the religions of Ancient Egypt, despite those practices being well documented on the walls of the pyramids and other monuments. The Tarot, however, may provide documentation of Pagan beliefs oppressed by the Christian Church.

The 22 images of the Major Arcana, when placed in order, present a story which has been interpreted as representing the spiritual evolution of the individual. Certain ideas are presented in the Tarot which are integral to that development; the cycles of death and re-birth, the ideas of

unity between spirit and flesh, the embracing of the physical as equal in value to the spiritual. These ideals could not be openly expressed in the oppressive environment of Christian Europe, but the images could easily be interpreted as reminders of the Pagan oral tradition, even by the illiterate followers of those beliefs. Furthermore, the 22 images did not have to be read in order, but could be re-ordered to express a number of different allegorical tales, taken individually or in groups. Even the individual cards could be used as keys reflecting familiar stories from the Pagan traditions.

It is apparent that, over the course of their development, the Tarot images have had Christian symbols added. This was most likely to make their presence more acceptable amongst the populace. Standard playing cards represented the life of the court and allowed games to be played which represented courtly affairs. The images of the Tarot could easily be passed off as simply images of everyday life, with cards like the Lovers representing the chivalrous treatment of women, or Aeon the coming judgment. In this way, students of the occult could pass off their studies as simply “playing cards,” although this practice could have also lead to the idea that playing cards was a sinful frivolity. Furthermore, when we look at the potential time of the development of the Tarot, around the 12th and 13th centuries, we see not only the possibility for sets to be made, but also the environment for them to be necessary to this cause under the Inquisition.

The Tarot may have, in its own way, helped keep alive the Pagan ideals of pre-Christian Europe. While the direct link between those times and the students of the Tarot may have

been lost, the bourgeois and aristocratic dabblers of the occult would have found the cards and interpreted the symbols even without the aid of a teacher, which is why the Tarot has enjoyed such success. The process of discovering the past in the Tarot could have also lead to the idea that the future could be discovered in those images, as it is in knowing the past that one can recognize cycles that could repeat. While the theory is based on speculation, its evidence is observable in the cards.

Modern Practice

The Tarot came into vogue with other parlor games in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, although it had been a part of the popular conscious for a much longer period. In those days, the Tarot was a typical part of the “swami” routine, with most so-called spiritualists being nothing but charlatans who helped escalate the misconception that the Tarot is purely used for divination. This blurred the more practical use of the cards as a tool for introspection.

With the coming of World War II and the very public knowledge of Adolph Hitler’s interest in the occult, the Tarot fell out of the popular mainstream and was regulated to primarily a Hollywood prop in B horror films until the 1960’s. It was in the ‘60’s that all things spiritual were taken back off the shelf to be re-examined. The so called “Age of Aquarius” brought the Tarot into the hands of both the enlightened and unenlightened alike, creating not only a boom in Tarot study and available information, but also big business for the charlatans out to make a buck producing

cheap varied, and obscure sets which only further blurred meaning of the images.

Still, with some ebb and flow relative to the times, the Tarot has remained a part of the popular psyche. Modern cartomancers have stepped away from the ideas of the Tarot being used for purely divination and have begun to explore deeply the Tarot's value in meditation and spiritual understanding. Modern Tarot sets have become more varied, with new additions attempting to incorporate other occult tools and schools of thought into the Tarot system. However, the information on the Tarot has become more honest in the same period of time, as authors begin to take a responsibility for their craft. This provides the student with some hope of at least separating the wheat from the chafe, and discovering for themselves the Tarot and its potential.

TAROT STRUCTURE

The Structure of Sets

The modern Tarot is divided into two distinct sets; the 22 images of the Major Arcana, and the 56 images of the Minor Arcana. The Minor Arcana is further divided into four books; Wands, Swords, Chalices, and Pentacles. The 22 images of the Major Arcana represent archetypes along a path of spiritual development. Each image is ascribed a distinct meaning which develops from the image previous to it in numerical order. The Fool is meant to become the Magus; the Magus becomes the Witch, and so on. These symbols can be re-ordered and interpreted out of sequence, providing a variety of meanings relative to the questions we seek answers for. The images represent both positive and negative aspects of life, and cover all the major aspects of the human experience.

The inclusion of the Minor Arcana, given this perspective, seems redundant. The four books of the Minor Arcana each represent an aspect of life based on the alchemic elements; Wands for air and intellect, Swords for fire and creativity, Chalices for water and emotion, and Pentacles for earth and materialism*. Each numerical card is given a meaning based on numerology relative to its suit; 7 indicating successful achievement. The 7 of Wands indicates successful achievement in intellectual affairs, the 7 of Swords indicates success in creative affairs...etc. The Court Cards of each book, the four cards of each book depicting a human figure, represent a person of some

degree of influence relative to that sphere; the King of Chalices is an older man who is emotionally invested in the questioner, the Knave of Swords is a young woman who inspires creativity, etc. The problem is that the Major Arcana with its 22 images is whole and complete, touching upon all the ideas represented by the four books of the Minor Arcana.

It is likely that, at one point in history, the Major and Minor Arcana were two distinct sets. The Major Arcana were the “Tarot” set, while the Minor Arcana were playing cards which could be used for divination through numerology. The fact that the two sets had like purposes most probably is how they became a single set, with the Minor Arcana, as common playing cards, helping to obscure the occult significance of the Major Arcana.

Further evidence of this redundant inclusion is evident when you consider the numbers. 22 images may not seem like a significant amount. However, in a traditional 10-card read, 2,346,549,004,800 potential outcomes exist using just 22 cards. The likelihood of ever getting the same reading from the Major Arcana in one lifetime is next to impossible. The inclusion of 56 more images, which have their own distinct method of interpretation, would only serve to muddle the Tarot.

This is not to suggest that using the Minor Arcana invalidates the reading. For the use of the Black Tarot, however, only the 22 Major Arcana images are necessary. Should you choose to incorporate the Minor Arcana with the Major Arcana in your readings, most guides suggest that the Major Arcana images should be seen as stronger

themes, while the Minor Arcana should be interpreted as shades of those themes.

*In some systems, the symbols of Wands and Swords are reversed, indicating either a school of occult thought with a differing opinion about elemental associations, or an outright attempt to obscure the correct use of the Tarot from the uninitiated. Also, the prime element is left out of the symbolism.

Structure of the Cards

The structure underlying every image in the Major Arcana is the “card behind the card.” It is a progression which uses alchemic shapes delineating spirituality and materiality in various orders. The symbol most often appearing in the Tarot to represent spirituality is the triangle. When the triangle is pointed upward, it indicates a spiritual growth or a focus on higher values. When pointed downward, it suggests spiritual failing or introverted focus.

The form representing materiality is most often the square or rectangle. The square most often forms the base for the spiritual triangle, if properly aligned. The square is out of place if it is above the triangle, suggesting confusion in purpose. The square is also represented in some instances as a cruciform, such as the cross formed by the legs of the Hanging Man.

In some instances, two other shapes are introduced. In the Empress, the general shape of the image is that of a diamond, which suggests materialism on a higher plan of

thought. In other cards, a circle is used to represent a balanced or aligned spiritual state.

Circles are also used to represent duality, a major theme of the Tarot. This usually involves two circles, often joined to form a lemniscate shape, or a horizontal “figure-eight.” This symbol is less the mathematical symbol of “infinity,” and more a representation of the exchange of active and passive energies represented by the masculine Sun and the feminine Moon.

There are some images which have no underlying structure, suggesting either a void of direction or pure potential, depending on the situation. The Fool is one such image. While lack of structure may seem like a natural state, the goal represented by the Tarot is a balance of structure; with materialism in its proper position relative to spirituality, and all elements in balance.

Another symbolic cue prevalent in the Tarot is the use of red and blue. Red tones represent an active state, and blue represents a passive state. The shift in hues provides an indication of the direction of the image represented, from balance or neutral to predominately one state or another.

Finally, the structure of the Tarot images often carry with them some sense of elemental self, also drawn from alchemy. Some cards will have a strong “air” quality to them, suggesting a need for intellectual development and processes. Fire will represent creative effort or thinking, water a need for emotional development, and earth a material focus.

The proper interpretation of the images is developed by understanding these structural delineations. The Black Tarot incorporates these cues into the images in a manner

that, while subtle, is clearly visible. These will aide the reader greatly in their own attempts to interpret the images.

Reversed Images

While discussing the structure of the cards, it is important to also mention “reversed images” and their interpretation. When the reader orders the cards prior to a reading, it is also assumed that he arranges the cards so that they all face the same direction. Through the shuffling process, some of the images are bound to become inverted. Over time, some readers have come to interpret these inverted images in a manner different than their traditional interpretation, indicating most often (but not always) the opposite intention of the image.

This, of course, is completely unnecessary. The Tarot is full of imagery which is either neutral in its meaning or outright hostile, such as the House of God, Hanging Man, or Luna cards. Reversing images to add the potential of ominous import is not only redundant, it serves to further confuse the reading of the cards.

The answer that most reputable cartomancers have for this problem is a simple one; simply right the cards as you lay them out, and ignore reversals altogether.

LEARNING THE TAROT

Students of the Tarot often look at the task of learning the cards and systems with intimidation. After all, there are 22 images in the Major Arcana, each with their individual interpretations, structures, and nuances. There is also the multitude of connections between those images and the other cards which must be understood when reading them. Add to this the Minor Arcana with its four books and 56 images, the numerous variations of readings, and the seemingly infinite and differing materials available on the Tarot, and the task can seem quite daunting.

The key to learning the Tarot is practice, plain and simple. It is through practice that the student familiarizes themselves with the cards and the systems. Provided here is a method that will aid the student in this endeavor.

Selecting a Tarot Set

There is nothing mystical about selecting a set. Some books have written that for a set to work properly it must be a gift from another Tarot reader. This is a falsehood promoted by the old-guard of the Tarot Community created to limit the reading of the Tarot to a select few, and also to reduce competition for those who profit from the practice. Other myths include the idea of walking into a shop and picking a set at random; literally closing your eyes and allowing yourself to be “drawn” to a set. This is also pure nonsense. The average student already has a set in mind when they first look to procure one, and with the numerous

sets on the market, there exists a set for every taste and personality.

What I suggest is that you purchase a set that you find pleasing to the eye, something you will take pride in working with. As you learn the Tarot, you will no doubt look into acquiring other sets for various reasons, if only to meet the needs of your growing experience. However, once you have selected a set you favor to start with, I also suggest that the new student purchases a standard/traditional set, one in which the structure and format is most like the sets originally designed in the 17th and 18th centuries. Despite the flaws inherent in the design, the Waite set provides an excellent starter set to use in addition to your set of choice, as long as the student is aware of the flaws and seeks to work around them.

The next thing the new student should purchase is a good book on Tarot, or several good books. The more information the student has, the better. The student should study these guides while always keeping in mind that no one book will have the answers they seek, and no book is the ultimate authority on Tarot. The student will want, as a goal, to develop their own understanding of the Tarot; therefore these guides should only provide a foundation for reference and comparison. This foundation should be formed by noting the similarities between authors and weighing the differences carefully before assuming one opinion over another.

Of course, a good notebook would also be of great help. As much as possible, the study of the Tarot should be taken as a scientific process. Careful note-taking will allow you to develop your own ideas about the Tarot, and more easily

make comparisons between one source and another and recognize patterns between readings.

Learning the Cards

The process of learning the individual images and their meanings becomes simpler if the process is taken in parts. Begin with the individual cards, starting with the Major Arcana and the Fool card. Take a day to familiarize yourself with this one image. Study the image, and write down your impressions of it. What ideas does it suggest to you? What about the image most draws your attention?

After you have established your own impressions of the card, then look into your reference materials for more information. The traditional meanings will be of some value, but it is your own interpretations which you will need to rely on most often. Follow this process through with all 22 images of the Major Arcana, then go back and look into the groupings of the cards. These groupings will be discussed later. The Minor Arcana typically takes much less focus, as a blanket system focusing on the numbers and the spheres of each book is most often applied.

In reading the cards, the reader will need to make connections between one image and the next, establishing a sort of story based on the images and their relative positions. Developing an understanding of these connections is best accomplished by shuffling the 22 cards and drawing three at a time. Treat the cards as past, present, and future, and look for connections in that relation. Look for similarities in symbolism, imagery, and

structure. Note the predominance of colors, and how this predominance shifts from one image to the next.

Of course, once the student has gained some confidence about the meanings of the cards individually, they should try reading for others. They will usually have no shortage of willing volunteers for this process. It is best to begin with the 10 card reading traditional amongst readers before attempting the various readings and the nuances. Readings should be conducted in a scientific manner. Take notes on the reading, beginning with the general environment, time of day, weather conditions, etc. Also, do a short study of your subject. Note their disposition, their age, gender, and your overall impression. Discuss with them their interest in having a reading, their understanding of the cards, and any particular biases about the Tarot and the occult.

Proceed through the shuffle, noting any problems, and then begin the reading. Do this one card at a time, noting the card, the position, your impressions, and the impressions of the person being read for. Continue through this process, building one card upon another and noting the connections between each card. Then, note the complete reading and the conclusion.

You will then want to again question the person being read for, getting their impressions. If at all possible, get them to follow up with you at a later date in order to gauge the success of the reading and the impact it had on the subject.

By comparing these session notes, the student can establish which times were best for their readings, what impressions were most accurate, and other details which may help their readings become more accurate and effective. This will also help ensure that the student is not becoming

complacent in their effort, and provide an invaluable reference source for future readings.

READING THE TAROT

When reading the Tarot, for yourself or for another, it is important to keep in mind that the Tarot is an allegorical system. The images represent impressions and are not concrete. Furthermore, the outcome only suggests the most likely possibility based on the available facts. It is not absolute and immutable.

Another misconception about reading the Tarot is the assumption that the goal is to know the future. While the Tarot may reveal a potential future, it better represents a means of understanding the forces surrounding the individual, and allowing the individual to deal with their own issues with those forces by providing them an external format. The Tarot guides the reader as to what questions to ask related to a particular situation. It is best then to see the Tarot as less of an oracle and more of a therapeutic tool, providing insight to the mind of the individual which they themselves may have not been prepared to openly admit.

As to the possibility of divining the future, the Tarot achieves this end in much the same way that meteorologist achieve their weather forecasts. Essentially, the reader discerns through the images and discussion the present and past conditions. They can then draw conclusions based on the images projected by the Tarot and deductive logic.

There are a variety of forms involved in reading the Tarot. The student will find that each form has its purpose, depending upon the situation. Reading the Tarot is a matter of understanding the positions of the reading form, the

individual meanings of the images, and how the images relate relative to their position in the form used.

The Single-Card Draw

The Single-Card Draw is the simplest of readings and is best used for getting immediate answers to pressing questions. It is also the least accurate of all draws, relying on only one card. This draw is rarely used as a reading for others and is instead typically used by the individual cartomancer for their own needs.

The Triad

The Triad is known under a number of names, including the Fate Reading and the Reading of the Three Sisters. This is because the positions most often represent the past, present, and future. Another variation of the Triad outlines the positions as the disposition of the one for whom the reading is being done, the nature of the forces opposing the individual, and the most likely outcome resulting in the meeting of the two.

The Baphomet Spread

The Baphomet spread is a five card draw which explores the individual without a question being asked. It is used to gain a better understanding of the individual.

Position 1: The Ego

This card reveals who you think you are at the time it is drawn.

Position 2: The Other

This card reveals your fears and concerns, the place where you most likely fall short, your psychic stumbling block.

Position 3: The Id

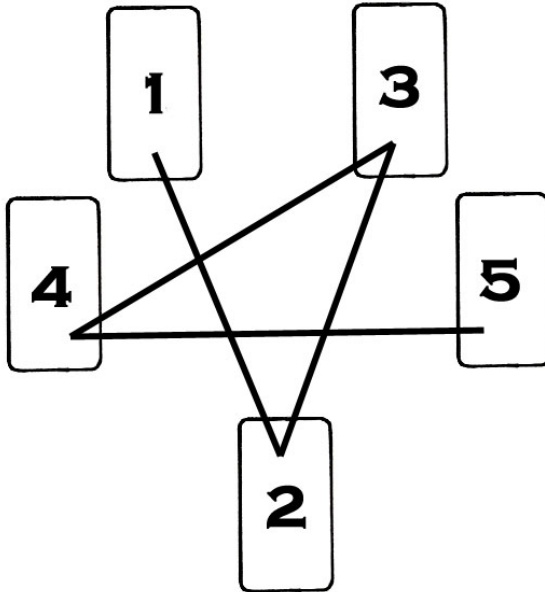
This card suggests the part of you which you try to repress, the self which balances out the whole against the fears and delusions.

Position 4: The Superego

This image suggests that which you recognize in the self, but dislike, and attempt to compensate for.

Position 5: The True Light

This image is the self in acceptance, the potential of the individual should they make peace between their disparate internal selves.



BAPHOMET SPREAD

The Ten Card Spread or Celtic Wheel

The Ten Card Spread is the traditional spread used by most cartomancers for divining the future.

Position 1: The Individual

This card reveals the individual's state relative to the question.

Position 2: The Obstacle

This card suggests the nature of the forces in opposition to the individual relative to the question.

Position 3: Near Future

This card suggests the immediate future resulting from the meeting of the two previous cards.

Position 4: Near Past

This card presents the immediate foundation which aligned the first two images against one another.

Position 5: Far Past

This card provides insight as to the nature of the individual which lead to their current state.

Position 6: Far Future

This card represents the potential eventuality should the current course be maintained in the individual's situation.

Position 7: The Self Revealed

This is the individual as he sees himself relative to the question, how the individual would like to be.

Position 8: External Influence

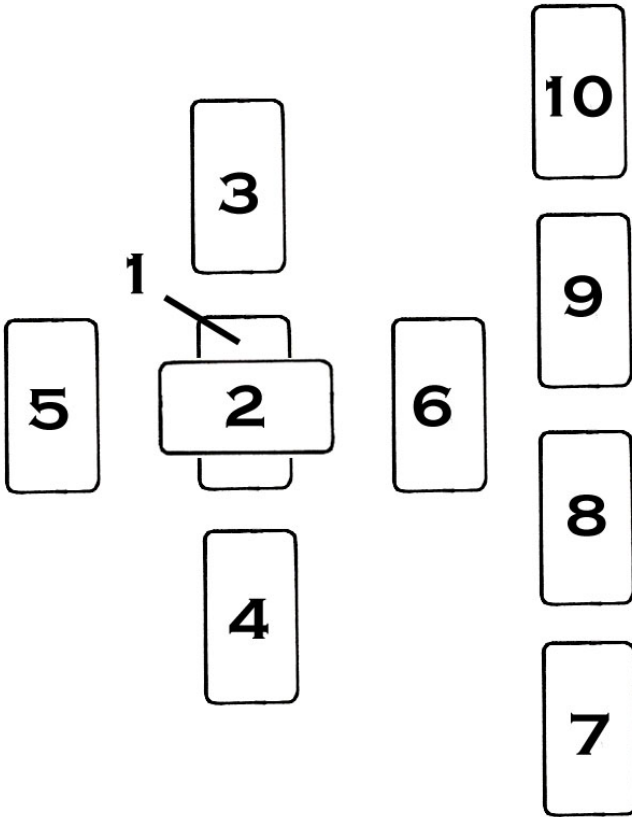
This shows the nature of the external forces involved in this matter which are influencing the individual.

Position 9: That Which is Feared

This image reveals that which the individual thinks will happen; most often what they hope will not occur.

Position 10: Potential Outcome

This represents the outcome of all the forces involved, should they remain aligned as they currently are.



**TEN CARD SPREAD
OR
CELTIC WHEEL**

Performing the Reading

There are two different perspectives which need to be understood before reading the Tarot, either for yourself or for another person; the view of the person for whom the Tarot is being read, or querent, and the view of the person reading the cards, the cartomancer. For the querent, the experience is a spiritual one, no matter how skeptical or jaded. They are expecting a mystical experience, an opportunity to connect with the paranormal. The process connects them to their subconscious, and thus the cartomancer should do all they can to promote this connection. The cartomancer, however, should approach each reading as a scientific experiment, doing all they can to duplicate the process as closely as possible in each attempt while remaining objective and aloof. For the cartomancer, each reading is an experiment, and should be meticulously documented.

For the optimum reading, timing and environment must be carefully managed, therefore it is suggested that all readings be scheduled in advance, if at all possible. Successful readings can be made spontaneously, but the accuracy will be enhanced and the over-all performance of the cartomancer is better served if time is taken to establish an atmosphere for each reading.

For the querent, the experience is not unlike the experience of when visiting a temple or church. There should be a transition from the “real” world, where things are concrete and predictable, to a world in which the wondrous is possible, even plausible. To achieve this, the optimum readings will be performed at a late hour, no earlier than 10

pm, and preferably midnight or later. This is not for the benefit of the Tarot's function, but for the querent, helping to establish in their mind the proper mentality. Of course, this is not always convenient, so the cartomancer must attempt to create the same mood artificially.

The environment in which the Tarot is read should be carefully managed. The querent should enter from the "real" world into a transitory space. This is achieved by simply having a clean, quiet room for the querent to wait in. This room should not be exceedingly well lit, but should have an average amount of lighting. Occult bric-a-brac should be in clear view; candles, books, magazines, and implements should be on display, again, for the purpose of creating the proper shift in the querent's mentality. While keeping this in mind, the cartomancer must also strive to maintain a professional appearance in this room in order to convey not only the occult mood, but also a serious validity and belief in what the cartomancer does. The querent should be allowed to wait, even offered something to drink, and given an opportunity to absorb as much of this transitional environment as possible. Obviously, to achieve this, it is best to have an assistant, someone who acts as a go-between for the querent from the "real" world to the world of the occult. When having a waiting area or assistant is not possible, then the cartomancer should greet the querent as the assistant would, and leave the room to prepare for the ritual. If the ritual will occur in the same room, then it should be prepared for that purpose, with candles and incense, as well as a table for reading, at ready.

The cartomancer's appearance is as much a part of the atmosphere for the querent as is the environment. Where, in the past, cartomancers would wear outlandish robes and headgear to designate their unique state, the modern cartomancer should appear as somewhere between a priest and a psychologist; clothing should be professional yet styled in a manner which is distinct from what might be expected in the professional world. For all intents and purposed, the cartomancer is acting as a priest or therapist, so each reading should begin with a discussion with the querent. The querent should be assured that the reading will be confidential, that there will be no parlor tricks, no sudden interruptions, and no gimmicks. The querent should also be told about the Tarot, the process of the ritual explained, and what expectations are reasonable. The querent should also be encouraged to discuss why they have come for a reading, going into what issues are at hand, what influences might be involved, and what steps have been taken or will be taken to resolve those issues.

The most important thing that can be done in preparing a subject for a reading is properly explaining the Tarot process. Even in a situation where no preparation is possible, a careful and detailed explanation, with an honest description of the reader's technique and thoughts on the process, will often be enough to place the subject in a frame of mind conducive to that process. This is because they will most likely appreciate the honesty of the cartomancer and feel they are being let in on secrets not privy to others.

While you should go to great lengths to create an experience for the querent, the querent will arrive as they are, and the cartomancer should take the time to make a

study of this. During the course of the discussion, the cartomancer should take notes, not only about what is said, but also how the querent is dressed, their emotional state, their apparent level of belief, and the cartomancer's own impressions about the querent. If, for any reason, either party is not comfortable with the situation, then a reading should not be performed.

When both parties are finally ready for the ritual, the cartomancer should take additional notes, as if preparing for a scientific experiment. The time and date should be recorded, as well as atmospheric conditions. Any unusual occurrences should also be noted, no matter how trivial they may seem. All of these factors could influence the reading. The purpose of the reading and the kind of reading should also be noted.

The ritual chamber, whether another room or the waiting room, should then be engaged. Artificial lighting should be either eliminated or minimized; instead the room should be lit with candles. All electronic devices should be disconnected, if they are present, unless the devices are being used for recording the ritual, which then should be noted. Cell phones and even watches should be shut-off and removed, and incense should be lit. This is all entirely for the benefit of the querent, which is the true instrument of the reading, as it is their subconscious that will influence the Tarot.

The querent and cartomancer should be seated directly across from one another. The table between them should have a solid colored cloth in place for the reading area, with candles on either side to provide light. The cartomancer should have their notebook ready, to record the

proceedings. The querent should be shown the cards, with the atouts being explained, as well as the meaning of the Tarot with the atouts in proper order. The positions should also be explained for the reading, depending on the type of reading that will be done. The cards should be placed face down in their proper order in front of the querent.

The cartomancer will now guide the querent through the process of shuffling and re-ordering the atouts, explaining the process again as they go through each step. First, the querent should clear their mind of all thoughts, and shuffle the cards, thinking of nothing else but shuffling the cards. They should continue to shuffle the cards until they are confident they are well shuffled. The purpose here is to “charge” the Tarot, to prepare is to receive the information from the querent for interpretation which is relevant to the issue at hand. It should be noted that this is the point where some querents will attempt to sabotage the process, often simply cutting the cards. If the cartomancer feels that the querent is not fully engaged in the process, the reading should be discontinued. The cartomancer cuts the cards in front of the querent, and instructs them to shuffle the Tarot again, this time thinking of the question, repeating the question in their minds as they shuffle, and shuffling until they feel the Tarot is once again well shuffled. The cartomancer will cut the cards again, and this time the querent will say their question aloud, then proceed to shuffle the cards while thinking about the question until the cards are well shuffled. The cartomancer will take this shuffling as is, and proceed with the reading from here.

The spread chosen will determine the significance of the atouts. Each card should be placed face up before the

querent one at a time, with the meaning of the atout and possible relevance being explained with each card. The cartomancer should continue taking notes between cards, encouraging the querent to offer their impressions and ask questions. With each successive card, the process should continue with the addition of an explanation of how the cards are tied together, creating a progression and building upon one another in meaning.

Once all the cards have been revealed, the total meaning should be taken in, and the querent should be again encouraged to explore the relevance in their own mind. The cartomancer should record the entire reading and any impressions, either that of the querent or their own. Based on the reading, the cartomancer should then advise the querent, providing some guidance based upon the reading. With the reading ritual complete, the querent should be asked to wait while the cartomancer organizes the Tarot and their own thoughts.

Finally, the cartomancer should ask for a review from the querent. This could be as simple as asking if they thought the reading was relevant, or if it was what they had expected. The querent should also be given a means of contacting the cartomancer in the future, and encouraged to follow-up with a report about the accuracy of the reading. The cartomancer should also inform the querent that they will be in contact within the week, as the cartomancer will review the reading themselves and provide any new information, if it becomes apparent in the personal review.

The purpose in maintaining notes is to establish a data base which the cartomancer can refer to in the future. For example, some atouts may take on a more significant

meaning for the reader or in particular situations which would not normally be noticed without having the notes to establish a pattern. Reading the Tarot can be accomplished without taking these steps, but doing so without the process does rob it of some of its potential. Successful cartomancers do all they can to avoid trivializing the Tarot reading, requiring that it be an experience, and not a novelty.

THE PATH OF AWARENESS

The 22 images of the Tarot represent, when placed in order, the evolution of spiritual awareness in the individual. This is something that those who look to the Tarot as strictly a tool for divination miss. The awakening and understanding of the inner self allows the individual to develop some control of their lives beyond the potential of the uninitiated and average person, thus providing a greater control over their individual lives. In this aspect, the individual who uses the Tarot for the purpose of spiritual development would not need them to divine the future. They would be determining the future for themselves.

This process begins with the Zero Card, the Fool. This is the natural beginning of the Tarot, a “null-state”. The Fool represents the every-man, unaware of his true potential, lulled into a sense of false-contentment by his place as a cog in the social machine. The Fool, however, is a frustrated soul. He is driven by urges he does not understand, and burdened by a potential he does not appreciate.

Should the Fool put down that burden and examine his potential, he develops into the Magus, the next card in the order. As the Fool is a tool of the social machine, it is only natural that, as the Magus, he seeks the adoration and

validation of his peers, themselves not yet awake to their own potential. The Magus has become unique, but cannot yet appreciate that uniqueness outside how his peers react to it. His potential is merely for show, and something he has not yet taken seriously enough to develop.

When the Magus bores with playing games for the entertainment of the mob and seeks to truly understand his self-worth, he becomes the Witch. The Witch is an introspective being, aware of her own self-worth and no longer requiring the validation of the crowd. She has become a spiritual creature, whereas the Magus was primarily material. The Witch's self-exploration allows her to develop into a being independent of society.

As the Witch's self-awareness deepens and begins to improve her lifestyle, she becomes the Empress. The Empress has become independent and disciplined enough that the internal depth and understanding developed begins to influence her outer world for her benefit. Essentially, the Empress has managed to get her internal house in order, and in doing so has created a foundation for her life.

When the Empress decides to take advantage of this shift in her life and affairs and apply her new discipline to her outer world, she becomes the Emperor. The Emperor is still a man of the people, but has clearly risen above his peers into someone more worthwhile, a state that is clearly recognized by those around him. The Emperor can now place into the same order his immediate environment as the Empress has with her internal self.

The Emperor, having accomplished an ordering of the individual's life before not available, frees the individual to begin to truly take on the examination and development of

the self. In this process, the Emperor becomes the Hierophant, a being aware of his own dualism, active and passive, masculine and feminine, material and spiritual, that was first developed in the Magus/Witch-Empress/Emperor cards. The Hierophant is the objective self, looking at this dualism and seeking a means to resolve it.

When the Hierophant internalizes these dualistic drives, he becomes the Lovers. The dualism competes for the attention of the individual, but both have his best interests at heart. One side nurtures, the other side thrills. Both are attractive, and both have their flaws. It is up to the Lover to know which drive to choose, and when to choose it.

As the Lovers develop a mastery of the exchange between one drive and another, he becomes the Chariot. In the Chariot, he is the Charioteer, and the two drives are the engines of his machine, propelling him forward. However, careful control must be maintained, lest the machine tear itself apart and throw the Charioteer to the ground.

Adjustment represents the Chariot whose mastery of the internal self is so complete that the transition from one side to another is constant and seamless. Adjustment represents the discipline over the internal self developed to its highest point without obliterating the distinction between the differing drives.

At this point, the awareness, and discipline developed in the individual has truly separated them from the common herd, and, as the Hermit, he may be feeling his first bout of anxiety over this separation. The Hermit looks back on the path behind him, and must decide if he can go forward. He has become a better person, spiritually, but at the price of no longer being able to fully relate to his former peers.

Should the Hermit be able to deal with his regret and move forward, he then seeks the Wheel. Through the Wheel, the individual comes to recognize the cycles of life of the typical man, and also the potential for himself to become separated from it to a place more tranquil and content.

With the new perspective of the Wheel come the first true attempts to assimilate the two opposing drives in the individual through Lust. Lust is the alchemic process of transfiguring one substance into another; thus primal urges are used to achieve spiritual understanding, and spiritual drives are used to create primal pleasure. The danger is in being burned by the process, of giving in to one urge or another and being devoured by the beast of our own passion.

Should Lust manage to elevate us further, we experience the separation from the common man only hinted at in the Hermit through the Hanging Man. The Hanging Man is completely disoriented, spiritually and materially backward and suffering for it. He stands at the edge of true spiritual awareness, but is still tortured by the passions and drives within, as well as the urge to belong to the herd.

The Hanging Man is the crucible which leads to the doorway of transformation, to Death. Death is a metaphysical end of one means of perspective, and the development of a new way of seeing reality. Death promises rebirth, should we be able to let our old life go.

Death leads to our transformed state in Arts. Spiritually, we are a new being, filled with real potential but still attached to some of our old methods. The play between our opposing drives is now much more under our control, and we can shift within ourselves from one drive to another as

smoothly as energy moving between positive and negative poles.

Our new state has two dangers. The first is spiritual complacency, a warning provided by Baphomet. While it is true we have risen quite high in our pursuit of the self, we must avoid letting our lofty state blind us or bind us to any particular dogma, internal or external. "Truth" may be easily proposed by others and ourselves, but we must never forget the real truth we seek from within.

The second danger is in the potential for material gain in our new state. Material values are just as sticky a snare as spiritual ones, and even more easily torn asunder. This is illustrated by the House of God, built to high and out of balance. It therefore cannot bare its own weight, and is struck down.

If we survive these dangers, we come to the next stage of development in the Star. The Star is an individual, alone in the void. The dual drives are no longer necessary, as they are and have always been of ourselves, and thus we are unified in purpose and thought. The Star, however, is truly alienated from all others, a state bringing both immense joy and regret.

It is this regret, the awareness of our spiritual selves and our separation from others which leads to Luna, and the harrowing created by our passion. Our spiritual awareness can lead to a paradise of our own design, but to know paradise we must first endure Hell.

Once we survive this internal harrowing, we find ourselves in a spiritual and internal paradise, described in Lucifer. Lucifer, the God of truth and light, has broken open the walls of paradise, were we are once again children free and

innocent, ready to face the world. Our dualism is no longer a burden or struggle, but a source of joy and comfort.

It is through our dualism that a new self arises in Aeon. We have discovered ourselves, developed to our potential, and now all that waits for us is to be, to see ourselves as worthy and prepared.

It is that state which is described by Lilith, the individual complete, balanced and at the same time unified and whole. Lilith reveals the potential of all humanity, just as the Magus revealed the potential of the individual, and thus begins the cycle anew.

THE CARDS

What follows is information on the individual cards themselves. Each image is given an in depth analysis, as well as their traditional meanings. The value of the traditional meanings is much like the general interpretations of astrological signs; broad brush strokes which provide an archetype for those symbols but not much practical information. The analysis as well is only a broad presentation of the images meaning; the cards do not provide real knowledge unless read in relation to one another and to the situation in which they are read. This is of tantamount importance for the reader of the cards to remember, the meaning of the images must be interpreted with each reading in respect to the current situation, and the meanings are not set in stone.

Black Tarot: A Note on Methodology in Design

Throughout the process of designing the Black Tarot, I consulted other trusted students of this tool for their opinions and advice, and I myself was also questioned about the process of design and my thinking behind the development of each image. There are at least five levels of meaning in each card, tied not only to imagery, but to their sequence in the over-all order of images, the color schemes, symbols, and the structure beneath the image itself. It has been my goal to rediscover the proper visual

interpretation of these images, recreating modern versions of the original structures and thereby recapturing the original intent of those images.

Of course, as a Satanist, I wanted to design a Tarot which was reflective of my own philosophies and beliefs, beliefs which I feel are reflected in the correct interpretation of the Tarot. These ideals are the foundations of occult thought, and while my embellishments give the images a “darker” feel than the one we are familiar with, they do not take away or mask the traditional structures and images upon which they are based. The inverted pentagrams which are prevalent in my designs have been long standing symbols of the occult attributable to a focus of forces toward the initiator, as opposed to directed from the initiator, as depicted by the upward-pointing pentagram. In some atouts, such as the Adjustment image, both these symbols are included, representing the ebb and flow of energies which are a part of our natural state. The focus of the Tarot is on the individual, therefore, in an occult sense, the predominance of pentagram symbols which suggest energy directed upon the self are appropriate.

Another obvious revision in my design is the stripping away of Christian symbols and re-investing those symbols with new meaning. For example, the Hermit in the Black Tarot is dressed in the garb of a monk or ranking member of traditional clergy, and the Hanging Man is obviously an inverted Messiac symbol from Christian mythology. The intent here was not to mock these religious icons as it was to suggest the dangers of dogmatic thinking in our society. The Christian symbols in the Black Tarot do not represent Christianity itself, but the societies and values built upon

Christianity. The Tarot is a study of the individual human spirit, and in order to achieve the potential suggested in the Tarot, the individual must free themselves from the programming of the social order, most immediately represented by the religious iconography of the Christian Church.

Modernizing the images meant freeing the Tarot from the limitations of its designers from antiquity, who I believe were pressured by the needs of the time to use Christian and classical imagery to communicate the meaning of the atouts. It also meant that revisions had to be made in order to make the image relevant to the current era, such as in the Lovers image. Ugliness in the era of the older designs denoted corruption and beauty symbolized purity. This is not the case in the current era nor is it applicable to the actual meaning of the atout. A number of symbols include modern images because the meaning can be more directly communicated in symbols which did not exist in antiquity.

I looked to a variety of Tarot sets for inspiration and understanding of structure, but most frequently used traditional sets from the 16th and 19th century, the Waite set, the Wirth Set, as these sets remain true to the Tarot structure, and the Thoth set for symbolic interpretation. Most often, these sets were compared and contrasted against one another in order to understand the underlying symbols which were familiar to them all. The results strip away the confusion that is associated with some of the images and the traditional meanings, which often appear to have little actual connection.

In the end, the Black Tarot is but one more interpretation, which will be compared and contrasted to other Tarot sets

by other students, adding to the over-all experience of the student involved. It is my purpose that the Black Tarot serves to enlighten and inspire, in both this school and other philosophical schools of the occult.



0 THE FOOL

The Fool is the “Zero Card”, representing the null state, or the apathy of the common man regarding his spiritual development. The Fool is little more than a cog in the social machine, a drone worker for whom all things are pre-packaged; his work, his home-life, his entertainment, and his sense of self. He accepts what society tells him about the world and even himself without much thought, and is a victim of forces, both internal and external, which he does not even think to comprehend. He is basically a man who lacks any real control of his life.

The Fool feels the weight of his potential as a human being merely as a burden, something which he must suffer under. He is dragged along by the demands of society and urged to act by primitive drives. He travels this path blindly, unwilling to take responsibility for himself and his actions. The Fool has only to set down his burden and examine its contents to begin to recognize his own self-worth, but fears disrupting the status quo.

The figure is the everyman, walking the path of life with his burden slung over his shoulder. He wears the uniform of the modern worker, the colors representing the spiritual and primal potential within. Dragging him by the throat is the pressures of time, something he has not learned to make his friend. He is a slave to the schedules of others. Behind him is the beast of his lower urges, encouraging him to waste himself on frivolity and pointless endeavors, satisfying only his most basic needs. The Fool does not

look were he is going, which will eventually lead to falling off a cliff.

The Fool suggests a need for us to reach for purpose in our lives, and to take more responsibility for our station and situation. No one will recognize our worth if we do not recognize it for ourselves. Our awareness is not a burden to be buried under cheap distractions, but rather to be honed and sharpened for our personal benefit.

The traditional meaning of the Fool indicates a dangerous passivity or apathy, and a failure to recognize the true nature of our position. Its real value is as an indicator to seek our own self-worth and to begin to take responsibility for our lives.



I THE MAGUS

The first card of the Major Arcana (not counting the Fool, technically the “zero” card) is the Magus. The Magus represents the individual having first discovered their potential, but that potential has yet to be developed. This is an individual who has become aware of his inherent self-worth, but not yet what that value is. He looks for the answers in the eyes of others, by putting his potential on display and allowing others to tell him what the value is for how much they are impressed. For those of us of the Left Hand Path, it is an affirmation of our internal power and self-awareness, the beginning of the recognition that we are different from the herd, and that difference should be explored and developed.

The Magus represents the individual on the precipice of self-discovery, indicating that while they may be aware of their potential, they have not yet made the choice to fully engage this potential. The Magus is a reflection of ourselves as he is a reflection of the needs of his observers; he requires the validation of others to feel he has any self-worth.

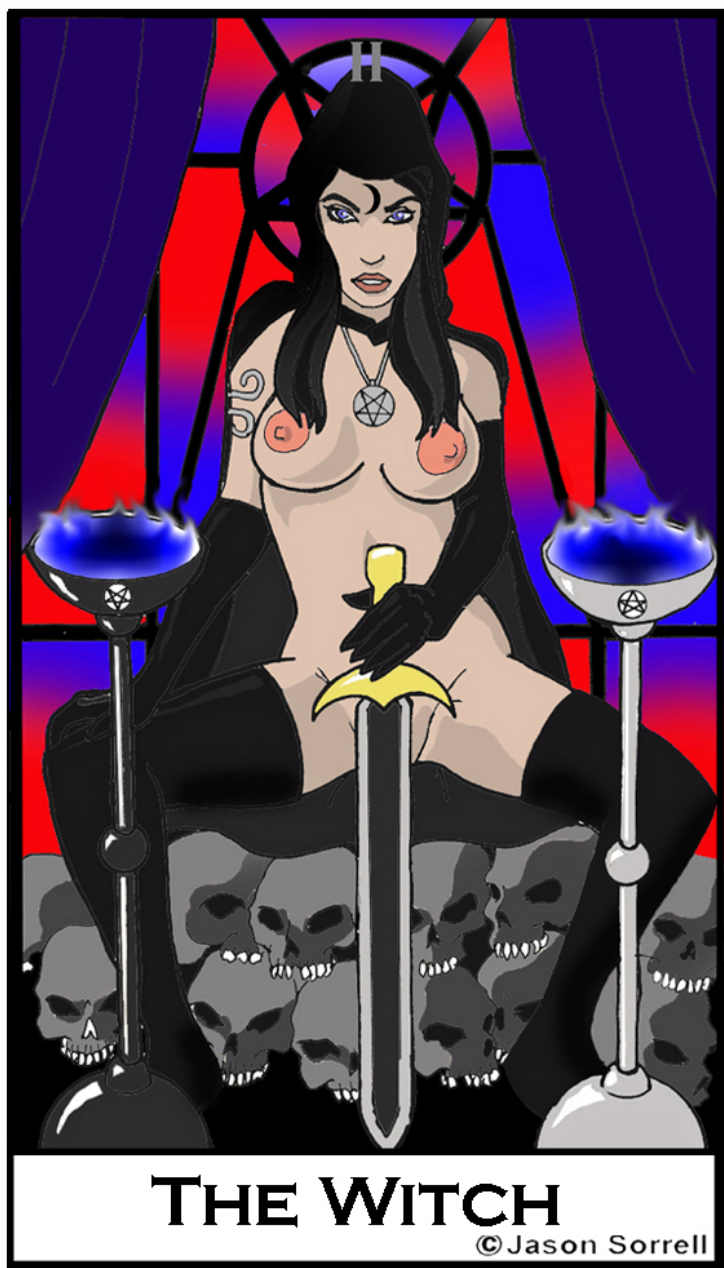
The figure faces the observer, putting on a show for their edification and a display of power. Before him on the table are the tools which he has discovered; the chalice, the pentacle, and the wand (represented by the baseball bat). He holds aloft the sword, the most direct symbol of his power amongst his tools. These symbols are repeated in other items on the table; the internet representing the depths of the chalice and water element, the money representing

the pentacle and materiality, and the candle represents the sword and the fire element. The wand, representing the element of air, is not doubled. The individual is not being reasonable, the sphere of air, and therefore only sees the aggressive aspect of the wand. Structurally, the card is split horizontally through the middle, and the figure is divided into his higher and lower selves. The Magus is obviously focused on his spiritual self, he is man realized, and seeks to separate himself from his baser desires, even though they are his foundations. The red and blue colors in the background indicate the conflict between passive and active desires. The pentacles and black robes represent a self focus, and the skull is a reminder of mortality, that the time for action is now. The infinity symbol on the blade indicates the ultimate goal of spiritual growth, connecting with infinity.

The Magus indicates a need for us to take up the exploration of our self worth. It is clear that we have potential, but we treat this potential as if it has no particular value, a mere contrivance to gain the attentions and favors of those around us. Instead, we need to take up our tools and develop them to their full potential.

The traditional meaning of the card indicates a commencement in activity, the urge to act, especially to communicate in some way. For us of the Left Hand of the Path, the Magus is an indicator to take action, to begin to focus on our ideas and desires, even if it means denying the needs of others.

The astrological connections of this card are the dualistic zodiac of Gemini and the symbolism of Mercury. The Gemini aspect is represented in the awareness of self but the requirement of validation from others, a paradox. Mercury provides the need for action, particularly communication.



THE WITCH

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II THE WITCH

The Witch (traditionally titled “The High Priestess”) is the 2nd card of the Major Arcana. In this card, the Magus has progressed from looking for validation in the direct display of talent to validation through the interest in the mystery of the self. As the Magus is outwardly active and internally passive, the Witch is outwardly passive and internally active. The Magus acts out, the Witch invites in. The Witch is aware of the internal nature of her power and potential, and is aware of the introspective required to explore it. Passive contemplation begins the development of that potential.

The figure sits facing the observer, just as the Magus in the previous card. As the Magus is closed and anonymous, the Witch is clearly aware of her self and confident, displaying her charms as a means of invitation. Structurally, the dissolution between the spiritual and primal in the Magus is acknowledged in the Witch, who is aware of the primal foundation allowing for her spiritual exploration. The rectangular base formed by her legs, the stands, and the throne of skulls represents a stable, material foundation, while her arm position and upper-body form a triangle representing higher spiritual focus. In the older cards, the cloaks of the Witch indicated a vaginal quality; this image is more direct in its sexuality. The Witch also has the sword from the Magus, now drawn downward as a screen and indicating self-focus in her spiritual growth. The incense burners represent both Left and Right Hand Paths. The passive and active background from the Magus is also

present. Upon her forehead is a crescent moon, symbol of introspective and emotional depth. In nearly every way, The Witch is the feminine introspective answer to the masculine Magus. Her power is not in what she can do, but in who she is.

In a formal pattern, the Witch traditionally indicates the trust in intuitive responses, seeking out hidden mysteries, and quiet contemplation. For the Left Hand Path, it indicates the above and the use of the unknown about the self as opposed to the obvious. More power can be found in what is assumed about the individual than in what can be proven by the individual, and often it is wise to allow people to make their own assumptions rather than provide answers. There is power in silence.

The card is tied to Saturn and the Moon, emphasizing introspective and the feminine.



THE EMPRESS

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III THE EMPRESS

The Empress is the third card of the Major Arcana, and represents the transition of the Magus through the Witch into a being that is outwardly spiritually empowered. The Empress symbolizes the strength which results from spiritual awareness and mastery of the internal self. Where the Witch expressed introspection and internal power, the Empress now uses that understanding of the internal self to take control of their lives.

The Empress sits facing the observer, as does her mate, the Emperor. The two cards are meant to be seen together; the joined duality of the male and female energies hinting at the focus of the next cycle. The Empress is the expression of lunar and feminine energies, represented in some cultures as Dianic that of the huntress/goddess. She wears a mask of royalty, her own face too divine to be seen directly, a symbol of her regal nature. The mask is silver, the metal of the Moon, as is her shield. She holds the shield above her waist to signify that her focus is still in the spiritual realm. Her gown is a royal purple, and she is surrounded by a blue aura of passivity. However, the wing-forms behind her are red, a symbol of spiritual activity. Unlike the Witch, who was passive and contemplative, the Empress is active in her internal and spiritual development. She holds the sword point down, a symbol of her ability to act, but her preference to react as opposed to initiate action. Her crown is also a lunar symbol, the crescent faced up like a cup, holding in power. She rules from the darkness of the Left Hand Path, from the internal-self, and behind her is a

lunar disc. By placing the two cards side-by-side, the lunar disc of the Empress compliments the solar disc of the Emperor, forming the symbol of infinity.

The traditional interpretation of the Empress emphasizes wisdom, spiritual strength, and civility. For those of us of the Left Hand Path, the Empress indicates a need to master and develop the spiritual self, especially in a manner that can be seen as an example to others.

The card is tied strongly to lunar energies, suggesting spiritual and magickal empowerment.



THE EMPEROR

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IV THE EMPEROR

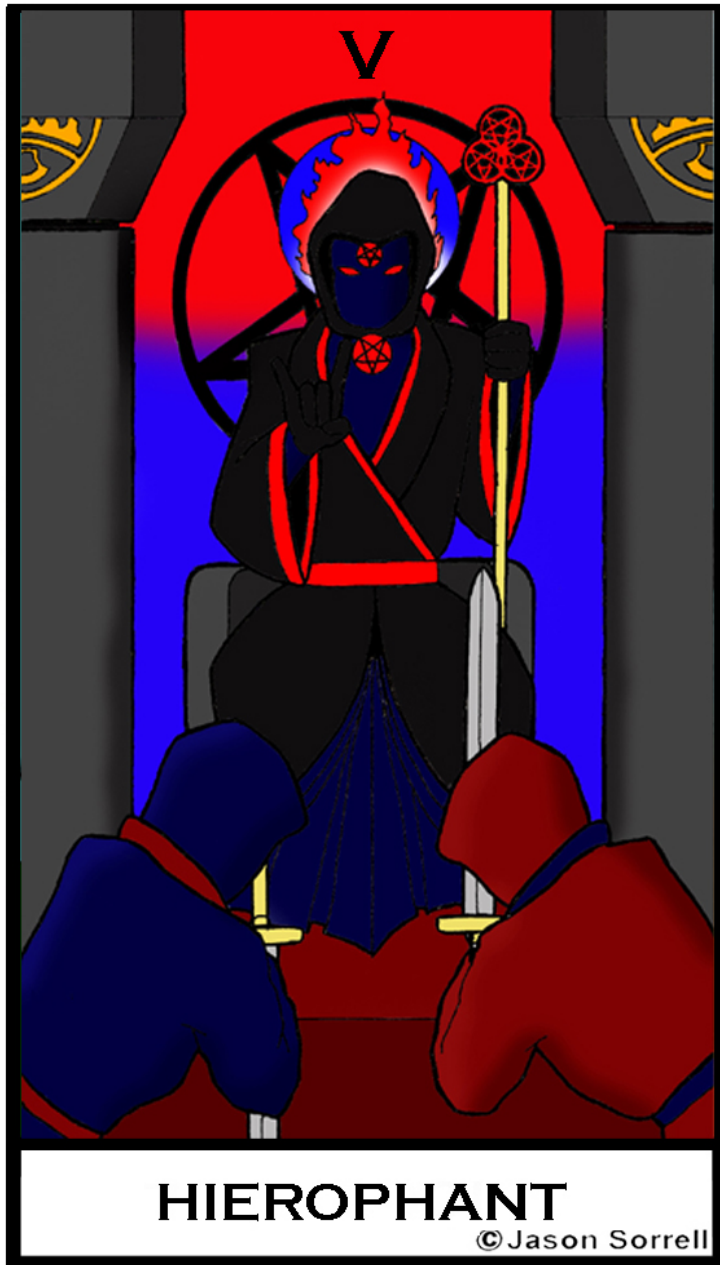
The Fourth Card of the Major Arcana is The Emperor. This represents the Magus having evolved through the Witch and the Empress into full awareness of his potential and the beginnings of manifestation of that potential in a real sense. Where the Empress was master of her inner self, the Emperor seeks to master the forces in his immediate domain. The Emperor is the urge to order in the individual's life. The Emperor also ends the first cycle of the Major Arcana, which was initiated by the Fool. The Emperor is the self discovered and embraced; the next cycle will deal with the exploration of what the self is.

The Emperor sits facing the observer, as did his mate, the Empress. The two cards are meant to be seen together; the joined duality of the male and female energies hinting at the focus of the next cycle. As the Empress was a lunar and feminine card, so the Emperor is solar and masculine. His mask of royalty is gold, and he is adorned with red horns of activity, strength, and fertility. His dragon-shield is also gold, and compliments the shield of the Empress, as does the symbol on his mask, re-iterating the fact that they are truly two sides of the same being. The position of the shield, relative to the position of the shield in the Empress, represents grounded spirituality. The Empress held spirituality aloft, this was her focus and source of power. The Emperor is a spiritual being but uses that power to create changes in his material environment. The Emperor represents activity and is surrounded by a red aura. The solar disc represents the forces of materiality at work in the

Emperor, and when combined with his mate, the symbols of sun and moon form the lemniscates symbol of eternity. A ram's skull is in the dark background, symbolizing the earthy and material nature of this card, and of course, the Emperor rules from the darkness of the Left Hand Path.

Traditional interpretations emphasize the authoritarian aspects of this symbol, but one should consider more the implications of being an "emperor" of one's own life as opposed to having an "emperor" over you. Tradition suggests public authority, strength, and certainty, but for those of us of the Left Hand Path, the symbol should be seen as one of personal control and the ordering of our life and environment.

The card is tied to Mars and Jupiter, representing both the masculine aspects of strength and materiality.



V THE HIEROPHANT

The Hierophant is the fifth card of the Tarot, and represents the beginning of a cycle exploring a more concentrated effort to examine the self. The individual recognizes the duality of the self; the spiritual drive and the primal drive, both serving the self in their own ways while also opposing one another. In this recognition, a third self is developed, the objective self, represented by the priestly figure in the image. The drives supplicate themselves to this objective self, who must now weigh and judge the drives for their value and purpose.

The Hierophant indicates that the individual has reached a point where the self can truly be examined and developed. With the individual's potential recognized and embraced, the tools for development must now be gathered and appraised. These tools are the drives of higher and lower urges, once a burden to the Fool, now developed into our servants, though their methods conflict with one another.

It should be noted that while the two supplicants face away from the observer toward the Hierophant, the Hierophant is not addressing them. The Hierophant instead looks directly at the observer, as if to counsel the self. The supplicants, one red for activity, one blue for passivity, each carry swords at the ready indicative of their natures, one pointed up and the other pointed down. The Hierophant's robes contain both red and blue, but are primarily the passive color, indicating the urge to examine and move with caution. He holds in his hand a staff, indicative of the

wand of the Magus, and the need for intellectualization.

Structurally, the image is that of the spiritual triangle, pointed upward, and formed by the body and head of the Hierophant. The Triangle is supported by the two circles formed by the supplicants' heads. Normally, these circles would be joined to form a lemniscate shape, but their distance indicates the disjointed nature of their yet undeveloped relationship.

The Hierophant represents the need to recognize the duality of our selves, and to begin to resolve their disjointed nature. In this effort, we made need to seek a teacher, or to take on the teacher role ourselves in regulating our own behavior.

The traditional meaning suggests duty, conscience, and a disposition for religious life, a far cry from its actual meaning.



VI THE LOVERS

The sixth card of the Major Arcana is often mistakenly taken to mean a decision of romantic import. Modern images of the Lovers re-enforces this error, having changed the image so drastically that the original message is lost. The Lovers continues the progression of addressing the duality of self first explored in the Hierophant. In the past card, the individual had developed to a point where he recognized and understood the conflicting forces within him. Now, in this image, he tries to negotiate and mediate between those forces.

The image represents the individual making a choice, but the choice is not about love, but rather a decision between reason and emotion. The image is of three figures, who in reality are all one individual. The central, male figure is as the Hierophant in the last card, the individuals newly developed sense of self and perspective. The supplicants from the last image have now transformed into the two women; one a sultry temptress and the other a nun. The temptress represents the primal urge, but also the material and reasoning urge. The nun represents the spiritual and emotional urge. This is a revision from the antiquated image, which represented reason as an undesirable crone and emotion as a young woman. In the original image, the male favored the young woman over the crone, emotion over reason. However, for those of the Left Hand Path, this would be incorrect, reason an indulgence prove to be a sultry lover and preferable to the demands and restrictions of spirituality and emotion. The central figure, although

favoring reason, has not abandoned spirituality, and it is through the acceptance of both urges that the individual progresses. In the older versions, divine inspiration was represented by a cherub above the male pointing his arrow toward the young woman. For our purposes, inspiration comes from within, and is indicated by the flaming halo about the male figure's head. The primal urge, represented by the snake, is an active energy, the color of which is also present in the lining of the male figure's coat.

In later interpretations, the drama represented by this card was removed, leaving a male and female figure along with an angelic presence between them. This nearly loses the original intent of the image, and it is unclear why it would be interpreted as such.

The Lovers bring the individual into the reality of the new awareness and perspective which he has acquired. This perspective demands a constant weighing and negotiating between opposing internal urges, and requires a careful balance be maintained.

The traditional meaning of the card indicates a need for a responsible choice, weighing matters objectively.

The astrological connections of this card are obviously influenced by Venus and are sometimes interpreted as the struggle between love and lust.



VII THE CHARIOT

The seventh card of the Major Arcana is the Chariot. The Chariot illustrates the individual having achieved some tandem integration of the two opposing drives in his life. The Charioteer has come to understand that through careful control and discipline, the energy generated by the opposition of the two separate urges of his internal self can be used to carry him higher. This is the alchemic principle of the union of opposites bringing about change and increase. The union of opposites is both the source of creation and destruction.

The Chariot describes a man at the reins of a finally crafted and tuned machine. The machine and its driver represent the entire self; the driver is the objective self-developed in the Hierophant, and the engines of the machine are the two opposed forces. The driver is carried aloft by the machine, but must keep his hands at the controls at all times. The engines drive the machine forward, but are pointed in opposing directions; threatening to tear the machine apart should the driver's control slip.

The Chariot rides forward across the sky, toward the observer. The machine is bio-organic, possessing a life of its own. At either side are the active and passive drives of the machine, pointing in opposite forward directions. It is through the control of the Charioteer, the Magus from the first image, which keeps the engines from tearing the machine apart and keeps the machine aloft. This illustrates the relationship between the higher and lower selves. The lower self, the body of the machine, is driven by its urges.

Only through the management of the higher-self is the whole self kept together and coherent. However, the higher-self needs the lower-self to be sound and well-developed in order to achieve its maximum potential.

Structurally, the image is a spiritual triangle supported by a material square base, a form we have seen before. Within the material circle are two spheres representing the dualistic drives, as in the Hierophant card. Unlike the Hierophant, however, the drives are closer together, nearly connected. This suggests that the drives are coming more into alignment, and support the spiritual development of the individual through their tandem exchange.

The Chariot represents the ideal man first realized. The ideal man has fully developed his faculties, has a clear sense of direction, carefully managed control of his emotions, a developed physique and a well organized mind. This is a tentative state, however, barely holding itself together. The fact of the matter is that this state can not hope to last, the strain of maintaining this type of control and total vigilance is enormous. The Chariot must develop further if it is to realize this state as a natural occurrence.

The traditional meaning of this card suggests triumph over obstacles, success in enterprises, talents rightly exercised, and progress in travel. The meaning we should draw from it, however, is the successful, if temporary control of the forces in one's life.



VIII ADJUSTMENT

The Adjustment Card is the eighth card of the Major Arcana. It represents a point of true balance achieved through discipline and careful management of the emotional self. Unlike the Chariot of the previous image, this state of balance is more natural and secure. Adjustment represents the individual in a state of perfect neutrality between the two opposing forces driving her, neutrality maintained by also balancing the body and spirit.

This is a natural point of self-examination on the path of enlightenment described by the Tarot. From this centered and disciplined perspective, the individual is best suited to determine if continuing on this path is worth the effort, or if they have the even have stamina to journey further. The individual is at a cross-road, and this state of balance is, as with the Chariot, temporary, as it must give way to one direction or another.

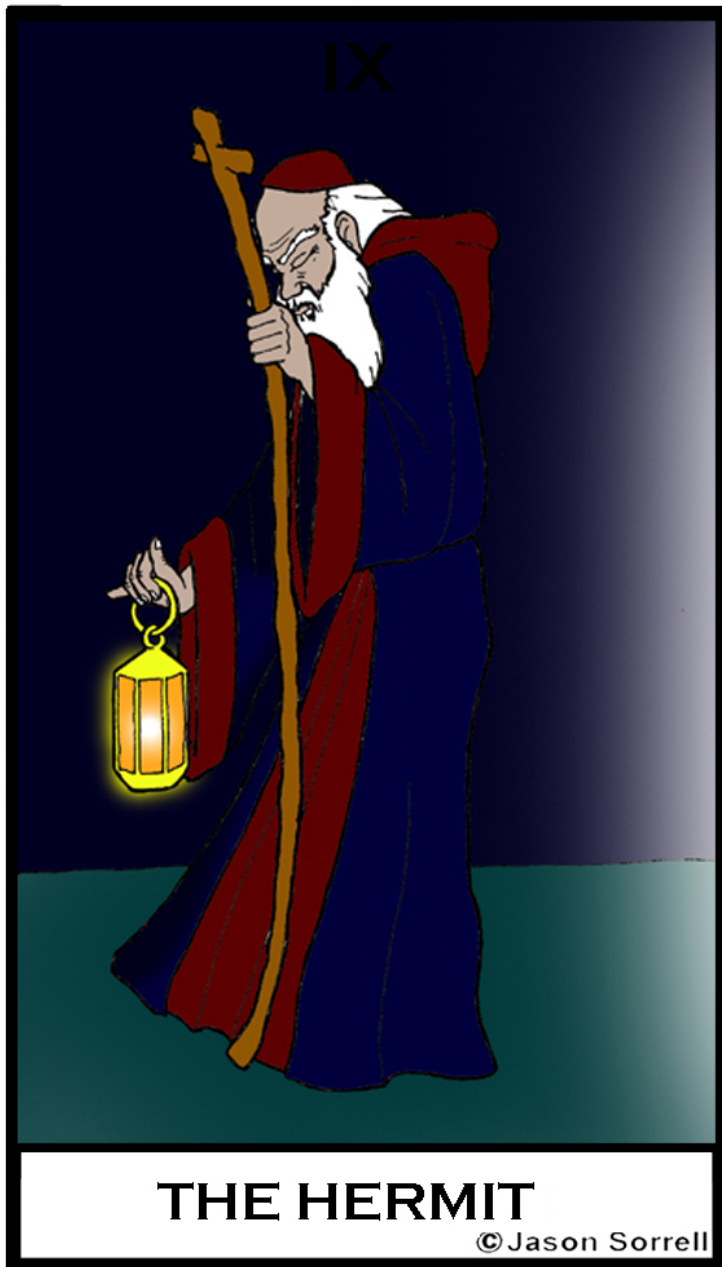
The image is of a woman in meditation, seated in the lotus position. In her left hand, she holds aloft the sword at the ready. About her are symbols; the upward-pointed pentagram of the Right Hand Path, the downward-pointed pentagram of the Left Hand Path, and between them both, the neutral “yin-yang” symbol. Despite her centered state, she indicates with her right hand her preference, and the means by which she has achieved and maintained this state. It has not been through altruistic acts or an attempt to be neutral, but rather through intense self-focus and discipline indicative of the Left Hand Path.

Adjustment suggests that deliberation must be undertaken,

that a choice must be made on how best to proceed. It also indicates a need for neutral bias regarding the situation at hand. The individual must lay aside any passion he may feel for one choice or another, and instead seek a fair and balanced decision.

The structure of the card is that of an oval, formed by the hands of the woman in the air and the symbols around her base. She is at the center of a neutral place, her navel at the very center of the image. This indicates a need to look inwardly.

The traditional meaning of the image is equilibrium, regularity, order, tranquility, and stability. It indicates the reason of law and the natural order.



IX THE HERMIT

The ninth card is one of the simplest images in the Tarot. The Hermit suggests a search of some kind. What that search may be is relative to its position in the reading. In the ordered Major Arcana, it is a search for the past, suggesting that the individual has evolved to a point where he is beginning to feel the gap his evolution has placed between himself and the common man. The Hermit longs for the days when mundane activities and trivial frivolities were a source of contentment. Ignorance is bliss, after all, and the individual is now so far from ignorance.

The Hermit represents the individual in a state of regret. A shift in attitude must occur for the individual to progress. He must not look to the life he is leaving behind, but instead forward to the life that lies before him. This is why the Hermit is a hermit; he is not ready to advance, yet he has become too advanced to rejoin his peers.

The most immediate thing we observe is the direction the Hermit faces; turned toward the left of the card. We in western society read left to right, so our eye is trained to naturally progress in this direction, associating the left of an image with the past, and the right with the future. The Hermit has his back turned toward the well-lit future, and instead holds his lantern toward the murky past. The future is so bright that the Hermit could abandon his lantern, if he would but turn and face what awaits him.

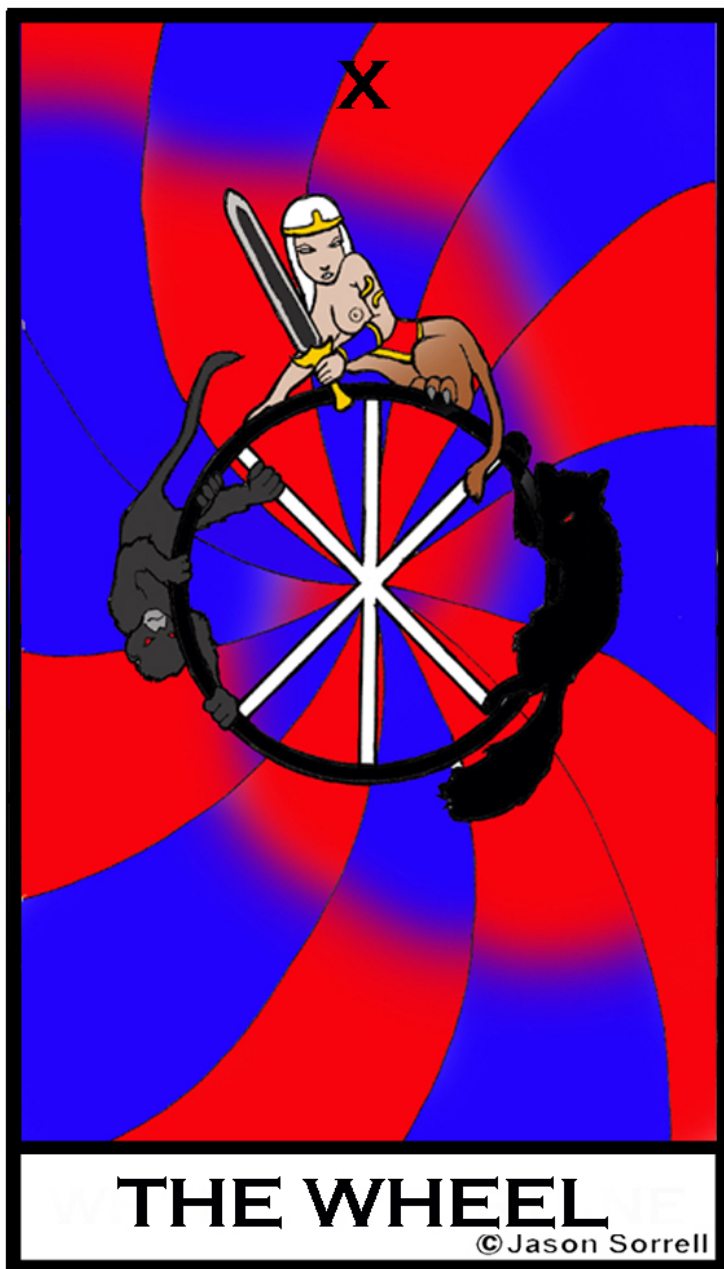
The Hermit is clearly a religious figure of some sort. His blue robes are lined in red, suggesting that he is passive to the outward world, and inwardly focused. This re-iterates

his lack of awareness for what awaits him, and his need to try to re-live his memories. He is stopped and leans heavily on his staff; the future is as much a burden as his past, and he is in danger of suffering the same attitude towards his potential as the Fool, despite knowing something of that potential. The fact that he is a religious figure is indicative of his social obligations; the pressures society place on him to conform.

The structure of the card is also very simple, being purely a material rectangle. This is indicative of the worldly matters that weigh down the spiritual self reflected in this image.

The Hermit tells us that we cannot live in the past and progress into the future, and that we must be willing to let go of our former lives in order to progress and achieve our potential. It also suggests that society cannot tell us who we are, and not matter what the pressures laid upon us, we must seek our true selves.

The traditional meaning indicates a withdrawal from social life, but that reflects only a part of its real intent. It also traditionally indicates silence, meditation, and study.



X THE WHEEL

The tenth card, the Wheel, provides an interesting look at life in the world around us. It represents the cycles of that life, the ebb and flow between our spiritual and primal selves, and the transitions we experience progressing from one drive to the next.

To really begin to understand the Wheel, we must discuss the image first. The Wheel is a circle with spokes, and traveling around it are three figures. The first figure, on the right, is a wolf, clinging to the Wheel as it progresses upward. The wolf represents the primal self evolving. At the top of the wheel is a sphinx, a figure somewhere between animal and human, a perfect blend of primal and spiritual. Despite this seeming like an ideal state, it is only temporary, for on the decent is the ape, a representation of our spiritual selves devolving.

Many commentators on the Wheel fail to mention the fourth position, the bottom of the Wheel. There is nothing here, suggesting that this is from where we originate, and where we are destined to return, if we remain a part of this cycle. It is also interesting to note that the Wheel travels in reverse to what we consider a natural direction. It moves counter-clockwise. This indicates that, despite the progression represented being the status-quo, this is not the natural order. The progression described by the wheel is one driven by fear, by the base need to simply survive. The spiritually aware come to know another drive, that of love, and must seek to abandon the fear cycle and enter into the progression of higher urges.

Our focus is on the perimeter of the Wheel, where all the activity seems to be taking place. This is typical of our lives; we look to the surface of things, and rarely see the greater meaning beneath. There are only six spokes to this Wheel, instead of the eight that we would expect if the Wheel was meant to be a statement about time. The six spokes form a symbol familiar in Northern-European Pagan religions. The three upper-spokes form a downward pointing arrow, symbolic of the solar God. The upward pointing spokes form an arrow symbolic of the earth Goddess. Their union at the center of the Wheel is the symbol of creation. It is the central point which we must find in ourselves, the higher purpose to which we are drawn. This purpose we pull us from the cycle of fear which drives the common man, and lead to true freedom.

The traditional meaning of this image is a period of instability, change, and impermanence. For those of the Left Hand Path, it indicates a need to free ourselves from the frivolities of mundane life, and to look to a calling more in line with our true natures.



XI LUST

I began this project with the intent of creating a Tarot deck designed for the Left Hand Path and based on the “traditional” images of antique Tarot design. As I have moved forward on this project, I have found that the meaning of the card, while often tied into design, is often more relevant than the recreation of the traditional image. Through the evolution of the Tarot, many decks have obscured or obliterated the most ancient of meanings in order to either meet some political or aesthetic agenda. While I do not deny that I have both a political and aesthetic agenda myself, I have tried to remain true to the spirit of my original intent.

I bring this up because the Lust card embodied the exact paradox between meaning and image that I am struggling with. Right away, you see that I have abandoned the traditional title of the 11th card in the Major Arcana, choosing “Lust” instead of “Strength”. I made this choice for a few reasons. First of all, I agree with Crowley’s interpretation that this card represents not only the strength of the will, but also the pleasure invoked by enacting said strength, thus whereas “strength” represents the quality, “lust” represents that quality’s application. As this is a Tarot for the Left Hand Path, I felt it unnecessary to hide behind any sociable niceties and instead reveal this card as it should be interpreted.

However, I disagreed with Crowley’s selected imagery, essentially the “Whore of Babylon” astride her many headed beast. The traditional image is of a maid gently

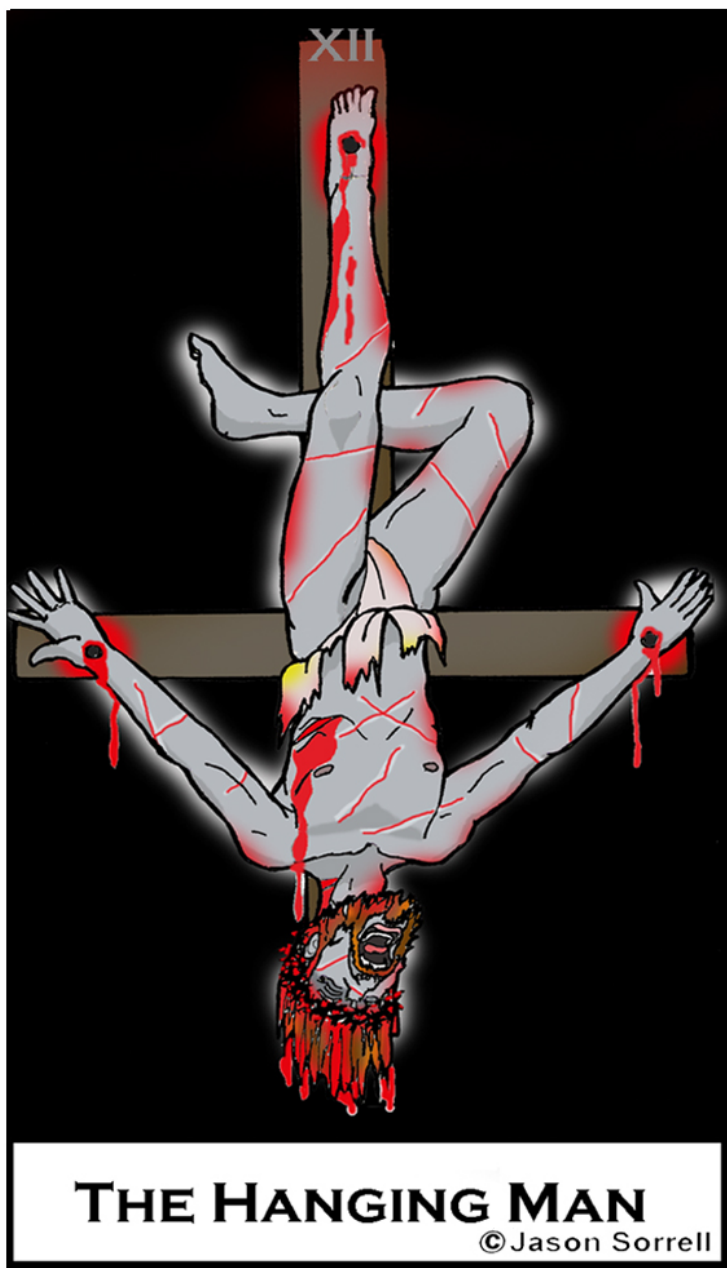
subduing a lion, and has no connection to the Biblical image invoked by Crowley, intentionally or otherwise. In the traditional image; a woman, reminiscent of the Magus (as is the Witch), represents female and lunar forces, as well as the intellect, while the lion embodies the solar and masculine primal energies. This is an inversion in medieval thinking, which normally attributes intellect to the sun and the male, and bestiality to the moon and female. I feel that Crowley is correct in the idea that this is advocating the intellectual pursuit of baser urges and the usage of primal methods for spiritual gain. It is the oldest game, the use of sexual charms to acquire what one needs. In this case, instead of being ruled by those base urges, the person has evolved to a point where those urges can be enjoyed without fear of becoming enslaved to them.

In this image, the Witch is astride a flaming lion, she with the symbol of the moon on her head, the lion with the sun. The lion is ferocious, yet presents no harm to her, and she is stimulated by the ride, pleasuring herself without fear of flame or fang. She literally and symbolically controls the beast between her thighs, and takes pleasure in its indulgence. It could even be suggested that she is the source of the beast, that through her indulgence in primal pleasures, she has generated the spiritual energy of the lion.

Some will also note a discrepancy in the order of the card, which is the 11th card in this set rather than the 8th. There is some debate to the proper order of the Tarot. Some suggest that the Golden Dawn, who helped make the Tarot a part of pop culture, intentionally changed the order from 11 to 8 in order to keep the common public from fully

accessing the potential of the tool. Others say it is simply a matter of preference. For me, this card in the 8th position interrupts a series of cards which deal with duality and the negotiation of conflicting energies, and is more properly a symbol of transformation from one kind of energy to another, thus I advocate the correct position as the 11th card.

The traditional meaning of the Lust card is that of transcendence, that something must be overcome by subtle, rather than direct confrontation. For our purposes, this means the use of wile and cunning, and the pleasures involved in intellectual advantages. It should also be noted that some consider this a symbol of the conflict between Luciferian and Ahrimanic forces being negotiated, that in the end both spirit and body can lead to a pleasurable result.



THE HANGING MAN

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XII THE HANGING MAN

The twelfth image of the Tarot is one of the richest of the entire set, and many artists and poets have used this symbol or attempted a deeper study of it. The Hanging Man is a statement on the human condition relative to ordinary life. The Fool suffers, but is unaware of why or from what source. The Hanging Man is that source defined. It is of a man crucified, hanging inverted in space. The man is tortured and in agony.

The fact that the man is hanging in the void is indicative of the basic separation every man feels from all other things; that no matter how close we might become with another, or what we do to fill the void, we are also basically separated and contained within our own minds. Traditionally, the figure seems oblivious to his state, but the Hanging Man is clearly in pain. This is indicative of the state of torture which seems ever present to our state; either through doubt, confusion, lack of confidence, anger, bias, or any of the other negative idiosyncrasies which plague us.

Obviously, this image is meant to suggest the Messiac images familiar in Christianity. It is the idea of suffering without purpose, suffering because it is our lot to suffer, even though we have the ability to put an end to the suffering. The icon symbolizes the pressures of society for which we suffer for, that the machine of social order has robbed us of our individuality, and forced us all to conform to the sterile ideals of the general mass.

The structure of the image further reflects this state. The head and arms of the figure, along with the cross-bar, for

the spiritual triangle which we are familiar with from other cards. However, in this image the triangle points downward, reflecting an inverted spiritual perspective, something which is overly focused on the internal state. The cross formed by the legs of the figure indicates a material square, out of position above the triangle. This is indicative of the needs of the world actually weighing down the spiritual self. The focus of the individual is inverted, causing him torment. This is further indicated by the exchange between red and blue in the image. The figure has a blue skin, indicating a passive, apathetic nature. However, his wounds bleed red, the urge to act literally bursts through his skin.

The Hanging Man indicates that the individual needs to right himself. Just as ignorance is bliss, knowledge can be a source of agony, if not embraced. It suggests that the normal state of man is unnatural, but that we have the freedom to correct this state by taking responsibility for ourselves and refusing the role of the martyr.

The traditional meaning of this image varies greatly, depending on the source. For some, it is indicative of great sacrifice, for other, death by violence. For us, the image indicates an unnecessary sacrifice, or a burden needlessly carried. It is a disharmony with our true selves, and the urge to correct the matter.



XIII DEATH

The thirteenth card is traditionally unnamed, but has become known as the Death card because of the iconography. The image, interestingly enough, is also one of the most inconsistently represented in all the Tarot sets I have seen. Although there are some consistent and traditional symbols within the card, there is no consistent structure.

The Death Card, despite its grim visage, is not a card representing literal death. The death represented by this image is a metaphysical death. The previous images dealt with the positive and negative aspects of the changes resulting from the increased awareness. The Death image is indicative of the actual state of transformation from a being that is driven primarily by material needs and worldly impulses to a being driven by spiritual urges and internal drives.

Our image is of a skeletal and cloaked figure, with its arm extended and a scythe hanging across the bottom of the image. The figure stands in a dark corridor, ending in a doorway from which a bright light pours forth. The image is fairly direct; the individual must let go of their former and socially defined life and embrace their new and self-defined life. The symbol on the brooch of the cloak is the symbol of Saturn, an astrological symbol associated with time and transformation.

The Death card indicates a state of transformation, that the life of the individual is undergoing a change, typically positive and rejuvenating. The problem the individual

faces is a fear of change, thus the grim-reaper as a symbol of this change. The individual must overcome this fear and embrace the changes occurring in their lives.

The traditional interpretation of the Death card indicates transformation, unavoidable death, and transition. Transformation into the next metaphysical state and spiritual perspective is the meaning we should draw from this image.



XIV ARTS

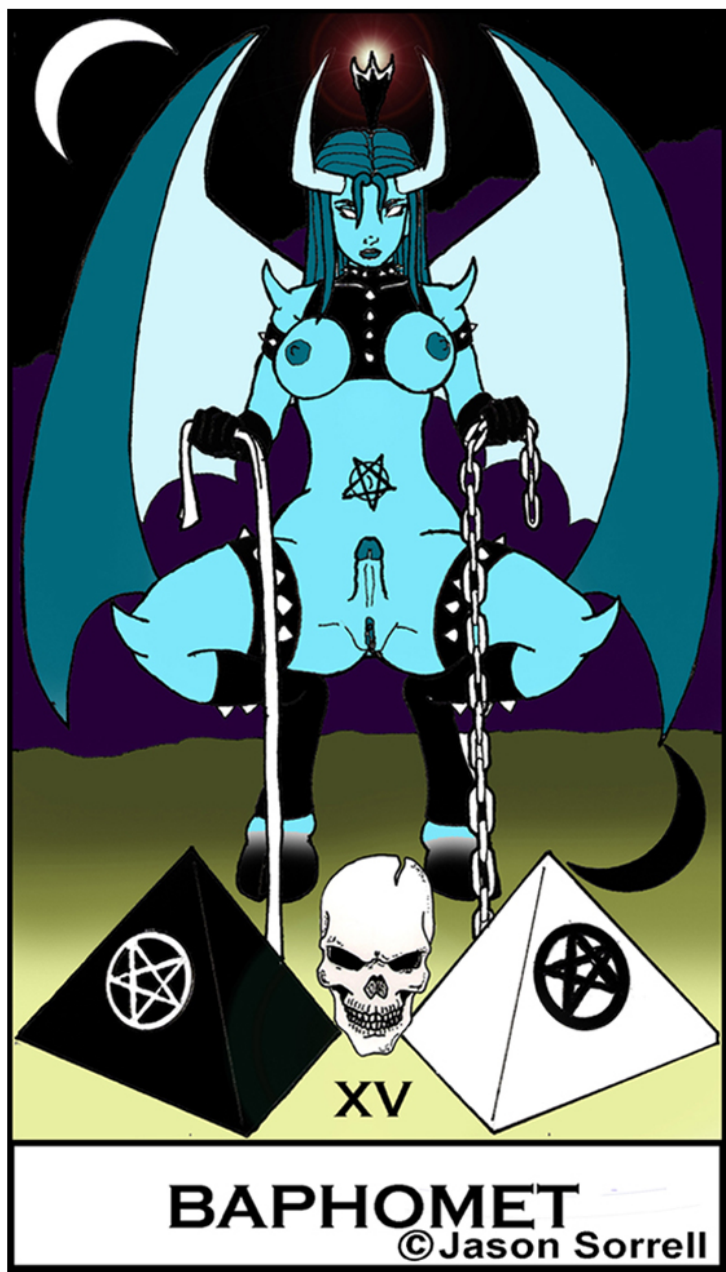
Arts is the fourteenth card of the Major Arcana, traditionally called “Temperance”. A number of varying explanations have been put forward regarding this image, the majority of which seem to be lacking. Just as the Death image dealt with transformation, so does the Arts card. However, where Death was transformation of a passive sort, being outside the control of the individual, Arts indicates transformation initiated by the individual. The individual has achieved a level of control and self-awareness that allows them to exchange fluidly between active and passive states.

The traditional image is of a woman pouring water horizontally between two jugs. The image on the Black Tarot is of a woman floating in mid-air, with energy arching from one hand to another. The energy changes form from passive to active as it moves between one hand and the next. This is indicative of the controlled shift between states. The woman, like the Chariot, is kept aloft by the power and exchange between her dual-self, however, she no longer has need of an artificial construct in order to maintain control of this exchange. She has become the embodiment of the change, freeing the self from the act of constant control.

Arts suggests that the individual should attempt to make changes in their life; changes initiated by the individual. It indicates the ability to make transformations in one’s life, if we are willing to be active in the process. It also suggests the potential to unite opposites, the source of magick in the

universe.

The traditional interpretation of the image denotes the uniting of opposed forces, discipline, and self-control. The exchange between passive and active energies play heavily in this card, suggesting that when we appear passive, we should be active in our minds, and when we are active, we should seek internal stillness.



XV BAPHOMET

The 15th card in the Tarot is traditionally named “The Devil”, and is associated incorrectly with negativity and stagnation imposed from without (from the Devil). This, in my experience, is incorrect. As the student progresses through spiritual exploration, it is easy to come to a rest at certain points. At these points, the individual may look at their progress and the positive effects on their lives and decide that they have achieved their potential, becoming enamored with their accomplishments and the things they have gained as opposed to the quest for spiritual enlightenment. For those of us on the Left Hand Path, that is fine. Our Devil does not represent the same thing to us that it would to others, so our Devil card will be different as well.

Baphomet serves as a reminder to the student that they are their own masters. In their spiritual progress, they may become enamored with the “good” they can do for their fellow man from their lofty perspective. Baphomet reminds us that we are looking inwardly for our support and sense of comfort, and we should avoid becoming enslaved by the needs of others.

The figure is a hermaphrodite, and includes animal and human components. This is to convey the internal universe, inclusive of all opposites, instead of the outer world, a source of distraction. The card structurally centers on the figure's genitals, indicating again the focus on internal issues and a reminder that we should not become so wrapped up in our spiritual ideals that we deny our

primal urges, and that engaging our sexual urges is a natural way to achieve balance and maintain our sanity. This is re-iterated in the black and white pyramids in the card, the black representative of the Left Hand Path and pragmatism, and the white representing the Right Hand Path and altruism. The figure holds a chain to the white pyramid, indicating the servitude often associated with altruistic philosophies and goals, and a ribbon to the black pyramid representing the comfort and pleasure in the pragmatic philosophies. The blue color of the figure also indicates an introspective focus, and the black and white crescent moons represent balanced energies within. Finally, the torch between the figure's horns represents the truth in darkness, the internal indicator of truth and reason within us all.

Some authors note that all four elements are represented in the Devil Card, indicating its connection with the world. This is also incorrect. The older cards contained all the elements except water. Water represents dissolution and emotional forces, and this card indicates a need for structured and reasoned thinking. Earth, Air, and Fire are all represented in the Baphomet card, but no water.

The traditional meaning is based more on history than the esoteric significance of the card. Most cultures relate the Devil immediately to the negative aspects of their own societies; therefore the Devil represents disruption of character, loss of power and money, and domination by material forces. In fact, the card represents an over-emphasis on the spiritual, and an unhealthy failure to acknowledge our baser natures and engage in our primal

urges.

Astrologically, the card has strong connections with Mars and Venus, as well as Scorpio, all symbols of passion, lust, sexuality, and primal drives.



XVI THE HOUSE OF GOD

The House of God, also called “The Tower”, is the 16th card of the Major Arcana. It is a warning, but is incorrectly interpreted as a warning about impending catastrophe. As the Baphomet card was a warning about spiritual stagnation, the House of God warns about material dependence. The individual has reached a level in his development where their spiritual awareness provides them many advantages over their peers. These advantages could easily lead the individual to profit financially. While this would be fine and good, there exists the temptation to abandon the development of self for the pursuit of material gain.

The image is of a church, its steeple being struck down by a force from above. From its heights fall two figures, a priest and a bishop. As in other images of the Black Tarot, the symbols of western religion indicate the structures and institutions of our society. This is a representation of the pit-falls of material dependence; the structures we build in our effort to secure ourselves through material means can always be torn asunder. The two figures re-iterate this idea; the priest indicating the social obligation to pursue material security, the bishop indicating spiritual pursuits subverted for profit.

Of interest to us in this and the traditional images of the House of God is the structure of the tower itself. If we look at the forms of the tower and the cap that has been broken off, we will notice that the tower is a squared off form, while the cap is circular. The square is a material symbol,

while the circle is spiritual. In the House of God, both of these forms are artificial and united poorly. The result is a structure which could not possibly last, it is doomed to fall. Other commentators have suggested that, like the biblical Tower of Babel, it is the divine that brings the tower down. However, most structures can resist a lightning strike. The lightning here only indicates that any natural pressure on this structure will bring it down.

The traditional interpretation indicates catastrophe, excess, disaster, and the pursuit of delusional ideals. For those of the Left Hand Path, it is a warning not to become too dependent on material values. Dependence on that which is valued by other can be used as a weakness against the individual.



XVII THE STAR

The 17th card of the Major Arcana is the Star, often said to be the most visually agreeable image in the Tarot. This has been suggested because of the balance of the four elements within the image; air, fire, water, and earth, all equally present and complimenting one another. The Star is the first card of a new progression in the Tarot. It is reminiscent of the Arts card, which also depicts a young woman with two energies flowing one from another. However, unlike the Arts, the energy is fluid being poured onto the ground. In the Arts, the individual has accepted the transition to a higher state of being, and can now enjoy the wisdom and gifts such a transition holds. The subsequent cards; Baphomet and The House of God are meant to show the trials this new state of awareness entails and to shake loose the final trappings of mundane thinking. Traditionally, the pouring of the fluids represents “nourishing the earth”, or creativity. This, however, is incorrect. The ebb and flow of the dualistic internal energies which has so dominated the focus of the Tarot in the past images is finally being abandoned in the Star; the individual has fully integrated into a whole self.

The Star represents this initially awareness of whole-self, and the loneliness of being wholly independent from any other person or thing. The figure is in a desolate location, as individual and alone as a star in the sky, which, despite their apparent closeness and relation to the stars around them, are light years in distance. The individual’s blood and the water of the earth mingle in a wasted pool, and a

bird-like beast calls out to the figure, a reminder of the primal urges still present. The tree upon which this creature rests is often considered to represent the Tree of Knowledge, but it is of mundane knowledge in this image, and has been picked clean. The figure is unabashedly nude, re-enforcing her state as alone and in no need of protection of any kind. In essence, the card is implying the old adage “it is lonely at the top”.

The seven stars in the background are often mistaken for the Pleiades, which would imply the influence of Taurus and create imbalance amongst the elemental forces in this image. The title of the card is singular, thus one star should be our focus. Tarot Scholars believe that the large star in the sky represents Sirius, which, as a star associated with the hottest days of summer and fire, provides balance to the elemental forces depicted. Sirius also harkens back to legends of ancient and alien races which may have once visited our planet and passed down to early man knowledge on all manners of science and art. This suggests that the individual in this state has more in common with these alien beings than the common man.

The fifth element, Akasha, is represented by the central position of the figures head in relation to the rest of the image. Akasha is suggested by that which is not visible, within the figures mind. This also suggests that this is primarily where this state of loneliness occurs, in the mind of the individual. The person may actually be surrounded by people, but they are no longer her peers, and are incapable of understanding her new perspective. The structure of the card suggests a circulation around the figures head of the elements, suggesting that in becoming

truly whole, the cycles of the cosmos are realized within the individual on a microcosmic scale.

The traditional interpretation is that of creativity and inspiration. For those of the Left-Hand Path, however, this creativity is spurred by the isolation which is brought on by intellect, suggesting that the individual creates in order to fill the void and create a conduit by which to deal with her lesser developed acquaintances.



XVIII LUNA

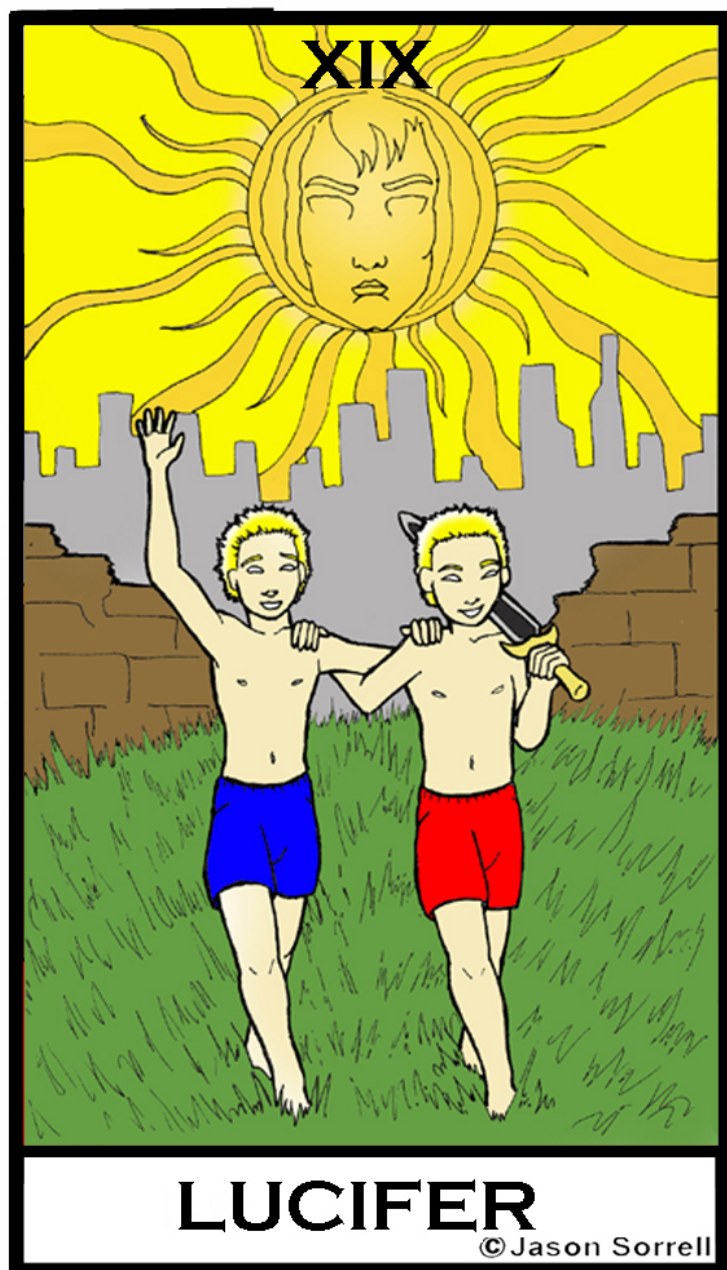
The 18th image, Luna, of “The Moon”, is a symbol of a spiritual harrowing, a sort of “personal hell”. The setting is of the lowest level of the spirit in the material world. Some authors consider this the most frightening of all the images in the Tarot. It suggests a spiritual purging, that in order to evolve to the next state, the individual must first face their inner-most fears.

The image is of a river of blood passing through a hellish plain. At the rivers mouth is a crayfish, indicative of the astrological symbol of Cancer, a symbol tied to lunar energy. It is the symbol of that energy in its negative aspect, emotional energy of the basest nature. Opposite the crayfish is the face of Luna in the sky, the representation of the higher aspects of the emotional self. On either side of the river of blood stands a wolf, representations of the basest aspects of the spiritual self. The towers beyond, like the House of God, reflect the build up of material aims. The raindrops in the sky fall towards Luna, indicating false ideals and an overactive imagination influenced by the moon; in essence, a state of ‘lunacy’. This image sums up all the warnings and negative implication of the Tarot, which the individual must face.

Luna indicates to us that until we are truly tested, until we have experienced the worst aspects of the self, we cannot truly appreciate the good. Like the Moon Goddess of ancient times, Luna has two aspects; the benevolent Artemis, Goddess of the hunt and independence, and the malevolent Hecate, ruler of the hell. We must endure this

spiritual test if we are to truly evolve. We will be tested to our limits, but we have developed the tools to endure. All that remains is the force of will to cast aside our dependencies and our delusions, and to stand as our true selves.

The traditional interpretation focuses on the association with the moon, indicating perils of an unknown source, a lack of security, and an overly active imagination. For the Left Hand Path, the card indicates a need to endure, to see through the illusions built around us, and to be true to ourselves, no matter what the consequences.



XIX LUCIFER

The 19th image in the series is tied directly to Luna, the previous image, and one cannot truly discuss this image without reflecting on the previous card. Lucifer presents the response to the Luna Card, the harrowing successfully endured, and the rebirth of the self that will result.

The image is of the sun beaming down on a city in the distance. Walking away from that city in the foreground are two boys in a green field, separated from the city by a fallen wall. The boys are the dualistic sides of the self, the wolves from the last image in human form. The passive is waving to the observer, in essence hailing the self, and the active carrying the sword of power. The green field is indicative of paradise, the opposite of the barren hell of the last image. “Paradise” can be literally translated to mean “walled place”. In this image, the power of Lucifer has destroyed the wall keeping man from his spiritual birthright, allowing the self to leave the false constructs of society represented by the city. The self is reborn and free.

In ancient Italian traditions, Lucifer is the God of the sun and truth, Diana the Goddess of the Moon and mystery. It is the two united that produces Aradia, spiritual truth, the Goddess of Witches. This allegory is clearly present in these images, dealing with the exchange of lunar and solar energies, and the union which must be realized in order for the individual to grow, spiritually.

Lucifer is the promise to the student of the rewards of endurance, of remaining true to the self and of establishing our own paths. Lucifer provides freedom, illuminating the

truth as the torch between the horns of Baphomet. In this manner, the truth we establish becomes the truth of all reality.

The traditional interpretation indicates success, especially in financial matters. It also indicates clarity of expression and the establishment of good relationships.



AEON

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XX AEON

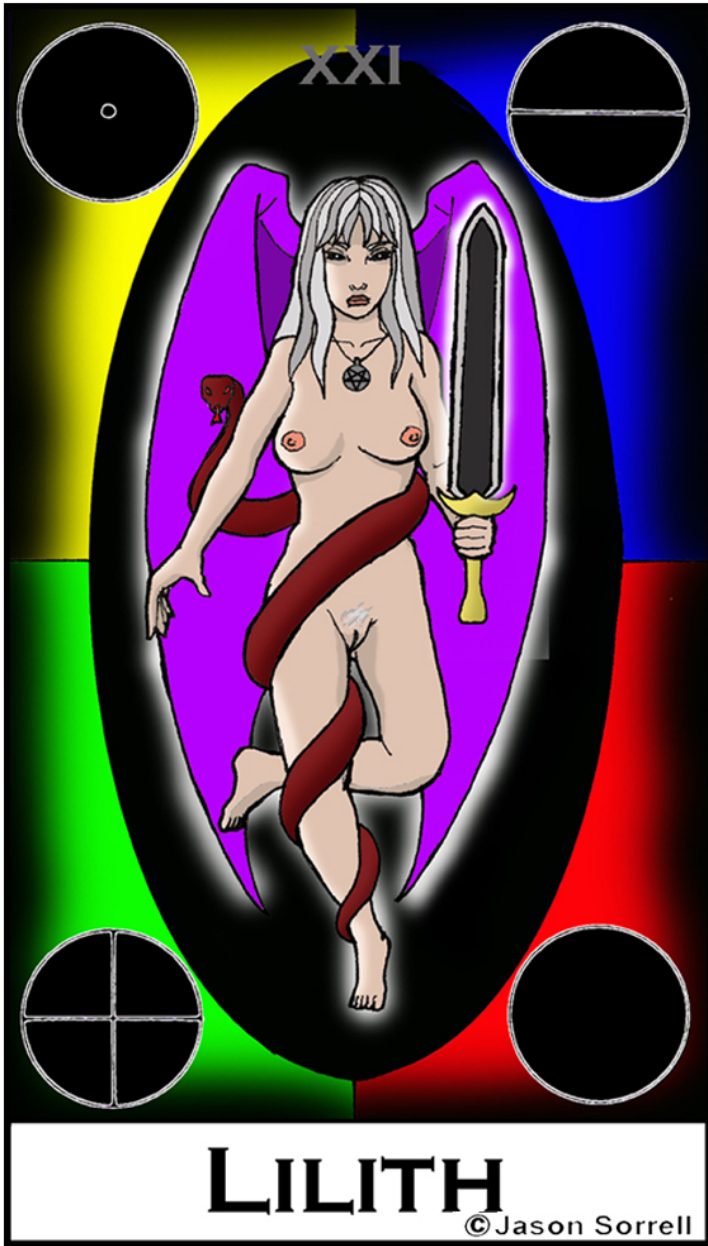
The 20th card, also titled “Judgment”, is the result of the process indicated by the Luna and Lucifer images. The individual has survived the harrowing of Luna, has discovered the paradise of Lucifer, and is now being reborn as the true self. Aeon indicates the individual should enjoy their individuality and independence, for doing so leads to transcendence.

The image is of an individual, with his or her back facing the observer. At either side are the Magus and the Witch, the active and passive selves from the first two images of the Tarot. It is through their union that the new self has arisen. The individual arises from a material chamber, in some interpretations a grave. This aspect of the image is reflective of the process of initiation in numerous mystery cults; rebirth is symbolized by rising from a grave. It is indicative of the death of the old self, the former forgotten, so that the new self may rise unfettered.

Above the trio is an angel, with the horns of power and the wings of divinity, with trumpet ready to sound. Traditional interpretations have attempted to associate this symbol with the archangel Gabriel, but it is actually a symbol of the true self, the divine self, calling to the individual to stand as they are, to take up their rightful spiritual place. The Magus and the new-born self hail this divine self, while the Witch looks upon the self. This suggests that while we should actively pursue the divine, we should remain mindful of our material needs and urges, never forgetting that those drives also where a factor in our development.

The structure of the card is one of the simplest in the Tarot. At the bottom of the card rests a material rectangle, formed not only by the cell, but also by the three figures. Above this rectangle is a circle of balanced spirituality, formed by the angel. This indicates that the only step remaining is to remove the self from the material “box” and take the rightful place at the center of all things.

The traditional meaning of the image suggests regeneration, success in the face of difficulties, and favorable legal judgments. The image indicates that all things must be worked at to be achieved, we are all judged by our efforts.



XXI LILITH

Lilith, the 21st and final image of the Major Arcana, is said to be the sum total of all the images preceding it. Also called “The World” traditionally, a variety of interpretations have been attributed to the image. In fact, it is indicative of a natural state of harmony. It is balance between all the forces in the individual and in the world relative to the individual. Prior to this point in their development, the individual had experienced states of balance, but these states were tenuous, and required effort to maintain. In this image, the individual is balance itself.

Lilith was selected as the name for this image in the Black Tarot because the meaning of the card most closely relates to the Lilith myth of Judeo/Christianity, and the natural conclusions which arise from that myth. Lilith, the twin compliment of Adam, desired to be equal to her brother/husband, as both were representations of the divine manifest. Adam, however, would not acknowledge the active energies within his passive mate, and denied her true place. Lilith then left or was cast out of paradise, after which a new mate was made for man, who while meeting his needs, could never be his equal. Adam as man had denied his own spiritual self.

Lilith, on the other hand, being as Adam, had all of Adam’s abilities regarding nature and intercourse with the divine. When Adam and his lot were cast out of paradise and cursed with mortality, Lilith naturally endured, becoming the spirit of the outer realms, all the things which man feared and could not understand. Arguably, Lilith

could be considered the source for all our matriarchal mythology, especially when said myths involve serpents and sexuality.

The image is of a nude woman, holding in her left hand the sword of power carried through the Tarot from the Magus, indicative of her ability to take action. Her breasts are bared, suggesting her nurturing nature, and her sex revealed, indicating her affiliation for passion and creativity. Twined about her body is a red serpent, indicative of material action, and upon her back are wings of divinity, suggesting her higher spiritual development. This spiritual balance is further indicated by the oval in which she is centered, surrounded equally by the four elements that form a rectangle of materialism. The natural relationship is not spirituality above materialism, but spirituality from within the material.

The figure's position is the opposite of the Hanged Man, indicating that the individual has righted the state reflected by the Hanged Man. Her arms and head form a spiritual triangle, pointed upward, supported by the material cross of the elements formed by her legs.

The traditional interpretation of the image suggests successful achievement, but the image means so much more. It is indicative of the natural state, the right mind in a sound body, properly focused and at ease with the self. It is the goal, the place we are all trying to reach, the ideal for which we all strive.

CARD GROUPS

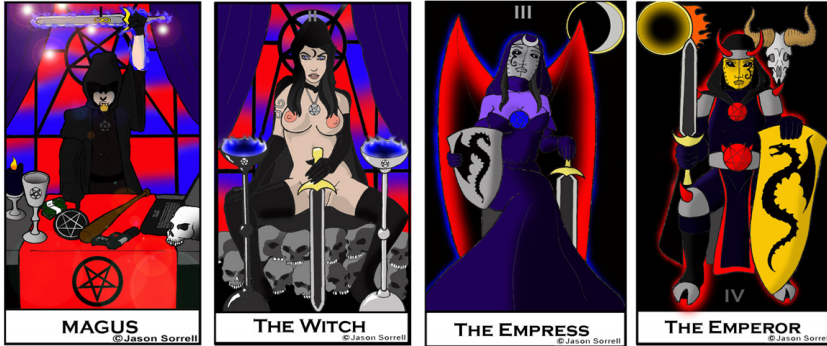
The cards relate to one another in groups. Through the analysis of these groups, we can come to understand the interactions of the images and the relationships that exist between them in readings. These groupings also further illustrate the many allegorical lessons which can be derived from the images.

The Quatrains

Out of the 22 images, we can group the cards, in order, into 5 groups of four images. Each group relates to a specific phase of the process of evolution of the individual awareness, and can be equated to one of the five alchemic elements; air, fire, water, earth, and “prime” or “akasha”.

The remaining two cards are The Fool and Lilith. These cards represent opposite ends of the spiritual spectrum; The Fool representing a “null-state” or void, and Lilith representing an absolute state. Some authors have even suggested that these two cards are one and the same; as absolute totality and absolute nothingness are twin states.

The Air Quatrain



The Air Quatrain develops the self-identity, who we are in relation to the world around us. You see in these images that all are interacting with the observer, but each in a different fashion. In the Mage, the individual has become self-aware, but that awareness requires the validation of others. The Mage is a showman, and requires an audience. The Witch takes that self-awareness and internalizes it, learning to appreciate being who she is. The Witch attracts through her secrets; that which she does not immediately reveal. The Empress is the highest initial expression of this introspection, the self becoming confident in who she is. The Empress has power, but remains approachable. Once the individual has achieved the confidence to be who they are regardless of the opinions of others, he becomes the Emperor, and is able to retain command of himself no matter what the pressures of situation. The Emperor is power, and interacts with a world through a position of command.

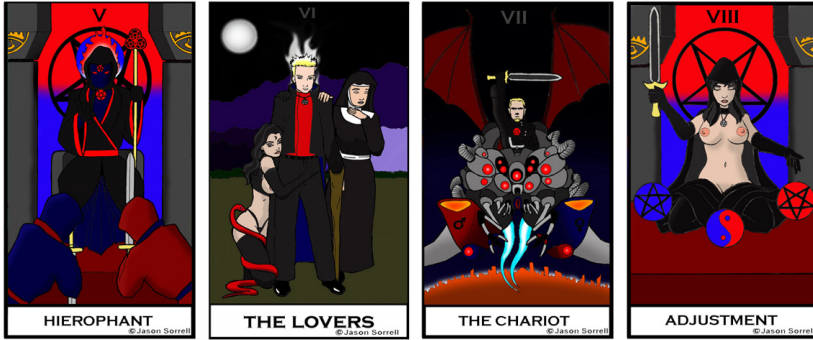
The individual begins to establish who they are to the world around them through the Air Quatrain. The initiation of the self begins with the Magus; the discovery of that we have unique gifts which we should be able to explore. The Magus suggests that these gifts will be discovered through the praise of others. We initially test our talents through the mob.

Once we discover those talents through the Magus, we explore what those talents mean to us through the Witch. The praise of the mob helped us realize our skills, but seeking the praise of the mob can wear thin. The discovery of our own self worth, developing our own self esteem, frees us to be ourselves and not at the whims of the crowd. The Witch brings us to know ourselves.

This knowledge from the Witch allows us to interact with the world with confidence. This is expressed in the Empress. The discovery and acknowledgement of the self raises us above our peers. The confidence we find in our uniqueness gives us a regal air.

From this position, we find ourselves once again interacting with the mob in the Emperor. However, while we needed the mob for our self identity in the Magus, the Emperor has the command and confidence to direct the mob. The Emperor will be, whether the mob agrees or not, which is why he attracts them. He is who is, without question.

The Fire Quatrain



Now that the self has been discovered through the Air Quatrain, the self can be explored more deeply in the Fire Quatrain. All these images explore the duality that is present in every person; the urge to be active or be passive. The Hierophant begins this exploration with the recognition of this duality. The Lovers then express the problems associated with this dualistic nature, the give and take of the internal self. The Chariot takes this interaction of the dualistic self and expresses the achievement of the objective self, the self who has the ability to take this interaction of opposites and make use of it. With discipline and practice, the individual learns to maintain this state of balance between opposed internal drives, as expressed in Adjustment. While this state is ideal, it is still artificial, requiring careful effort.

The Fire Quatrain creates and develops the self on a deeper metaphysical level. The Hierophant begins the recognition of the internal drives of the self. It is the recognition of our aggressive and passive sides, as well as an objective self,

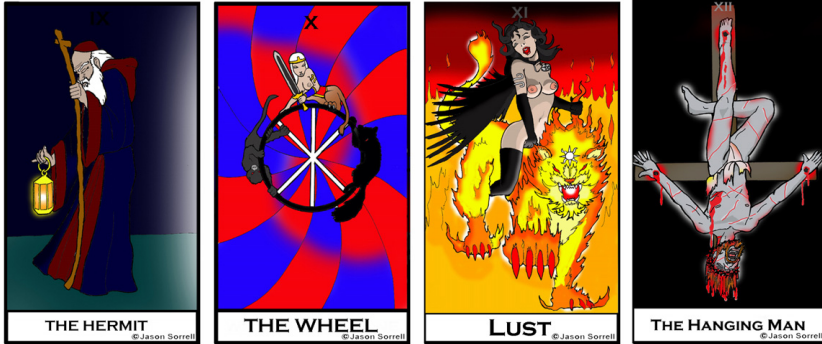
the hint of the true self. We should not simply be the sum of our urges.

The recognition of the inner workings of the self leads us to contend with those disparate drives. The Lovers explores the conflict within us. The choices we must face are not black and white. There are positive and negative aspects to both our aggressive and passive natures, and we cannot be purely one or the other. We must learn about and cater to each side of ourselves to maximize our potential.

The skills learned in the Lovers allow us to use the opposing drives to their maximum benefit. The struggle within us should not be seen as an obstacle to overcome, but as a potential source of power. It is finding a way to use those opposed forces in a manner that complimentary to each, instead of negating both, that leads us to excel.

With practice and discipline, the tentative state between these drives described in the Chariot becomes easier to reach and maintain. This place of balance is described in Adjustment. It is from this point that we can truly begin to develop the self and discover our true natures. From the Fire Quatrain, we create the tools which will allow us to evolve.

The Water Quatrain



The position developed in the Fire Quatrain of balance and self-awareness sets us truly apart from our peers. The Water Quatrain deals with this separation from the common herd, which must be negotiated or it will hold us back from discovering our true selves. The Hermit first explores this separation; the feeling of being older, the regret of no longer fitting in. The Wheel reveals the cycle we see in others along its circumference. The cycle between our higher and lower selves is the result of the unnatural separation between those selves. We seek the center of the Wheel. Lust explores the pleasures of our separation, the benefits of having developed our metaphysical selves to the heights which we have achieved. The Hanging Man deals with the negative aspects of this separation, the sense of self-doubt and fear of failure.

In achieving this level of development, it is natural that we will look on our former selves with a sense of longing. It is easier to conform to the expectations of society and belong

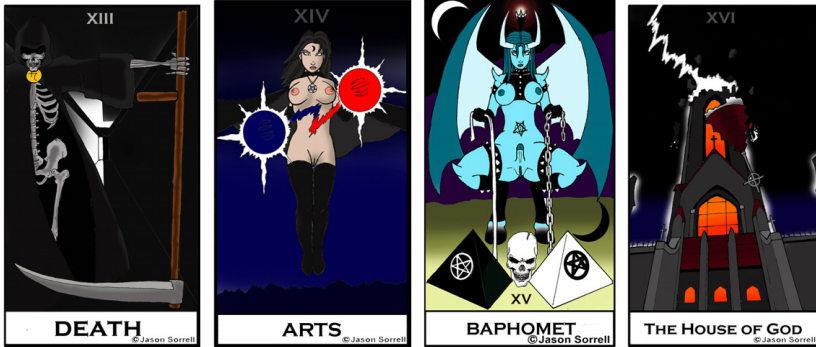
to the common herd than to discover our true selves and stand alone as individuals. The Hermit expresses this regret, looking back upon the past and searching for answers and comfort there, instead of facing the future.

This searching the past leads us to discover the cyclic nature of the society we are leaving, and the birthright of our true place in that cycle. This is expressed in the Wheel. The Wheel suggests that we must learn to separate ourselves from the petty dramas of common experience, seeing all those states and institutions as transient, while our true selves will be a permanent and lasting state outside this cycle.

Lust shows us how to begin to achieve this position. We must learn to increase ourselves spiritually through out primal urges, recognizing that our material selves is the foundation for our spiritual growth. We must also discover the pleasures of our spiritual selves, learning the strength in our indulgences.

The Hanging Man then describes the final pains of our separation from our peers in development. We recognize that our next steps will take us away from the comfort of the herd. Furthermore, we recognize that not taking those steps will leave us in torment, caught between the knowledge of our potential and our failure to risk what is necessary to achieve it. The Hanging Man reveals the path of cowardice, and the internal torment resulting from fear and regret.

The Earth Quatrain



The Earth Quatrain describes the recognition of the true self. Air described our recognition of our uniqueness, Fire the development of the self, and Water dealt with the positive and negative aspects of being an individual. In the Earth Quatrain, the self begins to manifest through our understanding of what we are to be. The Death image begins this process, as we release ourselves from our former lives and the pain described in the Hanging Man. In this metaphysical death, we are transformed into a being of our own design. This being is represented by Arts, the expression of the individual who has mastered the internal and opposite selves. While this state may seem ideal, we must also recognize its pitfalls; spiritual stagnation represented by Baphomet (who urges change), and material dependence, represented by the House of God.

The recognition of the true self begins with the end of the old self. The Death Card describes this process; a transformation of the self. We leave behind the old self, denying that habits and distractions that kept us from

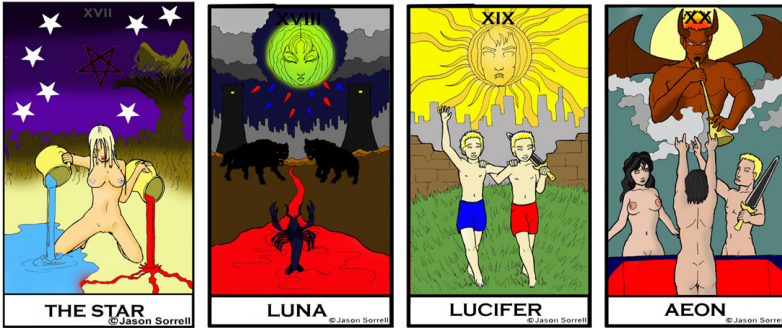
growing, and moving on with our personal development. The transformation is a natural process, raising us up from the pain of the Hanging Man.

In Arts, the dualistic nature of the self is fully embraced, and used to its maximum benefit. The flow between one state and another is nearly seamless, and the energy resulting from this union allows us to achieve that which is out of the reach of our former peers.

This position is tantalizing in its allure, but we are still short of our true selves, and still in danger of regressing. Baphomet warns of the potential for spiritual stagnation and the potential for deluding ourselves. Baphomet urges us to continue to see the true-light, and recognize that serving one path or another in our new state will lead to slavery and stagnation.

The House of God presents the warning of the material potential of our new state, as we could easily come to seek the potential profits from this state above the development of our true natures. Our dogma, or the dogma of others, might lead us to create castles that cannot stand, or institutions which are bound to fall.

The Prime Quatrain



The Prime Quatrain describes the final phase of development, the attempt to achieve the true self. The Star begins the process by eliminating the constructs of the passive and aggressive self, unifying into one whole being. This internalization of motivation, however, does not end the exchange between the passive and aggressive sides of the self, as we discover through the harrowing of Luna. Once we surpass this “long dark night of the soul”, we find ourselves in a euphoric state of the self, as described in Lucifer. Lucifer is the illumination of truth hinted at in Baphomet. From there, a new rebirth occurs in Aeon, as the dualistic urges unite and free the self completely. We have then only to choose to rise, following the example of Lilith.

The Star is the creativity of the individual developing its true worth. No longer needed are the divisions of the self, and a new and bright whole-being is achieved. It is the nature of the darker self to resist such integration, however, and even in this state, we have some sense of what awaits.

Luna is the spiritual harrowing which tests this new integration of the self. We must fully face the darker aspects of our being, surviving the internal hell of our own design. Failure is a very real possibility, indicating that we need further development at some lower stage of the process. Failure also has the potential to destroy us, to leave us suffering in that hell.

Should we be able to face the harrowing of Luna, we arrive at the freedom of our true nature, the disparate parts of our soul fully integrated. We can now embrace the paradise of our birthright, the walls of social pressure broken away.

The integrated dualistic selves bring about a rebirth of the true self in Aeon. Aeon is the calling to an even higher state, a state of true integration with the universe. The disparate parts of our soul are no longer in conflict, and we find ourselves ready for a state of actual balance and awareness.

THE TAROT AND SELF-INITIATION

As we have examined the Tarot in this volume, it hopefully has become clear that divination is not likely the Tarot's sole or true purpose. Rather, the intent of its design may have been as a set of pneumatic keys with which the student of the occult could recall and examine lessons from the past. The Tarot may present a definitive link between modern occult scholars and the practitioners of the occult prior to the Renaissance.

With this understanding, we begin to recognize the value of the Tarot, not only to those who rediscovered it in the past, but to the modern student. The Tarot reveals a path to self-initiation in the greater secrets of western mysticism, providing a "road-map", if you will, for the student to follow. This map indicates quite clearly five steps the student should proceed through in order to achieve success in their occult studies.

The Discovery of the Self

More often than not in our modern society, a person is defined by the forces around them than by their own efforts to develop an identity. We are the circumstances of our birth, the role cast for us in society, bound by the limitations defined by the institutions which we attended as children. We are told that we could be president, astronauts, sports figures, and movie stars, but the fact of

the matter is that these outcomes are limited to a very select few. When we fail to achieve this, we feel that we have failed entirely, and give up on ever making something more of ourselves. “Luck” did not favor us, so why bother?

It is this apathetic attitude which plagues our society. If we have something of value which will raise us up above our peers, we must first have the urge to discover it. This is the process of self-exploration, of learning what it is about ourselves that is of merit, and developing that trait to its fullest potential. It is through this effort that we throw off the shackles of social pressure, and become self-defined.

The Creation of the Self

Once our identities have become self-defined, we must dig deeper to develop the person which we have discovered through our self-exploration. We must temper and discipline the self so that the old habits of subservience are cast off, allowing new and purposeful patterns of behavior to emerge...patterns of our own design. This is the process of self-creation.

Obligation is the pressure society places on the individual in order to maintain control of the whole. A vicious cycle becomes evident in the average persons life; the cycle of work-pay-work. We are driven to “need” things which are beyond our reach, and to obey rules which are unnecessary or illogical. We must begin to re-evaluate the rules and demands of society to see what best works for us, and what should be ignored. In defining the self, we have chosen not to be the animal that society thinks we should be, and instead choose to be the men that we envision.

The Exploration of the Self

Once we have identified and developed the self, we must then turn to our new roles in the social apparatus. Obviously, we will not fit into our old patterns and behaviors as we did in the past, nor will we comply fully with the expectations placed upon us in the past. We must re-examine our role in society, and determine where, if it all, society fits in with us. We are no longer a tool of the machine, but rather the machine is a tool for our purposes.

As we examine the machine in relation to our new perspectives, we will immediately recognize that many of our old patterns are no longer acceptable, and must be modified or abandoned in order to maintain our self-defined lives. This may mean that those who we once considered friends and peers will no longer fill those roles, as they remain mired in the socially-imposed framework, and cannot relate to your new understanding. You will need to achieve a re-birth of the self, announcing to the world that a new you exists, and that the old you is dead and gone. This process will be painful and spiritually draining, but is necessary if you are to be free to live as you will.

The Materialization of the Self

Now that the self-defined being has negotiated his role relevant to the social apparatus, he must endure. The pressure to conform again to the expectation of society and relinquish your identity will be great, and in order to

maintain the strides you have thus far made, your self-identity must be stand against these forces.

This process will seem awkward at first, but it is society which must conform. Overtime, you will develop the confidence and practice of resisting these forces that will make the resistance a natural part of your being. Society will conform; those around you, if they remain, will come to understand, appreciate, and embrace your personal definition of self, or they will cease to have meaning in your life. That which will not break you will only serve to increase.

The Emergence of the True Self

This process takes time and practice, and will be challenging. The individual we create as ourselves is not as easy to maintain as that which society would have us be. You will experience profound loneliness in your disconnection from your former peers, and must take strength in your personal creativity. You will suffer spiritual crisis after crisis, which will test the limits of your conviction to be who you see fit, as opposed to who you are as defined by others. You will have doubt, remorse, and fear in this effort.

However, if this individual self whom you have created can survive this harrowing, tested by the crucible of social pressure and free of the learned behaviors of your childhood, then you, the real you, will be free to emerge. You will rise far above your peers, coming to a point of spiritual comfort and confidence that is rarely experienced by others. Your life will be your own, free of the

entanglements suffered by those still defined by the social construct, free of the pressures to conform to another's ideal, free to be. This is the true goal of the Tarot, the initiation of the self.

Appendix A: Steps in a Reading

In performing a reading, it is best to maintain a similar structure for each event. This reference is meant to aid the reader in achieving this.

1. Select an appropriate time and place.
2. Acquaint yourself with the person for whom the reading is being done; from your own impressions to their reason for having a reading.
3. Take careful notes.
4. Explain the Tarot process and mechanics.
5. Based on the situation, select an appropriate reading.
6. Lay out the cards, one at a time, explaining the significance of the position and the image.
7. Proceed through the cards, one at a time, discussion the relationships between the cards and their relevance to the matter at hand.
8. Ask the subject frequently about the significance of the images and the information in their minds.
9. Once the cards are completely laid out, review the connections between the images, and discuss the over-all significance and interpretation. Get the subjects impressions as well.

Appendix B: Ten Card Spread Positions

1. The Querent
This position describes the person for whom the reading is being performed relative to the question being asked.
2. The Obstacle
This position describes the nature of the primary force that opposes the person for whom the reading is being performed.
3. Immediate Future
This position describes the most immediate result which will arise from the meeting of the Querent and the Obstacle.
4. Immediate Past
This suggests the foundation upon which the current situation is based.
5. Long-Term Past
This position represents events in the past which have contributed to the current situation.
6. Long-Term Future
This position suggests the long-term ramifications of the current situation if allowed to proceed.
7. Internal Attitude
This position represents the internal drives of the querent regarding this matter, which may be of help or hindrance.
8. External Influence
This position reveals the external forces which will influence the querent regarding this issue; from the environment or from persons around them.

9. Hopes/Fears

This position signifies the querents expectations or concerns regarding this issue.

10. Outcome

This position suggests the final outcome of the situation relative to all the positions preceding it.

Appendix C:
Quick Card Reference

Zero Card: The Fool

Quick Interpretation: Lack of awareness

Structure: None

Traditional Interpretation: Passivity

One Card: The Magus

Quick Interpretation: Self-discovery through others

Structure: Material and spiritual self divided

Traditional Interpretation: Commencement of activity

Astrological Influence: Mercury/Gemini

Gender Reference: Young male

Two Card: The Witch

Quick Interpretation: Need for introspection

Structure: Spiritual focus supported by material foundation

Traditional Interpretation: Intuition

Gender Reference: Young female

Three Card: The Empress

Quick Interpretation: Confidence in our wisdom

Structure: Spiritual/material diamond

Traditional Interpretation: Wisdom

Astrological Influence: Venus, the Moon

Gender Reference: Wise female

Four Card: The Emperor

Quick Interpretation: Successful ordering of our environment

Structure: Spiritual ability supported by material foundation

Traditional Interpretation: Will

Astrological Influence: Mars, Jupiter

Gender Reference: Male of authority

Five Card: The Hierophant

Quick Interpretation: Recognition of our internal drives

Structure: Spirituality influenced by the exchange between passive and active energies.

Traditional Interpretation: Duty

Gender Reference: Wise male

Six Card: The Lovers

Quick Interpretation: Choosing between active and passive drives

Traditional Interpretation: choice

Seven Card: The Chariot

Quick Interpretation: Control of the internal drives

Structure: The drives contained in a material square, supporting the spiritual focus

Traditional Interpretation: Success in travel

Astrological Influence: Sagitarius

Gender Reference: Unmarried male (female querent)

Eight Card: Adjustment

Quick Interpretation: Self-maintained balance

Structure: Spiritual circle

Traditional Interpretation: equilibrium

Astrological Influence: Libra, Venus

Gender Reference: Interested female (male querent)

Nine Card: The Hermit

Quick Interpretation: Regret, being stuck in the past

Structure: Material rectangle

Traditional Interpretation: Searching

Gender Reference: Elderly male

Ten Card: The Wheel

Quick Interpretation: Knowing our proper place

Structure: Spiritual circle

Traditional Interpretation: Risk

Eleven Card: Lust

Quick Interpretation: Reveling in the self

Traditional Interpretation: triumph

Astrological Influence: Sun/Moon, Leo

Gender Reference: Desirable female

Twelve Card: The Hanging Man

Quick Interpretation: Internal disorder

Structure: Material cross weighing down inverted spiritual triangle.

Traditional Interpretation: self-sacrifice

Gender Reference: Pitiabile Male

Thirteen Card: Death

Quick Interpretation: Metaphysical transformation

Traditional Interpretation: Change

Astrological Influence: Saturn

Fourteen Card: Arts

Quick Interpretation: Self-initiated transformation

Traditional Interpretation: Uniting of opposites

Astrological Influence: Virgo

Gender Reference: Empowered female

Fifteen Card: Baphomet

Quick Interpretation: Avoid spiritual stagnation

Structure: Material rectangle containing a spiritual oval, centered on procreative organs.

Traditional Interpretation: loss of power

Astrological Influences: Scorpio

Sixteen Card: The House of God

Quick Interpretation: Avoid material over-investment

Traditional Interpretation: Disaster

Astrological Influence: Jupiter

Seventeen Card: The Star

Quick Interpretation: Integration of the self

Structure: Centered on creative focus

Traditional Interpretation: Inspiration

Astrological Influence: Sirius

Gender Reference: Inspiring female

Eighteen Card: Luna

Quick Interpretation: Spiritual harrowing

Traditional Interpretation: danger

Astrological Influence: Cancer, the Moon

Gender Reference: Mysterious female

Nineteen Card: Lucifer

Quick Interpretation: Spiritual freedom

Traditional Interpretation: Great success

Astrological Influence: The Sun

Gender Reference: Admirable male

Twenty Card: Aeon

Quick Interpretation: Rebirth

Structure: Material square and spiritual circle fully developed

Traditional Interpretation: success in the face of difficulties

Twenty-One Card: Lilith

Quick Interpretation: The true self

Structure: Balanced material square surrounding a spiritual circle in equilibrium. The spiritual triangle being supported by the fully developed material cross.

Traditional Interpretation: Successful achievement

Astrological Influence: Venus, the Sun

Gender Reference: Ideal female

Appendix D: The Minor Arcana

The Minor Arcana is, for use of the Black Tarot, unnecessary. The Major Arcana already deals with the four elemental bases of alchemical understanding, and a more than sufficient reading can be achieved with just the 22 cards. However, if the reader still wishes to use the Minor Arcana, either with the Tarot proper or as a separate set, the following is a quick reference for interpretation. Keep in mind when mixing the two sets, that the Minor Arcana meanings are always subordinate to the Major Arcana, and serve to tint the cards with which they are related in a reading.

The Minor Arcana is basically a numerological system. Each book has a sphere of influence, and each number assigns a meaning relative to the sphere. The spheres are as follows:

Air: Wands; The Intellect

Fire: Swords; Creativity

Water: Chalices; Passion

Earth: Pentacles; Materialization

So, for example, the number seven suggests “through struggle, the goal is achieved”. Thus, the Seven of Chalices would suggest that a matter of passion has achieved fruition. The numerological meanings are as follows:

Ace: A new beginning or project

Two: An initial set-back

Three: Some gains are made, the forces opposing are overcome, but not vanquished

Four: External opposition requiring a change in tactics

Five: The opposition is weakened, but still may not be overcome

Six: A point of balance between the goal and opposition is reached

Seven: Through struggle, the goal is achieved

Eight: Only partial success. Re-analyze the goal

Nine: While success is achieved, a new project looms

Ten: Total success

The Court cards, or “face” cards, do not have a numerological value, and are traditionally interpreted to represent influence from an actual person in the following manner.

Knave: Young woman or child

Knight: Young Man

Queen: Woman

King: Man

As can be seen, the Minor Arcana is far more subjective than the Major.

Appendix E: The Inverted Pentagram

The cover illustration, and the back-image of the physical cards, features a downward pointed, or inverted, pentagram. This may at first seem obviously appropriate, given that this book is meant to illustrate the Tarot for the Left Hand Path, and that the inverted pentagram is a traditional symbol of the Left Hand Path. This is not, however, why this image was chosen for the Black Tarot.

The traditional association between the inverted pentagram, the Left Hand Path, and things considered by western society to be “evil” is a falsehood, built upon the cross-adaptation of occult practices and Christian beliefs. Originally, the upward and downward pentagram symbols were used interchangeably by the cultures for which those symbols held power. The intent was not to illustrate benign and malignant forces, but rather energy directed upward toward the universe, and energy directed downward toward the self. “Evil” played no role in the meaning of the inverted pentagram until only within the last few centuries. The inverted pentagram is even included on numerous markers and symbols in the United States.

The shift came during the Renaissance, when the sons of noblemen, bored with their privileged lives and facing dwindling wealth and estates began to dabble in occult practices. They revived many of these practices and teachings, but they also tainted those teachings with their own ingrained Christian beliefs. Christianity opposes the ideals of self-focus and independence, thus anything which supported these ideals was related with the opposition to Christianity; the Devil.

The Tarot has always been a tool for self-exploration. Even as a divinatory tool, the focus is always on the individual and the future in relation to one person. Given the Christian backgrounds of the people who rediscovered the Tarot centuries ago, this was a difficult concept to grasp. Thus, we have the mythology built up around the system; that the Tarot should be read for the greater good and the like. Even modern cartomancers continue to maintain these altruistic values, which are completely out of place with the Tarot system. The Tarot is neutral in its practice, remaining a tool for self-exploration with no malign or benign goal.

With this understanding, the use of the inverted pentagram with the Tarot becomes clearer. It is a symbol of self-focus, as the Tarot is a tool of self-focus. It is not a symbol of “evil” or any other negative construct of the western mind, but rather a description of intent; that the individual achieve

Appendix F: Being a Prophet for Profit

The debate over the ethics of reading the Tarot for a fee runs deep and heated. Despite the best arguments against reading for profit, people have been selling their services as an interpreter of the cards since their inception. There are those who would suggest that the gift of the Tarot should not be given to others for a fee, but rather shared freely. Most of those of this opinion are not averse to receiving a “donation” for their services, and typically require a donation of at least a minimal amount in order to perform this service.

It is a given that if you are able to perform a service that is in demand that you are entitled to compensation. Reading the Tarot is no different; the reader should receive something for their time and skill. The reason reading for profit is typically discouraged by the experts is because they are making money from the Tarot and are concerned about their services being devalued in a watered-down market. There is another potential issue regarding reading for profit; that the person buying the service will come to be dependent on your performance, but this danger is part of reading for another regardless of being paid to do it or not. As long as the proper precautions are taken to avoid this potentiality, there is no reason why one should not profit from reading the Tarot. As a matter of fact, it could be argued that the measure of a good Tarot reader is a certain level of success and comfort resulting from their skills.

In this essay, I intend to be very blunt with my advice regarding reading the Tarot for profit. The bulk of this

advice comes not only from experience, but from also observing professional readers and carnival workers. The resulting techniques, while not always seeming completely ethical, are effective and typically practiced.

Be Knowledgeable

The first step to being a successful reader is to be knowledgeable of your craft. Know the cards you are working with and the processes you will employ. The more practiced and knowledgeable you are, the better your reading will be.

Be Consistent

Another key to earning a profit from reading is to always be consistent in your efforts. The process of the reading should be the same for every client, with the experience being as close as possible from person to person. Also be consistent in your pricing to avoid any accusations regarding your fees.

Be Professional

The more professional your demeanor and appearance when reading the Tarot for a client, the more your services will be appreciated. It is a simple matter of perspective, as a reader; do you regard your services as being akin to that of a fry-cook, or that of a lawyer? If you believe that your skills are that of a professional, then your appearance and behavior will reflect this.

Understand the Laws in Your Area

The laws across the country vary in regard to Tarot reading for profit. Before taking on regular clientele, you should familiarize yourself not only with laws regarding Tarot reading, but also regarding operating a small business. Most places that do have laws regarding the Tarot restrict the service for the purpose of therapy or divination. Such issues are avoided by referring to your services as being for entertainment. While you provide your service for entertainment purposes only, you can continue to be adamant about your opinions and beliefs in the Tarot as long as you do not encourage others to share those opinions and refer to them as solely your beliefs.

Be a Woman

While this may seem sexist, Tarot Reading and Divination for Entertainment services are industries where women typically do better than men. This is probably because of the general perception that women are more intuitive than men. Women who read the Tarot should play on this, dressing and behaving in a manner that suggests an intuitive, mystical nature. Men, on the other hand, do better by coming across as professional, but different. For example, suits and dress clothing are often worn, but in colors that are not typical of a professional environment.

Be From Another Country

This may also seem politically incorrect, but persons from old-world or third-world regions are perceived as being more spiritually aware than their new-world counterparts, and therefore do better as Tarot readers. Professional

readers who are not ethnically from an area will often learn to convincingly fake an accent and be knowledgeable of an Eastern European state in order to augment their aura as a reader.

Dress for the Part

As mentioned in previous sections, dressing for the part helps create an atmosphere conducive to readings and adds to the readers validity. Women have an advantage in this arena, being able to go for a mystical mystique that would appear gaudy on their male counterparts. Men should appear professional in a manner that still distinguishes them as a person apart. This could be as simple as flashes of color with a black suit.

Be Prepared

Whatever your choices in method and mannerisms, always be prepared to perform and to account for yourself. Have business cards ready, keep a notebook handy, and have change for the fees you charge. Also make adjustments for your safety; read near a public area, carry self-defense devices, and be willing to let the money go for your own safety.

Tactics

The major difference between Tarot readers who get paid for their services and reader who want to be paid is being willing to do it. A Tarot reader reading for profit must be willing to put themselves into the public eye as a reader of the Tarot. Simply reading for your friends will not suffice.

Tarot readers must advertise their services. This can be accomplished with fliers, business cards, and web-sites. The reader for profit must decide what kind of services they will offer and the venue they will be delivered in. If you are lucky enough to have a space that can be dedicated for the purpose of reading the Tarot, then that space should be utilized and appointments taken for readings. Alternative options include in-home reading sessions, reading for parties, and offering your services to businesses as an attraction to their bar/restaurant/bookstore.

Most professional readers charge between \$10-\$20 per session, and keep such sessions to an hour at most. A beginning reader should work their way up to these fees, starting at \$5.00 a reading and perhaps advertising as a student reader learning to perform. An excellent method for building up clientele and learning to deal with the public is to take your cards out onto the street and into bars. Simply lay out your cards and begin reading. People invariably will walk up and ask if you do readings, to which you can reply that you do them as a student for \$5.00 a reading.

A final tactic is taken directly from the professionals, always suggest at the end of a reading that another reading would be advisable in a month or so, in order to better understand the results from this reading. This leaves the door open for return business.



About the Author

JASON SORRELL has been a student of the occult for the last two decades and is an avid observer of politics, theological debate, and society. Jason has written for a variety of underground publications and for various organizations on a range of topics related to the occult and the advancement of Satanism. His creative efforts also include a growing body of artwork, with his Black Tarot being the latest completed project. Born in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, Jason currently is a resident of Austin, Texas with his girlfriend and three children. He is the owner and proprietor of Creative Oddities Studios.

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THE BLACK TAROT is available as a working set. The set includes the 22 images of the Black Tarot, certificate of authenticity, and instructional pamphlet. The sets are limited editions, numbering only 666 sets. Each set and certificate are signed and numbered.

Sets are priced at \$29.99. For more information or to order, email egodiabolus@hotmail.com .