

Tarot Articles

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An Introduction to the Tarot

What is the Tarot?

Tarot is the name given to certain decks of cards, usually used to answer personal questions or to look into the future. The cards first appeared in medieval Europe, but frequently encountered legends suggest that they were brought from India by the Gypsies or are a remnant of the ancient Egyptian *Book of Thoth*. The development of the cards is covered in more detail in *History of the Tarot*.

Whatever their actual origin, true Tarot decks contain 78 cards spilt into two sections. One of these is similar to our modern playing cards but with different suits (cups instead of hearts, for example) and with an extra court card, a Knight, in each suit. The remaining 22 cards are the Major cards that most people associate with the Tarot, cards like the Lovers, the Star and Death. An in-depth exploration of the various components of a Tarot deck, along with depictions of every card in the medieval *Marseilles* deck, is given in *Structure of the Tarot*.

The illustration above right shows a selection of cards from the *Marseilles* Tarot, and to the left is an example of one of its Major cards, the World.

How is the Tarot used?

spreadcelticcross.aspFor divination, cards are selected from a deck at random and arranged according to a layout or spread. Each card has a basic meaning, and this meaning is modified by its position in the spread. A good reader not only brings their experience and knowledge of the cards and the spread to the reading, but can relate the interpretation to any given question or issue. To the right is an illustration of the popular Celtic Cross spread. The process of performing a Tarot reading, from preparation to the subtleties of interpretation, is covered in *Reading the Cards*, and a number of spreads are explained in *Tarot Spreads*.

For psychological or mystical applications, the images and meanings of the cards can be used as the basis for meditation or mental exploration, and their links to other symbolic systems like the Kabbalah and astrology can be employed for expansion of knowledge and synthesis of ideas. The sequence of the Major cards in a Tarot deck can be viewed in many ways, one of which is as an allegory of the evolution of the soul.

Does the Tarot work?

The answer to this question depends on what you expect the Tarot to be or do. Certainly, a good Tarot reading, thoughtfully considered, can be helpful in working through problems and weighing up decisions. The psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung recognized the value of the cards, and they can help with self-exploration and assist in the task of becoming an integrated, balanced whole. Some of the ideas of Jung as they relate to the Tarot are introduced in *Jung and the Tarot*.

Many people, though, use the Tarot to try to glimpse the future. The idea that, through some unknown mechanism, the fall of the cards foreshadows events to come is held by many. Those who have worked with the Tarot over a period of time often vouch for the fact that the cards do seem, subjectively at least, to be uncannily accurate about future events. Equally there are those who argue that such ideas are mistaken, that correct predictions happen only by chance and those that do not come to pass are conveniently forgotten. For all the claims of self-proclaimed "psychics", there is no objective evidence that the cards can reveal anything meaningful about the future, but whatever the truth of the matter, there is no doubt that the Tarot can be an invaluable tool for self-discovery in intelligent hands. A more detailed discussion of some of the issues surrounding the predictive powers of the Tarot is given in *The Tarot and Divination*.

Where can I get a deck or a reading?

The best way to learn about the Tarot is to buy your own deck and explore the cards for yourself. Our list of Recommended Tarot Decks in the Byzant Scriptorium should help you get started. You can have a Tarot reading performed for you right away on the Byzant website: free on-line readings and free weekly readings are available to help you get a feel for the cards.

Is there more to the Tarot?

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kabbalah.asp Certainly! The Tarot is much more than a method of divination. As well as being interesting from historical, sociological and artistic perspectives, the Tarot is a powerful tool for spiritual and psychological investigation. The Tarot is closely linked to the Kabbalah through the Tree of Life (shown right), for example, and an understanding of the Kabbalah will deepen your appreciation of the Tarot, and vice versa. The Tarot-Kabbalah link is covered and illustrated in *The Tarot and the Kabbalah*.

You can learn a lot about the Tarot by exploring the rest of Byzant Tarot, and there is much in the rest of our website that has links - some obvious, some subtle - to these remarkable cards.

Tarot Myths

There are many myths surrounding the origin of the Tarot, and the theories that the cards were invented in ancient Egypt, India or China are often expressed. These ideas owe more to a sense of romance or wishful thinking than to any hard evidence. One popular myth, expounded in *Le Monde Primitif* (1781) by Court de Gebelin, is that the cards were brought from India by the Gypsies (who, as their name suggests, were originally thought to have come from Egypt). The true origin of the Tarot cards remains a mystery, but what is known is that cards similar to those we have today first appeared in Italy and France in the late 14th century.

Early History

The earliest known cards still in existence date from 1392 and, of these, only 17 remain. It is believed that they were painted for Charles VI of France by Jacquemin Gringonneur, but it is possible that they are actually less ancient and are *Tarocchi of Venice* cards from the middle of the 15th century. The earliest surviving full deck was painted in 1422 by Italian artist Bonifacio Bembo. This is known as the *Visconti* deck after the family name of its commissioner, the Duke of Milan.

The standard modern deck consists of 78 cards split into two sections: the 22 cards of the Major Arcana (the archetypal Tarot cards, such as the Lovers, Death and Judgement), and the 56 cards of the Minor Arcana (four suits of fourteen cards, each comprised of cards numbered from one to ten, and four 'court' cards). This structure is a derivation of the *Venetian* or *Piedmontese* Tarot, but early decks were of several types with varying numbers of cards. Examples of early European decks related to the Tarot include:

- *Tarocchi of Venice* (also known as the *Lombardi Deck*), which has the same structure as a modern Tarot deck
- *Tarocchi of Mantegna*, consisting of five series of ten cards each
- *Tarochino of Bologna*, which differs from the standard structure in having no court cards in the Minor Arcana (so 62 cards in total), and is thought, probably erroneously, to have been invented by Francois Fibbia, Prince of Pisa
- *Minchiate of Florence*, a 98-card deck consisting of the standard 78 cards augmented by twenty additional major cards representing the twelve signs of the zodiac, the four elements (Fire, Water, Air and Earth) and four cardinal virtues (Hope, Prudence, Faith and Charity; though these are often considered to be Wisdom/Prudence, Temperance, Courage/Fortitude and Justice).

While there is little actual evidence for the existence of the Tarot before the 14th century, many of the ideas symbolically depicted on the cards are much older. While cards like the Juggler (Magus), the Pope (Hierophant), the Devil and the Last Judgement seem fully at home in the context of medieval Europe, others, such as the High Priestess and the Moon, have a more pre-Christian feel to them.

Initially, the Tarot may have been used for playing games, and our contemporary playing cards are effectively a subset of the Tarot deck. In modern Italy, there is still a game called *tarocchi* played with the Minor Arcana. Opinion differs, though, as to whether playing cards evolved from the Tarot or vice versa. Over time, the cards became used for fortune telling, which is their main application today.

During the 15th century, dissemination of the cards was limited as they had to be hand-painted or drawn, but as new printing techniques became available, Tarot became more accessible. By the 16th century, a deck called the *Marseilles Tarot* was widely used. Below are some examples of cards from this deck. From left to right, these are the Juggler, Death and the Moon from the Major Arcana, and the Ace of Wands, the Six of Cups and the King of Swords from the Minor Arcana.

Esoteric Associations

The cards, particularly the 22 cards of the Major Arcana, have strong esoteric associations, and these began to be postulated and explored from the 18th century onwards, with the cards being linked to many areas of mystical study, such as the Kabbalah, alchemy, ritual magic and divination. Whether these associations were a guiding force in the creation of the Tarot or whether they were added to the lore by these later mystics is, again, debatable.

The 19th century French occultist, Eliphas Levi, explored the link between the Tarot and the Kabbalah. Though others before him had suggested such a link, his was the work that cemented the association in occult study, and the Kabbalah-Tarot system became the main model for the development and interpretation of the Tarot, and of its use in the Western Mystery Tradition. Levi himself felt that the Tarot was born from Kabbalistic teachings, though there is no hard historical evidence for this belief.

The 19th and early 20th centuries saw a revival in the study and application of occult teachings, and many of the associations between the Tarot and other mystical systems were developed or refined at this time. Most influential was the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, an English Rosicrucian society founded in 1888. Members of the Order separately produced two of the most popular and influential modern Tarot decks: the *Rider-Waite* and the *Thoth* deck.

Arthur Edward Waite was a prominent member of the Golden Dawn. In 1910, he published *The Key to the Tarot* in which he wrote: "the true tarot is symbolism, it speaks no other language and offers no other signs." He directed a fellow member, Pamela Colman Smith, in the design of the deck now known as the *Rider-Waite* (Rider was Waite's publisher).

Another member, Aleister Crowley, designed the *Thoth* deck, which was painted by Lady Frieda Harris. The deck was developed between 1938 and 1943 (considerably longer than the anticipated three months). Though Crowley published his study of the Tarot, *The Book of Thoth*, in 1944, the deck itself was not published until 1969, by which time both designer and artist were dead. Thoth, incidentally, was an Egyptian god (the equivalent of the Roman Mercury), said to be the inventor of hieroglyphics.

Both the *Rider-Waite* and the *Thoth* decks are replete with esoteric symbolism, combining important symbolic aspects of earlier decks with Kabbalistic, astrological and alchemical references.

The Last Judgement

These days there is a plethora of decks to choose from, but in some ways more is less. It sometimes seems that we have lost judgement and discrimination where the Tarot is concerned: there are many decks that are simply gimmicks with scant regard for the history or symbolism of the Tarot. Some are merely nice to look at, which is not a bad thing if the deck is used for its aesthetic value alone, but offers nothing more. Decks now come in all shapes, sizes and structures: with round cards, square cards, triangular cards and differing numbers of cards. Sometimes the changes are justified, such as the expanded size of the *Enochian Tarot* (which has 30 cards in the Major Arcana) to accommodate the underlying system of Enochian Magic on which it is based; though whether such a deck is really a Tarot deck is a moot point.

There are now decks based around myriad spiritual traditions, from Paganism, Druidry, Native American Spirituality and Zen Buddhism, to Greek, Norse and Arthurian mythology. But whatever the virtues and vices of these disparate decks, they confirm the vibrancy of the Tarot and its application to many times and many cultures. The best of these new developments, those that grow from rather than ignore established Tarot tradition and symbology, show that we too can deepen and evolve our use and understanding of the Tarot, just as our forebears did theirs.

Structure of the Tarot

Structure of a Standard Deck

The precise origins of the Tarot remain a mystery, but over time a fairly consistent standard has evolved for the structure of a Tarot deck. The components of this structure include not only the number of cards and their symbols, but also their order in relation to each other and their division into groups.

The standard Tarot deck follows the structure of the *Venetian* or *Piedmontese* Tarot from medieval Europe. This consists of 78 cards made up of two groups: the Major Arcana and the Minor Arcana, having 22 and 56 cards respectively. In the Major Arcana are found the archetypal Tarot cards, like the Fool, the Devil and the Moon; while the Minor Arcana is comprised of four suits of fourteen cards, each containing cards numbered from one to ten as well as four 'court' cards. Examples of cards from each of the Arcana are shown below, as depicted in the influential *Marseilles* deck from medieval Europe. Click on an Arcana to find out more about it and to see all the cards that it contains.

Variant Decks

While the 78 card structure described above is the standard for a deck to be a true Tarot deck, not all decks that claim to be Tarot adhere to this pattern. Early decks were of several types with differing numbers of cards, and some contemporary decks vary the system to accommodate the underlying non-Tarot philosophies on which they are based. Examples of early European decks related to the Tarot include:

- *Tarocchi of Mantegna*, consisting of five series of ten cards each
- *Tarocchino of Bologna*, which differs from the standard structure in having no court cards in the Minor Arcana (so 62 cards in total), and is thought, probably erroneously, to have been invented by Francois Fibbia, Prince of Pisa
- *Minchiate of Florence*, a 98-card deck consisting of the standard 78 cards augmented by twenty additional major cards representing the twelve signs of the zodiac, the four elements (Fire, Water, Air and Earth) and four cardinal virtues (Hope, Prudence, Faith and Charity; though these are often considered to be Wisdom/Prudence, Temperance, Courage/Fortitude and Justice).

An example of a modern deck that eschews the historical Tarot structure is the *Enochian Tarot*: an augmented deck containing eight extra cards in the Major Arcana to support the system of Enochian Magic on which it is based. Although they contain elements of standard structure, whether such decks are really Tarot decks at all is debatable. Even those modern decks constructed on traditional lines often replace cards in the Major Arcana with inappropriate alternatives or ignore important aspects of established symbolism.

The Kabbalistic Structure of the Tarot

The most influential model in the development and interpretation of the Tarot from the 19th century on has been the consideration of the cards as an expression of the esoteric system known as Kabbalah. The most important decks of the 20th century have been based on Kabbalistic ideas, in terms of their structure, their symbology and their interpretation. Two major examples are the *Rider-Waite* deck and the *Thoth* deck, designed by Arthur Edward Waite and Aleister Crowley respectively.

The Tarot and the Kabbalah

Adherents of the Mysteries have long held the idea that the Tarot has its origins in the arcane system of the Kabbalah, though there is no firm historical evidence for this. The work of the 19th century French occultist, Eliphas Levi, was the catalyst for the study of the esoteric link between the Tarot and the Kabbalah, which became the main model for the development and interpretation of the Tarot. The most influential decks of the 20th century were founded on Kabbalistic principles, in terms of their structure, their symbology and their explication.

Central to the Western Kabbalah is the glyph *Otz Chiim* or the Tree of Life. This consists of ten spheres or *sefirot* connected by 22 paths, and is shown here. Though the tree may be drawn with variations in the location of paths - particularly in pure, Judaic Kabbalah - esoteric tradition is consistent in presenting the tree as above, with the paths in the positions shown. The *sefirot* themselves are also considered to be paths, giving a total of 32 paths in all; but in discussing the associations between the Tarot and the Kabbalah, it is simpler to consider the Tree as 10 *sefirot* and 22 paths, as these groupings correspond respectively to the Minor Arcana and Major Arcana that make up the structure of the Tarot.

The Major Arcana and the 22 Paths

As can be seen on the diagram above, there are 22 paths on the Tree of Life, one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. There are also 22 cards in the Major Arcana of the Tarot, and each of these corresponds to a Hebrew letter and a path on the Tree of Life. The usual attributions of the Trumps to the paths is shown above, but some occultists offer slightly different attributions. Aleister Crowley, for example, transposes the Star and the Emperor, so that the Emperor corresponds to the Hebrew letter *tzaddi*, and the Star to *heh*. This is in keeping with the Thelemic teaching of Crowley's *Liber AL vel Legis (The Book of the Law)*, where it is written "All these old letters of my Book are aright; but Tzaddi is not the Star" (chapter 1:57).

Each path expresses the interaction between the pair of *sefirot* it connects. As a quick, much simplified example, Trump XXI, the World, concerns the successful completion of one phase and the start of another, as well as ideas of synthesis and crystallization. The interactions of *sefirot* nine, *Yesod* (Foundation), and ten, *Malkuth* (Kingdom) mirror these ideas, with the generative aspects of *Yesod* finding their fulfillment in *Malkuth*. The process of Creation ends in *Malkuth*, and the return begins through *Yesod*. The path and the World both correspond to the Hebrew letter *tav*, and again this is highly appropriate as it is the final letter of the alphabet and means 'cross', a symbol associated with the manifest world.

The above example is, of course, a greatly simplified distillation. The meanings of the paths can only be approached through much study and meditation, and the symbolism of a suitably designed Tarot deck can help in this process. Conversely, an understanding of the Kabbalah facilitates a much deeper understanding of the Tarot.

The Minor Arcana and the Sefirot

There are ten *sefirot* on the Tree of Life, and ten numbered cards in each suit of the Minor Arcana. This gives a simple and compelling correspondence, with all the sixes belonging to the sixth *sefira* (*Tifereth*), for example. Just as the *sefirot* follow a sequence from the new beginning or creative impulse in the first *sefira* (*Kether*) through to completion in the tenth (*Malkuth*), so the numbered cards in each suit follow this pattern from the Ace through to the Ten.

Kabbalists view the Tree as acting on or through four worlds: *Atziluth*, *Briah*, *Yetsirah* and *Assiah*. So the system can be further refined, as each of the suits of the Minor Arcana corresponds to one of the four worlds. For example, *Assiah* is the manifest world, corresponding to the element Earth and the Tarot suit Pentacles. So the Six of Pentacles corresponds to *Tifereth* in *Assiah*. *Tifereth* is the *sefira* of balance and beauty, and *Assiah* the manifest, material world; hence the Six of Pentacles in the Tarot deck has meanings associated with putting money to good use, generosity, nobility and deserved success. The correspondences between the Kabbalistic worlds and the Tarot suits are as follows:

Tarot Suit	Element	Kabbalistic World
Pentacles	Earth	<i>Assiah</i> (Manifest World)
Swords	Air	<i>Yetsirah</i> (Formative World)
Cups	Water	<i>Briah</i> (Creative World)
Wands	Fire	<i>Atziluth</i> (Archetypal World)

The court cards of the Minor Arcana are also placed at important positions on the Tree:

Court Card	Sefira
Pages	<i>Malkuth</i> (Kingdom)
Knights	<i>Tifereth</i> (Beauty)
Queens	<i>Binah</i> (Understanding)
Kings	<i>Chokmah</i> (Wisdom)

Also, entire suits may be allocated a position, just as the four worlds are sometimes expressed on a single Tree:

Tarot Suit	Sefira
Pentacles	<i>Malkuth</i> (Kingdom)
Swords	<i>Tifereth</i> (Beauty)
Cups	<i>Binah</i> (Understanding)
Wands	<i>Chokmah</i> (Wisdom)

That the final two tables above are nearly identical is no surprise, as each type of court card corresponds to a particular element, as does each suit. The discussion on the Minor Arcana goes into this in more detail.

Jung and the Tarot

Carl Gustav Jung was born in Switzerland in 1875 and died in 1961. He founded analytic psychology in response to the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud. This differs from the Freudian model in downgrading the importance of sexuality and childhood conflicts in the treatment of neuroses, and concentrates more on a patient's current conflicts. Jung made the significant step of defining the unconscious of a person as comprised of both a personal unconscious (proceeding from the experiences of the individual) and a collective unconscious (issuing from the inherited structure of the brain, and common to humanity). This is important to esoteric study in that it goes some way towards explaining the power of archetypal, symbolic systems like the Tarot. Indeed, the concept of archetypes - potent universal symbols appearing in myths, fairytales and dreams - is an important part of Jung's concept of the unconscious.

Jung classified people as introverted and extroverted types, but more importantly from the point of view of the Tarot, further classified them according to four functions of the mind: thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition. In his final work, *Man and His Symbols*, Jung wrote:

"These four functional types correspond to the obvious means by which consciousness obtains its orientation to experience. *Sensation* (i.e. sense perception) tells us that something exists; *thinking* tells you what it is; *feeling* tells you whether it is agreeable or not; and *intuition* tells you whence it comes and where it is going."

He considered that, in each person, one or more of these functions predominate, and that the others require development through application if that person is to become whole. Jung put it like this: "For complete orientation all four functions should contribute equally." These functions can help enrich our understanding of the Minor Arcana:

<i>Jungian Function</i>	<i>Tarot Suit</i>	<i>Element</i>
Intuition	Wands	Fire
Feeling	Cups	Water
Thinking	Swords	Air
Sensation	Pentacles	Earth

Three of the attributions look exactly right, but does Intuition really correspond to Wands and Fire? Intuition as creative, perceptive insight and initiator of action fits the bill very well. Jung himself wrote, "Intuition is not mere perception, or vision, but an active, creative process that puts into the object just as much as it takes out."

The occultist Dr. Arthur Edward Waite expressed the following, distinctly Jungian, view of the Tarot: "The Tarot embodies symbolical presentations of universal ideas, behind which lie all the implicits of the human mind, and it is in this sense that they contain secret doctrine, which is the realization by the few of truths embedded in the consciousness of all."

Tarot Decks and Books

There is a vast variety of Tarot decks and books available, but the quality to quantity ratio is low. Our recommended decks are those that have stood the test of time.

Thoth Tarot Deck

The Thoth Tarot is a beautiful deck, replete with symbolism, that works on many different levels. The cards were painted by Lady Frieda Harris under the guidance of Aleister Crowley, but the deck remained unpublished during their lifetimes.

Rider-Waite Tarot Deck

The Rider-Waite Tarot is probably the most popular deck available, and its clean, simple, symbolic approach is very appealing. The cards were painted by Pamela Colman Smith under the guidance of Arthur Edward Waite. Rider was Waite's publisher, but Waite-Smith is a more appropriate name for this deck.

Marseilles Tarot Deck

The Marseilles Tarot Deck originated in medieval Europe, and its classic style and structure became the template on which most Tarot decks from the eighteenth century on were based. Our decision to use the Marseilles Tarot for our site and readings was influenced by its simple, time-honored design.

The Book of Thoth

This is Crowley's exposition of the symbolism that lies behind his Thoth Tarot Deck, and it is an essential companion to that deck for those interested in using the cards for more than mere divination.

The Pictorial Key to the Tarot

Waite's book is subtitled "Fragments of a Secret Tradition Under the Veil of Divination", and is, in part, an illustrated discussion of the illustrations and divinatory meanings of the cards in the Rider-Waite Tarot Deck.

NEOPLATONISM AND THE TAROT

by Dr. Robert O'Neill

The thesis presented in this essay is that the philosophical and mystical system underlying the Tarot symbols (i.e., Fool + Trumps) is Neoplatonic. The connections between the Tarot and Neoplatonism were pointed out in my earlier book (O'Neill 1986) but subsequent research has uncovered a wealth of additional evidence that should be of interest to anyone interested in Tarot symbolism.

Neoplatonism and its early development

Neoplatonism is a term coined in the mid-nineteenth century (Harris 1972) to describe late Greek/Alexandrian philosophy (Merlan 1960). Plotinus (~204-270) is usually identified as the chief innovator (Inge 1929). The name Neoplatonism is misleading since it is not a revival of Plato but rather a synthesis and culmination of Greek thought including Aristotle (Merlan 1975). Indeed, modern scholars acknowledge that Plotinus is no closer to Plato than he is to Aristotle (Anton 2000) and have suggested that Neoaristoteleanism might be a better title (Harris 1972).

The basic ontological challenge for Plotinus, as for earlier Greek philosophers, was to explain the connection between an infinite, immaterial, and unchanging Source or God with a finite, material, and changing world. Plotinus' solution was a series of intermediate steps or emanations that were immaterial but mutable. These intermediaries bridged the gap between the immaterial and the material in a series of gradual steps. The concept of emanations had been developed by the Stoics but only for material phenomena such as light radiation (Harris 1972). Plotinus elevated the analogy with light to a basic ontological principle. As we will see, this simple explanation became the philosophical basis for much of Mediterranean spirituality, western science and art, and even magic.

Plotinus was an Egyptian and so was his teacher, Ammonius Saccas (185-250). Plotinus studied in Alexandria for 11 years and was a participant in the Alexandrian synthesis of ideas (O'Neill 1986). So there is a real basis for the occultist belief that the Tarot originated in Egypt. However, it was not the Egypt of the pharaohs and pyramids but the late Alexandrian synthesis that was the true basis.

Buddhist and Brahmin thinkers were in Alexandria at the time and it should come as no surprise that there are many oriental concepts in Neoplatonism (Gregorios 2002). This synthesis provides a simple explanation for why later Tarot interpreters were misled into thinking there was a direct oriental input into the Tarot. The oriental input was indirect through Neoplatonism.

Alexandria was also a center for Gnostic thinkers (Wallis and Bregman 1992). So it is no surprise that later interpreters detected Gnostic elements in the Tarot symbols. But once again the influence was indirect (see article on Catharism and the Tarot). While some Gnostic elements were incorporated into Plotinus' system, he argued strenuously against the mythology and dualism of the Gnostics (Turner and Majercik 2000). For Plotinus evil is a simple absence of

good and not a creative force as it is in Gnosticism. Fundamentally, Neoplatonism is not a Gnostic system. Rather, it is an Alexandrian/Greek system that was influenced by Gnosticism and it is this symbolic system that we find in the Tarot.

Alexandria was also a center for Jewish scholars. For example, we later find Philo arguing for the compatibility of Judaism with Greek philosophy (Smalley 1964). Scholem (1974, 1987) documents the roots of QBLH in Neoplatonism (also see Goodman 1992). We will deal in more detail with the occultist interpretation of Tarot as a system of QBLH in a separate article. For now it suffices to say that the system of sephiroth and indeed the Sefer Yetsirah are Neoplatonic and that the 16th century Christian Cabalists that the occultists relied upon for their interpretations were themselves Neoplatonists (Kristeller 1964).

It was a disciple of Plotinus, Porphyry (c. 232-304), who wrote his biography and organized his written works (Smith 1974). The chief work, the Enneads, was only translated from Greek in 1492 by Marsilio Ficino. So Plotinus' own work was not available in Italy as the Tarot evolved between ~1410 and 1450. We will have to trace the influence of Neoplatonism through a number of later writers.

The most influential conveyors of Neoplatonism were Iamblicus (c. 245-326) and Proclus (d. 450). They accepted Neoplatonism as the culmination of Greek philosophy and drew out the logical consequences of Plotinus' philosophy for religion, magic, and symbolism (Lachs 2002).

Plotinus had identified the transcendent "Good" of Plato with the Pythagorean "One" (Harris 1972). Iamblicus and Proclus (Dodds 1963) expanded this insight by assimilating Neopythagoreanism into Neoplatonism. Following Posidonius (Merlan 1975), they adopted mathematics as intermediates between God and created matter. The logic is simple: God is immaterial and indivisible, matter is material and divisible. The logical intermediary is mathematics which are immaterial and divisible. Thus intermediaries such as the World Soul, angels, and even the human soul were equated with mathematics and numbers acquired a cosmic and mystical status. Thus, insofar as Pythagorean number mysticism and symbolism entered into the Tarot, it was a thread in a wholecloth called Neoplatonism.

Plotinus was a mystic and describes out-of-the-body experiences in Enneads IV. His philosophical system of emanations or intermediaries describes not only the steps in the creative descent but also the logical steps for a mystical ascent back to the One (Merlan 1975). The mystical implication was developed by Iamblicus and Proclus but also by other authors in Athens (Hierocles, Damascius, Simplicius, Priscianus), in Alexandria (Hermeias and Olympiodus), and in Rome (Macrobius and Servius) (Culiano 1991). The Pistis Sophia also discusses the return journey. Indeed, many other-world journeys (discussed in a separate article) were probably influenced by Neoplatonism (Culiano 1991).

Founded on this mystical background, Iamblicus and Proclus also added a theurgic or ritual element to the mix (Smith 1995). Plotinus' mysticism was designed for the philosopher. His method was to concentrate on each of the intermediate steps and deny the properties of that intermediary. In this way, the mystic eventually stripped the ultimate concept of the One of all multiplicity and imperfection. Plotinus hints that the ultimate union with the One requires more

than this negative dialectic, it requires an act of love (Anton 2000). Later Neoplatonists felt Plotinus' method was too restricted to philosophers and that his hint about love opened the path to a more universal religious system in which ritual, magic, and initiation permitted access to the non-philosopher. Therefore, influenced by the Mystery Religions and probably also by Gnosticism (Merlan 1975), Neoplatonism became a religious and magical system (Webb 1974). Neoplatonism adopted initiations, rituals, spells, and passwords to be used during the ascent (Betts 1986). There was a mystical connection between a name and the thing it represents (Gombrich 1972, Ormsby-Lennon 1995). In the end, mysticism, initiation, and magical ritual became integral parts of the system that was transmitted to later scholars.

In many ways, Neoplatonism was a convenient philosophical basis for western magic. Though Neoplatonism isn't the point of origin of magic nor a necessary component, it was often adopted as a logical philosophical base. The world we experience is simply the physical manifestation of a spiritual and immaterial world that lies beyond matter (Harris 1972). What is most real and most powerful is utterly removed from matter (Alexandrakis 2002). The explanation of physical phenomena must involve the participation and involvement of higher levels in the chain of being (Anton 2000). The material world is based on an archetype of the ideal world of Plotinian emanations. By magical access to levels of that ideal world (e.g., angels and demons, astral and planetary correspondences) one can gain power over physical phenomena.

The Influence of Neoplatonism on the Eastern Christian Church

Neoplatonism was very influential in the late ancient world and influenced philosophy in many different spiritual traditions (Vanderjast and Patzold 1991). Perhaps the strongest influence was on the Eastern Christian Church. When the Athenian Neoplatonic school was closed in 529, it moved to Byzantium (later called Constantinople) where it became a dominant philosophy in eastern Christianity (Harris 1972). Neoplatonism also influenced the eastern church through Origen of Alexandria, Basil, and Gregory of Nyssa. Neoplatonism became codified into Christianity by Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus (Rorem 1993). By the time of Photius (820-891), Neoplatonism had been deeply engrained into the eastern church (Anton 2000).

Eastern mysticism was also influenced by Pseudo-Dionysius (Lossky 1957). Basilides is probably the originator of the theory that the individual soul emulates the Plotinian act of creation by traveling down through the 7 cosmic spheres (Culiano 1991). In the monastic mysticism of the east, Neoplatonism provided the underlying philosophy.

The reason that eastern Neoplatonism is of interest to us is that Harris (1972) shows that Psellus (1018-1079) relied heavily on Proclus and, in turn strongly influenced Pletho (c. 1360 - c. 1450). Pletho was one of the Greeks that traveled to Italy in the 15th century for the councils that attempted to reunite the eastern and roman churches. Pletho provided access to Greek philosophy that Italy had only known through the Latin writers and stimulated a new interest that stimulated the 15th century Italian Neoplatonists.

Though Pletho and other Byzantines at the council are often credited with introducing the Italians to Neoplatonism, we will show below that they simply stimulated a tradition that was already deeply engrained in Roman Christianity. Pletho later formed a Neoplatonic community

in Greece (Webb 1974) that espoused an individualistic religion uniting Neoplatonism, Christian mysticism, Sufism, and the Chaldean Oracles (Godwin 2002).

The Influence of Neoplatonism on Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism

Islam was also strongly influenced by Neoplatonism and by the works of the late Hellenistic philosophers to which they had more immediate access than the Latin West (Affifi 1939). Of particular importance was Al-Farabi (870-950) and his disciples Al-Razi (d. 925) and Ibn Sina (d. 1037) who was known in the west as Avicenna.

Al-Farabi wrote extensively on the Plotinian emanations and their relationship to the hierarchical cosmology of Ptolemy (Fakhry 2002). Avicenna combined the Neoplatonic cosmology with the developing 'Ôscience' of astrology (Robb 1935). So when the Arabic manuscripts began to be translated into Latin in the 12th century, the west found cosmology and mathematics tightly bound in a Neoplatonic package. With the new 'Ôscience' came a mystical philosophy (Morewedge 1992) and the package was assimilated along with the contents.

The emanation theories of Al-Farabi were strongly opposed by Al-Ghazali (d. 1111) and largely died out in the eastern Mediterranean. Later Islamic philosophers such as Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), known in the west as Averroes, opposed Al-Farabi on many points but elsewhere defended him against Al-Ghazali's attack (Fakhry 2002). But it is also clear that Islamic Neoplatonism continued to flourish in Islamic Spain. At this point in the discussion, it should come as no surprise that Neoplatonism became the philosophical underpinnings of Sufism (Fakhry 2002). Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi (d. 1191) reconciled Neoplatonism with Islamic mysticism through the hierarchy of lights (Fakhry 2002). Modern Tarot interpreters who see a common thread with Sufism are, once again, both correct and seeing only seeing a single aspect of the wholecloth of Neoplatonism.

The Influence of Neoplatonism on Early Christian Fathers

We have seen that Neoplatonism was infused into west thought with the translation of the Arabic philosophers in the 12th century and again with the arrival of the Byzantine embassaries in 15th century Italy. But it is also important to realize Neoplatonism was also deeply engrained into western philosophy, theology, and mysticism from the earliest times. Thus, these external infusions served as stimuli for an already existing Neoplatonism.

To understand how Neoplatonism became incorporated into western Christianity, it is necessary to understand how the medieval theologians used their authorities. The primary authority was, of course, the Scriptures. Second only to the Scriptures were the writings of the early Christian Fathers. These early writers were seen as being closer to the time of Jesus and largely preserved from error in order that God might set Christianity on a safe track.

We have already seen that many of the Eastern Fathers of the Church, such as Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, were Neoplatonists. And we will find the same thing to be true of Western Fathers such as Origen (c. 185-254, Lawson 1957) and Clement of Alexandria (Lilla 1971). John Cassian introduced the west to the Neoplatonic mysticism of the Egyptian Desert Fathers. But the Fathers most responsible for the orthodox elements of Neoplatonism in Roman Christianity are Saint Augustine (354-430) and Pseudo-Dionysius (O'Meara 1982).

Augustine was a convert who was greatly influenced by Marius Victorinus (born c. 280), a Roman Neoplatonist and Christian. Augustine's major works (Bourke 1958, Ryan 1960) were widely available and cited by essentially all of the orthodox Christian theologians. Augustine's interpretation of Scriptures included the idea that there was both a literal and a deeper mystical sense (Smalley 1964). This led to later concepts of multiple level of meaning in scriptural exegesis and, by extension, all symbolic systems. Augustine's writings are deeply personal and mystical (Robb 1935). Mysticism is seen in a Neoplatonic light as an individualistic and inward experience and journey upward. With Augustine, Neoplatonism takes on Christian garb and most of its pagan connotations are Christianized or discarded.

Pseudo-Dionysius is the title given to an anonymous Christian Neoplatonic writer. His works were widely available (Rolt 1940, Luibheid 1987) and extremely influential (Knowles 1975, McGinn 1991) throughout the later Medieval period. He was believed to be the Dionysius who is mentioned as a convert in the Acts of the Apostles. Therefore, most theologians regarded his writings as being of apostolic age and he was considered a reliable eyewitness to early Christian thought. As such, he was considered as a Father of the Church and an impeccable authority (Rorem 1993).

Pseudo-Dionysius became the ultimate orthodox authority on angelology through his work on the Celestial Hierarchy. He invented the word hierarchy (Rorem 1993) and used this concept to array nine choirs of angels from lowest to highest, paralleling the Neoplatonic intermediaries. With Pseudo-Dionysius, the Neoplatonic-Ptolemaic cosmology became something akin to Christian dogma and was accepted throughout the medieval period.

Pseudo-Dionysius supported Augustine in finding multiple levels of meaning in the Scriptures and in all spiritual symbols. He adopts the theurgy of Iamblicus and Proclus in claiming that the deeper mystical meaning of symbols was only revealed to the initiates. Thus, he laid the theological foundation for the mystical significance of hierarchical symbolic systems, such as the one found in the Tarot.

Pseudo-Dionysius also provided the theological basis for much of western mysticism (Louth 1981). He introduced the term 'cloud of unknowing' to describe a Plotinian negative theology in which contemplation of God involves the successive denial of attributes until the One is stripped of all descriptors (Rorem 1993). Later Christian mystics relied extensively on this Neoplatonic concept to describe their experiences.

By dressing the theurgy of Iamblicus and Proclus in orthodox Christian garb, Pseudo-Dionysius also provided a theological foundation for much of the natural science and magic of medieval Europe. Basically, the idea is that sensible nature is derived from and closely correlated with the immaterial (Alexandrakis 2002). This is the core idea behind the influence of the celestial spheres on human life (astrology and astrological image magic), the occult virtues of natural objects (gems, herbs, etc.), and the theory of correspondences in which objects have a natural correlation with various planets. In many respects an understanding of Pseudo-Dionysius and his influence on orthodox theology is the only hope for the modern reader trying to decipher the Church's reaction to magic. Summoning and compelling demons was never acceptable. But

explaining plagues by astral conjunctions and comets or administering medicines during the proper phase of the moon was usually approved as a proper application of human reason to an orthodox Neoplatonic cosmology.

Neoplatonic Christian Philosophers and Theologians

Since Origen and Clement, and especially Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius, were accepted as Church Fathers, Neoplatonism became an integral part of Roman Christianity (Klibansky 1937). While the complexity of the Neoplatonic system played only a background role in many writers, it became a dominant theme in a succession of philosophers and theologians who kept the Neoplatonic synthesis alive in western thought (Markus and Blumenthal 1981).

It is beyond the scope of this essay to trace each Neoplatonic concept through every writer between the 5th and the 15th century. We are only interested in establishing that many Neoplatonic ideas were incorporated into western thinking and available at the time the Tarot was designed. To establish this lineage it suffices to hit on some of the high points and deal with the most influential authors.

The scholarship of McGinn (1995) permits us to follow the trail of one concept that is of interest to Tarot studies. The World Soul or Anima Mundi is a concept that originated with Plato in the "Timaeus". This dialogue was available in the west through a 4th century translation by Chalcidius. The Greek Neoplatonists made the World Soul an important emanation of God, the immediate creator of the material universe and the lowest aspect of God and the one that makes immediate contact with the mathematical intermediaries. The World Soul is referred to as female and 12th century illustrations are of a woman. Therefore, this Neoplatonic concept is probably the model for the World card in the Tarot de Marseille.

The Anima Mundi appears in a number of classical Latin authors, such as Cicero, Seneca, Virgil, Macrobius, and Apuleius (Haskins 1927). Since these authors were so influential in 15th century humanism, it is important to realize that they were immersed in late Hellenistic philosophy, i.e., Neoplatonism. The early momentum built up around the concept of the Anima Mundi continued and the idea appears in Boethius, the Asclepius (attributed to Hermes Trismagistus), Augustine, Eriugena, Anselm (Deane 1962). The Neoplatonist Peter Abelard (Luscombe 1970) and Meister Eckhart identified the Anima Mundi with the Holy Spirit. With the translation of two additional Platonic dialogues (Phaedo and Meno) by Aristippus of Catania ~1156 (Haskins 1927) there was an increased interest in the concept which appears in Bernard and Thierry of Chartres, William of Conches (Thorndike 1923), Bernardus Silvestris, Gilbert de la Porree, Abelard of Bath, Hermann of Carinthia (Haskins 1927), Arnold of Bonneval (late 1150's) and Hildegard of Bingen (Thorndike 1923). The 12th century renewal of Neoplatonism is also found in Alan of Lille (Wilks 1977, Evans 1983, Otten 1992). By the 13th century, the World Soul, a fundamental Neoplatonic concept, became a standard item in the vocabulary of orthodox Christian philosophers, theologians and mystics.

In addition to this rapid-fire survey of the World Soul concept, we also need to focus briefly on two sources that were influential in transmitting Neoplatonism to the scholastics and the 15th century. The first is Eriugena (McGinn and Otten 1994), aka John the Scot, aka Duns Scotus (c. 829 - 870). Eriugena knew Greek well and provided translations of Pseudo-Dionysius (Harris

1972). His encyclopedic system was an explicitly Neoplatonic system and was based on the emanations and the mystic return to God (Westra 1992). He was apparently the first to use the term supernatural (Rorem 1993) to describe the intermediaries. Many of Eriugena's ideas were radical and he was posthumously declared a heretic in 1225 and again in 1585 (Harris 1972). If you wonder why it was felt necessary to condemn some of his radical ideas a second time, it was because the first declaration was largely ignored and Eriugena continued to influence philosophers, theologians and mystics through the 15th century. He had a particularly important influence on the 15th century Neoplatonist, Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464), who we will discuss below.

The second influential source of transmittal was the Abbey of St. Victor (Harris 1972). Hugh of St. Victor (1096-1141) was an Augustinian scholar and mystic. He wrote a commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius' "Celestial Hierarchy" and reinforced the Neoplatonic themes of hierarchy, the spiritual function of symbols, and the negative approach to mysticism (Rorem 1993). Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173) continued the assimilation of the Pseudo-Dionysian themes into an orthodox philosophy and theology. Thomas Gallus (d. 1246) moved from St. Victor to found an abbey in northern Italy. He continued the Neoplatonic tradition and helped put together the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus that was relied upon over the next centuries. The corpus included the translations by Eriugena and by Sarracenus (~1167), commentaries by Eriugena and Hugh, together with a paraphrase of Pseudo-Dionysius by Gallus (Rorem 1993).

One reason for emphasizing the Victorine Neoplatonists is that St. Victor is located in Marseilles. One can expect, therefore, that the Neoplatonic symbolism at St. Victor foreshadowed the Neoplatonic symbolism of the Tarot. There is no reason to think that the Tarot was invented in Marseilles, but it is easy to see why the symbols were espoused when they were brought there from Italy at the end of the 15th century. The Neoplatonism that Thomas Gallus took to Italy two centuries earlier had returned and Marseilles became a center of production for the French Tarot.

To summarize the influence of Neoplatonism on medieval thought, it is clear that many elements of late Alexandrian/Athenian philosophy were assimilated into western thought. Not every thinker emphasized these ideas and most were only remotely aware of their true origins. The Christian writers relied on Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, and the early Church Fathers, not on Plotinus. Humanists read Cicero, Virgil, and Boethius without recognizing that these authors were heavily imbued with Neoplatonism. Many of the occult and theurgic concepts of Iamblicus and Proclus were Christianized by Augustine. The hierarchical cosmology, the mystical ascent, the World Soul, and even some aspects of natural magic and astrology became part and parcel of the western Christian worldview. And it is that worldview that is encapsulated in the Tarot.

Neoplatonism in Thomas Aquinas

One of the most interesting aspects of Neoplatonism in western thought was its influence on the greatest scholastic theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). Aquinas is usually presented as a purely Aristotelean theologian but he was strongly influenced by Neoplatonism (Schmitt 1982). Albertus Magnus, the teacher of Aquinas, got him interested in Proclus' "Liber de Causis" which, at that time, was thought to be written by Aristotle. Albertus also introduced Thomas to the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius whose apostolic authority was unquestioned. Aquinas wrote a

commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius' Divine Names which describes the creation descent and mystical reascension. The influence of Pseudo-Dionysius on Thomas has long been recognized (Henle 1956, Hankey 1987, Elders 1990). Thomas cites Pseudo-Dionysius more than 1700 times (Rorem 1993).

McInerny (1990) establishes that Aquinas was also influenced by another Neoplatonic writer, Boethius (c. 480-524), whose "Consolations of Philosophy" formed one of the foundations of 14th and 15th century Italian humanism. Thomas also relies heavily on Augustine in his discussions of the Pauline out-of-the-body experience (2 Corinthians 12:1-6). Thomas' discussion helped establish the orthodoxy of mystical experiences which formed the core of western Christian mysticism (Harris 1972).

One of the reasons that Aquinas has often been classified as purely Aristotelean is his dependence on the Arabic commentators of Aristotle whose works were translated in the previous century. However, as we have seen above, these commentaries were heavily laced with Neoplatonism (Fakhry 2002). Avicenna was clearly a Neoplatonist and even Averroes defended many of the Neoplatonic theses. Indeed, due to a clerical error, several of the books of Plotinus' "Enneads" had been translated under the title "The Theology of Aristotle" and were believed to be written by Aristotle (Fakhry 2002). So even though Aquinas and the later scholastics thought of themselves as Aristoteleans, their reliance on Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius, the Islamic Neoplatonists, and works of Proclus and Plotinus that were attributed to Aristotle, meant that many Neoplatonic concepts became further imbedded into orthodox theology.

The Influence of Neoplatonism on Western Christian Mysticism

Christianity incorporated an orthodox mystical spirituality from its beginnings. It was supported by Scriptures in the mystical experiences of Moses, the Old Testament Prophets, Paul, and the author of Revelations. The evidence that this Christian mystical tradition influenced the Tarot is complex and will be left for a separate article. The present task is to establish the deep Neoplatonic roots of this orthodox tradition.

Scholars have long agreed on the Neoplatonic basis of Christian mysticism (Von Hugel 1909, Jones 1909, Underhill 1911, Katsaros and Kaplan 1969). Plotinus decried the "flight of the alone to the Alone" (Ennead 6, 9:11) and most of the Church Fathers that discussed mysticism were Neoplatonists, e.g., Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, Origin, Clement of Alexandria, Basil, Gregory the Great, the Egyptian Desert Fathers.

John Climacus (c. 570-649) wrote "The ladder of divine ascent", an obvious reference to the Plotinian ascent through the intermediaries.

Much of Christian monastic spirituality is based on contemplation of the Scriptures. We have seen that Iamblicus and Proclus introduced the idea of hidden mystical meanings underlying symbols and that Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius applied this idea to scriptural exegesis. Many medieval writers on the Scriptures accepted this personal mystical message as superior to the literal sense. As a result, many orthodox commentators on the Scriptures, including Peter Comestor, Peter the Chanter, and Stephan Langton, were unknowingly promulgating a fundamental Neoplatonic principle that became fundamental to western mysticism. A useful

summary of the influence of Neoplatonism on interpretation can be found at Guide to Medieval Theory.

A Neoplatonic, hierarchical mysticism underlay much of medieval theology (Dronke 1988). In the 9th century, Eriugena espoused a thoroughly Neoplatonic mysticism. Eriugena was declared a heretic, but not for his mystical writings, which continued to influence Christian spirituality (Harris 1972). The translation of Greek and Arabic Neoplatonists in the 12th century supplied further fuel (Chenu 1968). Rorem (1993) shows that the Franciscan theologian, Saint Bonaventure (c. 1217-1274) espoused a number of Neoplatonic themes in his writings. His major spiritual work, "The Soul's Journey into God" is clearly Neoplatonic and relies on authorities such as Pseudo-Dionysius and John Climacus. Bonaventure also developed an encyclopedic cosmology that was based on a Neoplatonic hierarchy. Amusingly, he placed the Franciscans near the top, with the Seraphim, and way above the Pope! So perhaps the Tarot Hermit is a Franciscan?

One of the most widely read and influential Christian mystics, Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), incorporated a number of Neoplatonic themes in her writings (Dronke 1992). Hildegard, like many Neoplatonists, was an encyclopedist who wrote on science, cosmology and medicine in addition to mysticism (Thorndike 1923). Interestingly, she accepted the Neoplatonic concept of correspondences between material objects and spiritual intermediaries. As a result, she discussed 'good or natural' magic involving herbs and gems and believed that medicines should be administered under the proper phase of the moon.

It is beyond the scope of this essay to do a thorough survey of Neoplatonism in all of the medieval mystical writers. For the present, it will suffice to mention one other influential Christian mystic, Meister Eckhart (c. 1260-1327). Eckhart was an enthusiastic proponent of the orthodoxy of Neoplatonic mysticism (Thorndike 1923). He, following Peter Abelard, attempted to legitimize the Neoplatonic intermediary, the Anima Mundi or World Soul, by saying it was identical to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Christian Trinity.

Not all the Christian mystics were philosophers or theologians and were probably unaware, and uninterested, in the Neoplatonic implications of their writings. However, the negative theology of Plotinus is implicit in concepts like the 'cloud of unknowing' and the 'dark night of the soul'. The descriptions of the mystical experience as an ascending journey through a series of intermediary stages is universal and clearly Neoplatonic.

The Influence of Neoplatonism on Western Art and Symbolism

One of the words that Plato used to describe the supreme being was Beauty. Plotinus developed this idea into a theory of aesthetics (Putnam 1960) that became an integral part of western culture. For the Neoplatonists, beauty is not a matter of symmetry but was an archetype of the supreme One. As an archetype, beauty had a spiritual purpose that was largely unconscious and it attracted and lifted the human soul toward the One, the absolute Beauty that is the quest of the mystical process. Thus, creating and viewing art was an act of de-alienation (Anton 2000). Alienation is a Platonic term to describe what happens to the individual human soul as it is separated from its true home in the world of ideas and is united to a human body. De-alienation

was then a semimagical act in which beauty led the embodied soul to remember and long for its true spiritual home.

The transmittal of the Neoplatonic aesthetics occurred in parallel with Christian philosophy and theology but was not directly dependent on learning. Robb (1935) points out that there was really no need for the artist to be a learned man. The main concepts of Neoplatonism were broadly disseminated in scores of lay treatises and hundreds of lyrics. Scholarly debate was not needed to assimilate the hierarchical cosmology, the encyclopedic symbolism, and the spiritual quality of beauty. Similarly, de-alienation was a natural act and one did not have to understand the theory in order to experience the uplifting.

Neoplatonism entered medieval architecture through the Gothic style originated by Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis (Rorem 1993). Suger was a Neoplatonist (Crosby 1987, Crosby et al. 1981) and the architecture style he developed was encyclopedic, hierarchical, symbolic, and cosmic in dimension. All of the great Gothic cathedrals were built on this Neoplatonic aesthetic. Experience of their interiors was a spiritual and uplifting experience. Attending rituals in such a structure harkened back to the cosmic theurgy of Proclus. The cathedral transformed liturgy into an aesthetic mystical experience. This same aesthetic ideal continued into the architecture of 15th century Italy where the Tarot was invented and where great domes represented the intermediate spheres linking God to earth (Cheney and Hendrix 2002). So if the modern Tarotist sees foreshadows of the Tarot symbols in Abbot Suger and the great Gothic cathedrals, their intuition is accurate. However, once again, they are focusing on one of the threads of the wholecloth of Neoplatonism that produced the Tarot.

Plotinus stated that there were three types of humans that were predisposed to undertake the mystical ascent: the philosopher, the musician, and the lover (Anton 2000). We will return to the lover in our discussion of medieval poetry. In the meantime, it is easy to understand why musicians should relate to a Neoplatonic aesthetic. The Neoplatonists raised music to the highest level of spiritual endeavor, akin to philosophy in leading to mystical ascent. Indeed, Plato occasionally used a Greek word for music as a synonym for philosophy (Kupke 1992).

The connection between music and mysticism resulted from the Neoplatonic assimilation of the mystical theories of Pythagoras. The musician must constantly deal with the practical aspects of mathematics. To strike a chord, certain string lengths must be established on the lute. When the ratios of string lengths correspond to the mystical ratios of Pythagoras the music is magical and uplifting to rapture. By manipulating the mathematical intermediates between matter and God, the musician ascends through the spheres in a magical and intuitive way. One need not even understand the mathematical theory in order to experience the mystical ascent. The process is archetypic and allows the musician to participate in the mystical experience even without the negative theology of the learned mystic. An excellent summary of the influence of Neoplatonism on early music theory can be found at Music Theory Resources.

Eriugena described theology as a "Ékind of poetry, by means of fictive imaginations, adapts Holy Scripture to the inquiry of our minds." (Otten 1992). The statement reflects the high regard in which Neoplatonists held creative allegorical poetry and imagery (Dronke 1988). The epic poetry of Virgil was an allegory of the mystical journey and inspired similar efforts in Petrarch

and Dante. The poetry that could capture the scope of the Neoplatonic vision would be encyclopedic, incorporating the intermediaries, symbolism, and allegory. Perhaps the finest example of medieval Neoplatonic poetry is the 12th century "Cosmographia" of Bernardus Silvestris (Wetherbee 1973). Here the full range of Neoplatonic cosmology is developed.

Although grandiose epic poetry seemed best adapted to conveying the Neoplatonic vision, Plotinus also pointed out that the lover was one of the human types best suited to the mystical ascent. Plotinus primarily developed a negative mystical theology in which the learned philosopher successively denied attributes to arrive at an "unknowing" of the One. However, Plotinus hints that the final step to total union requires love. This hint was developed by Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius into a theology of union through love. This Christian Neoplatonism had a deep influence on Alain de Lille and Chretien's romances (Wetherbee 1973). Courtly love became a 'Platonic' love that led to spiritual elevation, as seen in Petrarch and Dante. The romance of the Grail legends became a mystic journey and ascent. The aesthetic ideal in lyric and romance poetry accepted the same Neoplatonic ideal as architecture and music. So if the modern interpreter sees hints of the Tarot symbols in the Grail Quests, the insight is probably correct. But the Tarot does not represent a French romance and this is just another thread in the wholecloth of Neoplatonism.

Fine art adopted a Neoplatonic aesthetic just as we found for other arts. Italian churches and public buildings were filled with art that conveyed an encyclopedic view of sacred history, a hierarchical angelology and cosmology, and attempted to lift the soul of the viewer into mystic rapture (Anton 2000). The Church approved this religious art on the grounds that it facilitated teaching dogma to an illiterate audience. Admittedly, medieval art focused monotonously on the life of Christ and seemed to appeal to the emotions rather than evoking a mystical experience. Nevertheless, Augustinian Neoplatonic theory held that the intense love and pity evoked by such images were an integral part of the mystical ascent and medieval saints are often depicted as staring intently at a crucifix.

Beyond this emotive response, the religious icon was also seen to be a manifestation of the divine, with specific correlations in the world of emanations, i.e., a special association with spiritual powers (Koutras 2002). Specific icons were believed to be able to cure the sick or soften the hardened heart. Although orthodox, such beliefs can be seen to be closely related to astral image magic in which a talisman is believed to have special correlation to a planetary intermediary and capable of producing cures or specific physical effects.

Art also incorporated the Neoplatonic concepts of symbols. The mystic significance of symbolism was developed by late Neoplatonists, such as Proclus, and adopted by Augustine to explain mystical layers of meaning in Scripture. This concept of hidden levels of meaning was widely applied to art and poetry. Dante stated explicitly that there were hidden mystical messages in the Divine Comedy (see separate article on Dante and the Tarot). By the 15th century, such hidden meanings were deliberately inserted into works of fine art. A famous example is Botticelli's Primavera (~1478) with deliberate Neoplatonic references that have been carefully dissected by scholars (Cheney 1985). The creative descent is illustrated at the right margin. The right center is occupied by an ecstatic dance supervised by Eros, referencing the

theology of love. At the right margin we find Mercury (= Hermes) reaching upward for the return to the beyond.

The Influence of Neoplatonism on 14th and 15th Century Italy

The many disparate threads of Neoplatonism were woven together in the northern Italian city-states of the 14th and 15th centuries. Many of the threads can be found in Dante (see separate article on Dante and the Tarot). Dante is strongly Neoplatonic in his cosmology and mysticism (Moore 1900, Gardner 1913, Wicksteed 1913, Robb 1935, Harris 1972). In the Paradiso (28:130-132), Beatrice describes the nine choirs of angels and their association with the nine spheres of heaven (Jacoff 1993). This cosmology is straight from Pseudo-Dionysius' Celestial Hierarchy. It is also clear that Dante describes an individualistic spiritual journey that is taken from the medieval Neoplatonic mystics (Dinsmore 1901). Dante's vision was influential with later Italian poets and artists and was held in the highest regard among Neoplatonist philosophers in the 15th century (Robb 1935).

Dante's influence was important, for example, in Petrarch (1304-1374). Petrarch authored an epic poem 'I Trionfi' which has been offered as a model for the Tarot symbols (Moakley 1966). Petrarch is usually thought of as a humanist, enamoured of ancient Roman and Greek culture. However, he was also an early critic of aristotelianism and in the Triumph of Fame he gives the first place to Plato (Kristeller 1964). Like most humanists, Petrarch was influenced by the latin Neoplatonic writers (Kupke 1992) such as Macrobius (Commentary on Cicero's Dream of Scipio), Martinus Capella (Marriage of Philosophy and Mercury), and Boethius (Consolations of Philosophy). The simple fact is that humanism had a strong element of Neoplatonism. Fulgentius' Mythologiae firmly establishes humanism into a Neoplatonic framework (Kupke 1992). Admittedly, Petrarch was not a systematic thinker but the Neoplatonic mystical journey is evident in his work and he often cites Augustine and the latin Neoplatonists (Robb 1935). So insofar as Petrarch is seen as the source of the Tarot symbols, he is simply another thread in the wholecloth of Neoplatonism.

The Neoplatonism implicit in Dante and Petrarch became explicit in Luigi Marsigli and Coluccio Salutati. These late 14th and early 15th century Neoplatonists largely relied on the Latin writers, such as Boethius. However, after the sojourn of Manuel Chrysoloras to Venice and Florence (1394-1399) a number of Platonic and Neoplatonic manuscripts were collected (Robb 1935). Marsigli, an Augustinian monk, met with friends for discussions in the cloister of Santo Spirito in Florence. Marsigli's 'Academy' was continued by Ambrogio Traversari and Carlo Marsuppini. Similar 'Academies' were formed by Pomponio Leto in Rome, Pontano in Naples and Ficino in Florence.

The Neoplatonic revival in Italy was given a solid boost by the Council of Florence (1438-1439). This Council attempted to reunite the eastern and western churches and brought to Italy the flowers of Greek scholarship: Plethro, Bessarion, Isidore of Salonika, possibly Theodore Gaza. These scholars brought a number of Greek philosophic manuscripts and ignited further interest in Neoplatonism. The Council continued until 1445, moving to Florence and then to Rome. However, it is important to recognize that even prior to the Council Italy already possessed a solid foundation of Greek culture, a fair stock of manuscripts and translations and a number of informal societies intent on discussing and developing these ideas (Robb 1935). So the Greek

scholars stimulated, rather than originated, the Italian tradition in Neoplatonism. Indeed, Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) was a catholic prelate and Neoplatonist and proclaimed Pseudo-Dionysius the great of theologians.

The flowering of Renaissance Neoplatonism occurred with Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) and his Neoplatonic Academy in Florence (Kristeller 1943). Ficino (Ficino 1975, 1978) was an ordained priest and his academy was more than just an intellectual center. It was a spiritual community that incorporated mysticism and the gradual ascent to God through the Neoplatonic emanations (Kristeller 1964). True to the Neoplatonic spirit, Ficino attempted a grand syncretism that reconciled all knowledge and condensed it into one paradigm (Robb 1935). Thus, Ficino's synthesis also included astrology, magic and the occult (Peters 1978, Cheney and Hendrix 2002). Ficino's disciple, Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), continued the syncretism. Pico studied under Jewish Averroist Elia del Medigo and incorporated a Christian Cabala, another flavor of Neoplatonism (Kristeller 1964).

At this point, it may be helpful to consider an infamous Neoplatonic symbolic system of the early 15th century. The Tempio Malatestiano was built in Rimini by Sisismondo Pandolfo Malatesta (1419-1468). The temple is not useful as a model for early tarot but provides an example of another Neoplatonic symbolic system of the same period (Godwin 2002). The importance of the temple is that it incorporates symbols from a variety of sources into a synthesized and esoteric spiritual system. The result is a syncretized symbolic system that appears to have the same Neoplatonic underpinnings as the early Tarot.

The temple was formed by enclosing an old church and dividing it into 8 chapels. The overall system appears to correspond to the descriptions in the "Cave of the Nymphs" by the Neoplatonist Porphyry (Shapiro 1958). The first chapel contains the seven virtues, with Justice given the highest place. The second to fourth chapels contain the Sibyls, saints and old testament figures. The fifth introduces Pythagorean music theory with putti playing instruments. The sixth contains putti symbolizing the three classes of airy spirits from Augustine (City of God 7:6) and representing the next stage in the ascent of the soul. The seventh contains the planets and zodiac. The final chapel contains the 8 muses, 7 liberal arts, Prosperine (harvester of souls) and Apollo. Godwin (2002) considers the temple as the supreme monument to an early enthusiasm for the Neoplatonists, fully two decades before Ficino. Malatesta exhumed the bones of Plethon, the Greek Neoplatonist, and placed them in the temple/church.

The sycretism that occurred in the northern city-states of 15th century Italy must have seemed both flabbergasting and elating. Wisdom converging from all sides seemed compatible and seemed to fit together so nicely. Wisdom as disparate as Latin classics, Greek philosophy, epic poetry, Gothic architecture, Islamic philosophy and astrology and Sufi mysticism, Jewish Cabala, Provençal Quest poetry, Christian mysticism & they all seemed to bespeak a common message. Surely there must be only one truth! Imagine how incredible it must have seemed when Pletho and the Byzantines arrived in Italy carrying the same message! From our modern perspective we can see why all these disparate sources of wisdom seemed ripe for synthesis: they were all branches of the same Neoplatonic roots. It comes as no surprise therefore, that the Renaissance syncretism flowered in the Neoplatonism of Marsilio Ficino and Pico della

Mirandola. The Renaissance discovered the synthetic Royal Flush ð but the deck had been stacked way back in the Alexandria and Athens of the first centuries of the Common Era.

The Neoplatonic Concepts in the Tarot

Our survey of Neoplatonism and its influence on early 15th century Italy indicates that Neoplatonism forms the core philosophical system underlying the early Tarot symbols. The symbols form a hierarchical system essential to the Tarot game in which 'higher' cards defeat 'lower' cards. We have seen that the western concept of hierarchy derives from Plotinus' concept of emanations. The concept of emanations led to a concept of the structure of the spiritual world (Armstrong 1940) and even the physical cosmos corresponded to this hierarchical system (Harris 1982). A summary of the influence of Neoplatonism on astronomy can be found at Neoplatonism and Astronomy

The hierarchical structure of the Tarot symbol means that a number was assigned to each card. We have seen that Plotinus and the early Neoplatonists assimilated Pythagorean number theory by identifying the infinite being as the "One" and the emanations as mathematical. So any number symbolism applied to the Tarot is easily explained by its Neoplatonic foundations.

The highest emanation in the Neoplatonic system is the Anima Mundi, i.e., the Spirit of the World. The highest Tarot symbol is the "World" card and resembles medieval representations of the Anima Mundi. Although this representation is not found among the oldest extant Tarot cards (see articles on the Iconology of the early World cards), its presence on the Tarot de Marseille indicates that the Neoplatonic foundations of the symbols were recognized early in its evolution.

The Tarot symbols represent a broad synthetic view of the world and human life. We have seen that the Neoplatonists were encyclopedists (Wetherbee 1973). Beginning with the Latin Neoplatonists such as Calcidius, Macrobius, Capella, Boethius, and reinforced by Eriugena and the Chartres school, such syncretism became identified with the Neoplatonic worldview. Thorndike (1929) shows that this encyclopedism began in the 13th century with 'De natura rerum' of Thomas of Cantimpre, "De proprietatibus rerum" of Bartholomew of England, and "Speculum naturale" by Vincent of Beauvais. The Neoplatonic trend continued into the 14th and 15th centuries with the "Repertorium" of Petrus Berchorius, "Dittamondo" of Fazio degli Uberti, "Fons memorabilium universi" of Dominico Bandini and "De rebus expetendis et fugiendis" of George Valla. This Neoplatonic syncretism also influence the art of the times. The more comprehensive the vision, the greater art (Anton 2000). We find this in the epic poetry of Dante and Petrarch and the comprehensive art of Giotto and di Vinci.

In the Neoplatonic vision, comprehensive symbolic systems also had an occult mystical significance (Edman 1925). At one level, the art or symbols had an uplifting function, drawing the soul upward toward its true goal. But beginning with Iamblicus and Proclus and continuing with Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius, symbols also had a deeper mystical significance. Plotinus discussed the use of images by a spiritual director (Schroeder 2002). By the presentation and withdrawal of images, the director leads his disciples from their engagement with sense, discursive reason, and passion to the fathomless beauty of the supernatural world. So the concept that the Tarot symbols have a second and even a third level of interpretation seems to have a solid foundation in the culture and Neoplatonic worldview within which they were created.

The early Neoplatonists assimilated the Gnostic and Mystery religions by developing the magical and religious aspects of the system. This synthesis is evident in late Hellenistic culture. The Greek magic papyri (Betz 1986) contain elements from many religious systems and show the early association of magic with Neoplatonism. The system is deeply individualistic and contains a strong sense that nature is penetrated by spiritual force (Robb 1935). Augustine establishes the legitimacy of angels by referring to the theory of daemons, the powers of the upper heavens and identified with the stars and heavenly bodies. Thus, angels and demons have the same nature, a more purified form of pneuma or spirit. This pneuma is the glue pervading the universe (Couliano 1987). This concept underlies the theory of western magic and accounts for the connections between human events and the stars and planets. It explains image magic in which carefully chosen physical objects can draw down beneficial (or harmful) spiritual influences. So if one sees magical associations in the early Tarot cards, that viewpoint is supported by the Neoplatonic system underlying the symbols.

There is one specific mystery associated with the early Tarot symbols that is easily explained by their Neoplatonic roots: the absence of a Prudence symbol while the other three moral virtues are represented. We have discussed elsewhere (see the chapter on the iconology of the three virtues) that Iamblicus' life of Pythagoras indicates that the human soul has three levels ruled by Temperance, Fortitude, and Justice in that hierarchical order. This is precisely the order found in the Type B ordering which is used in the Iconology chapters as having the best credentials as the earliest ordering of the Tarot symbols. The system of three virtues became a Neoplatonic tradition and the medieval Neoplatonic theologian, Peter Abelard, maintained that Prudence was not a virtue and that the other three were ruled by Justice (Marenbon 1992).

The Neoplatonic roots of the Tarot symbols explain the variety of theories that have been offered by interpreters. The early Tarot resembles the symbols in Petrarch's *Ōi Trionfi* because Petrarch followed Dante in framing his epic in a Neoplatonic worldview. Petrarch's poem isn't the model for the Tarot, but it is a parallel Neoplatonic system and naturally shows resemblances. Similarly, the Tarot has been thought to originate with the Grail legends because they are also Neoplatonic. Ramon Llull and Nicholas of Cusa have been thought of as originators because their Neoplatonism parallels what can be seen in the Tarot symbols. The same is true of theories involving Abbot Suger of St. Denis and the Abbey of St. Victor in Marseilles. These are not the points of origin of the Tarot but one would expect to see Neoplatonic symbolism in these places that parallels the later Tarot. Interpreters have seen elements of Gnosticism, the Mystery Religions, Buddhism and other eastern philosophies in the Tarot. These elements can be seen because they were assimilated into Neoplatonism at its earliest stages of development in Alexandria. Other interpreters see QBLH and Sufism as the points of origin. The early Tarot is a Christian Neoplatonic system that would obviously show strong resemblances to the Judaic and Islamic versions of medieval Neoplatonism. There is also good reason to believe that Pythagorean mathematics, astrology, and magic can be found in the early Tarot since these were integral parts in the Neoplatonic worldview. It appears that many of these theories contain elements of the truth but focused on individual threads that were woven into the syncretistic wholecloth of Neoplatonism.

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Economics and Society at the Tarot's Origin

by Dr. Robert O'Neill

This article will deal with the social and economic milieu within which the Tarot was designed: early 15th century in northern Italy. The article is motivated by misunderstandings about how society was structured at the time and how that structure might have placed constraints on the Tarot's origins. No attempt will be made to present a general survey, only to address questions that seem relevant to Tarot.

It is important to realize that the Tarot was not born in a rural feudal society with church, aristocracy, and peasants forming the three branches. Duby (1980) demonstrates that this form of society was largely a theory rather than a fact. The strictly hierarchical society was developed after 1000 A.D. as a Neoplatonic theory of how the ideal society should be organized. Based largely on Pseudo-Dionysius, the heavens and cosmos were conceived as a strict hierarchy of greater and lesser. In the 11th century several writers proposed a similar hierarchy as the ideal structure of human society (Duby 1980). Certainly the rural estate with its serfs, manor, and blooded royalty existed in some places in Europe for some periods. But the static social model seldom endured for long in the face of invasions, wars, famine, insurrection, and other disturbances.

By the 12th century, the rise of the artisan and merchant classes and use of money led to a society with a rather different structure (Sapori 1970, Miskimin 1969). These new classes did not fit the old picture because trade, not just agriculture, became an indispensable part of society (Pirenne 1936). Currency, rather than landed property, became the essence of wealth (Duby 1994) and the aristocracy lost its stanglehold. Rise of literacy with secular employment of the educated meant that knowledge was no longer the exclusive province of the clergy.

The period between 800 and 1200 saw the development of the cities of northern Italy (Moore 2000). Within the cities, the vertical social structure began to change into a horizontal structure with merchants, artisans, and professional classes evolving (Cipolla 1976). Territorial disputes between the cities required the aristocracy to hire mercenary armies with money borrowed from the wealthy merchants (Jardine 1996). When debts could not be repaid, the merchants traded debts for concessions and power began to shift into the hands of the middle class (Lopez 1976). The concessions meant that the accumulating wealth could not be usurped by aristocracy or church and a new self-administered judicial system developed that was favorable to trade (Pirenne 1936).

Technological innovations also played a role in the transformation of society (Gimpel 1976). The heavy wheeled plow, horse collar, improved rotation cropping, and the wheelbarrow improved agricultural productivity and with it, the size of the European population and the quality of its diet. Improvements in ship construction and rigging, the compass, and the clock simplified navigation and enhanced maritime trade. Expanded use of the spinning wheel and larger looms, together with water- and windmills provided products to be traded (Mokyr 1990).

Conditions in the cities were quite different from the countryside. In the cities, more than 50% of the total wealth was in the hands of merchant families. There were still the homeless and poor that constituted ~6% of the population and rose to ~15% in time of war or famine (Cipolla 1976). There were also artisans that earned a meager living but could occasionally afford meat or a dowry for their daughters. A few artisans, such as Venetian glass makers, even rose to the wealthy class (Lopez 1976). There were also professionals, such as physicians and notaries, that occupied an economic position between artisan and merchant.

The cities were far from utopias of social justice, but the people ate better and so were healthier and lived longer lives. Records from 1336/8 Florence show an annual consumption of 4000 oxen and calves, 60,000 sheep, 20,000 goats, and 30,000 pigs. In Milan, 1288, there were 18 fish stores and 440 butchers with 70 oxen consumed each day (Lopez and Raymond 1955). By 1424, meat constituted 20% of the caloric intake of a worker (Hunt and Murray 1999).

In addition to improving living conditions, the increase in commerce created a demand for education. Trade and credit required ledger books and writing of letters and contracts (Pirenne 1936). By the 13th century manuals were being produced to educate merchants and books are listed among the possession of merchants (Lopez and Raymond 1955). Between 1365 and 1410, one merchant exchanged more than 100,000 letters with agents and intermediaries (Jardine 1996). In 14th century Florence about 40% of the urban population had two years of schooling and some

ability to read (Cipolla 1976). In 1288 Milan had 70 teachers of reading and writing, 1500 notaries, and 40 copyists (Lopez and Raymond 1955). By the early 15th century, merchants' sons from all of Europe were travelling to Italy to learn bookkeeping (Swetz 1987).

As a result of the changes in the distribution of wealth and increased literacy, the aristocracy cannot be seen as the only group with the means (Chambers 1971) to commission or purchase a Tarot deck. By the early 15th century wealthy merchants were commissioning many works of art and collecting books and trinkets (Jardine 1996). Confraternities also became important patrons (Goldthwaite 1993). Indeed, by 1387, Florentine art and paintings were being sold in other cities (Lopez and Raymond 1955, Larner 1971).

The growth of cities, the dominance of wealth through trade and the expansion of literacy to support commerce combined to produce a relatively independent middle class. Thus, the aristocracy cannot be considered the only social group that could have designed or commissioned the early Tarot. The rising middle class had both the means and the leisure to develop and enjoy a new symbolic card game.

TRADING AND COMMUNICATION BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

During the early middle ages, trade with Islam was primarily conducted by the Provençal Jewish community (Lopez and Raymond 1955). Trade was facilitated by the Jewish communities scattered all around the Mediterranean. The Moslems, for their part, were always interested in commerce since trading was the profession of Mohammed (Lopez 1976). But by the 8th and 9th century the Italian cities began to vie with the Jews in trade with the Islamic and Byzantine empires (Lopez and Raymond 1955).

There is a general impression that Italy was largely cut off from the eastern Byzantine empire during the early middle ages and information flow did not resume until after the crusades. This impression isn't accurate (Scammell 1981). The southern Italian cities, e.g., Naples, Amalfi and Salerno had been protected from Islamic invasion because the Byzantine fleet had intervened. These cities recognized the emperor in Constantinople and were in continuous communication since the 8th century (Pirenne 1936). Amalfi maintained strong ties to Egypt (Lopez 1976). Venice at the head of the Adriatic, was beyond the reach of Islamic invasions and the Carolingian rule never reached that far (Lane 1973). Venice maintained allegiance to Constantinople rather than the Holy Roman Emperor (Pirenne 1936) and maintained trade with Constantinople throughout the middle ages. Venice established trade with Africa and Syria by the end of the 9th century (Ashtor 1983). In the 11th century, Constantinople hired the Venetian fleet to protect it and this resulted in the Venetians acquiring trading rights in the Black Sea (Lopez 1976). Genoa and Pisa entered the arena by expelling the Moslems from Corsica and Sardinia where they had inhibited trade along the west coast of Italy. Genoa and Pisa then invaded Tunisia and exacted many trading concessions when they withdrew (Lopez 1976).

Thus the exchange of trade goods and information between Italy and the Greek and Islamic empires started well before the Crusades. The most important impact of the Crusades was not the acquisition of new knowledge from the east. The most important impact was the further opening of the Mediterranean to Italian shipping (Pirenne 1936). The Turkish invasion that expelled the Crusades was a land war. The Turks did not have great fleets and continued to trade with Venice and other Italian cities throughout (Pirenne 1936).

Several factors seem to explain why the Moslem did not maintain a position as a sea power in the Mediterranean. The first seems to be a strange bias. Although the Moslems had triangular sails that were capable of tacking into the wind, they preferred to sail during the monsoons with the wind from behind. There is an old Arab proverb: "Only a madman or a Christian would sail to windward" (Mokyr 1990). A second and more important reason is that great philosopher al-Ghazali (1058-1111) concluded that science and technology were incompatible with Islam (Mokyr 1990). Islam concluded that all knowledge was already available from the ancients and 'innovation', particularly if it originated with the infidels, became suspect as a form of heresy (Lewis 1982). So while the Moslems remained the dominant traders on a global scale (Said 1978) and were the axis of many interwoven trading systems (Abu-Lughod 1989) they became less dominant in the Mediterranean.

The Europeans, on the other hand, were anxious to learn and imitate everything they could. According to Pope Pius II, a young man with pretensions for learning in the early decades of the 15th century went to Constantinople to study

(Jardine 96). So the acquisition of eastern wisdom in Italy did not begin with the arrival of the Byzantine ambassadors in the middle of the 15th century.

We will document in a separate essay the historical record of this acquisition. There was a relatively continuous transmission of works on magic, including ritual magic, alchemy, and astrology through the Church. The transmission was justified under the premise that future Churchmen would need to "know thy enemy". There was relatively little access to this information outside the monastery but there isn't any reason to think that secret pagan societies must be postulated to explain the transmittal. A major emphasis on translating Arabic documents on medicine, astrology and alchemy began in southern Italy in the 12th century. So there isn't any reason to think that secrets were acquired by the Crusaders or Templars. The connection to the ancient wisdom occurred publicly through the Church and through the Italian merchants.

The Italian city states had acquired considerable independence. So while the new middle class remained fervent Christians, they were not covered by the Inquisition. Merchants often employed fortune-tellers to predict outcome of dangerous trades (Jardine 1996) without fear of censure. There was also a lively European market in saints' relics (Brooke and Brooke 1984). They had demonstrated and well-documented access to the ancient wisdom of the east through relatively straight-forward and orthodox means and they had little fear of repression by the Church.

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Secret Societies and the Origins of Tarot

by Dr. Robert O'Neill

Many presentations of Tarot history recount the transmission of great secrets of the Universe through an unbroken succession of secret societies. These societies are credited with communicating the wisdom from ancient times through oral instructions and initiations. The purpose of the present essay is to critically examine this concept. It is certainly true that occult societies developed esoteric aspects of the Tarot in the 18th and 19th century. These developers constructed the elaborate theories of transmission through secret societies to account for the ancient wisdom in the symbols (Webb 1974). Our specific focus will be on the possible role of secret societies in the design of the original 15th century cards.

The modern Tarotist may have experienced some of the negativity associated with secret societies in our culture. The negativity is usually dismissed as propaganda: repression by Science and the Church of a valid but competitive view of the world. But we should be aware that some of the resistance comes from a fear that secrecy implies a hidden agenda.

This fear is not without merit. The Bavarian Illuminati of the late 18th century started as a masonic society but developed a subversive political agenda (Wilgus 1978). We will see below that secret societies may hide criminal activity. Claims of direct access to ancient wisdom through the Great White Brotherhood may be associated with the development of a cult (Kueshana 1963).

As a result of this suspicion, authors have often adopted the occultist version of history and used the claims of unbroken secret societies as evidence of a hidden agenda. In one notable case, the author used occultist history to prove the persistence of the "Jewish Peril" in European history (Webster 1924). In another instance, the ancient and secret search for 'enlightenment' is taken as proof that occultists are servants of Lucifer, i.e., the Light Bearer (Monteith 2000). Thus, reconstruction of the actual history should not be seen as a reductionist attempt to destroy an innocent mythology. Increased information on the actual history is probably also the best defense against malicious distortion of the search for individual spirituality.

In this spirit we can proceed to examine the actual secret societies that existed in Europe during the period immediately preceding the design of the Tarot. Rather than begin with the questionable histories constructed by the later occultists (Marras 1865), we will begin by examining the historical record.

Some of the secret societies of the Middle Ages indeed used the characteristic combination of passwords, initiation ceremonies, and oaths of secrecy. But for the French 'Chauffeurs' of the 14th century, the secrecy covered criminal activity (Axelrod 1997). The Sicilian 'Vendicatori' was founded in 1186 to administer a kind of street justice and avenge public wrongs. The 'Beati Paoli' of the 12th century were also a Sicilian criminal organization that may have had connections with the Cathari heretics (Axelrod 1997). So there is some justification for the suspicion that secrecy may be a cover for criminal activity rather than enlightenment.

One of the societies sometimes mentioned in occult history, the Vehmgericht, operated in 13th century Westphalia. They became an unofficial system of justice during a period of anarchy. They were a secret society but do not appear to have operated in secret and trials were conducted publicly. They do not appear to have made any claims of access to or transmittal of ancient wisdom (Axelrod 1997). In 1371 their right to administer justice was officially recognized by the Emperor. The claims that they were the keepers of ancient wisdom appears to be a fabrication of later occultists (Webb 1974). Even their private documents are concerned with legal matters, such as whether they had authority to try and execute heretics and those that practiced magic (Daraul 1987).

Another group of societies that were absorbed into the occultist history were the religious military orders. These religious orders, living a traditional and orthodox monastic life, had as an element of their religious rule the duty to take up the sword in defense of the Christian faith. There is nothing that directly ties any of these religious orders to the Tarot. However, they must be discussed because of later occultist legends that one of these religious orders, the Templars, were part of the direct lineage of secret societies that conveyed the suppressed wisdom of the ancients. We will deal with the Templars at greater length in a separate essay. For the moment, it will suffice to point out that

the Templars were not the first of these military orders, nor were they the last. Many of these orders still exist today, primarily as honorary investitures by the Catholic Church.

The oldest of the military orders seems to be the Order of the Golden Spur, also known as the Order of the Golden Militia (Axelrod 1997). It was probably founded in the 4th century and followed the rule of St Basil which is the standard monastic rule in the Eastern Christian Church. This order still exists with membership bestowed as an honorary investiture by the Church.

The oldest of the western military orders associated with the Crusades is the Order of the Hospital of St John the Baptist in Jerusalem, better known as the Hospitallers. The order was founded in 1050 to operate a hospital for pilgrims. In 1118, they added a vow to fight the enemies of the faith. Contrary to the "Holy Blood" myth, the Hospitallers and not the Templars were the favorite of Godfrey de Bouillon who gave them his own manor house in Brabant as a gift. The order became fabulously wealthy as a result of donations. The order still exists as a small religious community in Rome (Axelrod 1997).

There are two other military orders that preceded the Templars. The Order of St. Lazarus was founded in Palestine in 1060 to assist pilgrim lepers. The order appears to have disappeared although several Popes attempted to fuse it with other orders to help it survive. The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem was founded by Godfrey de Bouillon in 1099. As with many of these orders, it was united with the Hospitallers after the crusades. However, it regained independence in 1496 and still exists as an honorary Catholic society (Axelrod 1997). Following the Templars, several other military orders were formed. The Brothers of the Hospital of Holy Mary of the Germans in Jerusalem, the Teutonic Knights, were founded in 1190. They originally operated a hospital and later added a military vow. The order still exists as a religious order recognized by the Catholic Church. Another group, the Militia of Jesus Christ was founded in Portugal in 1318. Since this group was given the Templar property in that country, it is likely that they were composed largely of the Templars who were never persecuted in Portugal. Still another group, the Order of the Collar, later called the Supreme Order of the Most Holy Annunciation, was founded in 1362 and was probably always an honorary society. The Noble Order of the Golden Fleece was founded in Bruges in 1430. It was originally a religious military order but eventually membership became simply an honorary award.

The Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon, the Templars, were founded in 1119 and imitated the Hospitallers by incorporating military operations into their monastic rule. After the Holy Land was lost, their primary purpose was gone and the Pope sought to incorporate them into the Hospitallers, as was done with the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. The Order, however, ran afoul of the French king, Philip IV, who owed them a great deal of money. The king signed a formal treaty of allegiance with the Templars in 1303 (Annan 1967) and yet seized their property in France in 1307 and tortured a few confessions of heresy. The Pope, under French 'protection' in Avignon, instituted a formal Council to investigate the allegations of heresy and finally unilaterally disbanded the order before the Council could issue its declaration of innocence.

If the above version of Templar history does not sound familiar, it is because later occultists rewrote the history of the Order. The occultist version makes for a more interesting story of a secret society preserving esoteric secrets learned in the Middle East. The occultist version is full of internal inconsistencies and conflicts with the historical record and is rejected by modern historians. However, the details are so complex and the mythologies so elaborate that it will require a separate essay to deal with them.

It should suffice for the present to make a few points. There is no reason to associate the Templars with the bloodline of Jesus since there were two other military orders that had prior and closer associations with the French monarchy in Jerusalem. The Portuguese branch of the Order continued to exist, in their original quarters, but nothing ever emerged to associate them with either heresy or special esoteric wisdom. The great majority of the Templars were faithful to their vow of obedience to the Pope and joined the Hospitallers without protest or incident when he issued his order to disband the Order. If the Church actually believed the allegations of heresy it is strange that they continued to approve of new military orders and to this day bestows membership in these orders as its highest honor. One of the reasons that the occultists recast the Templars as heretics was that they were considered to be a critical link in the theory of uninterrupted transmission of ancient secrets from the Middle East. The contention is that the knights learned the secrets from a Moslem Shiite sect known as the Ismaeli, later known as the Hashishim. The existence of the sect was reported in Europe by Marco Polo (Annan 1967). The radical sect existed from 1090 until

the 13th century and were named after the drug Hashish used in their initiations. Their influence derived from their fanatical obedience to leaders and the assassination of political opponents. The power of the sect was broken by Mongol invaders mid-13th century and they never had much influence after that time.

Occultist history suggests that the Templars were actually derived from the Hashishim. The two military groups had similar organizations, bore similar colors and had the same commitment to the defense of their faith. However, the Templars bore the same similarities to earlier militant monastic orders which were far more likely to be the progenitors.

It is certainly true that the Templars, like all of the other military orders, had contact with the Hashishim. In fact, the Templars and Hashishim formed a brief alliance during the 1129 attack on Damascus (Wilgus 1978). However, by 1152, the Hashishim were under the control of the Templars and paying a crushing tribute. So if the Templars learned great secrets from the assassins, they had a strange way to show their gratitude.

Some occultist writers suggest that the Templars were actually converted to Islam. That assertion is difficult to maintain in light of the many Moslems they killed in battle. Further, Saladin (~1187) vowed death to every Templar. In detailed accounts of Saladin's victories, captured Templars were offered mercy if they would accept Islam. All refused and were killed. If they were, in fact, already Moslems then such accounts make little sense.

One piece of circumstantial evidence is sometimes offered to support the contention that the Hashishim had an influence on the Tarot designs. Henry, count of Champagne, travelled through Ismaeli territory of the Middle East in 1194. He recounts being shown a very tall tower. At a signal from the leader, two white-clad guards hurdled themselves headlong to their deaths. However, in other essays, we will find more convincing sources for the Tower card in the 14th century illustrations of Dante and in illustrations of the destruction of the Tower of Babel in the Apocalyptic artistic tradition.

In summary, there doesn't seem to be much substance to the allegation that the Templars learned the great ancient secrets from the Hashishim. First and foremost, there isn't anything to indicate that the Hashishim knew anything worth communicating! A drug-using cult that practiced assassination to achieve their political aims doesn't seem a likely candidate to transmit spiritual wisdom. Second, opportunity doesn't imply transmittal. Most readers have lived in the United States and therefore been in the right place at the right time to learn how to produce fissionable Plutonium. But have you in fact acquired that secret knowledge?

Along with the Templars, Freemasonry is often cited as a secret society that transmitted the ancient wisdom. Without doubt, Masons were active in developing the occult theories of Tarot from the 18th century onward (Decker et al. 1996, Decker and Dummett 2002). But they are unlikely contributors to the original 15th century symbols. By the 14th century, there were guilds and journeyman of stone workers. These 'operational' masons developed passwords and secret handshakes so that qualified workers could be identified far from their home base. Documents, known as the Old Charges, date back to 1390 and 1425 (Jones 1967). But these were early labor unions and there were no hints of esotericism.

Esoteric doctrines began with 'speculative' Freemasonry in the 17th and 18th century, too late to have contributed to the design of the Tarot (Roberts 1972). By 1789, there were 600 lodges competing for a potential audience of 20 to 30,000 freemasons. Rivalry among competitive independent lodges in France led to the proliferation of fabricated histories designed to prove the ultimate authority of each new faction as it arose de novo.

Thus, the search for 14th/15th century secret societies produces no likely candidate that might have transmitted ancient wisdom to the Tarot designers. The few societies that existed at the right time, such as the Hommes de l'Intelligence (1398-1410), were in the wrong place, Brussels. And their leader's propensity for running about the city naked makes it hard to take them seriously.

But if there were actually no secret societies, then why the persistent rumors? The simple truth seems to be that later occultists fabricated the legends to legitimize their own authority. Charismatic leaders, as part of their claim to authority, declared unique access to wisdom transmitted from antiquity through secret societies and oral transmission. We know, for example, that the leaders of the Golden Dawn forged a 'Cipher Document' and letters of authority from non-existent German predecessors. Similarly, the Priory of Zion, formed in 1959, forged documents to legitimize their claims to antiquity.

There are several questions that must be asked about the occultist account of secret societies. If these societies carefully guarded their secrets for thousands of years, then isn't it disrespectful to reveal them now? If the motivation is not self-aggrandizement, then why isn't the revelation made anonymously? Initiation into secret societies involves vows of secrecy and acceptance of dire penalties for violation. If the occultist historians actually had access to the great secrets, why were they never subjected to punishment? The reader is free to disagree, but it appears fairly patent to me that the occultists manipulated history to enhance their own status and that of their newly formed 'secret society'.

But if there was not a direct oral transmission of the ancient secrets through secret societies, then how did they come into our hands? The first part of the answer is straightforward: the secrets were written and preserved through relatively orthodox means. There are two scholarly studies of the history of esotericism and magic, one classic (Thorndike 1923) and one recent (Flint 1991). Neither author found any hints of transmission through secret societies, nor any need to hypothesize such. The orthodox Christian writers were well acquainted with the details of magic, often explaining it in some detail before condemning it! The justification for the detailed explanation being that future generations needed to be able to recognize the evil! But however strange the contradiction seems to us, it remains true that the founders of the Golden Dawn found most of their secret wisdom in the Library of the British Museum.

There is a second important reason why oral transmission and secret societies are not needed to convey the ancient wisdom. As Jung clearly saw (Jung 1953-1967), the fundamentals of this wisdom are archetypic. There were certainly initiatory cults and secret societies in the ancient world complete with secret passwords and rituals. But the same elements occurred in Polynesia, China, Australia, central Africa and Mexico. Apparently, the belief in magic and initiation is a spontaneous phenomenon and no direct transmission is required to explain its reappearance at many times in European history.

Thus, although secret societies played an important role in later developments, there doesn't appear to be much evidence that they were influential in the origins of the Tarot. The only real candidates may be the religious Confraternities which we will deal with in a separate essay. The secret societies named by the later occultists seem unlikely candidates and there is absolutely no corroborating evidence to support the contention.

Some writers are suspicious that secret societies were primarily about criminal activity or political conspiracy. For some of the societies existing at the time of the Tarot's origin, the evidence seems to confirm that suspicion.

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Fool's Journey

by Dr. Robert O'Neill

Modern interpreters sometimes refer to the Tarot majors as the Fool's Journey. The 21 images of the trumps are seen as stages in a psychological or mystical journey and the Fool is seen as the pilgrim. Is this interpretation the result of modern imagination stoked by Jungian psychology? Is the Fool's Journey merely an occultist fable?

The purpose of this essay is to address these questions. Specifically, the objective is to examine whether the ordinary card-player in 15/16th century Italy would have seen the trumps as a Fool's Journey. As the evidence accumulates, the sceptic may be surprised to find that this is, in fact, possible.

The prima facie evidence is the availability and popularity of the venacular classics of Dante and Petrarch. Dante's 'Divine Comedy' is unambiguously a mystical journey and incorporates at least 19 of the 22 Tarot symbols. Petrarch's 'I Trionfi' shows many connections to the Tarot (Moakley 1966) and describes the poet's own psychological development from sexual infatuation to Beatific Vision (Carnelli 1971). Handpainted manuscripts of these epics may have been the exclusive property of the aristocracy and wealthy merchants, but the poetry itself was the proud possession of every Italian, sung by blacksmith and drover (Larner 1971).

However, the popular poetry of Dante is only the surface. The visionary voyage/pilgrimage/journey is an integral part of the Western experience. Indeed, our earliest written story (~1600 BCE), the cuneiform 'Epic of Gilgamesh' (Kovacs 1990), relates just such a journey (Zaleski 1971). We will find that the mystical 'other worldly' journey is a persistent theme throughout the history of Western culture.

Please permit me to pause briefly and acknowledge that the visionary journey is not the exclusive property of the West. The mystic journey occurs in Taoist, Buddhist, Brahman, Persian, Egyptian, Judaic and Christian traditions (Gardiner 1989). I have been honored to hear the Hawaiian legend of the fire goddess Pele's journey into hell to rescue her kidnapped sister. Stories of otherworldly journeys are common to shamans in Oceania, Siberia, Korea, Japan, South America, and among the Inuits of North America (Couliano 1991). Mystical journeys through the 9 heavens on dragons or birds are found in China. The Indian Vedic hymns speak of mystical ascents. In Tibet, the journey of the dead soul is an essential element of religious literature (Fremantle and Trungpa 1975). There is nothing to indicate that the tales of spiritual journeys in Hawaii or Japan had any influence on the Tarot. But the broad, cross-cultural basis of these stories is Jung's primary criterion for archetypal material. Jung (1956) deals with such stories under the rubric of the "Hero's Journey". So, if one accepts Jung's concept of the archetype, then the Fool's Journey is a mythic theme available to all times and cultures. Indeed, modern accounts of near-death experiences (Corcoran 1996) seem to belong to the same archetypic tradition.

However, our objective relates specifically to the early Tarot and the mystical journey tradition in the West. So we must next turn our attention to the early Egyptian texts on the soul's journey after death (Budge 1901, 1920, Morenz 1960). The early dynastic Pyramid texts talk about the soul's ascent step by step up a ladder. The intermediate Coffin texts indicate that the soul must overcome obstacles on the ascent. The later Book of the Dead discusses the weighing of the soul and the need for passwords and magic spells at various stages of the journey. We should also mention in passing a 7th century BCE Akkadian text on Kummaya's journey to netherworld (Collins and Fishbane 1995). These ancient texts were not available when the Tarot was designed in 15th century Italy. But the Egyptian and Akkadian texts reveal the deep roots of the versions that were known to the card-players.

From these Egyptian texts, let us pass to the Greco-Roman tradition (Couliano 1991). There are examples of otherworldly journeys in both Homer's *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. Plato's *Republic* (~375 BCE) discusses the journey of the soul in the afterlife before its rebirth (Haas 2000). Cicero records the visionary journey of Scipio (106-43 BCE). Silius Italicus records the visionary journey of Punica. Plutarch (50-120 CE) tells of the journey of Aridaos. The journey of Apolonius is recorded sometime before 217 CE. Plotinus (205-270 CE) equates these mythic visions to the mysticism of the individual soul's journey back to the One. Proclus discusses the descent and subsequent ascent through the spheres. And although the direct evidence is sparse, it appears that the Mystery Religions involved simulated passage upward through the planetary spheres. The Mitraic initiate descended downward to a conversion deep within and then passed through 7 stages from darkness to light (Zaleski 1987). Once again, these Greco-Roman texts and mysteries were not all available in early 15th century Italy. But they indicate the direct transmission of older traditions and the persistent appeal of the journey theme in Western consciousness.

Parallel to the Greco-Roman tradition was a developing Judeo-Gnostic-Christian tradition. During the period from the 3rd century BCE to the 2nd century CE, an impressive literature developed in which the visionary is taken on a mystical journey (Collins 1989). In addition to the canonical accounts of Daniel and Ezechial there are more than 20 other examples. The following is a list compiled from Doresse (1960), Couliano (1991), Himmelfarb (1993), and Collins (2000):

- Book of the Watchers (1 Enoch 1-36)
- Testament of Levi
- 2 Enoch
- Similitudes of Enoch (1 Enoch 37-71)
- Apocalypse of Zephaniah
- Apocalypse of Abraham
- Ascension of Isaiah
- 3 Baruch
- Hekhalot Rabbati
- Merkaba Rabba
- 3 Enoch
- Apocalypse of Elijah
- Chronicles of Jerahmeel
- Revelations of Joshua ben Levi
- Ascension of Moses
- Apocalypse of Esdras
- Apocalypse of the Virgin Mary
- The Story of Zosimus
- Apocalypse of the Holy Mother of God
- Apocalypse of James
- Mysteries of St John the Apostle and the Holy Virgin
- The Book of Resurrection
- Apocalypse of Sedrach
- Paraphrasis of Seem
- Zostrianos
- Two Books of Ieu.
-

I thank the readers for their patience in allowing me to establish the historical foundations underpinning the visionary mystical vision. The details of the individual accounts are not relevant since it is a reasonable assumption that the texts themselves were unknown to the 15th century tarot card-player. But the sheer volume of the early tradition shows the deep well from which the early Christian mystical literature drew its material.

It is the Christian accounts of the mystical journey that are most relevant to our objectives. Modern Tarotists may be unfamiliar with this literature and once again I beg your indulgence while I establish just how extensive this literature was. Not a century of the Common Era passes without one or more examples (There are also some additional visions for which I could find no date: Walkelin, Voyage of Bran, Louis of France, Monk of Savigny, The Precious Pearl.). The following list is mostly from Gardiner (1989):

- 0-100
 - St. Paul (2Corinthians 12, Galatians 1, see Segal 1995)
- 100-200
 - Apocalypse of St. Peter
 - The Shephard of Hermas
- 200-300
 - The Martyrdom of Perpetua
- 300-400
 - Apocalypse of St. Paul
- 400-500

- St Brendan's voyage
- 500-600
 - Abbot Sunniulfus of Randan (Couliano 1991)
 - Three visions from Gregory the Great
 - Salvius
- 600-700
 - Furseus the Irishman (Couliano 1991)
 - Drythelm of Cunningham (Coulinano 1991)
 - St. Fursa (Zaleski 1987)
 - Baldarius
 - Visio Baronti
 - Bonellus
 - Drythelm's vision
 - Maximus
- 700-800
 - Vision of Adamnan
 - Monk of Wenlock
 - Barontus
- 800-900
 - Bernoldus
 - Wetti's vision
 - English Priest
 - Poor woman
 - Charles the Fat's vision
 - Raduin
 - Rotcharius
 - St. Ansgar
- 900-1000
 - Vision of an English man
 - Laisren
 - Ansellus Scholasticus
- 1000-1100
 - Heriger
 - Leofric
- 1100-1200
 - Vision of knight Owen
 - Tundale's vision
 - Monk of Evesham's vision;
 - Gottschalk
 - Vision of Alberic
 - Boy William
 - Gunthem
 - Monk of Melrose
 - Orm
- 1200-1300
 - Thurkill's vision
 - English Novice
 - Olav Asteson
- 1300-1400
 - Dante
- 1400-1500
 - Lazarus
 - William Staunton

The number of examples in European literature is impressive. However, the ubiquity of the stories means little if the 15th century card-player knew nothing of these visionary journeys. But that is not the case. "Otherworldly narratives are one of the most popular and fascinating types of medieval literature" (Gurevich 1988, p. 109). And again, "These visions were extremely popular literary works" (Gardiner 1989, p. xiii). Tundale's journey, for example, was available in at least 13 languages by the end of the 14th century (Gardiner 1989). Over 200 manuscripts of this vision have survived (Haas 2000).

The popularity and availability of this literature is easily explained. They were preserved by the Church as moral allegories useful for preaching (Gardiner 1989). As such, they were actively preserved in the monastery scriptoria and widely disseminated. The stories were told and re-told throughout Europe. It is reasonable to assume that the 15th century card-player had been exposed to one or more of the stories.

It is also important for the modern Tarotist to realize that these experiences were not presented as fiction. Like Dante, many of the journeyers insist that they are relating an actual experience and that they, like the author of Revelations, were instructed to communicate what they had experienced. The Christian accounts are not merely visionary experiences. The journeyers relate experiences of smells, heat, and pain. Eyewitnesses attested that the journeyer returned with burn scars from their experience of the underworld.

Whether or not the eyewitness accounts could stand up under the critical cross-examination of a modern sceptic is beside the point. The modern sceptic does not believe in griffons and unicorns either, but the 15th century card-player probably did. So the important point is that the card-player likely accepted the miraculous accounts as actual experience. This was an age of belief. Magic and miracles and spiritual journeys were as real and familiar as bread and ale.

But if the reader is now ready to accept that the mystical journey was known and accepted by the early 15th century, it remains to ask whether the card-player would have recognized these popular accounts in the Tarot Trumps. This is, in fact, the crux of this essay and we must weigh the evidence carefully, both pro and con.

The lowest numbered cards do not seem to be derived from the traditional mystical journey. The Bagatto (the original version of the Magician card) does not appear in the "otherworldly journeys" If Moakley (1966) is correct that this card represents the guide - the instructor, protector, soul-taker - then perhaps this street magician is represented because the stories almost always include a guide (Zaleski 1987). But this is a stretch and there does not seem to be any firm evidence that the card-player would have recognized the Bagatto from the stories of the otherworldly journeys. Similarly, the Papesse and Empress do not seem to be represented in the traditional literature. We will have to seek other sources for these first few symbols.

On the other hand, the voyager in the Christian tradition often encounters members of the "estates of man". The Visio Bernardi reports seeing bishops and Charles the Bald in hell (Haas 2000). Thurkill meets priests, knights, judges and merchants (Haas 2000). Tundale sees a king on a throne (Gardiner 1989). Thus, rulers and clerics appear even if the Emperor and Pope play a less prominent role than in Dante's 14th century Divine Comedy. So we may conclude that the card-player might possibly have recognized the early cards as representing the estates of man. But the evidence is weak for all of the low-numbered cards.

The evidence only begins to become interesting with the intermediate cards. Tundale's vision reserves a special place in the afterlife for the Lovers, the "Blessed Married". The image of the Chariot would have been familiar from Ezechial's vision. The image of Justice, as the weighing of the soul, dates back to the Egyptian texts. But since these texts were unavailable in the early 15th century, it is more relevant to note the image of Justice, complete with scales, in Thurkill's familiar vision. The image of the Hermit might also have been recognized as it appears in St. Brendan's voyage and also in Tundale's vision. Thus, the cards numbered VI to IX in the Tarot de Marseille appear explicitly in the traditional visions.

But, as with the early cards, there is then a gap. Outside of Dante, I have been unable to find a direct reference to the Wheel of Fortune, the virtues Fortitude and Temperance or the Hangedman. Once again we must conclude that the early card-players would not have associated these symbols with the mystical voyages that they had heard lauded from the pulpit.

Indeed, a major finding of this study would have to be that the ordinary card-player would not likely have associated the early cards with the "Fool's Journey" theme. The source of the card-players association could well have been through Dante, who presents these images more explicitly. But only weak evidence can be offered that the first half of the Trump cards would have had an immediate association with the voyage theme.

The situation is quite different with the higher Trump cards. The Apocalypse of Abraham presents the archetypal Death disguised as an archangel. Death also appears in Tundale's vision. The Devil appears explicitly in Drythelm's and Tundale's vision. The Tower, complete with destruction and smoke, occurs in Wetti's vision. The theme of increasing light (Star/Moon/Sun) is quite common and appears in the Apocalypse of Paul, Drythelm's vision and in the account of the Monk of Evesham. An explicit listing of Star, then Moon, then Sun can be found in an Iranian account (Viraz, 6th century CE.). The theme of the resurrection and final judgment occurs throughout these stories (Gurevich 1988). The judgment is discussed, for example, in St. Brendan's voyage, Wetti's vision, the Apocalypse of Paul, and the Apocalypse of St. Peter.

The 15th and 16th century World cards shows a figure, such as an angel, holding up a sphere containing the "New Jerusalem". A common conclusion of many of the otherworldly journeys is a vision of heaven as the New Jerusalem (Haas 2000). It is found, for example, in Drythelm's vision, the Monk of Evesham's vision and the Apocalypse of St. Peter. Indeed, the vision of the New Jerusalem may be the most common element across all of the journey literature (Gardiner 1989). New Jerusalem as the goal of the journey remains even when the religious quest becomes associated with the romanic quest in the Grail legends (Emmerson 2000).

The familiar World image with female figure and the four beasts does not occur in the surviving early Tarot decks. However, this symbol appears in all of the Tarot decks in subsequent centuries. The transition from the New Jerusalem to the female figure is interesting because Himmelfarb (1993) points out that the true goal of the journeys in the Judaic literature is wisdom. The goal of the journey as Wisdom/Gnosis/Sophia may be a Judaic concept with its source in the Old Testament Wisdom literature, such as Proverbs (von Rad 1973). Thus, the transition of the World card from the New Jerusalem to an image of Wisdom may reflect the increasing influence of the Christian Cabalists of the later 15th century.

The Fool does not appear explicitly in the journey literature. However, the pilgrim often takes on properties that are associated with the medieval Fool. The visionary assumes the role of a "...child, not yet contaminated, the soul essentially stripped of status...it lacks a social identity...leaving behind the insignia of earthly status"(Zaleski 1987). The visionary as Fool may be clearer in the Judaic literature where the goal is Wisdom (von Rad 1973). For example, (Proverbs 26.12) "Do you see a man who thinks he is wise? There is more hope for a fool than for him" and again (Proverbs 28:26) " He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom escapes." Thus, the evidence that the card-player would have recognized the Fool as the journeyer is circumstantial. Certainly, the early card was not labelled "Tundale".

In summary, we can say that there was a long tradition of the mystical journey in the cultural milieu of the 15th century card-player. The stories were popular and widely used as material in preaching. There is a relationship between the elements in the mystical journeys and the Tarot symbol, particularly the second half of the trumps. But the evidence is far from overwhelming. So while it is not outlandish to hypothesize that the journey literature had some influence, it seems far more likely that it was Dante's Divine Comedy that was the immediate influence. But I would be remiss if I did not include in this survey two other potential sources of the journey literature: Sufism and the Grail legends. Sufism, like Judaism and Christianity, developed and preserved a literature on the mystical journey, the mi'raj or night journey of Mohammed. One commentator (839-923 CE) collected 26 traditions. These became popular Sufi legends and were available in Latin probably from the 13th century (Couliano 1991). In parallel with the Christian tradition, the Sufi literature equates the stages of the mi'raj with stages of the mystical journey. However, the specifics of the night journey do not correlate well with the Tarot symbols which appear to be more closely related to the Judeo-Christian tradition of otherworldly journeys.

Another version of the journey literature became incorporated in the Grail legend. In these popular stories, the 'otherworldly' journey becomes an individual's psychological and magical quest. Some modern interpreters have jumped to the conclusion that the Tarot is directly derived from these legends, but this is unlikely. It seems far more likely that they have a common source in the collection of archetypal visionary journeys that go back for millenia. If

there was an influence, it was likely to have been an indirect one through Dante's familiarity with the troubadours. However, because of the popularity of this theory of origins, we will address it in more detail in a future essay. In conclusion, there existed at the time of the Tarot's origins a rich tradition of visionary journeys. The readily available stories were Christian and commonly used as examples in sermons. It is reasonable to assume that the 15th century card-player was familiar with the concept and with at least some details of the stories. The evidence unearthed by modern scholarship, cited in this essay, indicates that the Fool's Journey is not an occult fable but a popular account of spirituality at the time of the Tarot's origin. What is more interesting is that it was a completely orthodox belief, fostered and disseminated by the Church.

At the same time, the evidence that we have examined does not make a convincing case that the Tarot was directly derived from this source. The symbols in some of the higher trumps appear in these stories, but certainly not all of the Tarot symbols and seldom in the right order. Strong evidence exists only for the correlations of the trumps with Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the culmination and greatest of the journey epics.

The evidence for correlations between the trumps and the *Divine Comedy* are addressed in a separate essay. Thus, it appears to be through Dante that the journey literature influenced the Tarot. And it can be argued that familiarity with the imagery in Dante would have led at least some card-players to see the Fool's journey in the cards.

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History of Tarot

by Christine Payne-Towler

This work began in 1970 when I purchased a used deck of the 20th Century Tarot in a book shop in Salem, Oregon. I was a freshman in college. With parents who were both therapists, I instantly recognized that Tarot was a tool with great potential for helping people grapple with the changing circumstances in their lives.

Soon I returned to the book shop to buy Volume 6 of the Brotherhood of Light Encyclopedia, entitled The Sacred Tarot. From there I learned about the connections the cards have with letters, numbers, astrology and a host of other symbol systems from antiquity. Naturally, I sent for C.C. Zain's deck and began memorizing all the correspondences. Finding others who were using different Tarot decks made me conscious of the need not to put all my eggs in one basket, so I started searching for other decks that were constructed with these correspondences in mind. Soon the Thoth Tarot and the New Tarot for the Aquarian Age joined the first decks on my table, and I was plunged into a twenty year passion that continues to this day.

When I discovered that I could buy Tarot decks directly through U. S. Games Systems, I became a collector. I also employed all the decks I could make sense of in my private practice with clients, students and study groups. Playing with them in terms of real-life situations as I conducted readings gave me the opportunity to see how their similarities and differences operated with different psyches and psychologies.

Collecting decks only multiplied my questions about which versions were traditional and which were innovative. Since my first exposure to Tarot reflected the Hermetic influence of the Brotherhood of Light, which is closely associated with the ancient self-initiation paradigm of the Mysteries, I could see that many decks were diverging from or just plain ignorant of Tarot's history. Thus, I found myself somewhat isolated from beloved colleagues who were for the most part satisfied with what they found in American bookstores. Over time I managed to collect the books cited by the authors of the decks as well as the books those authors cited, ad infinitum. After all these years of study and practice, I have emerged from the confusion with confidence and would like to share with you the themes I have discovered.

The Difficulties of Tarot History

Studying the history of Tarot is no easy task. For one thing, because it first appeared in Europe in the early 1400s in the form of cards, the early evidence is understandably altered and fragmented. Political and religious forces in the 1400 and 1500's forced Tarot into a situation where it had to be camouflaged to obscure its radical content. Generations of students and scholars have had to join secret lodges and take binding oaths to earn the right to have information that we in the twentieth century can access on the Internet and buy outright. As we shall see, some of Tarot's brightest lights have had to accept anonymity or damage to their reputations as the price of entry into the Arcane Teachings.

We latecomers to the scene have little understanding of or appreciation for the extreme sacrifices behind the preservation of our seventy eight card Tarot deck. To make matters more confusing, over the last three centuries, the gradual easing of cultural pressures to maintain secrecy led to distortions in the Tarot tradition and some wildly creative but revisionist "innovations."

Many different versions of Tarot's origins were postulated and evangelized, often with political or commercial gain in mind. What competing claims from differing viewpoints can we credit? How can we know which "expert" to trust? Is there a way to separate the truly historical part of the Tarot mythos from the oft-repeated but never documented "received wisdom"?

If I had fallen in line with most modern Tarot historians, there would have been no great insights coming from me on any of these topics. Commercial emphasis in the last several decades has been upon collecting documentable minutiae that can be proven about the charismatic personalities who have left a bit of themselves in the public record. While I am grateful to those who make it their mission to dig up the facts on these people, I cannot pursue that tack. Not with the cream of Europe's Tarot bounty sitting in my lap! For years I found myself back at my Tarot table in the middle of the night, looking at the cards. While sorting them and laying them out, I have been imagining

the conversations between their makers about the details they contested or held in common. Ultimately attracted to their Mystery School content, it is with the cards themselves that I have wrestled.

The Context In Which Tarot Appeared

The cards themselves have shown me an ongoing intergenerational and international dialogue between highly educated mystics and occultists whose earliest members we no longer can name. The teachings enshrined in the Tarot, most especially the Hebrew alphabet mysteries, astrology and the core concept of self-initiation itself, draw from ancient sources. These teachings were driven underground during the era following the Christian victory over the Mysteries in the fourth century AD.

During the repression, people who wanted to preserve those ancient teachings had to be very secretive. The Church forbade the common folk the right to read and write, hoping that these teachings could be wiped out if the majority were illiterate. That very strategy, however, drove the teachings into visual form (painting, sculpture, architecture and needlework). By the end of the Dark Ages, Europe was filled with the imagery that would eventually appear on the cards. Over time, private clubs formed, like invisible churches, to allow interested parties to pursue these studies with peers who were trustworthy. In this way the Church's policies forced its enemies to get together within what became known as the Secret Societies.

Because of the persecutions, the Tarot had to be promoted as a game for social amusement and distraction. That way, teachings could be revealed in the imagery that if spoken would seriously jeopardize a person's reputation as a Christian. Secret, a dangerous proposition in superstitious times. Society members, using pseudonyms, produced occult and philosophical works that hinted at the teachings contained in the Tarot, but veiled them in confusing terms or contradictory details to throw non-lodge members off the track. So although these strategies were necessary at the time, historians are left with a confusing maze of false leads and exaggerations to unwind. As well, if the historian or researcher does not think like an occultist and lodge member of the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, they are simply lost at sea. It was not until I committed myself to a thorough study of the Secret Societies and their histories that I began to understand the inner dimensions of the Tarot.

Luckily for all, the faces of the cards never lie, testifying to their origins if ever so quietly. In the earliest decks, discernibly Hebrew elements appear, commingled with classical Hermetic themes, spiced with Cathar and Gugliemite heresies, and unified by an overlay of Renaissance detail. In just a few generations, the cards became so rich with associations that it was impossible to reference them all in one deck, so Tarot decks had to proliferate. This led to different "schools" or families of related Tarots based on the emphases favored over others by any given deck's creator.

The paradox is that Tarot, our seventy eight card deck of distinct and definable Arcana (twenty two of which have their own names, along with their fifty six suit cards in four divisions), appeared in Europe nearly overnight, like Venus emerging from the foam, apparently with no antecedents. It emerged from the European psyche at the beginning of the 1400s, and although there were a few experimental exceptions (the Mantegna Arcana, for example), and a few variants (decks with shortened suits, or extra royalty, or an extra set of planetary gods, graces, or zodiac signs), Tarot decks today are essentially the same in internal structure as they were when they first appeared. Better minds than mine have asked, "How is this possible? Where did it come from?"

An Archetype Revival Theory

I feel certain that the astro-alphanumeric archetypes tied to the Greek alphabet through the Greek alphabet reforms (approx. 600 bc) survived the Dark Ages, most especially in Southern Europe. This body of correspondences would have detailed the numerical links uniting the Greek alphabet to the older alphabet of the Hebrews, along with the astrological values that the Alexandrian Hermeticists assigned to those letter/numbers. Those values became the basis for the medieval magical alphabets which we find scattered through the folios of the alchemists, Kabbalists, astrologers, and Magi of the Renaissance.

This body of astro-alphanumeric archetypes, with or without images to accompany them, became property of the Secret Societies before the appearance of the earliest woodblock and handmade Tarots of the early 1400s. These archetypes, likely elaborated from the Mystery School teachings attributed to Pythagoras (again, 600 BC), later became disseminated around the Mediterranean through the spread of Alexandrian culture. These correspondences were regarded as controversial and spiritually dangerous in Europe during the Dark Ages, but were never entirely

lost to scholars of the Mysteries. Tantalizing clues point to multiple ways this body of astro-alphanumeric codes could have survived. Dr. Lewis Keizer notes the presence of Roman-Hellenistic Serapis temples in Italy, relics of the Isis cult, one of which was excavated by the tenth century and reputedly contained images that could double as illustrations of the Major Arcana in "Egyptified" form (see "The Esoteric Origins of Tarot"). He also details the contribution made by the Gypsies in keeping these correspondences alive during the Church persecutions. Assertions abound in the writings of the Tarot masters of the 1700s that the Jews used these alphabetically keyed archetypes in their Mysteries, and that these archetypes found their way into the Secret Societies through this avenue as well. We can also expect that the Moslem libraries in Spain, and the Orthodox monestaries in Eastern Europe possessed similar tables of correspondence as well, as these communities never experienced the orgy of book-burning inspired by the Roman Christians.

A preexisting body of codes and correspondences, coming to us from late antiquity, is the skeletal structure upon which Tarot is formed, as I hope these essays begin to demonstrate. Based on the Hebrew alphabet, Kaballah, Pythagorean number and harmonic theory, and the signs and planets of Astrology, this structure is as old as Western civilization. Before there were Tarot cards, these astro-alphanumeric correspondences of related systems were firmly in place. No doubt the first Tarot cards were a reflection of these early archetypes, but for safety's sake they were stripped of the letters, numbers and other pagan symbols offensive to the Church.

Unfortunately, even in this humbler form, they were considered incendiary because of the Cathar-influenced images they contained, and two centuries of bans and persecutions followed. In addition to variations on some Major Arcana imposed by Papal order, the trivializing effect of formatting Tarot as a game diluted the pointedness of the earliest images. Nevertheless the interior, divinatory body of correspondences kept growing through the Gypsy usage cited by Dr. Keizer in his excellent chapter. After the appearance of the Marseilles Tarot in the late 1600s, new versions of several Major Arcana marked a fresh restatement of the old Arcana. It still was not safe to blatantly put Hebrew letters and astrology on the faces of the cards, but the especially loaded changes that appeared at this time revealed more detail about Tarot's internal structures and relationships.

I cannot prove my theory with manuscript evidence, but the decks of the 1660s themselves demonstrate that the primal Arcana archetypes re-emerged at that time, and every contemporary stream of Tarot was impacted. This includes the Marseilles-style decks, the de Gebelin school and the Etteilla variants (see booklet entitled *The Continental Tarot Decks*).

At the end of the 1800s another emergence of that inner-school material spurred the reforms of the French school and the breakout of the English and Spanish lodges. We have more documentation (and more opinions) about this wave of Tarot "reforms" than any previous emergence. But there is little consensus on which of the competing versions of Tarot's history to believe. Dissension among different "schools" or "lineages" has become more public as Tarot has grown more popular. A little study makes clear that the images we now generally associate with Tarot are relative latecomers to the earlier astro-alphanumeric archetypes inherited from Alexandrian culture. The Arcana images, no matter who their earliest illustrator, are hung on a preexisting structure that dictates their intrinsic order. Even if a Tarot artist later decides to change the names, the ordering or the imagery, it makes no difference because the fact that Tarot is structured as a $22+(10 \times 4)+(4 \times 4)$ system gives it away as an ancient artifact. Tarot is the set of flash cards for the astro-alphanumeric Mysteries of late antiquity, and it is those Mysteries which are the *Prima Causa* of the deck itself and all its images, names, numbers and other correspondences.

The Situation in America

Since the turn of the twentieth century, received wisdom in the English-speaking world about Tarot is that the Waite-Smith deck is the definitive pack against which all others should be measured. It has stood like a monument in the history of Tarot, supposedly representative of the best of the tradition but newly revealed for the modern age, summing up the past but pointing to a brave new future for Tarot. America took this well-documented and beautiful pack to its heart, and to this day those images remain the common denominators people generally refer to when they think of Tarot.

This has not been a bad way for Tarot to be introduced to America, but it has caused a problem for the Tarot historian. The problem is that Tarot did not originate in England or America, but in Italy, Germany, France, and later Spain. The Waite-Smith Tarot, for all its popularity and attractiveness, cannot truly be considered as "traditional" when compared to the older and original Tarots. The people and circumstances that originally shaped the Arcana

were centuries older than those whose names we know and whose histories we now recite. Between the 1400s and the present, generations of decks have come and gone, with America hearing little about the older Tarots and what they meant to the people who used them. Unless one has been assertive enough to develop a relationship with U. S. Games Systems and buy the "foreign" decks the bookstores didn't carry, one would never know that there was a history of Tarot before the twentieth century.

In my early years of study there was little published in English about those older decks, so there were no helpful teachers to consult when I needed a question answered. Even now, with Stewart Kaplan's *Encyclopedia of Tarot*, plus the books by Giles, Gad, Cavendish, Gettings, Knight and Tomberg (among others (see Bibliography), a clear focus on Tarot origins still eludes us.

Fortunately the evidence of Tarot's origins is all over the faces of the cards, and the diligent seeker can develop an "eye" for the clues once they line up the images and compare for themselves. With Stuart Kaplan's *Encyclopedia* in hand, and the works of the authors cited above, it has been possible to piece together a creditable history of the European Tarot which I hope can serve as a standard resource for English-speaking students and scholars alike. In the future we can carry on our Tarot debates with better grounding in the fundamentals, with an expanded knowledge about the larger, original world of Tarot.

Changing Attitudes

Our twentieth century love of personality makes the early centuries of Tarot look dull. Without names and stories about the authors and their histories, the decks themselves can appear inscrutable. But like it or not, Tarot is too old to worry about personalities, and we are going to have to take on the work of evaluating it on its internal structures and symbolic elements alone.

Nor can we afford to hold out for manuscript evidence before we decide where Tarot "came from." Unfortunately, many of the manuscripts where we would expect to find records that are contemporary with the earliest cards and their underlying images have been destroyed. This was a calculated effort undertaken by the Roman Church over several centuries, designed to keep the European people from turning away from Catholicism and toward the Gnostic heresies of the Middle Ages. The devastation that the Church visited upon the culture of southern France in the twelfth century obliterated the conditions that germinated the Tarot as we know it now. We are infinitely lucky that the cards themselves survived.

Now we have to learn how to "read" the surviving images in all the glory and variety that they still show. In them we can see the ideas flowing and evolving in "pictures worth a thousand words." We must cease viewing the images and symbols on the faces of the cards as secondary evidence, and learn to follow the protocols of the Art Historian when we investigate the Tarot. Insisting on text evidence for proofs of our theories is illogical given the underground status of its originators and the persecutions that it engendered.

Toward that goal, students and fans of Tarot would benefit from having full-color volumes at their disposal that would be filled with each and every Arcana from the earliest centuries. For example, researchers deserve to see every card from works like the Lazzarelli Codices (from 1471) which are in the Vatican Library. These are an exquisite set of tarocchi images, artistically resembling and named after the Mantegna cards, but confined to twenty two prints like the Major Arcana of the Visconti-Sforza (see Kaplan's *Encyclopedia*, p. 27). Between 1496 and 1506, Albrecht Durer, a German painter and engraver, made a set of 21 tarocchi images patterned after the E-series tarocchi of Mantegna cards. These images are exquisite and would make a very fruitful study (*Encyclopedia*, p. 47). As well, we need to see the remarkably beautiful circular pack of seventy two cards in five suits engraved at Cologne in 1470, a few of which are shown in the Fournier *Playing Cards* encyclopedia (Volume 1, p. 165).

Along those lines, it would also be beneficial if researchers could access a pack of cards reproduced from the Rosenwald Tarot cards as well as the related 15th century Italian Tarocchi whose cards are split between the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts (see Vol. II of Kaplan's *Encyclopedia of Tarot*, p 291.). The oldest deck employed in this CD, the Pierpont Morgan-Bergamo Visconti-Sforza Tarocchi deck, is just the beginning of the collection we need to scrutinize once we come to understand what we are looking at. (See *Overview of the Decks* for the complete listing of decks on this CD.)

We can also make better use of those creditable historical sources whose writings have proved to contain a high proportion of accurate information, according to the hindsight of modern scholarship. Bearing in mind that we in the late twentieth century have more information available to us on the Internet than kings and popes could amass in bygone days, we can understand even more what the old masters were trying to tell us in the Tarot Arcana. Especially interesting are the chain of esotericists from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, grouped in this CD under the heading The Continental Tarot Decks, who reformed the folk-style Tarots of their day, reinvigorating Tarot's ancient linkages with the teachings of Hermeticism, Kaballah and theurgy.

A Plea for Objectivity About Eliphas Levi

In this context I have to highlight Eliphas Levi, a French esoteric scholar of the 1800s whose voluminous writings have fueled this century's Tarot revival. Because he did not write in English, we in America have been dependent upon translators if we want to follow Levi's ideas. Levi's primary translator is A. E. Waite, a well-known British occultist from the early 1900s who positioned himself as an expert in all matters esoteric, especially Tarot.

To give credit where credit is due, Waite and his compatriots Wescott and Crowley have, between them, translated much of Levi's occult catalog. There is no way to deny the great benefit which the English-speaking world has received from the dedication of these three translators. In the meantime, however, they made sure to load Levi's work with enough mean-spirited forewords, foot-notes and afterwords that we struggle to see Levi through the thicket of discounts. I urge everyone who loves Tarot to study Levi and the Continental esoteric masters who followed him, ignoring all inserted material from translators, and take these authors seriously. Inaccuracies and distortions can be found in the works of every Tarot author, but we cannot discourse rationally about Tarot history until we can see through the smoke screen put up by the English occultists from the turn of this century.

I do not make these statements lightly, and dear friends in the Tarot community may wince at my bluntness. Nevertheless I simply differ with much of the received wisdom on Tarot lineages. The "party line" is that the English school was sincere in attempting to "correct" what they thought were ambiguities in Levi's works. My response is that those ambiguities were created by Levi's translators as part of the ongoing feud between the French (traditional) and English (upstart) branches of the European Secret Societies. (see accompanying essay "Esoteric Origins of the Tarot" by Dr. Lewis Keizer).

Let me state for the record that I do not fault any modern proponents of the English schools for this problem. I trace the origin of this issue to Levi's translators, who knew their actions would destroy Levi's credibility in the New World. It was necessary for them to do so because their version of Tarot was so radically different from its historical, Continental roots. To promote the Order of the Golden Dawn and its offshoots, they could not avoid casting doubt upon those who had gone before. Unfortunately, in trivializing Levi, they have deprived many sincere Tarot students of the readily available scholarship of Levi, reknowned French magus of the 1800s. Even despite the cruel misrepresentations of his translators, Levi's works contain a treasure trove of hints, clues and historical facts of interest to any who claim to love the Tarot (see Bibliography). His style is old-fashioned, and he is prone to poetic flights of pun-filled metaphor that present a challenge to translators. But he represents the pinnacle of scholarship in his day and is a respected voice in the traditional stream as well as an exceptionally subtle thinker. As we relinquish our biases, I hope we can begin to appreciate the man for who he was.

Ample evidence exists to place the French Masons, exemplified by Etteilla and his Tarot correspondences, squarely at the center of the reformulation of the Secret Societies after the French Revolution. Levi inherited that tradition with the Supreme Grand Mastership of the Fraternitas Rosae Crucis of Europe, which he occupied from 1856 to his death in 1875. Levi went to great lengths to document the transmission of these already ancient alphanumeric correspondences in his excellent writings. His students Papus and Wirth in their turn reconfirmed the edifice of esoteric scholarship that is the French School. One cannot claim to be an expert on Tarot, or on Levi and the French School, and then dismiss those Tarots as "incorrect." This alone is proof that the most influential scholars in this field were "hidden in plain sight," like the Tarot itself for so many generations.

It is a signature of Secret Society style to make the fewest waves possible in the mundane world unless it is strategic to The Work. Levi's modesty in life has been appallingly repaid by those who have been intellectually, not to mention financially, enriched by his legacy. Yet nobody from the various orders with which he was involved has ever stepped forward in a public way to defend his name until now. Close study of Volume 2's biography of Eliphas Levi, found in E. Swynbourne Clymer's three-volume tome on the lives of the Rosicruciae, finally helped me put

Levi's contribution to the history and transmission of the Tarot in perspective, but this wonderful work is unfortunately not readily available to all.

All this being said, I am fully aware that I am raising as many questions as I answer. It is the nature of knowledge to expand. My ignorance today will be glaring tomorrow, and I accept that fact in advance. If by presenting this information I provoke a buzz of responses (hopefully pro as well as con), trigger a few knowledgeable people to publish their books, even if to refute mine, and excite a few more souls toward the teachings that Tarot presents, then I will have been successful. I encourage everyone of such a mind to find and fill the holes in the arguments you find here, and send your conclusions to me at Christine@Tarot.com.

The Esoteric Origins of Tarot: More than a Wicked Pack of Cards

by Lewis Keizer, Ph.D.

Foreword

Modern Tarot is not a card game. It is a form of divination. As such, modern Tarot does not originate in medieval Italian card games, although they eventually became mediums through which cartomantic divination was done. Modern Tarot has a much more ancient derivation in the phenomenology of religions, iconography, and in Western esoteric tradition.

Christine Payne-Towler has provided me with most of the motivation and much of the research for this essay. She could have written a much more comprehensive tome, as she is an expert on Tarot iconography and symbology. But she wanted a scholar to look over her materials and lend credence to the esoteric origins of Tarot. I am honored to comply.

The So-Called "Propoganda Campaign"

Decker, Depaulis, and Dummett make the following statement in Chapter One of A Wicked Pack of Cards:

"(The Tarot pack) . . . is the subject of the most successful propaganda campaign ever launched. . . . An entire false history, and false interpretation, of the Tarot pack was con-cocted by the occultists. . . ." A statement such as this is as false as the misguided histories of Tarot presented by Gebelin, Etteilla, and the other founders of Tarot occultism in Western Europe. There was no conspiracy to misrepresent Tarot--only an attempt to understand and explain it. Eighteenth- century science was at the mercy of its own limitations, just as twentieth-century scholarship will later be recognized to be.

A Wicked Pack of Cards provides us with an excellently researched history of medieval and modern Tarot schools, but it does not attempt to understand and explain its significance. It understands Tarot as part of the history of European games, but it has no appreciation of the origin of modern Tarot in the history and phenomenology of the Western esoteric tradition, or as a sophisticated development of effective divination technique. A Wicked Pack of Cards provides a great deal of information, but the authors do not have a thorough enough background in the Western mystery tradition to properly interpret their information.

This article is intended to refocus academic discussion of Tarot to its significance and meaning within the context of real historical development in the Western esoteric tradition.

The Power of Tarot

When I was a young academic teaching Religious Studies at the University of California in Santa Cruz during the sixties and seventies, I was chagrined at the gullibility of students for naïve occultist theories about history, scripture, and emerging new-age fads like Tarot.

Like the authors of A Wicked Pack of Cards, I knew that modern Tarot decks were merely a development of medieval Italian Tarocchi. Tarot was not the secret Urim and Thumim of the Old Testament or the hieratic Egyptian Books of Hermes described by Clement of Alexandria. Yet not only young, impressionable students, but often even intelligent, educated adults wanted to believe that the Tarot was sanctified with hoary antiquity.

As I began to have deeper experience and understanding of Eastern and Western esoteric tradition, however, I found myself using Tarot and other forms of divination to touch more deeply into my own interior life. I began to understand the spiritual phenomenology of dynamic psychism, magic, and theurgy. I found that even some of the most recent decks, like the Alchemical Tarot, were extremely helpful to me. The readings I did for myself and for others clarified the invisible currents and subtle influences associated with important decisions and life crises.

Many times the Tarot has warned me away from pathways that I later realized would have led to disaster, or it has given me confidence to pursue directions that have proven to be true to my purposes in life. At crucial times the Tarot has confronted me with hard advice that I could have never accepted from my closest friends. Again, it has cheered me with encouragement for which there seemed, at the time, no basis (and yet, it was true. Can all this come from a pack of playing cards? Let us examine the historic esoteric influences associated with the iconography of the Tarot trumps.

The Popess

The earliest extant trump images date from the fourteenth century, and they include a female Pope. Today we know her as the High Priestess or Isis Veiled. The Popess was a remarkable image to use during an era when Knights Templar, Cathars, and other religious heretics were being tortured and burned in the Inquisition. We know that the Popess and other images fell afoul of the Catholic Church, which successfully suppressed Tarocchi for two centuries, while the game itself was often castigated by Protestant preachers. Why did the image of the Popess exist before the fourteenth century, and why was the Tarot suppressed after this period?

The issue raised by the Popess was theological dualism--the Albigensian heresy--which was the enemy that the Inquisition sought out either among the Cathars of Southern France, the Bogomils of Bulgaria, or other sects like the Patarenes. These were all survivals of a form of early Christian Gnosticism known as Manichaeism. The religion of the martyred saint Manes became anathema after St. Augustine of Hippo, a Manichaean of the fourth century, converted to Catholicism and became a founding theologian for Roman Catholic theology.

The teachings of the "dualist" sects allowed women to be clergy and to even hold office as a Pope. During the period of European history from which the image of the Popess survives, the Bogomils were loyal to their own mysterious Pope in Bulgaria, who may well have been a woman saint. Many of the heretical communities of the time relied upon prophetesses and female channels of Spirit to guide them, just as the early Montanists had done. In the Visconte-Sforza Tarocchi deck we find a Popess dressed in the habit of the Umiliata Order of the Guglielmites whose female leader, a Bohemian Lombard, died in Milan in 1281. The image in the deck represents Popess Sister Manfreda, who was elected Pope by her sect. She was regarded as an avatar of the Holy Spirit sent to inaugurate the New Age of Spirit prophesied by Joachim of Flora. This Popess was burned at the stake in autumn of A.D. 1300, the year that the New Age ending male domination of religion was supposed to begin. Later the Inquisition started proceedings against Matteo Visconti for his slight involvement with the sect.

In addition to the dualist heretical communities, there was a great proliferation of apocalyptic and new-age theology that had occurred with the advent of the millennial year A.D. 1000. Isolated scholars translated the Latin Bible, and especially the Book of Revelations, into their vernacular languages and read them as ciphers for their own age, which was one of ecclesiastical privilege and corruption. Their insights were privately promulgated, and secret societies formed to spread reform and revolutionary religious ideas.

From seminal movements like those of Joachim Flora, the German mystics in the line of Meister Eckhart, and the Brethren of the Free Spirit, there developed the greatest political ground-swell that was ever to threaten the Roman Catholic hierarchy--Protestantism. It now dominates much of Christianity, but is still theological heresy in Rome.

The early protesting or "protestant" sects were fiercely persecuted by Rome, which lumped them together with Albigensians, keepers of pre-Christian pagan religions, and the Jewish and Islamic infidels.

All of these groups were theologically "dualist" in the perspective of Rome either because they recognized a feminine or Mother aspect of Godhead (Cathars, Jewish Kabbalists, Bogomils) or because they preserved a Gnostic cosmology and anthropology. The Christian dualists were especially targeted because their Christologies were based on the mystic *Imitatio Christi*, a discipleship aimed at ultimately becoming a Christ. It would have been more to call them "unarians," because ultimately they viewed humanity as an emanation of God that contained a spark of deity and would eventually return to Godhead, rather than a mere creation of dust doomed ever to be subordinate and inferior.

The Cathars preserved the Merovingian ideal of the Wife of Jesus (Mary Magdalene) and his physical offspring through their concept of Holy Blood, against which the Carolingian revolution had presented the ideal of the Mass and Eucharist as the Holy Blood of Christ. The Eucharistic Sacrament was the priestly means through which the Church maintained authority over the laity. If personal mysticism and spiritualized allegories were to triumph over physical sacraments, the Church would lose its power. That is why later Protestantism renounced Priesthood and sacraments as "Popish" tools of Satan. But the ideal was originally that of the Gnostic heresies, who viewed human love as the Divine Sacrament par excellence and maintained the symbolism of a male and female Christ.

Under circumstances of political suppression and threat of the Inquisition, the wave of revolutionary spirituality that swept over Eastern and Western Europe in the tenth to fifteenth centuries was transmitted in heretical ballads sung

by Bogomil troubadours and in other forms of art, imagery, and iconography. Very clearly, part of this trend is preserved in the iconography of the early Tarocchi trumps. The most evident aspect of this iconography is the Female Pope.

Tarot innovator Edgar Waite was the first modern scholar to propose that the trumps were originally a series of images to convey the philosophy of the Albigensians. It is ironic that Waite should make this observation, since he radically altered the images of the Tarot trumps, adhering to the sweeping changes made by the English occultists of the Golden Dawn to the traditional European images. Waite's altered Tarot images are those most familiar to lay persons, and yet they are many steps removed from the original iconography. Perhaps the best example of the original iconography to survive the Inquisition is the Marseilles deck, which synthesizes alchemical and other imagery with an Egyptian theme that I'll later address.

An excellent discussion of the influence of heretical religion on the original Tarot trump images is included in a book by Robert V. O'Neill entitled, *Tarot Symbolism* (Fairway Press, Ohio; ISBN 0-89536-936-2). His chapter on "Heretical Sects and Their Influence on the Tarot" is carefully researched and deserves a wide reading.

Tarocchi Iconography and Hermetic Philosophy Tarot was far more than entertainment during the period from the 1300's to the 1500's when the game was suppressed. It appears among the luminaries of the Church as a means for contemplation and deep discussion. Tarocchi cards with trump images corresponding to Hermetic philosophical and cosmological ideals were used by Pope Pius II and Cardinals Bessarion and Cusa in the mid-fifteenth century during a church council in Mantua. The images of Mantegna's Tarocchi include Iliakos, representing the First Iliaster of Paracelsus and other metaphysicians, the Seven Planets, and other elements of the Hermetic-Platonic Hierarchy of Being. Nicholas of Cusa later wrote concerning a similar card game he had devised:

"This game is played, not in a childish way, but as the Holy Wisdom played it for God at the beginning of the world."¹ The impact of Hermetic philosophy and iconography on the Church of the Counter-Reformation was considerable. There was a time when many of the intellectuals of Europe hoped that Hermetic philosophy would be the means through which Catholic theology could be reformed to meet the challenge of Protestantism, science, and secular thought. There is still a sealed room in the Vatican belonging to the Borgia Pope that is painted with images of Hermes Trismegistus and other occult symbology. Statues and printed images of Hermes Trismegistus, Pythagoras, and other legendary adepts proliferated. Hermetic thought struggled with church theology within the Vatican itself, but was overcome by the forces of conservatism by the middle of the seventeenth century, never to surface again.

However, during the oppression of heretical sects and the evolution of the Reformation, new venues for esoteric and occult thought developed within Protestantism and Catholicism. The Knights Templar had been driven underground, but the Priory of Sion lived on as an elite Catholic secret esoteric society with Grand Masters like Botticelli and Da Vinci, whose art preserves the Hermetic cosmology and ideals. The Rosicrucian and Freemasonic movements of Protestant mysticism produced an esoteric Renaissance based on Hermetic thought and its synthesis with astrology, alchemy, magick, and a Christian version of Jewish Kabbalah that used not only Hebrew, but Greek and Latin alphabets. All this, in turn, was integrated with Greek philosophy and Pythagorean theory.

The scholar Frances Yeats' book, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* demonstrates the importance of iconography, philosophy, and Hermetic idealism during the period crucial to the development of the Tarot imagery. Alchemists and other practitioners of the esoteric arts transmitted their most profound teachings, such as the evolution of the Sophic Hydrolith or Philosopher's Stone, by means of iconographical allegories. It would be naïve to think that Tarot images were devoid of such interpretation in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, even though they were suppressed.

During the eighteenth century, when the Inquisition was losing its grip on most of Europe, and both Europe and the New World were rushing toward violent democratic revolution, Tarot again surfaced, not merely as an Italian card game, but as a means of divination. It became a focus of interest for occultists who, like French and English Freemasons, wished to sanctify their alternative spirituality with the authority of hoary antiquity. Divination, Cartomancy, and the "Egyptian" Gypsies

The earliest historical record we have of playing cards being used for divination is found in a memoir of the year 1765 by Casanova about the beautiful young Russian peasant girl named Zaire. She arranged twenty-five playing

cards into a magical square and was able to read in them all the details of his amorous adventures of the previous evening. On the basis of this account, the authors of *A Wicked Pack of Cards* speculate that cartomancy began with Russian peasants in the eighteenth-century. But to assign an origination date to an oral folk tradition, especially when it concerns magic, divination, or herbs and medicines, based upon the date of its first mention in European literature, is unrealistic and quite ignorant of the historical dynamics of oral tradition.

Where did Zaire get her knowledge of cartomancy? Not from books, and certainly not from the French nobility, who in the eighteenth century had just begun to discover occultism, divination, and spiritualism and relate it to their previous flirtations with Hermetic science. No, Zaire's knowledge came from an oral folk transmission totally independent of literacy and with a much greater antiquity than the literary products of Gutenberg's revolution. The source of Zaire's knowledge was ultimately Gypsy folk tradition.

The Gypsies were a unique nomadic nation that left India and wandered to Europe by way of Eastern Europe and Bohemia. They were erroneously considered by Europeans, including Russians, to be a survival of the ancient Egyptian people. They were also known as "Bohemians" because their annual traveling routes brought them into Europe by way of Bohemia, the Motherland of many European esoteric traditions.

Gypsies had their own kings and queens, their own initiatic traditions, and they were experts in forms of entertainment, animal training, and divination for wealthy clients. Methods of divination included "reading" various elements like tea leaves and scrying crystal globes, clouds, sand formations in stream beds, or reflections of the full moon on water. They read palms, used other physiognomic techniques, and they developed various psychic arts that were attributed to Rosicrucians, alchemists, and other occultists of Prague and Bohemia.

As interest in the Gypsy ("Egyptian") arts developed into European spiritualist fads of the eighteenth century, as the Hermetic ("Egyptian") philosophy spread through publications of the *Corpus Hermeticum* and various alchemical and magical texts purchased by the nobility, and with the popularization of hieratic Egyptian artifacts like the *Mensa Isiaca* (Tablets of Isis) published by Kircher, all divinatory and esoteric knowledge was attributed to ancient Egypt. Everything from Freemasonry to Mesmerism claimed its roots in the hoary antiquities of Egypt. Gebelin, Etteilla, and the other eighteenth-century European popularizers of cartomancy attributed the Tarot to the ancient Egyptian Books of Thoth, and the trump images to symbolic frescoes on the walls of Egyptian temples used as part of instruction given during priestly initiation.

The iconography of Egyptian Serapian temples were familiar to Italians. The temples had been built in Italy and Asia Minor during the Roman-Hellenistic period, when Egyptian Isis religion was popular throughout the Empire. A Serapian temple had been excavated as early as the tenth century, and Italians often traveled to see it and speculate upon the meaning of its frescoes and hieroglyphics.

During the Italian Renaissance, classical culture was studied and idealized. It is quite possible that Tarocchi images were understood as allegories from the very beginning, since the game itself was a kind of medieval Game of Life with reference to archetypal human conditions. Since the Serapian temples were places of initiation into Isis cult, it is also reasonable to assume that their iconography related to initiatic journey through life. To this extent, it is not impossible that Tarot images, which had a similar purpose in Tarocchi, had some root in Egyptian temple iconography.

But cartomancy, or divination with playing cards, was not an Egyptian invention. There may have been other systems of divination parallel to the throwing of yarrow sticks for the I Ching in the ancient or Roman-Hellenistic world of Egypt, but there is no evidence of anything similar to playing cards. Fortune-telling with playing cards, or cartomancy, was popularized by the Gypsies in medieval Europe after the invention and publication of playing cards. Because the authorities and teachers of cartomancy were Gypsies, divination with Tarot cards was assumed to be "Egyptian."

The Sanskrit-related language of the Gypsies was called Romany, erroneously related to Roumanian. The Gypsies were considered to be spiritually allied to the heretical and protesting religions of Europe, especially the Bulgarian, Roumanian, and Bohemian villagers whose folk religion preserved Manichaean and Gnostic elements, and whose preoccupations in the eighteenth century included astrology, alchemy, and esoteric speculative Freemasonry. These included the descendants of the Bogomiles, Cathars, and Albigenians, who had become the objects of persecution

and attempted genocide by partisans of the Roman Catholic Church, and whose cultures had produced the wandering Troubadors, who sang mystical, heretical songs to the Magdalene and told stories of the Holy Grail.

As a bridge to Eastern mysticism, European heretics had nurtured the European consciousness that would produce the institutions of Chivalry and Courtly Love. In the heyday of the Hermetic Renaissance and amidst the social upheaval of the Protestant Reformation, the mysterious Gypsies emigrated to Europe and wandered in large bands. They brought the ways of Indian mysticism and divination with them, and when they arrived in fifteenth-century Western Europe, the romance of the vanquished European heretical cultures was associated with them. They were welcomed for the entertainment they brought, feared and avoided because of the ferocity of their fighting men and women, and often expelled or forced to move on. They were closely attuned to the animals they brought with them, developing skills in animal communication and training. They traveled in annual migration routes throughout Europe and the Slavic regions, moving South for the winters and North for the summers, providing carnivals or trained animal shows and various kinds of "fortune telling" for a fee. They stayed clear of the regions where the medieval Inquisition held sway, but were often accused of witchcraft.

By the eighteenth century the Inquisition was on the wane. Gypsy lore was much in demand by both the nobles and middle class of Europe. The Gypsies were happy to oblige credulous Europeans with stories of their ancient origins in Egypt. In fact, they called their homeland "Little Egypt."

The Albigensian Paper Making Connection

Paper making was brought to Europe from the East by Templars and other Crusaders returning from the Holy Land or by Moors in Spain. The earliest paper making centers in Europe were in the South of France and in Lombardy and Tuscany (the areas occupied and controlled by the Albigensians or Cathari. After the massacre of the Cathari at Montsegur in 1244 by operatives of the Pope--perhaps the greatest act of genocide known to history previous to the slaughters of Armenian Christians by the Moslems in the twentieth century and Hitler's Jewish Holocaust in World War II--about four thousand survivors wandered Europe like the Gypsies as troubadors, pedlars, merchants, and journeymen paper makers. The persecuted Albigensian paper makers used a secret, symbolic watermark on their "Lombardy paper" by which means they communicated and kept track of each other in different areas.

Interesting evidence of the esoteric relationship between Gypsies, hidden Albigensians, hidden Knights Templar, and the operative Masons are indicated in manuscripts on guild practices created in the Rosslyn Chapel Manuscript Manufactory of the fifteenth century, which is now in the Scottish National Museum and exhibited in facsimile at Rosslyn Chapel which, as scholars are now finding, memorializes Gypsy, Rosicrucian, Templar, Freemasonic, and other hidden esoteric institutions of the period (all of whom were in contact. The St. Claire royalty of Rosslyn were both protectors of the Gypsies and Grand Masters of the operative Masons!

Given these facts, it is quite reasonable to assume that the first manufacture of tarocchi cards was done by partisans of the persecuted Albigensian tradition who maintained close relations with the Gypsies of India, the exiled Knights Templar, and the Scottish Masonic groups out of which Scottish Rite and other "speculative" forms of Freemasonic cult were emerging. This in itself points strongly to an esoteric origin for the Tarot images from the very beginning of their appearance as playing cards manufactured by guilds of Cathari paper makers who lived in hiding.

Divination and Other Spiritual Antiquities of the Gypsies

Gypsy tradition was Indian, but the traditions associated with the Gypsies in the European mind were directly derivative from Roman-Hellenistic Gnostic and Manichaeic spirituality, which the Cathars were still practicing in the thirteenth century. The Roman Catholic polemic against magic and divination that had been successfully and brutally waged against the Greek mystery religions and the Neo-Platonic philosophical schools like that of Hypatia never influenced the Gnostic-Christian religious culture of southern France and Bulgaria. There many of the ancient divinatory practices of Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt, and the Hellenized world were not only tolerated, but developed and well integrated into daily religious practice.

We must acknowledge that Murray's theories about the Old Religion of the Witches and its survival in the folk practices of rural Europe have been shown to be unrealistic. Modern Wicca, like modern Tarot, is a recent production with yearnings to an ancient occult history. The European romances about Egyptian Freemasonry, Christian Rosenkreuz and the ancient Rosicrucian Brotherhood, or the Theosophical Masters of Tibet were also, in great part, the creations of spiritual imagination. They tell us more about the spirit of their own times than about sacred antiquities.

However, in the case of the Western esoteric tradition and its interaction with Gypsy lore, we do find strong evidence of historical continuity with ancient pagan and mystery traditions. Gypsy traditions were strongly Indo-Iranian, thus extremely compatible with Manichaean and Gnostic culture. In their oral traditions concerning magic, spells, herbs, plants, stones, psychism, and divination, Gypsy communities preserved Eastern folk-magical and divinatory traditions that were essentially and qualitatively different from those preserved in Western Christian monasticism. "There is general agreement among occult authorities that the use of the Tarot was popularized by the wandering bands of Bohemians-- gypsies--who made their appearance in the late Middle Ages." (Doctoral dissertation of Thomas Williams for the University of Alabama, quoted in *A Wicked Pack of Cards*, Chapter One). Not only "occult authorities," but most scholars would agree that cartomancy and Tarot-card divination were introduced to Europeans by Gypsies.

In late antiquity, the Bohemians transferred and adapted their traditional forms of divination to the newly emerging form made possible by the invention of the printing press-- the deck of cards. These more ancient forms of divination were compatible with a deck of cards because:

they relied upon a complex set of symbols not unlike Chinese trigrams, Roman dice, Druidic runes, that could be interpreted allegorically

they operated by means of randomizing these elements through throwing or casting, as with lots, dice, or yarrow stalks

they had numerological associations that could be used to amplify interpretation The symbols of the Gypsies would have been pictographic, although they could have developed into more glyphic representations as did later demotic Egyptian or the Chinese trigrams of the I Ching. They would have been etched, drawn, or painted onto randomizable elements that could be cast or thrown, like runes or dice. The numerical system they used would have been similar to Pythagorean decimal number lore, as it was derived by Pythagoras from Indian Brahmin lore.

Since we can see that the original Tarot trumps were based, for the most part, upon Italian social images arranged in allegorical postures, and that only later were images altered to appear Egyptian or pre-Christian, it is easy to conclude that modern Tarot trump images have no relation to images or allegories that would have been used by the Indo-Iranian Gypsies. However, there are certain original trumps that simply do not have a basis in medieval Christian society, such as the Popess or female Pope (becomes the High Priestess).

Moreover, this image certainly does have a basis in both Indian and Albigensian religion as the Gnostic Sophia, the Magdalen, the female Christ, and the Virgin Goddess. To what extent did the cartomancy of the Gypsies influence even the earliest Tarocchi trumps? Perhaps more than we can know. According to some authorities, the Gypsy migrations began as early as the ninth century and peaked in the fifteenth century.

Although Gypsies must have made many innovations when they began to adapt European playing cards for fortune telling, it is also clear that they were able to find attributions for suits and trumps that were recognizable and correspondent to their own traditions of divination. Thus the fact that the images of the Tarocchi trumps survive in various permutations into modern Tarot decks indicates that they were congruent with Gypsy folklore that served as the basis for divination. Iamblichan Tarot Tradition in the French Occult Revival of the Eighteenth Century The occultist Court de Gebelin theorized in 1781 that the Tarot trump images originated in the initiatic halls of Egyptian temples. His ideas were popularized by Alliette, later known as Etteilla. But these men were not the originators of such speculation. It was already common understanding in French occult circles, which were essentially Freemasonic.

In the year 1798 there were six to seven hundred Masonic lodges in France containing perhaps 30,000 of the most educated citizens. Unlike modern American Freemasonry, which after WWII became mostly blue collar workers and lost much of its great intellectual patronage, the French lodges were (and still are) subscribed to by university professors and other intellectuals.

Lodges were split between those chartered by nobility and under a Grand Master for life appointed by nobility, and the new democratic form in which Masters were elected for a term. The first form was traditional, and its premise

was that the Grand Master was a true adept with all the knowledge and powers of a master. Unfortunately, princes and dukes often chartered unqualified Grand Masters, and the democratic movement in Freemasonry was causing lodges to split into factions. This same movement was attuned to the emerging American colonial revolution and closely tied to its founders. Ben Franklin, for example, was the elected Grand Master of a Lodge in Paris as well as in Philadelphia.

An extreme wing of the democratic Masons were the *Fratres Lucis*, Brothers of Light. Under the leadership of university free-thinkers, they were active architects of the French Revolution. They used forms of initiation that could result in death, based on their ideas of ancient Egyptian priestly initiation. A document probably translated by the nineteenth century occultist Jean-Baptiste Pitois (Christian) and published recently in English by Weiser entitled, *Egyptian Mysteries*, is an example of Illuminist initiatio practice in the guidance of Egyptian lore. During one part of the ordeal, in which the candidate must work his way through a dark labyrinth, he finds himself in a lighted chamber with a bed, food, and a beautiful unclad woman. He has vowed not to tarry, but if he does make the wrong choice, he is immediately set upon and killed. At this point in the eighteenth century the Lovers trump of the Tarot is reinterpreted according to the "Egyptian" initiatic ordeal, and we see a man with two women--one on his right who is chaste, and one on his left who is a coquette. Over his head is an angel aiming an arrow at him, to slay him if he makes the wrong moral choice. (I would have been dead in this situation!)

Allegorically, this represents the right-hand and left-hand paths, the Way of Life and the Way of Death of the Old Testament, the good and evil yetzerim of Kabbalah, or the Pythagorean Motion to the Left versus the Motion to the Right of Plato's *Timaeus* and the *Kore Kosmou* of Hermetic-Gnostic tradition. But among the *Fratres Lucis*, it represented something quite immediate and final. It is not known how many candidates met their doom in this form of Masonic initiation, but given the proclivities of Frenchmen, I am not optimistic. Egyptian lodges were established also by Cagliostro who, according to legend, was initiated by the Grand Master, the *Compte de St. Germain*, in a Templar ceremony using hundreds of candles. Cagliostro introduced the Egyptian Rites, which paved the way for the later Rites of Memphis and of Mizraim, which competed with the Scottish Rite in nineteenth century America until it was finally banned or abandoned in different jurisdictions. There is now one chartered Lodge of Memphis-Mizraim in New York City that, like all of the later Ultra-Masonic orders, admits both men and women.

The Egyptian paradigm was justified by a medieval document claiming to be part of the body of writings by the NeoPlatonist Iamblichus, whose *Manetho* is the memoirs of an Egyptian priest. The Pseudo-Iamblichan document describes initiatic images used in the hall of neophytes that correspond closely to the Tarot trump images known in the eighteenth century.

This, of course, is the Holy Grail of esoteric Tarot advocates—evidence that the Tarot images derive from ancient and archetypal Egyptian temple images. Currently there are many postings of a document by Michael Poe describing an Italian archeological description of images from a Serapian temple in Italy now under water. The images corresponde exactly to modern trumps, with Veiled Isis taking the position for the Popess or High Priestess, etc. I have been unable to contact Poe, so I contacted the Italian archeological museum in charge of the sunken Temple of Serapis at Pozzuoli and asked for any information, as this is the only Serapian temple in Italy I know that is under water. As of this writing, I have no response. But if Poe's information is correct, we would have an excellent possible source for the earliest Italian Tarocchi images, devoid of Egyptian dress.

Pseudo-Iamblichus was part of Egyptian Freemason occultism that also revived Pythagorean theory and numerical symbolism as part of their synthesis of Christian Cabbala, usually spelled with a "C" to differentiate it from true Jewish Kabbalah. This in turn was linked to alchemical, astrological, theurgical, and magical departments of the Hermetic arts in the French occult revival.

The Cabbalistic Attributions to the Tarot Trumps

During this period of intense occult innovation, the Tarot was legitimized among French practitioners as a valid ancient Egyptian divinatory tool. It is not surprising, then, that it is in this period we find Hebrew and magical alphabet attributions made to the trumps. But the Hebrew alphabet, with its twenty-two letters, became the most important system of attributions.

The letters represented the twenty-two Paths connecting the ten Sephiroth. These Paths, then, were associated with each trump image. Some of the Paths were in the Lightning Flash series leading from Malkuth back to Kether, so they were considered to be specifically associated with stages of initiation, while the others represented powers

gained and obstacles surmounted at each of these stages.

The authority for the Paths was the Jewish Sephir Yetzirah, the Book of Creation. However, it existed in several redactions and versions, each differing on details. The oldest was the Gra version, but it may not have been accessible to French occultists, who depended upon Latin and French translations. However, the French occultists did have access to the Alexandrian/Hermetic attributions (those of the Renaissance magi and the *Fratres Lucis* document). With these, they were able to associate the correct Hebrew letter with the Cabbalistic Path number and image in the twenty-two card series.

These attributions were added to the Tarot trumps in eighteenth-century France and spread to Italian, Spanish, and other Continental decks by the nineteenth century. They were part of the general Freemasonic and Ultra-Masonic lodge occultism of all Europe. *Tarot and Cabbala: Levi's Attributions* In his book, *Eliphas Levi and the French Occult Revival*, Christopher MacIntosh says, "Clearly Levi was in possession of no pre-Court de Gebelin material connecting the Cabala (sic. Ut.) and the Tarot. The connection was his invention."

This is the kind of fiction about Levi that English occultists have promulgated since the days of the Golden Dawn. English Freemasons declared French Freemasonry invalid in the late nineteenth century when the Grand Orient decided to expand their definition of theism to include Buddhist, scientific, and other non-Judeo-Christian concepts of Godhead or Ultimate Reality. The bad blood between English and French occultism that divided Gnosticism into English and French ecclesiae, Martinism into English Masonic and French ultra- or non-Masonic schools, and resulted in the contemporary French requirement that anyone who joins a Golden Dawn lodge be demitted from French Masonic lodges, has been clearly evident in English attitudes toward one of the greatest French occultists (Eliphas Levi).

Divination, Cartomancy, and the "Egyptian" Gypsies

In his *Conspiracy Against the Catholic Religion and Sovereigns*, Levi said, "The true initiates who were Etteilla's contemporaries, the Rosicrucians for example and the Martinists, were in possession of the true Tarot, as a work of Saint-Martin proves, where the divisions are those of the Tarot."² Saint-Martin had been a member of the occult lodge established by the adept Martinez de Pasqually in the mid-eighteenth century. He wrote his book divided according to the Tarot trumps before Levi's era. Later brilliant Martinists like Papus and Oswald Wirth would reaffirm Levi's assertion that the Tarot was the secret book of the eighteenth century Rosicrucians which existed as, "their criterion, in which they find the prototype of everything that exists by the facility which it offers for analysing, making abstractions, forming a species of intellectual world, and creating all possible things."³

Levi elaborated on what French occultists had already created perhaps a century before, and what was to become standard in all European Tarot decks of the nineteenth century--the correct attribution of Hebrew Path letters to the Tarot trumps. In this system, the Fool was attributed to Shin and the Magician was attributed to Aleph. The Hebrew letters were properly associated with their meanings as numerals.

Just as Etteilla had popularized Tarot for fortune telling based on Gypsy lore, Levi popularized what must have been secret lodge teaching in which the Tarot cards were used as tools of philosophical divination, probably in assumed likeness to the Book T of the seventeenth-century Rosicrucian Fama.

English Versus French Esoteric Freemasonry: The Golden Dawn

The founders of the Golden Dawn fabricated German Rosicrucian adepts who had supposedly transmitted profound esoteric and initiatic knowledge to them and given a charter to teach and initiate others. In fact, however, most of what Mathers and Westcott had actually received came from a French source--not German adepts--through Kenneth MacKenzie, who received it directly from Eliphas Levi. Few scholars would seriously challenge this assertion.

Mathers was a brilliant creator and synthesizer who spent untold hours at the British Museum reading magical and Kabbalistic texts. He and Westcott, like all English occultists, were Freemasons. The synthesis they created for the Golden Dawn rituals combined Rosicrucian and Christian Cabbalistic doctrine with the kind of layout used on a Masonic floor. The floor and officers represented Sephiroth, and initiation from 0=0 to 5=6 represented the upward ascent from Malkuth to Tiphareth. The initiatic instruction given to each Candidate on the Path from one Sephira to the next higher was allegorized on the Tarot trump associated with the Path number in the Hebrew alphabet. Mathers found that having the Fool in the position of Shin didn't work for his Masonic floor plan, so he decided to retain its number of Zero, but associate it with Aleph.

To justify this, he and later English occultists claimed one of two things: Levi had given a "blind," or purposely given a wrong Cabbalistic attribution to test people and make it possible only for adepts to discover the true attributions; or, Levi invented his own attributions and was wrong. After all, he was French, not English. How could he be right? Such were the later claims of dark luminaries like Crowley and even the American Paul Foster Case.

As a result, the Waite deck and all other English decks from that time forward have used the Golden Dawn system of Cabbalistic letter attribution to the Tarot trumps, in spite of the fact that it is blatantly inaccurate. The practice continues because very few modern occultists know how to apply true Kabbalistic principles to Tarot interpretation. Only the European decks like those of Tavaglione use the correct trump attributions, and even Tavaglione presents the Golden Dawn Path attributions rather than those of the Gra. The Tarot has a distinguished history in European esoteric tradition. It is not merely a card game that was adapted for fortune telling by Gypsies, and then sanctified with occultist illusions. It is a valid and powerful tool for divination that has roots in much older occult systems.

Author's Information and Footnotes

Dr. Lewis Keizer was one of the original scholars of the religious studies faculty at the University of California in Santa Cruz in the late sixties specializing in Biblical studies, Roman-Hellenistic religion, and the Nag Hammadi Coptic Gnostic Library. He received his M.Div. from the Episcopal Divinity School and a Ph.D. from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. His doctoral dissertation, *The Eighth Reveals the Ninth: A New Hermetic Initiation Disclosure*, has become a standard work in Hermetic studies. He and wife his Willa are presiding bishops of the Home Temple Priesthood and can be contacted through hometemple.org, where a list of his self-published writings and monographs is available. Keizer is also grailmaster of the Temple of the Holy Grail, which can be contacted at hometemple.org/THG.htm. Currently he is co-authoring an esoteric novel with Dr. Eugene Whitworth, author of *The Nine Faces of Christ*, and serves as academic dean for Great Western University in San Francisco, which specializes in distance-learning B.A. degree completion and graduate degrees with emphasis upon metaphysical subjects and the Western Mystery Tradition.

Lewis has written and taught widely in Western and European initiatic traditions, and he introduced male-female Freemasonry and other French initiatic societies to the U.S. Founder of the Popper-Keizer schools and Keizer Academy for gifted students (hometemple.org/ACADEMY.HTM), he also conducts orchestras and performs as an all-star jazz cornetist at international festivals. He is listed in *Who's Who in the World*, *Who's Who in Religion*, *Who's Who Among America's Teachers*, and many other standard reference biographies.]

1 Sez nec, Jean, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art*, translated from the French by Barbara F. Sessions (Harper/Bollingen; NY 1986) Back

2 Quoted in MacIntosh, p. 148 Back

3 Ibid. Back

Criteria for Esoteric Tarot

by Christine Payne-Towler

The term "esoteric Tarot" defines our approach to the unfolding history of Tarot. Throughout this program, it is the key concept and watchword. So the reader can follow the discussion, I have listed the following characteristics that must be met to qualify a deck as an esoteric Tarot:

1) The Tarot must have seventy-eight cards. This is not to say there is no esoteric content in the decks with other card counts. Many decks with fifty-two cards, or those with a few more or less, reveal the inherent structure of a Minor Arcana deck and contain imagery that refers to or reflects Major Arcana themes from larger decks. One can often see a King of Cups who looks like a minor Pope, or echoes of the Justice on the Queen of Swords, for example. Other decks have extras of both the Major Arcana and the Minors to serve the needs of the game for which the decks were constructed.

The seventy-eight card deck, however, encompasses the full spectrum of correspondences that fill out an esoteric Tarot as discussed in the "Confluence of Ancient Systems" essay. A few of the odd-numbered Tarots feature royalty or Major Arcana so beautiful or magically constructed that we felt we had to include them despite eccentric numbers of Minor Arcana. But the "perfect" Tarot for esoteric work is one with seventy-eight cards containing twenty-two Major Arcana, sixteen royalty and forty suit cards. In this way you get the full Hebrew/Greek alphabet, the Kabbalah Tree in each of the four directions, the twelve signs of the zodiac in the Kings, Queens and Horsemen, and four Pages to mark the solstice and equinox points at the cusps of the seasons. Having fewer cards forces us to drop the zodiac angels that align with the numbered suit cards. Extra cards are either redundant or change the system the Tarot was designed to express.

2) An esoteric Tarot is literate. It demonstrates the hallmarks of its creator's exposure to the archetypes behind the modern forms of the Arcana. At very least, it signals awareness of the historical stream of images from which our modern decks emerge. It must be grounded to some extent in the intergenerational conversation about these timeless archetypes which has been passing from century to century. This is not to say there is no place for entirely "new" decks, because some of the modern Tarots have reinvented the medium for wonderful, rich new uses. (In particular, I refer to Isha Lerner's therapeutic Inner Child Tarot, which has been translated into fifteen languages because it is so helpful to counselors of children and teens worldwide. Also note the Alchemical Tarot, entirely without Hebrew, Greek, astrology or any other controversial matter, but which provides a treasure trove of Renaissance imagery culled from alchemical journals of the period.) I celebrate the creativity that reformats Tarot for modern needs and uses, and many modern Tarots share space with the "research decks" on my Tarot table.

Unless Tarot authors make their affiliation with the ancient esoteric paradigm clear and detailed, however, their Tarot decks cannot be rightly called esoteric decks. They may be fabulous catalysts for intuition and deep emotional healing, they may be an innovative synthesis of modern themes, but they are not "the flash cards of the Mysteries."

In the course of this text we have laid out several different avenues whereby the relevant Greek, Egyptian and Hebrew symbol systems could have seeped into Europe in the centuries before Tarot appeared in card form. Tarot decks are the flash cards for this ancient worldview. The proofs are everywhere that the Hebrews, Pythagoreans, Christians, Moslems, alchemists and Rosicrucians were mining the same vein. In other words, the cards did not appear first and the esoteric correspondences second. Historically, the correspondences came first and dictated the structure of the Tarot deck. If a person has created a "Tarot" that ignores this inherent, innate historical foundation, then by definition that Tarot is not esoteric.

No one can know how many layers of meaning we will ultimately discover to be hidden in Tarot's structure, but it seems reasonable that a Tarot created to be used to its fullest will be designed with respect for the known history of this tradition. It will show Hebrew letters on the Major Arcana, the matching letters from the Alphabet of the Magi, or the matching Greek letters in order to establish a base upon which to place the related astrology correspondences. It will give us enough clues in the art and titles to declare its "pedigree," the historical stream from which it is quoting, if there is one. The presence of signs and planets could be optional if the other details are arranged consciously.

If any authors depart from the historical Hebrew, Alexandrian or French esoteric correspondences (for example, into one of the "modern traditions" like that of Dali or the English Magikal Tarot, which is the most well known contemporary pattern), they would do us all a favor to publish a complete table somewhere in their support material to delineate exactly what set of correspondences they are following. It would be wonderful if Tarot creators felt more obligated to research and explain where their images and correspondences came from and/or the idea motivating their emergence. There is nothing dishonorable or demeaning in saying "I am doing this on my own authority. I made these images and correspondences up myself." We who care about these simply want to know what the correspondences are so we know what we are working with when we pick up a deck.

It seems inevitable that there will be more true and authentic "ancient lineage" material yet to appear in the future as scholars sort out and date the various cultural strata included in the Tarot, even as it first appeared in the 1450s. Now that we can more clearly differentiate the truly ancient Hebrew and Hermetic/ Alexandrian Mysteries of the handmade and woodblock Gnostic Tarots, the Renaissance Christian Cabbalist Mysteries of the Continental school, and the "modern Magikal Mysteries" of the English school, we can make even fuller use of the treasure trove of esoteric lore left us by our illuminated ancestors, both ancient and modern.

The Minor Arcana should also show forthrightly their correspondences to signs or zodiacal degrees. It is helpful if the author makes it clear how they are treating the 5- degree angels of the Shemhamphoraseth. It is so much easier to work with a Tarot whose authors respect the built-in symmetry between the Major Arcana and the Minors, being conscious of the traditional Mysteries of the Decave when constructing their numbered suit cards (see the essay on The Minor Arcana).

3) Esoteric Tarots attempt to universalize rather than particularize. Beyond being founded upon or linked to either one of the three very closely related ancient lineages (which hopefully will be explicitly represented on the faces of the cards), or one of the "modern traditions" which have become elaborated for the twentieth century, esoteric Tarots are designed to be a scientific tool for examining energies, situations and psyches. They report without judgment. Like a microscope or a set of measuring devices, Tarot is impartial. It works best when it does not inflame the emotions overmuch or induce such flights of fancy that one cannot deduce practical instructions from its use. An excess of fanciful speculations can obscure the dynamics the card was created to reveal in its number/suit identity.

The images which have in this century become associated with the Alexandrian astro-alphanumeric correspondences make little use of elaborate art or brilliant color, avowedly because such embellishments influence us emotionally and affect our powers of judgment.

As flash cards, Tarot was made to hold layers of meaning condensed into cryptic symbols arranged in meaningful patterns. Those symbols have standard meanings which are geometric, astrological and alphabetical. They are not designed for "free association" but for calculation, like the equations that make sense of your tax statements or determine the placement of the beams that hold up your house. Their original meanings were not based on the "opinion" of any Tarot author, but were built upon the principles of numbers, suits and alphabet.

For this reason, traditional esoteric Tarots do not usually show human images on the numbered suit cards. When the principle represented by a given card's place in the grid (see various graphs and tables) is illustrated with a human personage, the understanding of that card can be diminished. This is not such a drawback in respect to the royalty cards because those cards were originally designed to carry the personalities of the related zodiacal signs. But the numbered suit cards are not people cards. They represent the play of forces and circumstances impacting human lives and the best strategies for not being swept away by them. They denote esoteric equations, not personalities.

In terms of the modern, fully illustrated Tarots, instead of being shown the formula that represents a certain natural law operating at a certain stage of the cycle in a distinct elemental realm, the Tarot user encounters a cartoon of people enacting specific behavior and undergoing a particular emotional experience. This overemphasizes the emotional content among the possibilities of meaning and interpretation for that card. The resulting reductionism has happened throughout the Major and Minor Arcana over the centuries. Although a case can be made that Tarot needs to be allowed to change and evolve, each such departure takes a deck further and further from being an esoteric Tarot. I do not mean to say that fully illustrated Tarots are a bad development in the history of Tarot, only that they

can easily obscure the underlying grid with too much editorializing. This all too human tendency is out of harmony with traditional esoteric Tarot design principles.

Gnosticism and Tarot

by Christine Payne-Towler

The subject of Gnosticism is entirely too large to be dealt with in an essay such as this one. This spiritual path has a history longer than that of Christianity and covers a territory that includes most of western and eastern Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, India, China and the Russian territories.

With so many different cultures and languages involved and the inevitable proliferation, demise and revival of countless versions and variants over two thousand years, there is no one thing called "Gnosticism." We must content ourselves with using this word as an umbrella concept, holding within its broad description myriad offshoots, competing ideas and exotic forms of practice.

In the remarkable history of this faith, an extensive chapter could be written just on the interactions of Gnosticism and the Catholic Church. The establishment of the Church of Rome in the fourth century AD allowed for three centuries of Christian development before the regulating authority of Rome arose to assert the "party line." Initially, each bishop was free to study, teach and write what he believed, and many were deeply influenced by Gnostic thought. But once the canonical standard for Christianity was set, the Church felt it necessary to posthumously excommunicate several of its most well-respected and influential early bishops for being Gnostic heretics! With an identity crisis like that defining its birth, it is no wonder the Church remained on guard and actively hostile to any traces of Gnostic thought appearing in "Christian Europe."

For those Gnostics who considered themselves followers of the Master Jesus, this exercise in internal censorship illuminated the true character of this new institution called Roman Catholicism. The paramilitary approach of the corporate Church toward its "irregular" members never softened, even though both Christians and Gnostics sometimes used the same scriptures and could be found worshipping together at the same altar.

The difference between Gnostic Christians (only a small group within the larger Gnostic field) and formal Catholics was in some ways a matter of interpretation of the meaning of a human life, the spiritual forces at work in this world, and the place of the feminine in the panoply of Higher Powers. Suffice it to say that this essay only touches a corner of the extensive mosaic that is Gnosticism.

Gnosticism & Tarot

In order to be clear about the relationship between Gnosticism and Tarot, it should be stated at the outset that there are no specifically "Gnostic" Tarots. It would be equally true to say, however, that every Tarot is a Gnostic Tarot. This paradox exists because, as with the difference between the Gnostic reading of Genesis and the Catholic reading of Genesis, the difference lies in interpretation. Tarot artists used this ambiguity to their advantage in the early centuries of Tarot. So, for example, the High Priestess image could be seen as an allegory for "Mother Church" in the eyes of a believing Christian, while a Gnostic might see in the very same image the female pope, a truly heretical concept! In this manner, the Gnosticism of Tarot is "hidden in plain sight," like much of the esoteric content implied in the art of the earliest handmade Tarots.

The situation gets a bit easier to untangle in modern Tarots because through the centuries, the tensions between the Church and its heretics took on more of the character of a stalemate: the Church came to understand that--it could not kill every heretic in Europe and still have a constituency to call its own. As a result less anonymity was required on the part of the philosophers and artists who were working with Tarot, so we are more easily able to learn about the Secret Society affiliations of those who have contributed most to the development of the Tarot.

Therefore, for purposes of this CD, we will assume that there is a Gnostic undertone to every Tarot deck to which we refer. Certainly since the time of Etteilla in the mid-1700s, almost every luminary in the field of Tarot has belonged to either the Rosicrucians, Masons, Martinists or some other Secret Society group.

Among the older Tarots, a good indicator of Gnostic affiliation, aside from subtle clues hidden in the artwork, would be the relative vigor of the Church's reaction to that deck, or to its artist, the person who commissioned it or to the region in which it was produced. We must remember that great variety existed in Gnostic thought. There were Arabic, pre-Islamic Gnostics, Gnostics who remained culturally Jewish, Egyptian Gnostics, Zoroastrian Gnostics and Hermetic Gnostics. They didn't all believe the same things, although all these ancient cultures based their

collective histories upon these first five books of Moses. These were not merely Hebrew scriptures. All of Western civilization believed in this as history. Many of the stories that Moses codified can be traced back to Babylonian, Akkadian and Sumerian oral tradition. Yet, not every spiritual seeker using the Mosaic texts agreed with his slant on the story. So from the time of Alexander right up to the French Revolution, the Gnostic "underground" has been preserving competing origin stories rejected by "orthodox" Judaism, Islam and Christianity, keeping alive an alternative vision of human nature and destiny.

It is probable that the expulsion of the Moslems, Gypsies and Jews from Spain helped bring Tarot into form as a deck of cards in other parts of Europe. Those expelled minorities flooded Europe with literate, spiritually inclined seekers. The European Secret Societies were providing a place for a meeting of the minds among those who were being marginalized and forced underground by the controversies of the times. I am convinced, and the evidence implies, that the Secret Societies participated in enabling the Hebrew/ Hermetic/Gnostic synthesis to see the light of day, albeit in card form.

Gnosticism And The Goddess

One of the things Gnosticism represents is a rebellion within the Old Testament-based (Mosaic) religions against those who used the myth of Genesis to stamp out the ancient Goddess-based mysteries of antiquity. Even as early as the second century BC there were those who felt Moses had distorted the ancient creation stories to eliminate the participation of the feminine side of Deity. The Goddess as co-creator had in earliest times been revered by all Semitic peoples and those memories have never been entirely wiped out despite the Hebrew focus on Jehova (JHVH) as the One True God.

As just one example of the preservation of the Goddess in Gnostic thought, let us look back to the Hebrew tradition about the "daughter of God," called the Matronit of the Kabbalah. Her roots were planted in Talmudic times in the first through fifth centuries AD. They called her by several names in their mystical literature: the Shekhina, Malkuth, the Supernal Woman and the Discarded Cornerstone, among other titles.

In this ancient conception, the FatherGod and his consort exist in such a rarified state compared to humanity that there is no way human consciousness can reach to them and experience their reality. The son and daughter of the Holy Pair, however, extend like shadows of their parents into this fallen world, linking humanity and the "fallen" creation to higher realities. (As this mythic theme came forward in time from Judaism, through Gnosticism and into Christianity, this pair would be renamed Christ and the Sophia.)

In *The Hebrew Goddess* (p. 135), Raphael Patai says "there is a detailed similarity between the life history, character, deeds and feelings attributed by Jewish mysticism to the Matronit, and what ancient Near Eastern mythologies have to say about their goddesses who occupy positions in their pantheons" (for example Solomon's Asherah or Ashtoreth, Ishtar in Addad and most ancient, Astarte in Byblos). Her cardinal attributes, according to Patai, are chastity, promiscuity, motherliness and bloodthirstiness. She is the archetype of ancient women's four roles in traditional relationship to men: sister, lover, mother, mercy killer. He goes on to equate the Matronit who "at times tastes the other, bitter side, and then her face is dark" with the Hindu Kali, who is also black and also feasts upon the dead.

If one were looking for clues to this ancient Hebrew form of the goddess on the Tarot, one could look for images that show qualities of the Matronit on the cards. Taking up the list of her qualities, we could easily see the four Queens having the attributes of virginity (Wands, sister), promiscuity (Coins, lover), motherliness (cups, nursemaid) and blood-thirstiness (Swords, the mercy killer). We could also look for the quality of blackness, which appears on the Queen of Cups in the Alexandrian/Hermetic imagery of the Ibis Tarot and others that follow the old Falconnier model from the *Fratres Lucis* document (see "The Continental Tarots"). In these Tarots, her cup is covered with pomegranate seeds, another reference to the combined Hebrew Goddess mysteries and the Egyptian Isis cult. We would also notice those Tarots that crown the coin on the Ace of Coins, a detail in the Tarot by Augustus Knapp and Manly P. Hall.

This crowned coin is representative of Malkuth, one of the titles of Shekhina/ Matronit, and a symbol for the Goddess in the World among the Merkabah Mystics who were practicing Jewish Gnosticism before the Kabbalists. For that matter, the World card itself represents the Goddess enthroned in matter, with the four elements doing her bidding and the earth turning under her feet. I might add that the Knapp-Hall Tarot is an especially interesting deck in this context. Hall was an occult scholar of the 1920s and 1930s who in the process of cataloging the world's great

Mystery Schools and their teachings, assembled a wonderful library of images from which to draw when making his own Tarot. Upon close analysis, it is obvious that he is, like the Ibis Tarot and all the others in this stream, reproducing the Falconnier or Fratres Lucis model. The only deviation of the Knapp-Hall from these older, Egyptian-style Tarots is that Knapp-Hall shows the characters in European clothing and situations.

On the Knapp-Hall suit of Cups, Hall shows the royalty in possession of a magical cup, the Holy Grail. The Queen is not black, and the cup is now in European form, but it boils and bubbles with potency in the King and Queen's hands, referring, I am sure, to the theme of the excellent book *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*. This blockbuster details the Gnostic heresy that Jesus of Nazareth was the husband of Mary Magdalen, from which union there were children (see also "The Esoteric Origins of Tarot"). After the crucifixion, she and the family were smuggled across the Mediterranean to Marseilles, and she lived out her last thirty years in Europe. Susan Haskins's encyclopedic *Mary Magdalen* fleshes out the details drawn from scripture, myth and legend. But it is clearly a traditional theme or else Hall would not so explicitly reference this Gnostic heresy on his Tarot. Nor is his slant a part of the modern rewriting of Tarot's history, since his deck was published in 1929, while all of the above-cited scholarly tomes have only appeared in the last thirty years!

As Gnostic artists and mystics retrieved and revived the feminine aspects of Deity in the imagery of Tarot, we see glimpses again of her many variations coming to us through the ages. It would not be amiss to say that any historical Tarot that has a preponderance of female images in the Major Arcana, and/or adds female images where one would more usually find a male image, could qualify as having a Gnostic slant. Later in this essay I will make direct reference to examples in various Tarot decks.

Gnosis Means Direct Knowledge

Likewise, according to the Old Testament-based religions, direct mystical or spiritual experience was not accessible to ordinary humans. The Gnostics' credo was to achieve direct experience of the Mystery whenever possible; each group was looking for intimate, personal experiences with godhead, much like those available through the traditional older Mystery Schools.

Drawing upon ancient Hermetic and Jewish gospels rejected by the canonizers of the Old and New Testaments, they challenged the official Judeo-Christian explanations of a monotheistic FatherGod, human origins, and the destiny of the soul. They felt that a straighter route could be found to reunite humanity and godhead without the interference of clergy or priestly hierarchies. In particular they worshipped and championed Sophia, the Wisdom of God (as mentioned in Genesis) who in the beginning co-created the world with the Father. In their societies, women's roles reflected this greater respect for the feminine. As Dr. Lewis Keizer and Stuart Kaplan remind us, the earliest Tarots show a woman dressed in ecclesiastical garb and named "The Popess." In the Mantegna tarocchi, this image is the person at the top of their "stations of man" series, the person who is closest to God, representative of humanity's highest development, and clearly a woman! In the mid-1400s, that is a powerful statement.

Pessimist vs. Optimist Gnostics

Another of Gnosticism's basic beliefs was internally disputed for centuries and is an ongoing philosophical and spiritual debate to this day. This split is well defined in the following quote from *In Search of the Primordial Tradition and the Cosmic Christ* by Father John Rossner, Ph.D., beginning on page 112:

"There is an essential distinction which must be made between 'optimistic' and 'pessimistic' forms of pre-Christian esotericism. The 'optimistic' gnosis views the whole world as good, as a divine and living world because it is animated by the divine effluvia, and capable of being activated by man as a co-Creator with God and as a priest of Nature. In this world, man's function is not to 'escape the world' but to awaken and activate persons, places, and things in Nature to become 'temples of the Divine Spirit.' Man himself develops gnosis in order to 'become or re-become a god,' in order to 'know God' in the existential sense. Like the 'magician' or 'theurgist' in the iconography of the Egyptian tarot card, man is to 'bring down' the divine power and light in order to impregnate and fill the objects of the physical world with their appropriate form of divinity.

The 'optimistic' form of gnosis may be identified with the ancient Egyptian 'religion of the world,' according to Frances Yates [see her book *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* pp. 20-38]. It was such a positive 'Hermetic' conception of a good, God-given creation (which is to be redeemed and divinized rather than discarded) which indeed may have provided the Egyptian background of both the Hebraic and Mosaic concepts of the creation in Genesis, and a source for the classical Greek metaphysics of Pythagoras and Plato. This earlier Egyptian understanding of gnosis pre-dated the later Hellenistic, world-denying 'religion of Gnosticism' in the early Christian

era."

A few paragraphs later, on page 113, Rossner writes that "during the Renaissance, Ficino and Giordano Bruno believed that this 'optimistic' variety of an earlier Egyptian 'proto-gnosticism' had found its way into original Mosaic tradition, and into the works of the New Testament, in the positive metaphysical philosophies of Jesus, John (the author of the 4th Gospel) and Paul. It also found its way into the Neo-Platonic Hermeticists of the early Christian centuries."

When we remember that the Tarots of Etteilla are designed to represent this very same strain of optimistic Hermetic Gnosis expressed in The Divine Pymander, we have to again give respect where it is due and return to studying this amazing Tarot in a new and deeper light. In contrast to the optimist Gnostics of various stripes, a spectrum of negative thinkers felt that this world of matter and time/space is a prison instead of an Eden. Those Gnostics viewed incarnation as "the fall," believing it to be a punishment. Others saw our immersion in matter as the result of a war between good and evil in heaven.

Some of these groups refused to reproduce, believing that in being fertile they would be playing into the hands of our captors, the fallen angels. The practice of sexual union has the effect of enticing other souls to leave heaven for this captivity below, an undesirable outcome for these world-denying Gnostics. Among the groups of pessimist Gnostics there were some who were entirely ascetic, choosing to stay maximally detached from the Fallen God's temptations, which would include the entire roster of earthly delights. Other strains of Gnostics believed the soul would not be allowed to leave this plane of existence until it had been through every experience available to humans. This belief encouraged all forms of license and excess, the unhealthy effects of which get this group more often classed with the pessimists than the optimists. Their motto was "eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you may die."

The Penetration of Gnostic Concepts into European Cultures

Prior to examining the visual evidence of three significant Gnostic themes embedded in European imagery and the Tarot, let us first investigate how these ideas managed to penetrate and indeed eventually saturate pagan Europe and become so popular that they survived the turbulent transition to Roman Christianity, the Crusades and the fires of the Inquisition.

Astrological and magical teachings were first carried west by the Jews liberated from slavery by the fall of Babylon. We have to give most of the credit to the Hebrew people for the saving of much of this early knowledge, because they were the one ancient nation who encouraged the literacy of every adult male in their tribe. The Jews carried their knowledge into Europe around the 900s AD. The Moors from North Africa moving into Spain and France around 650 AD increased the redistribution of Alexandrian scholarship into Europe and led to the building of libraries and universities in Madrid, Toledo, Seville and Aragon. They brought thousands of manuscripts, reflecting nearly a thousand years of scholarship, out of Egypt and onto the European continent.

As the Roman Church was plunging Europe into the Dark Ages with its book burnings and prohibitions against reading and writing for all but the clergy, most of Europe's cultural memory was either destroyed or collected in the clergy's secret libraries. Pagan, Egyptian, Jewish and Arabic families who had found niches for themselves in Christian Europe were hounded from pillar to post as the Christians destroyed the Mystery sites and practices. The Jews, and later the Arabs, translated and studied the manuscripts, diagrams and technologies bequeathed to them by history. In them, they rediscovered their own esoteric roots. The discipline of alchemy, originally explored by the Egyptians to satisfy humanity's need for medicines of a physical, emotional and spiritual nature, became a repository of proto-scientific experimentation. In the process, the imagery and symbolism of the ancient Mysteries formed the vocabulary and graphics for the alchemists' journals. The Arabic scholars omnivorously assimilated Egyptian, Hebrew, Hermetic, Gnostic and pre-Nicean Christian gospels, including it all in their experiments and theories.

This helps explain the enthusiasm that gripped the Roman Church to mount the Crusades and try to recapture the Holy Land for Christianity. An educated clergy that had either sequestered or destroyed the cream of European Classical civilization was getting restless and inquisitive. The Arabs had become famous for their revival of the secret knowledge, and the Hebrews had never left it behind in the first place. Both civilizations co-occupied the Holy Land. How could the pope resist the urge to seize it all, if it could be done?

Of course, the Church didn't succeed. Not only were the Crusades a disaster, but by the time it was over, Europe had

been rekindled with the very Gnostic, Kabbalistic and Hermetic heresies that Rome had been trying to squelch the entire previous millennium! Among other things, the Crusades awakened Christians to an alternative reading of their cherished gospels, restimulated suppressed heresies about the life, family, and travels of Jesus and the nature of the Grail Mysteries, and provided the impetus for the reawakening of the Gnosis in the underground Secret Societies. Gnostic Concepts Embedded in European Imagery and Tarot: Three Themes

1. Evolution: The Path and the Journey of the World Soul

Reincarnation was part of the belief system of the ancient world. In a very general sense, the Gnostic gospels assert that when the Creator fashioned the material plane, it was set up in solar system form with seven planets. At that time people thought the planets all revolved around Earth and that Earth was protected and guarded by the rings of the other planets.

What you see illustrated here is Earth and the World Soul surrounded by the circles of the four elements (earth, water, air, fire), in turn encircled by the planetary rings, embraced in their turn by the octaves of angels who make it all go round. This is the exact same concept illustrated by Mantegna's Prima Causa card (No. 50). The two cards that precede it in sequence, called the Eighth and Ninth Spheres, represent the Milky Way (No. 48) and the Vault of the Heavens (No. 49) invisibly turning all the inner wheels like a cosmic perpetual-motion machine. All this wheels-within-wheels creation makes up the Body of God. This conception is not exclusive to Gnostic beliefs. Earliest Kabbalists used the image of a circular reation before they devel-oped the Tree format (see "Kabbalah/ Cabbalah").

Those who agreed that humanity is "made in the image of God" would then see this cosmic map as the Gnostic model of the soul's chal lenge to "grow into" its full potential as a spark of the Divine. A soul that wanted to take incarnation in this world had to cross each planet's orbit and make an agreement with that planet's "soul" or intelligent principle (its genius). Each soul would pick up some of the qualities pertaining to that planet, forming its personality for this incarnation out of these different "planetary metals" in their raw state. And that soul's assignment in the course of a lifetime was to extract the pure metal from the raw materials of planetary qualities, purifying these elements so they could be minted into the "coinage" of each planetary realm. When it was time to leave the body and cross those planets' orbits again on the way back off this "mortal coil," one paid the toll owed to each planet and became liberated from further incarnations. This is the source of the original idea of the planetary alchemical metals. Each planet provides a certain amount of its fundamental substance out of which to build a personality. It is humanity's job to evolve and purify those qualities in the course of a lifetime.

Mantegna card No. 39, Astrologia, illustrates the governing intelligence of this spiritual map of the cosmos. She teaches us the math and science of time and orbital motion, leading us into the understanding of our "cosmic clock" and the process of preparing the soul in this life for the adventure of the next. Remember, the ultimate goal of the soul on this journey up the "Ladder of Lights" is to grow in consciousness and comprehension until it can fully identify and join with the great World Soul, the Sophia or Shekhina, who bridges the gap between humanity and Divinity (revealed so well in the Fabricius illustration). We are to become conscious, individuated cells in the body of the primordial Goddess, spouse of God and mother of this world.

2. The Female and Unfallen Creation: The Gnostics brought the ancient, pre-monotheistic Hebrew idea of the Shekhina, the feminine consort of God, into Gentile vocabulary, although among the Gnostics she was called Sophia, the Wisdom principle. Gnostics fostered the belief that Sophia, the Wisdom element of God, was feminine and represented the mind, meaning the actual conscious thinking that was vested in the making of Creation by the Creator. It is she who takes the creative juices of God and ferments them into the tangible world, the ecology of life. She creates what is actual out of the infinity of creative possibilities inherent in God, the undifferentiated Power.

Because of this important role of the Shekinah in Gnosticism, Gnostic Tarot decks place an especially strong emphasis on female figures, with goddesses appearing where the Christian patriarchy would use male images. My main exemplar of a Gnostic Tarot is a fairly recent deck, the Etteilla Tarot, which actually was published in the years just before the French Revolution. As mentioned above, recent scholarship has determined that Eteilla was using as his creation model the Hermetic document called The Divine Pymander, one of the Hebrew-inflected Hermetic gospels preserved by the Arabs through the Dark Ages to re-emerge in the late 1400s.

Etteilla's illustrated Major Arcana make it clear that this is a Gnostic revelation being illustrated in Tarot cards. The

High Priestess whom you see in the Etteilla Tarot (called the Lady Consultant, No. 8), is the Snake and Bird Goddess, the Great Mother of all the Middle Eastern Goddess traditions including the Hebrew and Gnostic Shekhina/Sophia. The Goddess is portrayed as Eve in Eden, with the serpent depicted as a vortex, a circular coil of energy, like a strong telluric aura around her. The tree she stands next to is another symbol of bridging Earth and heaven to draw down consciousness into creation. This goddess figure is psychologically and spiritually attuned with every molecule of creation, and all the creatures in Nature are her children. Although few images of The Priestess as Eve survived the shift of the Arcana from verbal descriptions in ancient documents to European cards, the El Gran Tarot Esoterico uses this same Eve image, this time holding a pomegranate and highlighted by the moon. There is also another Renaissance card game from 1616 (not a Tarot) called Labyrinth, devised by Andrea Ghisi, that shows Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden with the snake climbing the Tree of Life between them.

Only in Gnostic thought do we find a positive interpretation of the snake in the garden. The card that substitutes for the Hanged Man in the Etteilla deck has left behind the Judeo-Christian idea of human guilt for the "fall of man" and its expiation in sacrifice. The replacement card is called Prudence, No. 12, and pictured is the Goddess again, holding a wand in the shape of a "T" with a snake at her feet. In this image, she is lifting her skirts to the snake as if in invitation, with an enigmatic smile on her lips. The "T" cross refers to the last letter of the Greek or Hebrew alphabet, assigned to the path leading to Malkuth, bottom station of the Kabbalah Tree, and another name for the Hebrew "Earthly Goddess." Manly P. Hall, in his tome *The Secret Teachings*, links the Tav, the Tetractys, the caduceus and the Kabbalah! We know from the history of symbolism that the snake is a longtime symbol of life force, vitality or what the Chinese call "chi." It has not always been used as a symbol of evil or deception. The Gnostics held that the snake in the garden was a teacher of humanity, educating Eve and opening her eyes to the sexual mysteries. This same theme was explored in the older Mantegna Tarot image of Prudence, but in this one the snake is wrapping itself around the mirror into which Prudence gazes. The mirror is another symbol for Wisdom as are the two faces looking forward and back ward, so we are back with the Gnostic idea of Eve/Shekhina/Sophia as the initiator of humanity into the Mysteries, the Wisdom tradition, through her curiosity, mental reflection and natural magnetism.

Another clue to Gnostic influences in Tarot is the use of a female figure on the Pope card. This would be considered heretical in any Christian context, yet we see it from the earliest Tarots, the Mantegna tarocchi and the Visconti-Sforza pack, right up to that of modern scholar Manly P. Hall. In more modern Tarots, we have diluted her name down to the non-threatening "High Priestess," but her original title and form is that of the Female Pope. It is safe to say that a female Hierophant or Popess is a glaring clue to the spiritual beliefs of a Renaissance Tarot deck's author!

We also find female Chariot cards in three or four deeply Gnostic-influenced Tarots, suggesting that this is the ancient "Triumphant Chariot of Venus," an old mythological and alchemical theme highlighted by the fourteenth century poet Petrarch in his poem *I Triumphi*. The power of Venus lies in harmony, magnetism and the art of raising consciousness through the power of attraction and pleasure. Left alone, Nature rewards right action with joy and fulfillment, implying a trust in instinct and intuition which the Judeo-Christian tradition has rejected.

The optimist Gnostics believed that Eve was supposed to bite the apple. This strain of Gnostics (and there were others who disagreed) felt that without the biting of the apple, literal time and space would not have precipitated out of eternity. Hence, in the Etteilla Arcana, we see the Great Mother on the Eve card and then we have her whole creation on the Empress card, teeming with life and creative possibilities. There is no hint that this creation is flawed or less than an expression of Divine Will.

Yet in both the Jewish and the Christian concept, without the approval of God, the whole creation is fallen, in need of redemption, a problem waiting to be solved (see "Kabbalah/Cabbalah"). It's only the optimist Gnostics who felt that the spontaneous creation had virtue of its own because it is an expression of the Sophia force.

3. Sexuality's Place in the Creation: The theme of the androgyne or double-sexed magical entity is a subset of Gnostic speculation which harks back to the old Greek idea that before the soul's "fall from heaven" into a physical body, it had to split into halves, one male and one female, to accommodate the duality of the material plane. These two halves of the same soul then have to search for each other through the rounds of time, to complete each other before they can reascend into the divine realms as one.

Within this story is hidden a teaching about the power of sexuality, the attraction of the male hidden within the

female to the female hidden within the male, and the state of divine union which can transform animal sexuality into a source of magical and spiritual power. Given that the ancient Middle Eastern nations considered human intercourse as a microcosmic expression of the Great Union on high of God and his Consort, it would be remiss for a Gnostic Tarot to fail to cite the sexual mysteries in at least one Arcanum.

But different schools of Gnosticism had different opinions about this idea of opposites uniting. Some thought of the sexual urges as part of the conspiracy of the elements to bind human souls to Earth and the limitations of the flesh, therefore something to be avoided. Some felt that as long as the cycle of reproduction is being carried on, drawing more souls to this planet for reincarnation and polarizing human souls, fixating them on their gender differences, the creation would not return to its original innocence and divine order.

Others felt that only through the sex act could the opposites be united and the soul prepared for growth and evolution. The style apparent on any given Devil card of the Gnostic type will show whether the author was of the "sex is the problem" crowd or the "sex is the solution" crowd. In either case, the Esoteric Devil (called Typhon in the 1700s, Baphomet by the time of Eliphas Levi in the late 1800s) has a body with womanly characteristics from shoulders to hips, although the head and legs are those of a goat. The goat-like characteristics make a reference to the Gnostic Demiurge, a figure cited by some Gnostics as the force in opposition to the ascension of humanity, whose influence on the world's conception spoiled the intended perfection of the creation and enforced the dualities riddling this world: good/evil, rich/poor, dominant/ submissive, and so forth.

In this sense, when there is an emphasis on masculine characteristics in the Devil card, it highlights how the unified feminine is divided, split, parted, made from one into two upon the emergence of the Demiurge, also known as the Satan, the "tester," by the Jews. His job is to tempt souls to sin by creating chaos and disorder, then just sit back and see how we behave under stress.

Meanwhile, the Shekhina, whose female breasts the Typhon/Baphomet exposes, is here being assimilated to the seductive force which attracts us into incarnation and makes it so devilishly hard to leave this plane. Not just the violated Bride of the Underworld, dragged down by her immersion in the elements, she is shown as fully merged with the Demiurge, animal and Divine fused together. The Venus Triumphant ideal of the Gnostic Chariot card is now showing its flip side, as a dangerous sensuality which steals immortality even as the soul aspires to sacred union. This is an idea from the pessimistic Gnosis, a sex-negative teaching that infiltrated Judaism and Christianity in the Alexandrian centuries, encouraging all the Old Testament believers to reject pleasure and sensual expressions from their spiritual practices. And by thus demonizing the sensuality associated with the Goddess, which is one of the forces bringing the creation from unconsciousness to consciousness, the entire material world is demonized as well!

The Tarots that are more optimistically Gnostic emphasize the sensuous breasts and wasp waist, sometimes giving her angel wings rather than bat wings, and referencing her body parts to the elements of Nature (fire in the head, air in the breast, water in the bowels, and earth in the legs). Any Tarot that places a caduceus upon the belly of an obviously female Devil card, whether the caduceus is pointed upward or downward, is revealing the sex-positive Gnostic beliefs of its maker (as in the Esoterico, Papus, Tavaglione group). The Devil image from the Alchemical Tarot reconciles the opposites in a novel way, using an image of a two-headed, two-sided man/ woman balancing upon the winged eye of the Mystery. This image is an adaptation from a German alchemical manuscript by Basil Valentinus, published in 1604, and is cleansed entirely of any pejorative overlay from either Jewish or Christian sources. This image managed to escape the notice of the Church censors only because it was buried in an esoteric tome which never came into mass circulation.

The Tarot, by the 1600s being printed in "catchpenny" versions for mass consumption, had to be more energetically veiled to survive the burning times. Artists became adept at creating ambiguous images which on their surface expressed the evils of fleshly pleasures, while revealing for initiates the inner teachings of the Primordial Goddess, not sacrificed or eliminated, but veiled to protect her essential purity from the misunderstandings of the uninitiated.

One very interesting clue to the complexity of this tricky imagery, wherein ancient mythologems are distorted in their historical transmission and made to serve entirely other meanings, can be found on page 143 of Raphael Patai's exceptionally detailed *The Hebrew Goddess*, in the chapter on the Matronit, an early understanding of the Consort of the King. In this ancient conception, the happiness of the whole creation depends upon the blissful sexual union

between God and the Matronit, and each week every He brew couple was required to replicate this happy union in their own home in honor of the Sacred Marriage, and to restore happiness to the creation.

In Patai's own words: "Yet another version, still preoccupied with the times of divine copulation, speaks not of a weekly, but of an annual cycle. Every year, we are told, the people of Israel sin with tragic inevitability which enables Samael, the satan (or Azazel) [our sex-negative Devil], to bend the Matronit to his will. Samael, in the form of a serpent, or riding a serpent, lurks at all times near the privy parts of the Matronit, in the hope of being able to penetrate her. Whether or not he succeeds in thus gratifying his desire depends on the conduct of Israel. As long as Israel remains virtuous, Samael's lustful design is frustrated. But as soon as Israel sins, as they, alas, are bound to do year after year, their sins add to Samael's power, he glues himself to the Matronit's body 'with the adhesive force of resin,' and defiles her.

Once this happens, the Matronit's husband, the King, departs from her and withdraws into the solitude of his heavenly abode. This unhappy state of affairs continues until, on the Day of Atonement, the scapegoat, which is destined to Azazel, is hurled to its death down a cliff in the Judaeian desert. Samael, attracted by the animal offered to him, lets go of the Matronit, who thereupon can ascend to heaven and reunite with her husband, the King." What happens to this myth if we recognize that the Serpent is not evil or a tempter, but the educator of the optimist Gnostics? As a symbol of the life force, the Kundalini or serpent-fire of primal vitality, we might be looking at a perversion of the old Snake and Bird Goddess, who takes great joy in her creation teeming with rich possibilities. The King comes off as punitive and abandoning, discarding his wife just as she is getting initiated into the wild, passionate, uninhibited expression of her natural vitality. The snake heads for the bull's-eye, the sacred site of the original Blood Mysteries, which later degenerated into animal sacrifice and a distorted understanding of the Eucharistic Mysteries.

I suspect that Eteilla is showing us a positive interpretation of the Matronit's experience in his "Prudence" image, with her shy smile and skirts lifted for the serpent! Perhaps he is trying to communicate to us through imagery that it is prudent to study this serpent-force in its various manifestations, to be receptive to these wild, earthy, untamed and vitalizing forces usually demonized in the Judeo-Christian paradigm.

In Summary

This essay merely hints at the great Gnostic riches which lie hidden in the deeper layers of Tarot imagery and philosophy. It is my hope that scholars of the future will begin to take the Tarot seriously as a spiritual and initiatory testament, equal to any of our written Gospels, and embark upon the work of reconnecting the Holy Word to these pictures worth a thousand. For those who are interested in following these Gnostic themes further in their Tarot studies, there will soon be a book version of these Tarot Magic essays, complete with extra chapters further illuminating the mysticism of the esoteric Magi whose ruminations produced Tarot.

The Kabbalah/Cabbalah

by Christine Payne-Towler

For the first three decades during which I was assimilating information about Tarot, I avoided the history of the Kabbalah. Not only had it seemed too abstruse and foreign, but the teachings had apparently fragmented due to the many forced migrations imposed upon the Jews throughout their history. I did not relish the task of sorting out all the nuances, and I was intimidated by the volume of literature associated with this ancient study.

My attitude was a microcosm of the American approach to Tarot: Why do we have to drag in this other set of correspondences when the cards already hold so much information, what with their pictures, numbers, titles and the astrological references that are often on the faces of the cards? Isn't that enough to learn already?

Well no, it is not. As a matter of fact, that attitude prevents an important piece that is required if one is to truly understand the core content of Tarot. The Hebrew alphabet and its associations with numbers, astrology, angels and a host of other correspondences provides the very skeletal structure upon which the cards have grown. Without the Hebrew astro-alphanumeric associations that were laid out so long ago by our ancient ancestors, the Tarot could never have taken its present shape. So even if we never learn how to pronounce the letters correctly or read any words in Hebrew, we must understand just what is going on with these twenty-two letters in order to truly deepen our understanding of Tarot.

In the Image of God

It is the position of the Western Mystery Tradition, the orthodoxy of Christianity, Islam and Judaism, and the unorthodox fringe dwellers like alchemists, astrologers and Gnostics that the human species is the capstone of creation. Tradition has it that we carry the Grand Plan within our constitution. Inside each of us is hidden a "little world," seed and reflection of the "big world," the cosmos. This is the sense in which humanity is "made in God's image." In the spirit of respect for the grand assignment which the human race is living out, the Hebrews developed their alphabet mysteries to try to articulate our place in the whole and to develop a method for utilizing our divinely inspired powers safely and morally.

The Hebrew nation, ancient tribe of sacred scholars, has been a force for literacy and spiritual cultivation in Western civilization throughout its stormy history. The Hebrew alphabet, derived from the Phoenician, became the prototype for all the Western languages. Hence the letters have accumulated myriad associations and correspondences through the eons. Research on each letter would disclose an encyclopedia's worth of teachings in hundreds of languages spread across Western history. This treasure trove of spiritual knowledge is a large part of what the European Secret Societies have been pledged to protect throughout the generations.

While enslaved among the Babylonians prior to the turn of the second millennium BC, the Jews absorbed the excellent mathematical and astronomical skills of their captors. They brought away an understanding of how numbers unfold from one another, the inner mechanics of Sacred Geometry. Their passionately mystical national psyche, no doubt mixed with the unique discouragement that ensued from being a designated slave nation in the Middle East, caused them to turn their scrutiny inward to examine their relation to the Divine and how it could be expanded. Over time, the Hebrew nation unfolded their mysticism of numbers to illuminate how the physical and energetic constitution of humanity mirrors that of Moses' God.

There is no way a short essay like this could be at all definitive, so it must be assumed that we are only skimming the tips of the icebergs of Kabbalah. Great help will be gained from turning to Aryeh Kaplan's wonderful contribution, *The Sephir Yetzirah*. This extraordinary book catalogs and comments upon every version of the Hebrew astro-alphanumeric system from Abraham into the 20th century, and has been endlessly helpful to me. We Gentile occultists need this exact information so we can understand what the Hebrew people have been discussing among themselves, aside from the controversies that have played out in astrological, cartological or alchemical circles in the name of Christian Cabbalah. I shall be quoting Kaplan quite a bit as you read along; if your interest is piqued or if you care about these issues, you should own his book.

Origins of the Kabbalah

The first formal document to codify the alphabet teachings for posterity was called the *Sephir Yetzirah*. Tradition has it that it was taught by Shem (aka Melchizedek) to Abraham around 1800 BC. Abraham is known as the father of both the Hebrew and the Arab nations, as they were each dynasties founded by Abraham's two sons—one by his

wife's servant (the Arabic tribes), and one by his wife (the Hebrews). His banishment of the servant and her son when his wife finally gave him a "legitimate" heir is the basis of the ancient grievance between these two immense and competing cultures.

Aryeh Kaplan explains that an eighteenth century BC dating for the Sephir Yetzirah "is not very surprising, since such mystical texts as the Vedic scriptures date from this period, and there is every reason to believe that the mystical tradition was further advanced in the Middle East than it was in India at that time. Since Abraham was the greatest mystic and astrologer of his age, it is natural to assume that he was familiar with all the mysteries of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. Abraham was born in Mesopotamia, and he also lived in Egypt" (p. xiv).

Scholars like to have more than legend to base their claims upon, so Kaplan looks further for proofs of the antiquity of the Sephir Yetzirah. Based on analysis of various historical strata within the text, he states that "the earliest parts of the book appear very ancient, possibly antedating the Talmudic era [first and second centuries AD]" (p. xxiii). The Hebrew content within the alphanumeric teachings of the neo-Pythagoreans in the first and second centuries AD also verifies for us an already complete system of correspondences (see next section). Furthermore, according to Kaplan, "we find actual mention of Sephir Yetzirah in the Talmud [by 300 BC], and even though it is not absolutely certain that it is identical with our version, there is no real reason to doubt that they are one and the same" (p. xv). He also reminds us that "Sephir Yetzirah is one of the primary ancient astrological texts" which tells us that it is in harmony with the standard astrological paradigm used by both Hebrew and Gentile magi throughout the Western world.

The difficulty with dating this book's origins is that it came down through ancient history as an oral tradition, and was not formally written down until 204 AD. What we possess of it in the earliest times is legend, or hearsay evidence, references to it rather than the text itself. But other alphanumeric references, in both Psalms and Exodus, add evidence that a well known and nuanced philosophy existed for centuries in the ancient world before it ever was committed to writing.

The body of correspondences that Aryeh Kaplan is showcasing in his *The Sephir Yetzirah*, called the Gra pattern, is being given on highest Hebrew authority and validated by copious evidence as the original and extraordinarily ancient bedrock of Western Esoteric Tradition. The Gra is the baseline from which later developments, even competing versions, will be drawn. In it are defined the natural placements of the Sephiroth, the Paths, and their astro-alphanumeric correspondences. This pattern, taken altogether, is called the Gra Natural Array.

It should be noted that these correspondences are the ones we find on the illustrious Spanish Tarot, *El Gran Tarot Esoterico*, designed by Marixtu Guler and published by Fournier. These correspondences represent the tradition of Kabbalah, the ancient pure Hebrew stream of astro-alphanumeric mysteries. Remember, alphanumeric means numbers and letters, and when I add the prefix "astro," I mean signs and planets are included too.

Parallel of Influences of Hebrew and Greek Thought

Inconveniently, at the point in history where we can finally find these ideas in written form, we already find ourselves at a fork in the road. Kaplan indicates that the Sephir Yetzirah was as well-known outside Hebrew circles as within because of its astronomical and astrological content. So we should not be surprised if we see it being quoted or even assimilated by scholars of later centuries. This is exactly what happened in the ancient world.

One such scholar was Pythagoras, whose life in the seventh century BC marks the inception of Hermetic philosophy and numerological mysticism among the Greeks. He traveled the world while still in his thirties and forties, studying with every priesthood and esoteric college he could reach and procuring the texts of those he couldn't physically visit. When he finally settled down to start his own school, he credited the Hebrew Kabbalists and Hindu Brahmans for enlightening him about their number mysteries in which his own teachings about the whole numbers and Sacred Geometry were grounded.

Pythagoras wrote many volumes, a good quantity of which still survive. But in the context of Tarot, what we are most interested in is his participation in the "reform" of the Greek alphabet, which happened in his lifetime. The objective was to bring the Greek alphabet back into harmony with the Hebrew, from which Greek had been derived. In the course of this scholarly labor, two pairs of planets were purposefully switched in relation to their respective letters.

This small shift created a second stream of authentic, ancient, esoteric correspondences that are no longer "pure" Hebrew. It is these Greek/Hermetic variants that came into European history from various sources. The magi of the Italian Renaissance passed them into the Secret Societies, where they were enshrined in the *Fratres Lucis* manuscript which Dr. Lewis Keizer suggests is the model for the earliest self admitted "esoteric" Tarots: Etteilla, Levi, de Gebelin, et al. (see "Esoteric Origins of Tarot").

The Tarots that use these correspondences have been grouped under the title *The Continental Group* and show two variants: those that were published before Eliphas Levi and those that came after (see "The Continental Tarots" essay and various tables and graphs). The difference is subtle, which is why it has escaped the attention of Tarot scholars of this century until now.

The Holy Word: An Alphabet of Numbers

I want to insert a reminder for those who are not used to the idea that spoken letters have a correspondence with numbers. This may seem like a made-up connection which could be changed at will to serve the needs of a particular code or cipher. But in the ancient world, the numbers associated with the letters, whether Greek or Hebrew, were not changeable according to whim. In both these languages, the numbers were letters. By that I mean any mathematical value or calculation in numbers would be written out in letters. Each letter also represented a literal number, thus simultaneously having both a sound and a value.

This fact has profound implications which we moderns often fail to understand. We can easily grasp that a letter represents a sound; that's phonics as we learned it in grammar school. But a sound is also a vibration, a frequency resonating the eardrum in a mathematically specific pattern, a ratio or bell curve of ratios. So in that sense, a sound is a number. The ancients already knew from their own experience that sound works magic on the world, both on the human psyche and on the interior structure of matter. Rightly applied sound, the Holy Word of old, can work miracles. This is one reason why the names of angels, choirs of angels, Sephiroth and other divine names in Hebrew were considered so powerful and sequestered so long from the Gentiles.

Hence it follows that any noun, verb, name or other part of speech activates energies along the pathways in this Natural Array, which represents the Body of God that humans share in. These words also can be converted to numbers, revealing the word's "true essence" or interior nature. In the Hebrew language, words that add up to the same or related numbers are considered to have a direct link in the energy-world, as if they were vibrating at octaves of the same frequency. Gematria is the ancient name for the study of words that have numerical or geometrical structure in common, and there are many and various techniques to employ in that study. Most of the magical codes and ciphers of the Western tradition are derived through one or another form of Gematria in either Greek or Hebrew.

Use of these and other magical techniques empowers a practitioner to achieve one's spiritual goals. A spiritual name or sacred number, written on a piece of paper with the right intention, can serve as a talisman for contact with that energy/entity. This is the key to an invisible but potent link-up with the Chain of Being whereby the operator can specify exactly which frequency s/he is trying to contact.

In Greek there were also preserved lists of ancient God-names from the Orphics, the Isis cult, the Serapis mysteries, traditional mythology, and dead languages from their antiquity. All these names would be analyzed and employed mathematically as well as mythically.

I cannot convey how important it is for Tarot esotericists to ground themselves in Greek and Hebrew number theory in order to fully appreciate the profundity of our (quite a bit more recent) Major Arcana. One perfect starting place would be to study David Fideler's *Jesus Christ, Son of God*. Although to my knowledge Tarot is not mentioned once in the entire book, it is a thrilling immersion in the alphanumeric Mysteries of old. So when the subject of the "ancient alphanumeric correspondences" comes up throughout this CD program, I am referring to a fixed body of beliefs whose values have not changed in three thousand years. A=1, B=2, and so on down the Hebrew and Greek alpha-bets. These correspondences are canonical, set in historical stone. Lists of correspondences abound that are used for various purposes, but "the ancient correspondences" are none other than either the Hebrew originals or the Greek variant, modified in 700 BC by Pythagoras.

Is It Hebrew or Is It Greek?

Contributing to the confusion among Tarot scholars about the relationship between the Hebrew and Greek alphanumeric is that, although Pythagoras credited the Hebrews for refining his understanding of the number-letters, later Kabbalists of the first and second centuries were using the writings of the neo-Pythagoreans to help

them reassemble their tradition after the fall of the second Temple. So we have the Jews of the second century AD studying second century revivals of Pythagoras' writings from the seventh century BC, to find out what their Hebrew ancestors were doing in the eighteenth century BC! Is there any wonder we get confused?

It did not help that the words the second century Jews were using to explain their Kabbalah were drawn from the vocabulary of the Greek philosophers. In following up to see what I could find on this stage in the development of the Sephir Yetzirah, I found this quote from Gershom Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*: "The combination of late Hellenistic, perhaps even late NeoPlatonic numerological mysticism with exquisitely Jewish ways of thought concerning the mystery of letters and language is fairly evident throughout. . . . Various peculiarities of the terminology employed in the book, including some curious neologisms which find no natural explanation in Hebrew phraseology, suggest a paraphrase of Greek terms. . ." (p. 76).

I take these hints to imply that earliest redaction of the Sephir Yetzirah, which Scholem thought was assembled between the second and sixth centuries, was already cross-infected with the Hermetic/Alexandrian number mysticism which we now know first emerged with the Pythagorean school in the seventh century BC. So is it any wonder that the esoteric scholars of the Renaissance seized upon the Greek form of these correspondences rather than the older and much more obscure but original Hebrew ones? From the European point of view, even that of a Europeanized Jew, the Greek version was not only more accessible but culturally more familiar than the older correspondences, with their roots so far away in the Middle East.

Remember, there is no difference between the Hebrew and the Pythagorean correspondences in the case of the letters that represent signs of the zodiac. The only difference was between two pairs of planets, the pair Jupiter/Sun and the pair Venus/Mars. One pattern represents the Semitic origins of the alphanumeric pattern and the other is a Greek "reform" undertaken in the sixth century BC. We could see them as the eastern and western forks of the ancient alphanumeric Gnosis.

Variant Kabbalah Trees Among the Hebrews

Aryeh Kaplan, in his *The Sephir Yetzira*, briefly mentions several variations that were employed when applying the Paths on the Tree. The first is an offshoot of the Gra Natural Array, which he explains this way:

"In practice, for reasons dealing with the basic nature of the Sefirot, they are not arranged in this natural order, but have the middle line lowered somewhat" (p. 32). Kaplan seems to refer to the outcome of "the fall," graphically illustrating that the "heart of creation" has fallen out of contact with the Supernal Triangle and into alignment with earthly life.

Now that the Sephiroth have become base, they don't sit the same way in the Tree that they did before. This pattern still conforms to the canon of three horizontals, seven verticals and twelve diagonals, so it can't really be called a different system. It is the old Natural Array with a kink, the distortion of our fall away from the Creator. This pattern can rightly be called "ancient" because it came down with the oral tradition from Biblical times.

The Kabbalah Gets Mixed Up

By the tenth century AD, however, laments began appearing in Kabbalistic writings about the many versions of Sephir Yetzirah. Aryeh Kaplan spends several pages discussing how the "literally dozens of different variants" may have appeared (p. xxiv-xxv). Since there were Secret Societies among the Jews just as they existed among the Gentiles, alternate versions became "traditional" in separated communities. Transcription errors were deadly in these short, tightly worded texts, as were errors caused by oral transmission. Commentaries and margin notes from earlier versions got incorporated into later copies. Also, and probably most troublesome for historians, spurious versions were knowingly promulgated, disseminated to confuse the uninitiated.

When all is said and done, Kaplan names two main versions, the Short and the Long, as being widely disseminated enough to be relevant to his discussion of Hebrew Kabbalah. Only the Short version enters into our discussion on Tarot. The other, "older" version that Kaplan gives us for the paths on the Tree (p. 28) represents the Safed School, which is based on the Zohar, a small book of essays which is the mystical embodiment of thirteenth century AD Spanish Kabbalism. This pattern is a consequence of errors slipping into the transmission of the Kabbalah as mentioned above, and shows that the Gra version became altered by later developments.

In the Zohar, the Sephir Yetzirah is extensively quoted, but in this case it is the Short Version of the Raavad (also from the 13th century) that is being referred to. In this version, the planets have become disarranged from the letters

as given in the Gra. This obscure little text connects the Sephiroth and the Tree with the cosmos, tying the higher and lower worlds together with hierarchies of angels and spheres and paths that are interrelated through the letters of the alphabet into a theosophical system of the universe. The mysticism it inspired left a lasting impression in Kabbalism.

At this point, the path-pattern which the thirteenth and fourteenth century Kabbalists were trying to reconcile with the Zohar and the Short Form can be seen to contain an asymmetry that begs for resolution. In it, the two lowest Paths on either side of Malkuth are removed, and one hugely long one is added to connect Chokma to Geburah. This strengthens and emphasizes the "Lightning Bolt" formation that later Kabbalists/Cabbalists love so much, but it leaves the image short one diagonal, and looks lopsided. Kaplan does not tell us exactly how the letters are arranged upon the paths in this version. It is this pattern that Rabbi Isaac Luria Ashkenazi (1534-72), affectionately dubbed "the Ari," studied as he strove to rebalance the Tree in light of the Zohar.

The Implications of the Ari Version on Tarot Development

The Ari version of the Sephir Yetzirah set a benchmark for the public Kabbalist schools of the 1600s. It utterly departed from the hidden Gra form, either the Natural Array or the "fallen" form for practical application. Because of the great reverence given the Zohar, which had become tradition by the Ari's time and which had accumulated significant differing versions, Rabbi Luria worked with the Short Form of the Sephir Yetzirah from 1562 and the lopsided Tree of the Safed School to create his synthesis. However, Rabbi Luria's contribution to the unfolding of Kabbalistic teachings was immense but so controversial that its effect was to call into question the monotheistic character of Hebrew religion.

In the context of the tenor of these times, Luria's ideas represent a brilliant and remarkably optimistic response to the miserable conditions his people were experiencing in Europe. There is no room in this essay to expound upon the various details of his teachings (see Kabbalah by Gershom Scholem), but essentially in the process of detailing how this world came to be imperfect, he elaborated a whole new structure for the Tree of Life and rearranged the letter/path correspondences.

His was not an effort to prove any other versions wrong (he apparently did not know about the Gra version), but only an account of the difference between Eden at the time of creation and the present world with which we must now contend. Unfortunately, in the process of unveiling his wonderful Hebrew- Gnostic synthesis, he resorted to arguments and illustrations which veered, for many, dangerously close to Gnostic dualism.

There is no doubt that Luria was reflecting themes that saturated intellectual circles during his lifetime. The Albigensian crusades were already over, and in the course of attempting to suppress the Gnostic heresies, the Catholic Church had unwittingly strengthened and promoted the Gnostic core belief, proving through their viciousness that the mundane world was under the control of a cruel and demented shadow of the One True God. So Luria unfolded an explanation of what had happened to precipitate the "fall from grace" and how it might be repaired. In so doing, he laid out a scenario that paralleled the Gnostic and Hermetic cosmogonies also circulating at the time.

Rabbi Luria did not mean to create another dualist heresy, and even if he did so unintentionally, many people innately identified with his exposition. Intertwined as it was with themes of exile and redemption, Luria's doctrines had emotional resonance with the current life situation of being Jewish in Christian Europe. People also found a basis for hope in Luria's view of the future, when the effects of the fall were to be reversed by the restoration of the world through the spiritual labors of the Hebrew nation.

Before the Fall

To make what Rabbi Luria taught tangible, we have to look at the Kabbalah Tree in the ancient Gra form, and then we have to contrast that to the Tree as given in the Ari form from the 1500s. Looking at them back to back makes the issues very clear.

In the Natural Array as dictated in the Gra version, the archetypal human energy-body is shown as a tidy, symmetrical geometric figure that embodies the 3x7x12 structure of the Hebrew alphabet perfectly. This is the structure of human design which links us with higher worlds. In this pattern, the three "mother" letters are corresponded to the horizontal bars of the diagram, the seven planetary letters are the verticals, and the twelve zodiacal letters are the diagonals. Thus the twenty-two letters, as symbols of our inner spiritual energies, weave together the limbs and organs of our bodies with their heavenly correspondents above.

Both the ancient Hebrew alphanumeric system and the Greek Pythagorean alphanumeric system conform to the 3x7x12 rule that places the letters so specifically on the paths. Wherever diagonal paths converge, there is a power-center called a Sefhira (plural, the Sephiroth). These centers each had their own names and attributes from the earliest versions, but the greater practical emphasis had originally been placed upon the paths between the centers, along with practical methods for accessing and circulating these energies so we can use them to heal ourselves and change the world.

Imagine the alphabetical pathways that connect the Sephiroth as if they were veins and arteries in the body conducting energies hither and yon to create connections, feed functions and balance polarities. Much of the earliest strata of the Hebrew Kabbalah mysticism was tied up in chanting and meditating to activate consciousness along those internal pathways. One could easily compare this type of practice to a theurgical form of yoga, employing a combination of postures, chants, geometrical visualizations and meditations on the essential nature of reality. The implications are all laid out in detail in Aryeh Kaplan's amazing book.

After the Fall

In comparison, in the diagram of the paths as defined by the Ari, we see humanity in a condition of mortality after "the fall from grace." We have seen attempts to quantify the damage from the fall among even the earliest Kabbalist philosophers, but these variants were not considered dogma, only attempts to talk about what might have happened. But with the Ari version, due to Rabbi Luria's genius and reputation, this pattern became the pattern, both among future European Jews and among the Gentiles of the era.

In the Ari pattern, we see the full tragedy of the fall. Where Tifareth used to stand (the heart center, associated with the feminine part of God, the Shekhina), a hole has opened, now called Da'at. The energy that had filled that place has fallen and has descended to Malkuth (the world of time and space), which is now hanging off the bottom of the diagram like an orphan. Something that was once very elevated and close to the Source is now cast down and stands under all the other forces. From this point of view, ³the fall² is not just the loss of Eden but the degradation of the Goddess, who no longer occupies the heart of the creation. She now embodies the lowest world, that of matter, time and space. This is the world we find ourselves in now, according to Rabbi Luria, and we are challenged to find the path back to our former estate.

When we investigate the nature of Da'at, the ³new² Sefhira, it seems to correspond to the Hindu throat chakra, the power of the Holy Word to create by fiat. So this creative capability, the Word, which used to flow effortlessly from Tifareth, the heart, is now something that has to be earned through effort and striving, by aligning the lower nodes and directing will toward overcoming the distractions of the left and right pillars. Da'at signifies a power-center that a person has to build up to activate, although it exists in potential in all of us born after the fall. This work is necessary to lift ourselves back to our original nature.

The consequence of the fall is chaos in the path structure below the Supernal Triangle (Kether, Chokmah, Binah). The 3x7x12 pattern, dictated by the Sefhir Yetzirah, is destroyed, because now the heart triangle (Tifareth, Chesed and Geburah) and the pelvic triangle (Yesod, Netzach and Hod) point downward. Malkuth, ³the World,² is cast down into a position that didn't even exist in the old system; it now acts like an anchor on the soul instead of like a throne or a wonderful garden from which to draw nourishment. In the post-fall human, the centers below the Supernal Triangle become increasingly dense and crystallized, and for the first time, they represent the planets of the solar system. Malkuth is Earth, Yesod is Moon, Hod is Mercury, Netzach is Venus, Tifareth is the Sun, Geburah is Mars, Chesed is Jupiter and Da'at is (at least potentially) Saturn. The pathways are no longer arranged in their pristine pattern from Genesis, which allows for alternative allotments for the planets and paths, increasing controversy between Kabbalistic schools. Saturn, who has fallen to Malkuth but in potential could "rise" to the "new" throat center, is the last visible planet in the solar system, therefore the symbol of limits, discipline, examinations and natural consequences.

It is Saturn who occasionally makes us eat our words. He is also the one who sentences us to live out our most frequently repeated fears and pessimisms. He is the lord of the bottom line, the have-to's that no one can escape. The ancients used to say that Saturn was the final judge of whether we reincarnated again and again or whether we could pass on from this world into a higher state. This natural association of Saturn with Da'at fits in well with Luria's reincarnational themes, marking another resemblance to Gnostic ideas circulating in his times.

Rabbi Luria, in reaching for a way to explain humanity's fall from grace into the wretchedness of this life, reconceptualized the way the paths connect the Sephiroth on the Tree. He was not attempting to displace the Gra pattern because he did not know it existed. He was looking at the Zohar and the skewed Tree of the 1400s, hoping to patch the confusing welter of versions back together.

Luria was simply trying to create a format by which humanity could reconstitute itself and bring the world back to its pristine condition. His philosophy had certain consequences on the Tree of Life diagram, because "the fall" was seen as having changed our primal symmetry, which is to say, having upset the energy grid of our bodies. So the Ari version is a map of the problem awaiting solution, a damage report, like a medical x-ray the doctor views before surgery. This is true for every version that has fallen away from the Gra Natural Array. We are not supposed to enshrine this pattern as a way to live, but instead use it as a game plan for self repair. Luria was actually trying to give his people much-needed hope in troubled times, but his approach ultimately generated more confusion than it was able to heal.

Because the Ari pattern of "after the fall" attributions was offensive to old-school rabbis around Europe, a good deal of what one finds on the subject is negatively biased. Much ink is spent bemoaning the way in which Luria unwittingly exposed the monotheist core of Judaism to accusations of harboring the Gnostic dualism (see "The Gnostic Tarot"), a charge that undercuts the Hebrew claim of being the original chosen people of the One True God.

It looked to the skeptical as if he were positing two worlds with two separate administrations, the unfallen "upper face" of the Supernal Triangle (Kether, Chokma and Binah), where the energies are still balanced, contrasted with the "Lower Face" of the planetary Sephira resting on Malkuth, the fallen and chaotic World. This is the dualism that was so loudly disclaimed by traditionalists of the sixteenth century, even though it explained in very convincing terms the reality of the Jewish experience in Europe.

Rabbi Luria was offering a plan for the steps that Kabbalists could take to cultivate themselves and right the balance of Nature upset by "the fall." Unfortunately, it seems that the traditionalists of Luria's day could not get past the appearance of dualism to hear the call. Meanwhile, the literalists among his followers forgot that he was proposing a provisional map, not the final goal.

And Now, Back To The Tarot

To summarize what we have covered so far, history has preserved for us two "core versions" of the ancient connections between the astrological signs and planets and the letters-which- are-numbers. These interlocking Mysteries dictate the structure of Tarot as we know it.

The first connection between number/letters and astrology was the version "received" by Abraham (according to legend), which is now called "the Gra" after the Rabbi whose scholarship revived it in the late 1800s. This is the version presented by Aryeh Kaplan in his definitive work, *The Sephir Yetzirah*, and represented on the deck *El Gran Tarot Esoterico* (see "The Spanish School").

The second set of number/letter/astrology correspondences is a product of the Greek alphabet reforms undertaken in 600 BC with the help of Pythagoras, father of Hermetic number mysticism and harmonic theory. This version represents an Alexandrian synthesis and became part of the Greco-Roman cultural legacy in Europe. The difference between this version and the original Sephir Yetzirah is that two planetary pairs have switched places (see "Graphs and Tables"). We have called this the Hermetic/Alexandrian version or the Pythagorean correspondences throughout this manuscript, because the term "Greek Kabbalah" creates a false impression.

Whatever it is called, this is the pattern well-known in Europe by the appearance of the first esoteric Tarots, and this is the pattern of correspondences being used by any Secret Society member from the Renaissance to the late nineteenth century. Whenever you read about Cabbalah (the form the Christians and Gnostics worked with) as opposed to Kabbalah (the Hebrew form, unchanged from its Middle Eastern inception), you can be sure that it's the Pythagorean correspondences that are being referred to. Remember, in both variants, A always equals 1, B always equals 2 and so forth, as given in the tables.

The Non-Hebrew Kabbalah, called Cabbalah

History shows us that some Gentile scholars interested in Hebrew themes picked up this Ari pattern and built it into their worldview. Gathering momentum in the century prior to the first Tarots, a reawakening of classical wisdom was dawning upon Europe from both the Arab world and the eastern Mediterranean. Then, in 1492, the Spanish

throne declared its nation Catholic, exiling all Moslems, Jews, Gypsies and whoever else would not profess the faith. This great loss to the culture of Spain produced more stimulation for the cultures of continental Europe. And in the middle of it all, the first fourteen treatises of the Corpus Hermeticum were found, a momentous event in European scholarship.

Simultaneously, and as a result of this wonderful return of the ancient wisdom to Europe, the Secret Societies began to reemerge into visibility, producing the "Rosicrucian Manifesto" in the early 1600s. The subsequent publishing revolution embraced sacred literature from all the traditions of antiquity. The Masonic societies appeared, who over several generations constructed a Hermetic synthesis of the Western Mystery Tradition and eventually cast that construction into the form of playing cards.

Some Context for the Renaissance

Frances Yates states, in her chapter "Pico della Mirandola and Cabalist Magic" from her wonderful book *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, "names of angels, names of God in Hebrew, Hebrew letters and signs, are a feature of gnostic magic in which pagan and Jewish sources are inextricably mixed. . . . thus both the Renaissance Magia and its Cabala could be regarded as reformed revivals of magics ultimately derivable from pagan and Jewish gnosticism" (p. 108). So even though the ideas of the Alexandrian synthesis had not been current in Europe for over a thousand years at that point, they were embraced with great spiritual enthusiasm upon their reemergence and taken to heart by the most talented and visionary intellectuals of the day.

Although the return of learning to Europe was gradual, certain themes remained perennially of interest. Greco-Roman culture was physically engraved in the landscape around the southern Europeans, and the tradition of Hermes had a persistent hold upon the imagination of learned Europeans. The Jews and Gypsies were feared, romanticized and depended upon for their many "exotic" skills. Medicine especially was still largely magical and depended upon non-Christian (pagan) methods, some of which were nasty and disgusting or alternately, merely ritualistic, the true meanings often lost in time or corrupted in the transmission. Losses to superstition-induced illnesses and occasional bouts of plague provoked intelligent people to keep searching for better information, even if it came from non-Christian sources.

As part of the gradual shift that replaced the Middle Ages with the Renaissance, the quality of magic and mysticism, therefore the entire culture, became more refined. As more of the classics of antiquity were rediscovered and people had the luxury of using their brains for more than survival again, we see a new optimism, a sense of spiritual and intellectual empowerment and a return of the syncretist urges stamped out by earlier Christianity. As history's mystics and sacred philosophers became available to European intellectuals, their narrow-mindedness and superstitiousness began to evaporate, replaced by awe and reverence for the intelligence and understanding of antiquity.

The Renaissance Magi and Tarot

Around 1460, the aging Lorenzo de Medici of Florence received a Greek manuscript from Macedonia that contained a nearly complete copy of the Corpus Hermeticum. He had a "pet scholar" whose work he especially valued: Marcilio Ficino, who had been assigned to the translation of the Plato manuscripts. De Medici was afraid of dying before he had an opportunity to read the books of Hermes, so they were brought to Ficino to translate posthaste.

What Ficino found in the Corpus Hermeticum and developed throughout the rest of his career was the first Renaissance statement of NeoPlatonism, an amplification of the Alexandrian synthesis of the first and second centuries. Through his agency, the entire astro-alphanumeric structure of the ancient Mysteries came pouring into the magical imaginations of these inspired and brilliant linguists. Due to Ficino's regard for the Church, the whole synthesis was explained and experienced from a Christian outlook. He was careful to explain that he was using only the God-given "natural sympathies" that exist between visible and invisible things in the great chain of being. He attested to be merely connecting the upper and lower worlds through their innate lines of relationship, so the Church ought not to feel threatened. As this Christian, Gnostic-leaning antiquarian encountered the Alexandrian synthesis of Greek and Hebrew mysteries, a movement was born.

In particular, Ficino brought talismanic and theurgical practices back to Christian mysticism under the aegis of Hermes, mythical author of the Corpus Hermeticum. He felt that by strengthening the affinities between higher and lower things, he could help annul the effects of "the fall," permeating time and space with divine energies channeled by his astronomical talismans. To quote again Dame Frances Yates, "When Hermes Trismegistus entered the Church, the history of magic become[s] involved with the history of religion in the Renaissance."

Ficino's younger friend and colleague, Pico della Mirandola, wittingly or unwittingly contributed another huge boost to the impetus toward the Tarot. Pico added Cabbalist magic to Ficino's Christian NeoPlatonism, opening a fertile field both for study and for controversy. He extolled the virtues of the magical signs, sigils, numbers, images and other devices inherited from Hebrew antiquity and that form the literal link between celestial and terrestrial things. He asserted, quite firmly, that by bringing in the Hebrew mysteries, especially the seventy-two angels who connect the earthly realms to the zodiac (which we eventually see on the Minor Arcana), we can empower the natural symbolistic magic of Ficino with the extra charge of genuine Biblical tradition.

All these new correspondences emerged from close reading of the Corpus Hermeticum and related studies, and they produced a tremendous mystical surge not only in della Mirandola but in his whole milieu. Della Mirandola continuously reminded his readers/ listeners that this was Christian Magic, not only because it was meant to be used toward and dedicated to the Trinity, but because it came from the Hebrew/Alexandrian synthesis within which Christianity is grounded. History shows us, however, that Pico della Mirandola was not as well-received as he would have liked; he suffered regular persecutions and detractors because of how closely he skirted the line between scholarship and religion as defined by the Church.

Without straying too far from the topic of Tarot, let me emphasize that Pico della Mirandola also imprinted the Renaissance imagination with the idea of the magus as an agent of the Sacred Marriage, uniting the heavenly and earthly realms through theurgical workings. Using focused consciousness, the Holy Word, sacred sound and the powerful Hebrew talismans that della Mirandola taught that embody the formulae for cosmic values, the world can be impregnated with celestial energies much more efficiently than with Ficino's natural magic alone.

It is also della Mirandola who first articulated the concept of Silent Invocations composed from Hebrew names, letters, signs and sigils, and through this concept, the numbered suit cards received another layer of meaning. To this day, on the esoteric Tarots of the French School from Etteilla forward (and in some of the later English decks), one can see the sigils of the zodiacal angels progressing on the numbered suit cards. (Eliphas Levi called these angels the "Shemhameforesh," a bad transliteration of the Hebrew but a brilliant idea for making Tarot into Silent Invocations.) Tavaglione's Stairs of Gold Tarot details all these angels in the back of its booklet, all aligned with their various degrees of the zodiac for your magical convenience.

To sum up the contribution of this extraordinary person, we should look at the grand design of his mystical conception. For the Gentiles, Pico della Mirandola explained how what he called the "Twelve Punishments of Matter" (the signs of the zodiac) are driven out (actually, harnessed to the Paths) by the "Ten Good Forces" of the Sephiroth. In other words, if the domination of the astrological universe (fate and destiny) over the soul of humanity could be broken, then the Tree can grow back up the Sephiroth (chakras). In this way, the mortal soul is secured, the Ogdoad (eighth sphere, Da'at) comes together, and "the powers sing in the soul the Æogdoadic hymn' of regeneration." When the Tree conquers the pagan zodiac in the soul, the soul becomes immortal. It is here that we see the unifying thought that binds della Mirandola to the Christian Cabbalah above all other teachings and makes him the enemy of the astrologers of his time. His was a system that a person could use with free will and determination, undaunted by the stars or the elements of earth.

Pico della Mirandola and his philosophical peers (Marcilio Ficino, Cornelius Agrippa, John Dee, Paracelsus, Francesco Giorgio, Giordano Bruno, Johann Reuchlin and others) were at the crest of the Renaissance wave, fusing their scholarship with their art and their religion. They made it their business to investigate the philosophies and practices used by our multicultural ancestors. (It is a mystical experience just to read about these people in Yates's meticulously researched tomes.) They were deeply devout Christian, Gnostic and Hebrew scholars, passionately writing volumes and debating about ancient philosophy, filling folios with art and imagery and practicing theurgical rituals designed to put the soul in contact with our higher Source. It is too bad that the Church eventually felt too threatened to let this wonderful flowering carry on. But while it lasted, we all benefited, because in the sweep of the expansion the Tarot appeared, and on the momentum of the Renaissance, Tarot soared into the esoteric empyrean.

As a matter of fact, it is from the notebooks of the last Renaissance magi, a German Jesuit named Athanasius Kircher, that I believe the images which brought overt esotericism into Tarot were eventually drawn. Kircher is discussed in the essay "The Continental Tarots" as well, but for this chapter, we must acknowledge his contribution to the Christian Cabbalah content of Tarot.

Kircher's Christian Cabbalah

When we left the Hebrew Kabbalah to look in on the Renaissance magi, we had brought the Tree and the Paths up to the reforms of the Ari. His version of the Tree was an attempt to synthesize the Path attributions of the Short Version he had in his hands with the awkward Tree of the Zoharic Kabbalists of the 1300s. We saw that in the Renaissance, Christian applications of the Kabbalah were being discovered and synthesized from new translations of ancient manuscripts, and the Gentile world was getting a history lesson. (They did still think that Hermes predated Moses, however, causing them to promote the Alexandrian Mysteries even more than the Hebrew. It took more scholarship yet to untie that intellectual knot!)

Athanasius Kircher was born in 1602 and lived until 1680; his was a long and productive life. As a priest, he was not engaging in his studies with the aim of practicing magic or reviving the Mysteries, but his combination of scientific interest and spiritual respect for the ancients caused him to treat all his subjects respectfully, keeping in mind their best attributes. He was an artist, a linguist and a Cabbalist and had many other areas of expertise. I have no doubt his voracious intellect and voluminous writings and images influenced Tarot profoundly.

With all the sincerity of his Christian training and the scholarship that made him the last Renaissance polymath (he created the first Coptic grammar), Kircher "reformed" the Kabbalah Tree into the renamed Christian Cabbalah pattern. We see this pattern now throughout Tarot, alchemical and magical literature. It is he who decided to count out the alphabet along the paths in top-down order, an approach that has nearly completely supplanted the 3x7x12 ordering of the Sephir Yetzirah as reported in Aryeh Kaplan's master work. Kircher's is also the final and loudest voice in the Renaissance chorus that attributed the wisdom of antiquity to Egyptian culture. He had no way of knowing the truth in the way that we do now, in our age of scientific archeology and linguistic analysis, but the force of his conviction, that Egypt is the source of all the oldest magic, continued to reverberate through the Mystery Schools for several more centuries, stimulating the Rosicrucians and later Masons--Etteilla most notably--to incorporate Christian NeoPlatonist Cabbalah into the Silent Invocations that Tarot embodies.

In the sequence of Renaissance magi from Ficino to Kircher (and through many fascinating characters whom I regrettably cannot mention here), we see the force that drives Tarot into expression. The ancient Mysteries were already in place, although episodically forgotten and re-remembered with the cycles of history. The rediscovery of the bone structure of the Mysteries at the cusp of the publishing revolution made the creation of Silent Invocations in card form possible for the masses. How could Tarot not emerge as the "flash cards of the Mysteries"? It was the next logical step!

Conclusion

In this brief and incomplete scan of this fascinating stream of Kabbalah/Cabbalah knowledge, I have tried to keep the focus upon the details relevant to the formation of Tarot. This approach cannot help but leave some readers annoyed at what I left out, while others will wonder why I dragged so much detail in. My only defense is that I have learned to find it fascinating, and I hope you will too.

Tracing the ins and outs of the evolution of the letters/numbers, astrology and paths on the Tree of the Kabbalah is a life's work in itself. I have presented some of the results of my research in order to assist in untangling the riddles that have arisen around Tarot and its number/letter associations through the centuries. I hope that this material rewards with a few insights and evokes input from other scholars who have found these topics as compelling as I have.

Confluence of the Three Great Systems

by Christine Payne-Towler

In this essay we will examine the most esoteric, interior architecture that connects Tarot to the historical stream of Mystery School teachings passed down and grafted together from most ancient times. We will compare and contrast the details of the most ancient Babylonian astrology model, the Hebrew Mysteries of Kabbalah, its Pythagorean adaptation in Greece, the Ari redaction of the Sephir Yetzirah (which changed the form of the paths and settled the Planetary Governors upon the Sephiroth), and Athanasius Kircher's resulting efforts to redefine the paths and the letters upon them. So this "confluence" to which I am referring is the result of three thousand years of ancient lore, refined in the fires of the European Renaissance.

For those of you not conversant with occultism, I recommend that you read the essays on the Minor Arcana, the Kabbalah and the Gnostics before you start into this essay. It also would help to know enough about astrology to follow a discussion about relations between the planets and the signs. Nevertheless, I urge all interested parties to read this anyway, whether you understand it or not, and keep coming back to it until you can follow right along. This essay contains the key to it all.

Once we can grasp the idea that the Arcana of Tarot have been organized around a blend of Hebrew Kabbalist astro-number theory and Pythagorean sacred geometry, we can appreciate what the Renaissance Rosicrucians might have seen in the Tarot-- flash cards for drilling on the curriculum of a Hermetic University course of study.

No such university could exist in public by Kircher's lifetime, which spanned much of the 1600s. The Church had forbidden the universities from teaching the subject of astrology, the last trace of the ancient Mysteries, by the fourteenth century. Only the Secret Societies were keeping the ancient lore alive, and in some generations, there were only a few isolated scholars to pass it along. Luckily for us all, among them were a few truly enlightened members of the clergy, who used their privileged positions, excellent educations, and access to Church archives to study and illuminate the teachings of the ancients. Athanasius Kircher was one of those (for more on Kircher, see the essay "Kabbalah/ Cabbalah").

The Tarot, like all esoteric paradigms before it, outlines the Grand Plan, an overview of life at every level, with all its related mystical arts and sciences. As it has come down to us from history, we can see clearly how Tarot embodies the confluence of astrology/ Kabbalah/ number mysteries of antiquity. The goal of these schools was to redeem the soul of humanity after its fall from grace into eros, returning us to our primordial wholeness and immortality. Therefore we should expect to see a healthy trace of the Mystery School agenda still shining through the Tarot, despite its many superficial permutations in the last few centuries. Given what we now know about history, it would be more surprising if such values could not be found in the Tarot than if they could!

The Major Arcana, these twenty-two sophisticated and multileveled symbolic packages, have more often than not been presented in an order that parallels the numerical values of the Hebrew alphabet. Tables found in the first chapter of Stuart Kaplan's Encyclopedia of Tarot (Volume 1) confirm that since at least the mid-18th century, the Major Arcana have been publicly associated with the Hebrew alphanumeric system on a card-for-letter basis.

Few people realize that this body of correspondences carries within it several other symbolic formations that would be familiar to a Renaissance Hermetic syncretist. These secondary internal structures link the Arcana to the Hebrew Kabbalah, the Seven Planetary Governors, the Hermetic Caduceus, Pythagoras' Tetractys and the Astronomical Wheel of the Year. In the essay on the Minor Arcana, some of those themes were taken up to explain the internal structure of the suit cards. In this essay, we will take on related themes to be found within the Major Arcana.

Internalized Structures of Tarot

Astrological Correspondences. The first internal configuration to examine is the ancient astrological underpinning which serves as the foundation for Hebrew Kabbalah, Pythagorean Numerology and Christian Cabbalah of the Renaissance, much less the relatively recent Tarot. If you were a Renaissance magus, you would have this model internalized at the foundation of your learning.

To see how astrology relates to the Minor Arcana, see "The Minor Arcana" essay. The Hebrew letters link astrology to the Major Arcana, which then assume the role of pathways between the Sephiroth of the Kabbalah/ Cabbalah Tree. We will see this correlation further investigated when we return to discussing the Tree later in this essay.

First, witness the ancient figure of the Planetary Rulerships of the Signs, showing the Seven Planetary Governors apportioned around the Wheel of the Zodiac. The essentially Gnostic character of this diagram is revealed by the fact that starting from Aquarius and working sunwise to Cancer you see illustrated the descent of the soul from heaven to earth, picking up the "planetary metals" from the Archons as it sinks to physical Earth. (This corresponds directly with the descending motion on the left-hand side of the Wheel of Fortune in most Tarots.) Then starting with Leo at the bottom and working sunwise back up to Capricorn, you see the regeneration of man, the soul's repayment of his debt to the Archons, who then liberate him to return to eternity on the rising motion of the right side of the Wheel. When lined up thus, we see the "Ladder of Lights" formed by the planets stacking up around the Sun. (Remember, when this diagram was created it was thought that the sun, moon and the other planets all revolved around the earth. Nowadays we can see this as a psychological model, where each ego thinks that the rest of life is revolving around it.)

These sign/planet correspondences have been in place since the time of Babylon (2200 BC). The fact that the axis of the diagram puts the midheaven/nadir axis on the cusps of Aquarius and Leo could indicate it was composed in the "Platonic month of Leo," 10800 BC to 8000 BC, as the vernal equinox precessed. A friend with whom I have enjoyed sharing metaphysical speculations pointed out to me that in this rulership diagram, you can see not only the rulerships themselves, but also along the left diagonal bias you can see the pattern of "exaltations," while along the right diagonal you see the pattern of "falls," as named in the ancient rulership relations. (Connecting the "detriments" makes a beautiful star in the center of the diagram.) I would never have seen this pattern if he had not mentioned it, because I don't use exaltations, detriments or falls in my astrological practice. He added that those same diagonal patterns prevail in astrological homeopathy as well, where the "exaltations" are thought of as the "sympathies" and the "falls" are seen as "antipathies," both to be used as remedies depending upon whether you want to strengthen a condition or disrupt it. C.C. Zain in the Brotherhood of Light teachings discusses this in his volume on medical astrology.

The Septenary

Another of these internal formations within the cards is the 7 by 3 division of the Major Arcana that expresses the three worlds paradigm within which the human soul must seek initiation to return to its original estate (see the essay on Gnosticism). Different modern Tarot teachers have highlighted this "three sevens" approach in which one sets aside the Fool card and arranges the rest in three horizontal rows of Arcana numbered 1-7, then 8-14, then 15- 21. Since Papus's tome *The Tarot of the Bohemians* emerged, in which a great deal of space is given to this topic, and despite the fact that modern teachers may disagree on what values to attribute to these three septenaries (or seven triplicities), this internal symmetry is too compelling to ignore.

Numbers: The Decave

Another internal esoteric structure to be found within the Major Arcana is the embedding of the ancient Mystery of the Decave into both the Major and the Minor Arcana (see the essay on the Minor Arcana as well). The divinity of the numerals one to ten is a long-established feature of the Mysteries. The Egyptians surveyed their fields and squared out their temples and homes with a thirteen-knotted string rather than manhandle the sacred numerals with addition, subtraction, multiplication or division. The Hebrews fitted their ten-based number system into their alphabet, making each word a number and an astrological spell as well as a name.

The Greeks and Hebrews are known to have studied each other's alphanumeric systems in Alexandrian times. It should come as no surprise that the Arcana were constructed with the intention that a one-to-one identification be drawn between the Greek and Hebrew letters/numbers and Tarot Arcana which are numbered in single digits.

The Tetractys (see Minor Arcana essay) expresses another revelation of this same Decave mythos, and there is every reason to place those same Arcana into that glyph with a rightful expectation of significance. You can easily see the symmetry between the Numbers 1-10, the Arcana 1-10, their stations within the Tetractys diagram, and their stations on the Tree. This is deliberate, not an accident. So even though there are twenty-two Major Arcana in all, the first ten are customized to play this double role, just as the stations of the Kabbalah Tree of Life do, to embody and reflect this ancient reverence for the principles behind the first ten numbers.

The Hebrew Letters and the Tree of Life

The arrangement of the Hebrew letters on the paths of the Kabbalah Tree was established in antiquity when the manuscript Sephir Yetzirah was formalized around the second century AD. The Hebrews had alphabet mysteries before this time (see "Kabbalah/Cabbalah"), but the Tree did not appear with named Sephira and paths until this manuscript. The connection between the letters, their number values and their placement on the paths of the Kabbalah Tree persisted unchanged in history from 1800 BC to the Middle Ages, when the Ari began to speculate about the consequences of "the fall" (see below). Even then, it was only the pattern of the paths that was changing, not the letters and their associated numbers. Whenever the Tarot Arcana have been associated to Hebrew, Greek or any set of magical letters derived from those two alphabets, one can expect those path numbers to carry over unchanged to the Arcana, giving the paths definite images to which they would innately belong.

A glance at page 30 of Aryeh Kaplan's great work *The Sephir Yetzirah* will illustrate the original ordering which the ancient Hebrews kept among themselves from ancient times, and which was recently reaffirmed in the 18th century by the Gra, also known as Rabbi Eliahu, Gaon of Vilna. This pattern is dictated very specifically in the Sephir Yetzirah text, with careful attention to detail.

We seldom see this form in modern occult literature or on Tarots of the last five centuries, however. This is because, from the 10th century AD forward, differing variants slowly crept into the tradition, some of which Kaplan suggests were released with deliberate errors to befuddle the ignorant.

In Kaplan's own words, "Since the Gra Version was considered the most authentic by the Kabbalists, this is the one that we have chosen." (p. xxiv). Because in this CD we are focusing intently upon the ancient tradition in relation to Tarot, we stand with Kaplan in taking this pattern as our baseline from which other patterns diverged over time. Two modern decks have taken up the correspondences as outlined in Aryeh Kaplan's *The Sephir Yetzirah*. The first is *El Gran Tarot Esoterico* from Spain, and the second is the *Tarot of the Ages*, published in America. The *Esoterico* has the distinction of having been commissioned by cardmaker Fournier on the six hundredth anniversary of Tarot in Europe and has the look of an old Marseilles Tarot "with a twist." The *Tarot of the Ages* has Alexandrian-looking Major Arcana and fully illustrated Minors. They seem to have appeared unbeknownst to each other, the first in 1977, the second in 1988. One can think of these as our two truly Hebrew Tarots (see "The Spanish School").

More research is needed to "type" the details on the Marseilles-based Major Arcana of *El Gran Tarot Esoterico*, although they are intensely suggestive of the ancient Hebrew Goddess mythos as chronicled in Raphael Patai's wonderful book by that name. Both this deck's pedigree, and its exact correspondence to the ancient Hebrew astro-alphanumeric infrastructure, cement *El Gran Tarot Esoterico* in the Tarot canon as an authentic representative of the Hebrew Gnostic Tarot tradition, parallel in importance to the Alexandrian/ Hermetic stream, the Etteilla decks or the Marseilles Tarots.

Christian Cabbalah: A New Set of Correspondences

When the Ari (title of the Rabbi Isaac Luria, late 1500s) set out to make sense of the Zohar in light of the older, idealized Gra format, he was attempting to explain to his followers how we humans had become trapped in our bodies, alienated from heaven and our original selves. This is the point when the planetary attributions of the Sephiroth become concrete, in response to the belief that the human soul is now caught in the karmic web woven around us by the planets. Now that the abyss has opened at Da'at, it is nearly impossible for the fallen and divided soul to return to the primordial state of the supernal triangle.

As Rabbi Luria speculated and studied the versions and explanations available to him, he was inspired to alter the paths on the Tree to reflect the whole creation's tragic "fall from grace" after the sin of Adam as detailed in Genesis. From his time forward, various asymmetries can be seen in the Tree diagram, as the later Hebrew philosophers grappled with the consequences of living in this imperfect world. They were also attempting to deal with considerations raised by the Zohar, a thirteenth century addition to the Kabbalah canon, which forced extensive adjustments to the original Sephir Yetzirah pattern (see the essay "Kabbalah/Cabbalah"). This new pattern was eventually responsible for the creation of Christian Cabbalah through the esoteric insight of Athanasius Kircher.

Linking the Systems

In the following comparison of crucial Hermetic diagrams, we shall see how that shift on the Tree made possible the late Renaissance synthesis by Kircher. This was then handed down through the Secret Societies, appearing more visibly on the Tarot cards after the persecutions of the Church died down in the 18th century.

We know from the Gnostic myth (see essay on Gnostics) that when the Shekhina is displaced from her original seat (at the heart spot in the Gra pattern), the upright heart and pelvic triangles turn downward, and Malkuth is shoved out on its own, below the others. In other words, the Shekhina takes residence in The World, Malkuth, and dwells with her creatures instead of the Creator. From the myth of the Matronit, we know that the departure of the Divine Consort makes Jehovah cranky, and leads to difficult times for the people. The Hebrew nation had been celebrating the Sacred Marriage every Shabbat for thousands of years to assist in the reunification of the Goddess and the God, but the world was not mended yet.

No doubt mystics who contemplated this situation were looking for teachings and techniques to begin the process of mending the breach. The problem mythologized by the fall of the Shekhina away from the Supernal Triangle corresponds to an ancient Creation moment when matter was externalized from spirit and the link between them was broken. A discontinuity broke the order of the emanations (the Sefhira), creating a hole called "Da'at" in the pattern of the Tree and dropping the Goddess out of heaven. How would a Renaissance Magi construct the solution?

Piecing It Together

Compare and contrast the Wheel of the Year diagram with the Kircher Christian Cabbalah Tree diagram. They have a central theme in common, which is the ancient rulership pattern that links the Planets to the Signs in the Zodiac, as detailed above.

By looking back and forth between this rulership of the zodiac figure and the Kircher Christian Cabbalah Tree, you can see that the Tree diagram holds within it a wheel of Planetary Sefhira ranged around the Sun at Tifareth. Drawing a spoke between Venus and the Sun, and another from the Sun to Mars, links the same planetary pairs that are joined in the rulership diagram. (Mars and Venus together cover the rectangle of Aries/Scorpio/ Taurus/Libra.) A similar spoke exists between Jupiter, Sun and Mercury on the Kaballah Tree (Jupiter and Mercury rule the Mutable Square in the rulership diagram).

The only unmatching correspondence between the Astrological Wheel and the Tifareth wheel is the fact that Saturn has been placed upon Binah in the Supernal Triangle instead of on the Middle Pillar, where it would complete the pattern. If it were placed either at Malkuth or at the throat station, you would then have Moon, Sun and Saturn all connected along the Middle Pillar, just like they are up the center of the astro-rulership diagram. I submit that the post-Ari Kabbalah/Cabbalah stations of the Middle Ages Tree are constructed to reflect this ancient rulership diagram.

In light of the Hebrew tradition that precedes the appearance of the Renaissance magi, it seems obvious that the placement of Saturn on Binah is in error. Frances R. Yates, in her masterful tome *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (p. 100, footnote 3), indicates that this misattribution was made by Pico della Mirandola in the late 1400s, and it has apparently stood uncorrected since. (Following the logic of the Hebrew Kabbalists on this matter, we would find Saturn with the fallen Matronit at Malkuth, where she awaits redemption and restoration through a rise to Da'at (see "Kabbalah/Cabbalah").

The Wand of Hermes

The relationship between the Tree and the Planets becomes even clearer when you then look at the Kabbalah Tree's links to the Wand of Hermes. This image, also known as the caduceus, is usually portrayed as a straight rod with two snakes twining around it. Occasionally the snakes are winged. This is yet another symbol, like the Tetractys, that served as an organizing principle in the ancient philosophers' thoughts. Looking at the caduceus with the Kaballah Tree overlaid, we see Moses' rod and serpents with the serpents' bodies crossing at Tifareth, dividing the Tree into the Macroprosopus and the Microprosopus, the "upper face" and "lower face" of Deity, as developed by the Hebrews.

The Tifareth wheel, seen in purely Hebrew terms, shows a rotary movement just like that HERMETIC CADEUCEUS ON THE TREE OF LIFE on the Wheel of Fortune Arcanum due to the Mother Pillar's downward attraction toward Malkuth, the Earth, balanced by the Father Pillar's upward longing for Kether, the Unmanifest. But

when the caduceus is overlaid, one sees a new and more sophisticated kind of movement, more suitable to express the interplay of yin and yang around the center pole of androgyny (again, made up of Malkuth, Moon, Sun, Saturn and Kether). The two complimentary energies do not remain separated, each on their own pillar, but intertwine across the hub of Tifareth. The top of the Father Pillar is the head of the yang serpent, whose tail wraps around Hod to end in Malkuth, while the top of the Mother is the head of the yin serpent, who wraps around Netzach to end at Malkuth.

Each serpent is unique in its Supernal Triangle origins, but they each show seemingly opposite characteristics in their material extension at the bottom of the Tree. This pattern portrays the inverse reflection between "above" and "below," the mirror-image effect that happens when the soul falls "through the looking glass" from supernal or eternal reality into the material or reflected world, or inversely, rises up to transcend the ego and merges with Higher Self. The caduceus, symbol of the Hermetic Gnosis, comes from the same tradition as the Rulership Diagram showing the ascent and descent of souls on the Ladder of Lights. The Kabbalah molecule, the Wheel of the Year and the caduceus are all that same Ladder, and we can only wonder at the marvelous minds who were able to design this interlocking mystical puzzle.

Flash Cards of the Mysteries

Now that we have investigated the layers of the Mysteries in relation to each other, we can see the place of the various "schools" of Tarot in the transmission of those Mysteries. The El Gran Tarot Esoterico relates the Arcana to the pre-fall state of the Original Human, so it and the Tarot of the Ages give us instructions from the point of view of our immortal origins. One could most properly use them with the path-pattern on the cover of Aryeh Kaplan's The Sephir Yetzirah, as that pattern was proposed by the Gra at the same time as he restored the letter-to-planet correspondences. The unique feature of this Tree is that it closes the gap at Da'at without drawing Malkuth back up into the diagram (see "Kabbalah/Cabbalah").

The entire Continental group of Tarots, from the reformed Marseilles of the 1600s through Etteilla, Levi, Papus, Wirth and all others who follow either the "old Alexandrian" correspondences or Levi's subtle adjustment, are designed for the work of the Christian Cabbalists, who would be basing their theurgic rituals on the model inherited from the Renaissance magi (see Kabbalah/Cabbalah essay) and codified by Kircher. These are the Tarots that partake in the confluence I have detailed in this essay.

Tarots that have departed from this order or were never created in respect of it, cannot be used esoterically with the fullness of the decks created between 1660 and the late 1800s. For whatever reason, they lack the interior architecture we have explored above. Because of this, modern "esoteric" Tarots have had to work extra hard to justify their "corrected" systems. They have parted company with the Renaissance magi who gave us esoteric Tarot.

Now You Have Eyes To See

Whenever I examine a new esoteric Tarot, these are the kinds of tests I put its correspondences through. I look to see if the creator is in touch with these bedrock alignments which are built into the interior structure of the Hebrew alphabet, the Kabbalah molecule, the numerals, the astrological rulership pattern and the Arcana. I hope to see that all the internal linkages hold up--that if the deck shows Hebrew (or Greek) letters linked to signs and planets on the Major Arcana, then this symmetry between systems is held sacred. Of the Tarots available today, only those of the Continental Esoteric Schools (including the decks mirroring the Fratres Lucis manuscript) and the (unscrambled) Etteilla Arcana pass this test, although most of the very earliest handmade and woodblock Tarots can be used as if they were aware of these connections. Certainly since the "reform" of the 1660s (see "The Continental Tarots"), Tarot has been an esoteric document with a developed body of correspondences, and quite likely this has been true since its beginning.

For better or for worse, the modern Tarots with their reinterpreted correspondences are not representing historical Tarot, other than just the history of the twentieth century. I include here the Spanish decks taking off from Maxwell, the Golden Dawn group of Tarots, the BOTA Tarot, the Egypcios Kier and my very first real deck, the Church of Light Tarot. These decks or "schools" of decks have all moved on from the Renaissance paradigm of Christian Cabbalah, much less the older tradition of Hebrew Kabbalah. In all cases, the "corrections" to the ancient interlocking system undermine the position of Arcana within this family of related paradigms. This will be true of every other New Age attempt to reinvent the alphanumeric-astrologic connections of old, unless it is grounded in a

thorough knowledge of the longstanding tradition Tarot rests upon. There are only a few ways one can adjust the correspondences without shattering the system, as we have seen.

The Continental Tarots

by Christine Payne-Towler

Table of Correspondences for the Continental Tarots

Greek Letter	α	β	γ	δ	ε	ς	ζ	η	θ	ι	κ	λ	μ	ν	ξ	ο	π	φ	ρ	σ	τ	υ	
Hebrew Letter (Continental use)	א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ת		
Arcana Names	Fool	Magus	Phoetoss	Empress	Emperur	Pope	Lovers	Chariot	Justice	Hermit	Wheel	Strength	Hanged Man	Death	Temperance	Devil	Tower	Star	Moon	Sun	Judgement		
Arcana Number	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
El Gran Tarot Esoterico (Tarot of the Ages), Gra version of SephirYetzirah	△	⊕	♂	⊙	♄	♃	♅	♁	♆	♁	♃	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁
Old Alexandrian/Etteilla Greek, Hermetic	△	⊕	♀	♃	♄	♃	♅	♁	♆	♁	♃	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁
Levi, Wirth, Papus Continental Tarots	△	⊕	♀	♃	♄	♃	♅	♁	♆	♁	♃	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁
Marseilles (according to Joseph Maxwell)	△	⊙	⊕	♀	♃	♄	♃	♅	♁	♆	♁	♃	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁
Pierre Piobb, 1908 - Spanish Variant #1 Dall, Enskalherria	♃	⊙	⊕	♀	♃	♄	♃	♅	♁	♆	♁	♃	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁
Balbi, Spanish Variant #2	♃	⊙	⊕	♀	♃	♄	♃	♅	♁	♆	♁	♃	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁
	ABOVE this line, Hebrew alphabet is used in the ancient manner.												BELOW, modern adjustments prevail.										
OGD Order of Golden Dawn English School	♃	♄	⊕	♀	♃	♄	♃	♅	♁	♆	♁	♃	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁
Crowley's English Variant	♃	♄	⊕	♀	♃	♄	♃	♅	♁	♆	♁	♃	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁	♁
Arcana Numbers	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	11	9	10	8	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22

In the essay entitled "The Major Arcana" I emphasize that "something happened" to the Tarot in the late 1600s, when a new trend emerged in the images of the Major Arcana. I point to the Marseilles family of decks and the Etteilla Tarots to illustrate my point. The images shown by Antoine Court de Gebelin in his book *Le Monde Primitif* further validates this idea. The remainder of this essay is about exploring "what happened."

Let's review the situation of Tarot in the first half of the 1600s. Since the early 1400s, both handmade and woodblock Tarots showed a remarkable constancy of internal structure even though some packs were either edited or expanded to meet the needs of the various games for which they were created.

Tarot appeared in 72-card form in Italy around 1450, although this model may represent "splice" between preexisting symbol sets: the twenty-two Hebrew alphabet-keyed set called the Major Arcana, and the Turkish Mamluk cards of unknown provenance, a 15th century version of which can be seen in Volume 2 of Stuart Kaplan's *Encyclopedia of Tarot* (see essay on the Minor Arcana).

Kaplan also explains that the numerical order the Arcana appear in now is carried over from the French pack by Catin Geofroy, published in 1557 (Vol. 1, p. 65). Some earlier fragmentary Tarots show Roman numerals on some of their Major Arcana, but not all of them, and not in the order we are now familiar with. Those very old woodblock decks tend instead to follow the list enumerated in a sermon written by an Italian friar in the late 15th century (see illustration opposite page 1 in Volume 1 of Kaplan's *Encyclopedia of Tarot*). There is also another order derived from the Charles VI pack that keeps Temperance, Fortitude and Justice together in a group. A very small minority of Tarots follow this order, including Etteilla's Tarots. Many of the earliest decks did not show either Roman or Arabic numerals, titles or astrology sigils. Some of the images do, however, utilize traditional scenes and characters from

the signs of the zodiac, the personae of the planets and other traditional mythic themes familiar to the culture of the times.

A look at these oldest packs reveals images from the persecuted Cathar movement as well as Hebrew, Greek and Gypsy occult symbolism. The vehemence with which the Church attacked the cards and their makers only reinforces the evidence that Tarot was the repository of heretical wisdom preserved in imagery. Close study of the excellent book called *Tarot Symbolism* by Robert O'Neil exposes the falsity of the belief that there were no esoteric associations with Tarot imagery before Eliphas Levi.

The Marseilles family of Tarots began to appear in the late 1400s or early 1500s, slowly evolving and becoming more distinct as versions were reproduced and their popularity spread. The deck we are featuring from this family is based on the classical Italian-Piedmontese tarot of Giuseppe Ottone, first published in 1736. Dr. Lewis Keizer considers this family of decks to be the best reproduction of the earliest Arcana to have survived the Inquisition (see "The Esoteric Origins of Tarot: More than a Wicked Pack of Cards").

O'Neil suggests that the Marseilles Tarots were actually the original "folk" pattern, but since most copies were woodblock-print "catchpenny" decks, not expensive works of art like the handmade decks of the Milanese ducal families, they more easily became worn and were discarded and replaced. (I agree to the extent that I too think the earliest extant Tarots are probably not true to the sources that originally inspired Tarot.) This helps explain the uniqueness of the Visconti Sforza and related Tarots, which have more in common with the Mantegna Tarots than the Marseilles. Most of the differences from one pack of Marseilles Tarots to another were simply local details entered into the standard image to identify the maker and the region in which the given version was produced.

But in the early 1660s, two decks appeared that permanently changed the look of several Major Arcana. Subsequently, those changes "leaped out" of the Marseilles mold, appearing in the works of de Gebelin and all the Etteilla variants of the following century, effectively obliterating the older versions of these cards except in the case of a nostalgic few Tarot makers who preferred the archaic form. The two Marseilles-style decks that date this telling change in the Tarot canon are the Tarots by Jacques Vieville and Jean Noblet, both Parisian cardmakers in the Marseilles tradition.

A Glance At the Cards in Question

Two defining characteristics of the oldest Tarots were a Lovers card that shows "The Union of the King and Queen" theme, and a Devil card that shows the image of a traditional werewolf or lamia from European pagan antiquity. After the change in the late 1600s, those two cards are drawn to entirely different models, called the Two Paths and Typhon (or later Baphomet).

These amendments to the Arcana can first be seen in the aforementioned two French Marseilles Tarots which appeared in the early 1660s. A century later these same amendments appeared as illustrations in *Le Monde Primitif* by Court de Gebelin, and Etteilla's Tarot also followed them faithfully. By the beginning of the 19th century, all schools of Tarot used the "new" models despite their other differences. Adjustments were made at the same time to several other Major Arcana, but the Lovers and the Devil serve as perfect "markers" in Tarots that accepted this new influence.

In Volume 2 of Stuart Kaplan's *Encyclopedia*, we have an excellent illustration of the development of these two "new" Arcana as they appeared in 1660 in Jacques Vieville and Jean Noblet's decks. Kaplan was kind enough to put them on opposite pages, and we can actually see the ideas developing. Apparently Vieville liked the new version of the Lovers, but rejected changes to the Devil, while Jean Noblet went all the way and changed them both. It is uncanny how they form the line of demarcation--before them, only the old forms appear, but after them, entirely new images take over. It's hard not to wonder "what happened here?"

Introducing Athanasius Kircher

One way to answer the above question would be to ask the parallel question, "What else was happening in Europe during the second half of the 1600s that might cause a ripple of change in the Tarot?" This question is easier to answer.

In a general way the answer is "the closing years of the Renaissance." But the more specific answer, very relevant to Tarot, is "Athanasius Kircher." One has only to find a copy of Joscelyn Godwin's wonderful presentation Athanasius Kircher: A Renaissance Man and the Quest for Lost Knowledge from Thames and Hudson to realize that this German Jesuit scholar is a key to many riddles in the history of esoteric Tarot.

In the essay "Kabbalah/Cabbalah," an entire section is devoted to Kircher's Christian Cabbalah paradigm. It is he who adapted the paths of the Tree of Life into the form that modern magicians and Tarot practitioners are familiar with. It is also Kircher who was so convinced of the Egyptian source of the ancient mysteries, and so learned and literate in the exposition of his ideas, that the sheer force of his certainty impregnated esoteric thought for centuries afterward. And I think it is he who, either directly or indirectly, affected the look of the Tarot forever after.

As you gaze upon his illustration of Pan or Jupiter, it is difficult to miss how closely the "new" Devil image that appears in the 1660s resembles Kircher's conception. A shift in gender in evidence by Levi's time (late 1880's), in which the Devil gravitates from a masculine form, through a form with attributes of both genders, to the final female form, gives us the Baphomet image favored in the esoteric schools all over Europe (see chapter on The Major Arcana).

If we accept this resemblance as relevant to the changing of the Devil cards of Tarot, then we can see the process by which we might find evidence in Kircher's work or that of his contemporaries for the shift in the Lovers card, and possibly other details as well. Unfortunately, my catalog of Kircher's work is not extensive enough to let me point to such a striking parallel image in the case of the Lovers. But even partial exposure to his ideas and images serves to convince us that Kircher's voracious mind made itself an expert on whatever it contemplated. Meanwhile, the article by Dr. Keizer points to the mid-1700s as a pivotal time in the history of Tarot, because that is the time of the Fratres Lucis or Brothers of Light.

In essence, Dr. Keizer says that the books published by de Gebelin and Etteilla, lauding the Egyptian origin of the Tarot Arcana, were not original in their ideas at all, but were "already common understanding in French occult circles, which were essentially Freemasonic" (p. 12). Keizer sets forth that the "Egyptian Initiation" manuscript that was translated and published by Paul Christian (aka Jean Baptiste Pitois) in 1870 is actually a Fratres Lucis initiatory document from before the French Revolution (which started in 1789). Keizer does not say at which point the Fratres Lucis got the document or when the images were created for it. Upon examining the book Dr. Keizer refers us to, called Egyptian Mysteries, anonymously published by Weiser in 1988, we find in its foreword "... Egyptian Mysteries was probably translated into French by Christian, though not from the original manuscript...but from a handwritten copy, many of which had been circulating in the occult world from the Middle Ages up to the 19th century."

These ideas in mind, we can now see a theme emerging: In the late Renaissance Kircher amalgamates the Ari version of the Sephir Yetzirah with the Pythagorean astro-alphanumeric code, and the basis for Christian Cabbalah is born. Kircher may have also been exposed to the Fratres Lucis document, which by then was available to occultists in Europe, and which also reflects the Hermetic astro-alphanumeric variant. He declares in no uncertain terms that the entire occult canon of the Renaissance comes from Egypt. The stream of Marseilles Tarots shows sudden and characteristic changes that could easily reflect the mammoth catalog of sacred art Kircher both created and commissioned. The Freemasonic community either picked up or were bequeathed Kircher's works, stimulating the enhancement of the already existing Gnostic-inflected folk Tarot with his fabulous and extremely occult images. Secret initiatory documents would then have been created to further illuminate the teachings contained in the images. Court de Gebelin and Etteilla (both Freemasons) each publicized the story of the Egyptian origin of the Arcana just as Kircher asserted it. However, the resulting initiatory document, which became associated with the Fratres Lucis by the time of the French Revolution, was not revealed publicly until 1870, by Paul Christian.

Meanwhile, the descriptions of the Arcana in that manuscript match exactly the changes which appear spontaneously in the Marseilles family of Tarots during the first half of the 1660s. I draw the conclusion that the inspiration for those changes is to be found in the Fratres Lucis manuscript, traveling through the underground stream of the Secret Societies. And if Kircher himself did not have a hand in mirroring the Fratres Lucis images into the Major Arcana of Tarot, then the Rosicrucian and Masonic community who followed in his immediate footsteps did.

Tarot historians have never seen the original models for the changes that appear in the Vieville and Noblet Tarots, but that may be just because we are not studying the Renaissance magi carefully enough. The telling fact that the images first appeared on Tarot cards two centuries before Paul Christian's publication of the *Fratres Lucis* document means that we have to reevaluate the current theory that the "Egyptian-style images" on some Tarots are late developments in Tarot art.

The very first of these Egyptian-style Tarots to emerge after Christian's publication was the Falconnier/Wegener Tarot of 1896. Gareth Knight, in his fascinating book *The Treasure House of Images*, tells us "Designs for the Falconnier Tarot were taken from original frescos and bas-reliefs in the Louvre and the British Museum, but they nonetheless retain a very French flavour" (p. 20). In the article written about this deck in Volume 2 of the *Encyclopedia*, Kaplan says "Interestingly, he [Falconnier] cites the 1760 Tarot of Marseilles by N. Conver [see Vol. 1 of the *Encyclopedia*] as one that is closest to the 'traditional' Tarot." Perhaps now we can understand why Falconnier would make such a comment!

The catalog of Egyptian-style Tarots, matching the *Fratres Lucis* manuscript, also includes the Papus Tarot, the St. Germaine Tarot, the Ibis, the Brotherhood of Light Tarot, *Egyptios Kier*, Tarot of the Ages and a few others. The information accompanying these Tarots all create the impression that their images come to us from sources far anterior to the first historical decks of the 1400s, and yet each shows the Two Paths and Baphomet rather than the earliest "European" images. We cannot prove such an early date as the origin of the manuscript or the images that have become associated with it. But it's clear that those who say it's "proven" that Pitois/Christian made that manuscript up for his book are simply not looking at the cards themselves.

Dr. Keizer also reminds us that the images that have become associated with the *Fratres Lucis* document might be influenced by the Isaian/Serapian cult that existed in Italy during Alexandrian times (until the 400s AD). The Italians were excavating and studying Serapian temples by the 10th century (see the essay "The Esoteric Origins of Tarot"). Kircher spent the later decades of his life in Italy, and was known as an omnivorous thinker and student of the world. Can we really imagine that he missed out on visiting one of those Serapis temples during his decades in Italy, when Egypt was his passion? To summarize, although the temptation for modern historians has been to look at the pivotal 19th century and the work of Eliphas Levi as defining the epoch of esoteric Tarot, upon closer examination, the situation is not so easy to characterize.

A Bit of Secret Society History

The term Secret Societies is used to refer to an underground affiliation of esotericists deemed heretical by the Catholic Church since the 1100s, made up of pagans, Jews, Arabs, Gnostics, Gypsies and other people of minority beliefs in Christian Europe. The Church's abuses drove them into each other's arms over time, and by the earliest publication of Tarot there were sophisticated international organizations within which mystically and philosophically inclined people, including Christians of a tolerant ilk, could associate and cross-pollinate their ideas.

A particularly important group in the history of Tarot is the Rosicrucians (having their beginning in Germany in 1614), whose membership was always kept secret, and who were dedicated to keeping aspects of ancient wisdom alive despite the Catholic overthrow of pagan Europe. Over time the Rosicrucians created various Masonic Orders to serve as a doorway through which to attract new members. Masonry became tolerated as the only legitimate non-Christian "religion" in Catholic Europe, providing a haven of refuge for alternative thinkers who were spiritually inclined but would not bind themselves to the Pope and all he stood for.

The Order of Elect Cohens (established in the second half of the 1700's by Martines de Pasqually) is the more recent origin of a lineage whose members have included many esoteric scholars pivotal to the history of Tarot, including Court de Gebelin and Etteilla. A century later, this lineage produced The Martinist Order, named after the philosophical stream of Martinez de Pasqually and Louis Claude de St. Martin and started by Papus in 1891. So we can confidently assert that, from the time of Etteilla, the first to popularize a Tarot with overt esoteric content in the 1780s, virtually all the pivotal writers and makers of esoteric Tarot decks in Europe have been Secret Society members. It may prove true that the Tarot is itself a Secret Society creation, although the conditions of persecution under which it originated make that assertion difficult to either affirm or deny.

It is possible to find many books of Tarot "expertise" professing to recount the known history of Tarot but that entirely gloss over the Secret Society connections of the people who have been most pivotal in the history of Tarot.

This results in a view of Tarot development with holes big enough to swallow an entire esoteric lineage! Thus I am infinitely grateful to have in my possession, due to a simple twist of fate, a three-volume restatement of the history of the European lodges, (called *The Book of Rosicruciae*, published in 1947) which puts an entirely different spin on the situation.

The author, E. Swynburne Clymer, also asserts that many of the people whose names are intertwined with the 18th and 19th century Tarots were members in the remarkable, multi-layered web of connections linking the mystical intelligentsia of Europe. In his giant Book, he starts with the publication of the seminal document "Fama Fraternalis" in Germany, around 1614. From that event he moves forward in time with biographies of all the leaders through the generations who were willing to have their names go down in history (many more are mentioned, but anonymously).

I have been greatly enriched by reading the esoteric biographies of St. Germaine, Cagliostro, Stanislas de Guaita, Eliphas Levi and Gerard Encousse/Papus. All these names are familiar to students of Tarot, but the public record on these people is in some cases scant, in others distorted. Clymer's information has given me a less lopsided perception of these dedicated and cultivated persons. Although some have felt that Clymer is a less than unbiased source and therefore his work is not taken as gospel, we cannot correct his excesses or gain perspective on his contribution unless his work is republished in accessible form for all.

When I looked for confirmation of Clymer's excellent volumes, I found Isabel Cooper-Oakley and her book *The Count of Saint-Germaine*, (as derived from the Masonic Archives, with all sources cited). Cooper-Oakley affirms that a whole cohort of magical personalities-- St. Germaine, St. Martin, Etteilla, Mesmer, Cagliostro and others-- collectively represented the French at the Masonic Convention in Paris in 1785 (see pages 108-9). By the end of the chapter she has supplemented that quote with similar remarks from other contemporary sources. As in the previous paragraphs, we are seeing the names of people who have featured heavily in the history of the Orders, in the history of occultism, and in the history of Tarot.

I find it fascinating to imagine just what the chemistry of those times and this group was like. Some of these people were tremendously controversial in their times, in particular St. Germaine and Cagliostro. It has piqued my interest that in this century, Tarots have emerged bearing the names of St. Germaine and Cagliostro. Subtle details on these Tarots point back to this exciting moment in history when Etteilla, Cagliostro, St. Germaine and their Brothers were fanning the flames of the Tarot revival begun in the previous century.

The Older Alexandrian Stream

In addition to the revolutionary reemergence of the *Frater Lucis*-style images of the Devil and the Lovers (among others), the European Lodges also revived the traditional astro-alphanumeric correspondences of the Alexandrian Hermetic system set into place by Pythagoras around 600 BC and revived during the flowering of Alexandrian culture after 300 BC. These correspondences, slightly different from those given in the *Sephir Yetzirah* of the Jews, are the only other version of the letter/number/Arcana correspondences we can be sure are truly authentic and founded in antiquity.

Etteilla taught these correspondences in his books published in the late 1700s, but the correspondences printed on his decks are a blind. Levi made subtle modifications in the late 1800s, and all the European Rosicrucian and Masonic lodges used them, with the exception of the English, right up to the 20th century Etteilla's Tarot became the most famous deck in Europe in the century after its inception. Its offshoot, the Catalan Tarot, became the first 78-card Tarot deck published in Spain in 1900, according to Fournier's playing card encyclopedia.

Etteilla-style Tarots became more ornate in the 19th century (see Kaplan's *Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, p. 141-144 and Vol. 2, p. 400-410). A shortened version was also printed in France at the end of the 19th century to simplify it for fortune telling. In Italy, the 19th century *Cartomanzia* was the homegrown response to Etteilla, and that Tarot has made it considerably easier to unscramble which of Etteilla's images go with which Arcana of the usual Tarots, as both of the sources mentioned below have only partial information in their lists, and over two centuries of reprinting in various countries, the Etteilla cards began to show considerable corruption in the letter/astrology correspondences, making a confusing situation even more difficult to unravel.

The two lists I am citing to detail Etteilla's astro-alphanumeric correspondences are the one given by Papus in the late 1800s, and Stuart Kaplan's version in Vol I of his Encyclopedia. Although I cannot read French to confirm those earlier connections, I know that Papus was the recognized expert of his time and was cited by all English, French and Spanish Tarot writers of his day. I trust his reporting, although his information only goes so far as to link Etteilla's Arcana to the more usual versions from the Marseilles Arcana. Stuart Kaplan shows a differently organized version of the same set in his Encyclopedia of Tarot, Vol. 1, having taken the trouble to supply the astrology correspondences from Etteilla's books. These correspondences became standard for all of Europe's Secret Societies and their Tarots by the time of Levi.

That would make Etteilla the harbinger of the late-appearing Egyptian-style decks, which include the Falconnier/Wegener Tarot, its modern cognate the St. Germaine Tarot, the Ibis, the Egyptian Kier and the Brotherhood of Light Tarot. All these Tarots bear Egyptian-style images (which I stated earlier could be Serapian-inspired, reflected through A. Kircher's synthetic genius). The texts of these decks reference, to a greater or lesser degree, the *Fratres Lucis* text translated and published by Paul Christian in his *History of Magic*.

Again, the numbers and signs printed on Etteilla's cards exist in their own little universe, as they are purposefully rearranged compared to any previous Tarot ordering. This body of attributions is a blind. What is true to the Alexandrian stream are his astro-alpha-numerology connections.

Why Did Etteilla Modify the Major Arcana?

It seems that Etteilla was attempting to realign the images of the Major Arcana with a Greek creation story, a later, Alexandrian modification of the ancient Hebrew mythos of middle-eastern origin. Recent research shows that in changing the images of the Major Arcana, Etteilla was drawing from a Hermetic book, *The Poimandres*, a Greek treatise on the creation of the world and the fall of humanity into Eros. Essentially it's a Greek version of the Genesis story, but with differing names and an altered ordering of events. It fits the standard type of a hypostasis narrative.

The hypostasis is a detailed recitation of the stages that The Creator used to step down universal power so it can be organized into a time-space world peopled with creatures. The *Kaballah Tree* is one hypostasis narrative, evident when you follow the angles of the Lightning Bolt as it descends through the planetary Sefira into matter. Such presentations are a recognizable feature of a Mystery School format. This is the classic "how the world came to be" narrative (see *A Wicked Pack of Cards* by Dumett et. al.).

Etteilla's Tarot assimilated the seven days of creation theme directly from *The Poimandres* (or "Pymander"; there are several spellings). This is one of the manuscripts the Moors saved when it was taken from Alexandria in the sixth century. It was later returned to Europe in the 1500s. By so explicitly detailing a seven days of creation theme that is not the Judeo-Christian version, he is waving a red flag, stating without words that "this is not the folk Tarot that can be passed off as Catholic." Perhaps the workings of democratic groups like the *Fratres Lucis* emboldened him to tell his truth, if only in veiled form, and only in the pictures. In hindsight, he was getting away with a lot!

Along with referencing the Greek and Hermetic stream of Gnosis as the source of his Arcana, Etteilla also reintroduced certain themes that were present in the earliest handmade and woodblocked Tarots but which had been suppressed through the efforts of the Church. Etteilla put back the earliest Goddess images that had been replaced by male figures like Hercules (Strength), Mars (The Chariot), the Hanged Man (Prudence), not to mention any extra Popes and Emperors.

To my eye, Etteilla attempted to revive the more blatant representation of the Sophianic, Hebrew Goddess-based suppressed Gnostic and Holy Grail mythos so threatening to the Church five centuries earlier among the Cathars. Gershom Scholem asserts this very theme in many places in his excellent works--that the Gnostic religion of the Cathars was by no means a purely Christian phenomenon, but instead was imprinted by the Jewish Gnosticism fermenting locally at the same time. Remember, the earliest handmade Tarots (from the mid-1400s) prominently feature the Popess card as a woman in full ecclesiastical garb, intimately identified with the Cathar heresies. Perhaps by clothing these oldest Gnostic images in Hermetic garb, he hoped to cement the link between Alexandrian culture and Gnosticism in Tarot tradition. It is too bad that the layers of veiling he applied to his Arcana have obscured them for so long!

Etteilla also put the signs of the zodiac on his first twelve Arcana, although again following no previous traditional ordering system, but super-imposing his own logic, then claiming it was from the Hebrew. However, as we have seen above, he was, in fact, working with the Hermetic/ Alexandrian variation, which dates back to the Pythagorean corrections to the Greek alphabet in the 7th century bc.

Reassessing Etteilla's Work

Elizabeth Cooper-Oakley's book *The Count of St. Germaine* names Etteilla as a compatriot to Masons and Martinists in his time. We also can see that he was using Kabbalistic correspondences that are in line with what we know of Pythagorean and Hermetic teachings. As well, his Tarots became the most popular and influential of the world's Tarots in the century following their publication. Why, then, do Tarot historians invariably skim over him so lightly? It is a measure of his success as a lodge member that the popular press has never seen the esoteric merit of these Tarots. "Hidden in plain sight," indeed!

It is more than likely that the Etteilla Tarot is the "blind" that the English writers from the early 20th century were warning students against getting caught up in. I can appreciate the thicket of considerations the Etteilla Tarot raises, appearing as it seems to, "out of the blue" and stealing the show so completely in its century that some scholars of his day feared Etteilla's Tarots would push out all the other decks on the market.

But if Papus and Kaplan are correct, and the similarities between Etteilla's Arcana images and the *Fratres Lucis* model are not accidental, it becomes clearer how important Etteilla's Tarot is for transmitting historical values, like a fly in amber, until we could finally decode them. His correspondences, both in the images and in the occult attributions, reach back to an ancient strata of magic, theurgy and mysticism referring us to Alexandrian sources rather than the older Judeo-Christian ones.

It is important to note that in the Arcana which Etteilla chose to rework to his own liking, he shows a high degree of literacy in the canon of magical art and the original Tarots. This suggests that the portrayal of Etteilla by exoteric history is another aspect of the "blind" around his Tarot. For all of Levi's bluster about the imperfection of the Etteilla Tarots, it is no accident that a century later, Papus would borrow the entire framework for his own *Minor Arcana* from Etteilla!

One Century Later: Eliphas Levi

Returning to Secret Society lore, let us note that Clymer spares no pains in mentioning, among those rosters of illustrious lodge members and esoteric scholars, that Eliphas Levi was the Supreme Grand Master of the *Fraternitas Rosae Crucis* of Europe (with the exception of England) from 1856 until his death in 1875. This makes him a distinctly more interesting person than has yet been admitted by his translators or biographers. The public perception of this man and his life work would have one believe that his importance to the transmission of the esoteric paradigm was mostly in his own mind! Some modern Tarot scholars seem genuinely puzzled that he commanded such respect from the European intelligentsia of his day, a huge oversight in view of the facts as stated by Clymer.

Whatever aspersions have been cast by the dubious upon the name of Eliphas Levi, esoteric tradition reveals his steadying influence in the chaos which the Secret Societies were experiencing during his tenure as Supreme Grand Master. Not only did he serve as Grand Master for over twenty of the most difficult years the combined orders had faced in his century (the siege of Paris during the Franco-Prussian War), but his name and writings were the turning point for esoteric Tarot, making it more accessible for the masses after the century of Etteilla's confusing tarots. Clymer also names him as a Kabbalistic and Magean Initiate, and a member of *L'Ordre Du Lit*.

The books for which Levi is most known appeared during his earliest years as the Grand Master. In them he indicated the Sephir Yetzirah, Pythagoras and Court de Gebelin (among others) as sources for the letter/Arcana/astrological codes and correspondences used within the *Fraternitas* (Levi's *History of Magic*, p. 76-7). In an article called "The Science of the Prophets" found in *The Mysteries of Magic*, a digest of Levi's writings translated by A. E. Waite (p. 275-288), Levi lays out his Hebrew letter/Arcana correspondences very clearly, with no ambiguity. If his attributions were spurious or mistaken, there was plenty of time for the world to critique his assertions when he was still alive. But no such controversy ever erupted, because these were the common correspondences all over Europe and had been so for over a century. Only after his death, upon the disposal of his papers and the translating of his works, did the efforts at revisionism begin.

Levi's Significant Contributions to Tarot

It is clear that Eliphas Levi's monumental scholarship and high status in the Secret Societies made it easier for his attributions to become the standard European pattern from the late 1900s until today. Yet a few Tarots continued to follow the older pattern represented by Etteilla. The switch is subtle, because nothing changes between the Hebrew letters, their numbers or their astrology. But Levi's work and the decks that grew out of his work show the letter Tav on The World and Shin on The Fool. The element/ planet correspondences with the letters stay the same, but the Arcana themselves switch places in the alphabet.

It is possible that while working with Charles Nodier and Jean Baptiste Pitois (aka Paul Christian) on the spoils of Napoleon's sack of the Vatican, cataloging and translating manuscripts from disbanded heretical monasteries of earlier centuries, Levi discovered something that inspired him to make this adjustment. So far I have found nothing among his translated writings which explains this transposition.

The French School of Tarot

In the essay entitled "Major Arcana Introductions," I stated that "something happened" in the late 1600s when a new trend emerged in the images of the Major Arcana. I point to the Marseilles family of decks and the Etteilla Tarots to illustrate my point. The images shown by Antoine Court de Gebelin in his book *Le Monde Primitif* further underscore this idea. The remainder of this essay is about exploring "what happened."

For context, let's review the situation of Tarot in the first half of the 1600s. Since the early 1400s, both handmade and woodblock Tarots showed a remarkable constancy of internal structure even though some packs were either edited or expanded to meet the needs of the various games for which they were created. Tarot appeared in 72-card form in Italy around 1450, although this model more likely represents a "splice" between preexisting symbol sets: the twenty-two Hebrew alphabet-keyed set called the Major Arcana, and the Turkish Mamluk cards of unknown provenance, a 15th century version of which can be seen in Volume 2 of Stuart Kaplan's *Encyclopedia of Tarot* (see essay on the Minor Arcana).

Kaplan also explains that the numerical order the Arcana appear in now is carried over from the French pack by Catelein Geofroy, published in 1557 (Vol. 1, p. 65). Some earlier fragmentary Tarots show Roman numerals on some of their Major Arcana, but not all of them, and not in the order we are now familiar with. Those very old woodblock decks tend instead to follow the list enumerated in a sermon written by an Italian friar in the late 15th century (see illustration opposite page 1 in Volume 1 of Kaplan's *Encyclopedia of Tarot*). There is also another order derived from the Charles VI pack that keeps Temperance, Fortitude and Justice together in a group. A very small minority of Tarots follow this order.

Many of the earliest decks did not show either Roman or Arabic numerals, titles or astrology sigils. Some of the images do, however, utilize traditional scenes and characters from the signs of the zodiac, the personae of the planets and other traditional mythic themes familiar to the culture of the times.

A look at these oldest packs reveals images from the persecuted Cathar movement as well as Hebrew, Greek and Gypsy occult symbolism. The vehemence with which the Church attacked the cards and their makers only reinforces the evidence that Tarot was the repository of heretical wisdom preserved in imagery. Close study of the excellent book called *Tarot Symbolism* by Robert O'Neil exposes the falsity of the belief that there were no esoteric associations with Tarot imagery before Eliphas Levi.

The Marseilles family of Tarots began to appear in the late 1400s and early 1500s, slowly evolving and becoming more distinct as it was repeated and its popularity spread. The present deck by this name is a reproduction of the edition published in 1748 by the Parisian cardmaker B.P. Grimaud. Dr. Lewis Keizer considers this family of decks to be the best reproduction of the earliest Arcana to have survived the Inquisition (see "The Esoteric Origins of Tarot: More than a Wicked Pack of Cards").

O'Neil suggests that the Marseilles Tarots were actually the original "folk" pattern, but since most copies were woodblock-print "catchpenny" decks, not expensive works of art like the handmade decks of the Milanese ducal families, they more easily became worn and were discarded and replaced. (I agree to the extent that I too think the

earliest extant Tarots are probably not true to the sources that originally inspired Tarot.) This helps explain the uniqueness of the Visconti-Sforza and related Tarots, which have more in common with the Mantegna Tarots than the Marseilles.

Most of the differences from one pack of Marseilles Tarots to another were simply local details entered into the standard image to identify the maker and the region in which the given version was produced. But in the early 1600s, two decks appeared that permanently changed the look of several Major Arcana. Subsequently, those changes "leaped out" of the Marseilles mold, appearing in the works of de Gebelin and all the Etteilla variants of the following century, effectively obliterating the older versions of these cards except in the case of a nostalgic few Tarot makers who preferred the archaic form. The two Marseilles-style decks that date this telling change in the Tarot canon are the Tarots by Jacques Vieville Tarot and Jean Noblet, both Parisian cardmakers in the Marseilles tradition.

A Glance At the Cards in Question

Two defining characteristics of the oldest Tarots were a Lovers card that shows "The Union of the King and Queen" theme, and a Devil card that shows the image of a traditional werewolf or

In his introduction to Oswald Wirth's insightful booklet *Introduction to the Study of Tarot*, Stuart Kaplan states that Wirth was following Levi in putting the Fool between Judgment and the World, while "in the Arabic sequence, The Fool was designated 22 or 0" (p. 9). This is the one and only time I have seen "the Arabic sequence" mentioned, but it suggests a period when the astro-alphanumeric correspondences were diverted to the Moslem libraries and there forgotten. After the waning of Alexandrian culture, they reappeared in Europe in the late 1600s to effect the "correction" that the Marseilles and Etteilla Tarots represent.

Levi's work on the Vatican treasures stolen by Napoleon made him and his co-workers, Nodier and Pitois, privy to materials that had been out of circulation for centuries already, materials we would give our eyeteeth to see again today. Quite likely it was all very carefully arranged to enlist Levi and his student (Papus) when the time came to catalog it all-- who else at that time would have known what they were looking at? With access to these remarkable papal treasures as well as to the archives of the Rosicrucian and Masonic societies they each belonged to, they were "insiders" in the most inside sense of the word! (This, by the way, shows one possible path the *Fratres Lucis* manuscript could have taken to reach Pitois/Christian, although it is certainly not the only possible way.)

We can now attribute to Levi the pattern of correspondences leading to the decks by Papus, Wirth and the one named after Cagliostro. The lion's share of modern European esoteric Tarots seems to be informed by this style of connecting the letters to the Arcana, no matter whether or how they splice on the astrology after the fact.

Reinstating Levi

Eliphas Levi was not the only person to suffer postmortem redactions and come out looking significantly reduced in the translation. I believe an unwritten mandate within the Societies states that when a member comes out with a book, deck or course of training that is too power-packed with the real teachings, or if it looks like it might be misunderstood or misapplied, several generations of lodge members following after them will be assigned to disclaim them. Etteilla disclaims de Gebelin. Levi disclaims Etteilla. Levi's Golden Dawn translators play havoc with him. Papus disclaims Christian/Pitois, and Waite repudiates them all.

This is all part of the ancient debate over how much of the inner teachings should be shared with the masses. Built into the Secret Society paradigm is the notion that "our group is privy to esoteric truths that others lack." The Church was continually trying to infiltrate the Secret Societies and criminalize their activities, so Society members could not freely share their teachings even if they had wanted to. Many occultists were also scientists, mathematicians, doctors, inventors and the like who rightly feared that their experiments and inventions would fall into the hands of those who would exploit them materially without adequate moral or spiritual guidance. (This is exactly what has happened in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with the rise of secular scholarship disconnected from religious frameworks and ethical considerations.)

So even those who were seen by Secret Society members as teaching the esoteric paradigm (Etteilla and Levi, for instance) felt they had to resort to a bit of obfuscation, retaining the innermost secrets for "those who had eyes to see." Even though Levi states in public that he thinks of Etteilla's Tarots as misguided and erroneous, in truth he is

using the very same system, with only the slightest amendments. And neither he nor Etteilla were entirely truthful about where the attributions came from. We must try to keep this trend in mind when we see how disparaging the English Tarot writers were about Levi just forty or fifty years later (see "The English School").

Interestingly enough, both Etteilla and Levi were educated occultists who would most likely have been exposed to whatever versions of esoteric correspondences were being taught and used in the widespread Secret Society groups of their respective times. Yet they chose not to specify that they were each representing the Alexandrian/Hermetic branch of the Hebrew tradition rather than the considerably older Semitic branch as originally tabulated in the Sephir Yetzirah.

In Conclusion

In light of the above, we can now define the Continental Tarot as comprised of a lineage of lodge brothers collectively committed to the survival of the Hermetic/Alexandrian Gnosis, already old and revered at the time of the founding of the Fraternitas. The first, handmade Tarots revealed the Hebrew/Cathar/ Gnostic origins of the Arcana, but those Tarots were eventually either lost or misunderstood, resulting in the promulgation of mass-produced decks with little but folk meanings, taking the place of the original flash cards for the Mysteries (see "The Confluence of Ancient Systems").

Kircher, the Fratres Lucis, Etteilla, Levi and other Tarot reformers eventually imprinted a more esoteric version of the ancient Arcana into the collective consciousness. This was largely an underground endeavor until Levi laid it out in a systematic way for the whole of the Fraternitas. We have seen that this stream of Tarots has formed the riverbed in which most modern European Tarots (not of the English stream) are flowing.

My meta-theory that underlies most of what I'm working with here is that the Rosicrucians, especially the Martinist Lodge, has made it their business to save and revive the Inner Tradition of Tarot. The Continental Esoteric Tarots perpetuate representations of the ancient Hermetic/Alexandrian Mysteries, of the earliest proto-Tarots, and of the secret documents from the Middle Ages. This is one reason for calling the nineteenth century the French Occult Revival. Most sources point to Levi as the figurehead, but the dates prove that he was coasting on the previous century's momentum.

As mentioned earlier, the crowd that has followed Levi's "adjusted" correspondences, from the late 1800s to this day, places the Tav on the World card, while the letter Shin is on the Fool (see the essay "The Confluence of Ancient Systems"). I think we can use this variation as another marker to show which Tarots were constructed by Fraternitas members after Levi and which were drawn from the Fratres Lucis document from the 1600s. For further insight into the more recent esoteric decks that promote the assignment of Shin to the Fool, see Valentine Tomberg's priceless Meditations on the Tarot. Tomberg tells us that this correspondence was given to him from a "Martinist-Templar-Rosicrucian" confederation he belonged to in St. Petersburg, Russia in 1920. The modern occult writer Mouni Sadhu uses a redrawing of Court de Gebelin's images with Levi's correspondences in his extraordinary manual, The Tarot. Irene Gad's valuable Tarot and Individuation also teaches this arrangement.

The Spanish School of Tarot

by Christine Payne-Towler

A few years ago, I was excited to acquire the Catalog of Playing Cards from Fournier, the Spanish cardmaker whose archive "must be the most numerous collection of its type in the world."

The author, don Felix Alfaro Fournier, grandson of the founder of the press, claims his book to be "the most complete graphical repertoire of playing cards which has been published to date, with 4,000 illustrations in full color and 2,000 descriptions of packs."

According to Fournier, early mentions of the Tarot in official documents first appear in Spain in the Municipal Archives of Barcelona in 1378. Unfortunately by 1382, card games were being prohibited by decree, first in Barcelona, then in Castile and Turia (Valencia). These warnings from the Church were meant to be taken seriously, following on the heels of the Albigensian crusade, waged from 1208 to 1229 by the Catholic Church against Cathar heretics affiliated with contemporary French and Italian papermakers and printers'guilds. It would not be surprising at all if the savagery and destruction that the Church perpetrated in the south of France a century and a half before had a dampening effect on the industry's freedom of expression in Spain.

The Spanish never stopped playing the card games, however, and instead experimented with and developed a rich artistry in their cards. The Fournier chapter on the Spanish cards shows 923 packs of playing cards just in Volume 1! What it does not show is a single Tarot pack being published in Spain until 1900, the Catalan Taroccos, and that one was a remake of the earlier Etteilla Tarot from eighteenth century France.

Considerable evidence tells us that the Spanish Jewish mystics kept in close touch with their colleagues in France, sharing considerable consensus in interpretation and practice of their common faith. This may have been the reason that a Tarot from France appeared that was drawn with Spanish art before the French produced a truly original deck of their own. Just as we do with images from Etteilla's Tarots, we have to take his writings with a grain of salt, too. On the faces of his cards, Etteilla printed various words, numbers, astrological glyphs and Hebrew letters, but they belong to the category of "veils" concealing his true correspondences. He was producing his works in a time when it was still necessary for him to disguise the content so as not to violate the boundaries set by the sources he was using or the oaths he had sworn upon becoming a Mason. In his books about Tarot, on the other hand, Etteilla passed on a body of astro-alphanumeric correspondences which he claims to have received from the Sephir Yetzirah of the Jews (see essay called "Kabbalah/Cabbalah").

We know now that he was dissembling on this point, because the astro-alphanumeric correspondences he used were actually a variant that had emerged with the Greek alphabet reforms of 600 BC. The confusion created by this misdirection has been a major obstacle that has deprived Etteilla of due credit for his contribution to Tarot history. The correspondences Etteilla published in his books are indeed related to the ancient Gra tradition detailed in Kabbalah by Gershom Scholem, but "related" does not mean "the same as." Etteilla was actually teaching the Hermetic/ Alexandrian variant, a later product of Pythagorean numerical mysticism. One could think of these correspondences as being Greco/Roman, a later development of the Hebrew pattern, itself derived from the Phoenician of antiquity.

But the Spanish Tarot decks as a whole are not characterized by the Etteilla Tarot alone, borrowed as it is from France and a hundred years old already in 1900. The one truly original Spanish Tarot, which like all others was printed in this century, is El Gran Tarot Esoterico, commissioned by the Fournier card publishing company in 1977 to honor the six hundredth anniversary of Tarot's appearance in Europe.

El Gran Tarot Esoterico

The Esoterico Tarot could be mistaken for a spin-off of the Marseilles Tarot to an unpracticed eye, but it is loaded with telling detail that links it with very ancient Hebrew legends about the Goddess, Eve, Sophia and the Wife of God (see essay called "The Gnostic Tarot").

Additionally, when the astrological sigils on the Majors and Minors of this deck are analyzed, they correspond exactly to a pattern of astro-alphanumeric correspondences of origin in biblical times. This pattern, called the Gra arrangement of the Sephir Yetzirah, was written down in the first or second century AD, late in history relative to its

true age. Evidence of its antiquity can be found in the fact that the Sephir Yetzirah was mentioned by name in the Talmud, which can be traced back to at least 300 BC.

It is also true that Pythagoras, Greek number mystic of the 600s BC, studied with the Hebrews, adapting their number theory to his own. So again history tells us that the roots of this pattern are considerably older than any others, although Marixtu Erlanz de Guler, author of El Gran Tarot Esoterico, was the first to print them on a Tarot deck.

Recent Hebrew scholarship from Aryeh Kaplan's The Sephir Yetzirah, published in 1990, highlights the reasons why the Gra version has to be at the root of the Hebrew alphabet mysteries (see the "Kabbalah/ Cabbalah" essay). This version has been confirmed in its authenticity and antiquity by no less a light than the eighteenth century Rabbi Eliahu, Gaon of Vilna, whose honorific, "The Gra," was given to his version. Aryeh Kaplan also reminds us that the Sephir Yetzirah is one of the primary ancient astrological texts, which strongly implies to me that its earliest form would have shaped a "world standard norm" from which future traditions would be drawn or against which later redactions (i.e., commentaries) would be contrasted.

So whenever I see a Tarot using the Gra correspondences, and notice that it was published two decades before Aryeh Kaplan's definitive research proving the historical validity of its astro-alphanumeric correspondences, I sit up and take notice! Marixtu Guler, author of the Esoterico Tarot, clearly has her finger on a rich vein of esoteric, occult tradition in this Tarot.

In light of what we now know, that the Etteilla cards were designed to be used with the Alexandrian/Hermetic astro-alphanumeric attributions (despite what he had printed on the cards), it is even more noteworthy that seventy-seven years later, after the Catalan Taroccos had become Spain's "traditional" esoteric Tarot, El Gran Tarot Esoterico would be prestigiously commissioned to represent an even older, more venerable and largely unsung set of attributions. This indicates to me that there was not as homogeneous a situation in the Spanish Secret Societies as on the rest of the Continent.

One impression that is hard to miss with the Spanish playing card decks is that the Spanish culture has been the most multicultural, colorful and open-minded of all the European cultures when it comes to playing card imagery, especially the closer we get to modern times. People from Africa, China, the Middle East and the Americas appear in their native dress, right along with the expected Europeans, often standing for "the four corners of the world" through their suit attributions.

Perhaps we should expect to see this variety since the path that papermaking took to reach Europe was from China via the Arabs, up through North Africa and into Spain. In these Spanish playing card decks, costumes are ornate, the figures are most often caught in various action poses (the Spanish royalty do not sit, unless astride a horse) and occasionally one of the royalty will suggest a Major Arcanum. The King of Cups often looks like a minor pope, while the King of Swords sometimes holds the crossed orb known from the Empress and Emperor Arcana. I am sure more resemblances could be found if we had the full decks to look at, instead of just a few "representative cards" from a catalog.

This multicultural trend continued as new Tarots began to appear in Spain. What the Spanish lacked in Tarots before 1900, they make up for in the late twentieth century!

Modern Spanish Tarots

The first seventy-eight card Tarot published in Spain, as previously mentioned, was the Catalan Taroccos, possessed of every feature that we would expect from an esoteric Tarot, although in an unusual arrangement. This deck demonstrates detailed and pleasing numbered Arcana inspired by classical archetypes, Hebrew letters, symbols purported to be Egyptian hieroglyphics, and in the case of the Minor Arcana, the faces of both the Catalan and French playing cards.

Starting with this deck, all the Spanish Tarot images show the modifications we have come to associate with the Frater Lucis Egyptian-style pictures first published on the Falconnier Tarot of 1896, as discussed in the essays "The Esoteric Origins of Tarot" and "The Continental Tarots." Perhaps the Spanish found the Catalan Tarocco uniquely

satisfying, despite its unorthodox arrangement of the Hebrew letters on the (reordered Etteilla-style) Major Arcana. Or perhaps they were supplementing their experience with French and Italian Tarots that made their way in from abroad.

We do know from books on Tarot published by Spanish authors at the beginning of the twentieth century, that the Falconnier Arcana (or some other source of Alexandrian-style Major Arcana) had appeared in Spain. We know this because we see their titles listed in a table in Pierre Piobb's Formulary of High Magic. This table, and an essay on the Minor Arcana by Eudes Picard, appears in *The Encyclopedia of Occult Sciences*, which was published anonymously in English in 1939. Both Piobb and Picard were originally published in the first decade of the 1900s, and can be found listed in the annotated bibliography at the back of Volume 2 of Kaplan's *Encyclopedia of Tarot*. In this article on Tarot from the *Encyclopedia of Occult Sciences*, Picard's section is illustrated with the Minor Arcana from the Etteilla Tarot, although the descriptions make it clear that what he was writing about was acutally a deck much like, if not identical to, *El Gran Tarot Esoterico*. On the table from Piobb, the astro-alphanumeric correspondences given for the Hebrew letters are those used in Dali's deck and the Euskalherria Tarot, which are marked "as given by [Paul] Christian." (This is another reference to the *Fratres Lucis* manuscript that Christian translated and printed for the first time, although the correspondences on those decks are those of the Old Alexandrian stream.) The illustrations documenting these Major Arcana correspon-dences are made from an unnamed Spanish Marseilles deck. Talk about an eclectic mix of influences! With so many themes appearing in the literature about Tarot upon the appearance of the Catalan Taroccos, it is no wonder that no other Tarots were published in Spain for seven decades.

The Spanish Marseilles

The Spanish Marseilles emerged in 1975, based on the 1736 Italian-Piedmontese Tarot of Giuseppe Ottone. We know that the Marseilles family of decks consisted of "esoteric Tarots" not only because of the many artistic references within them to myth and magic, but also from the telltale changes instituted upon the Lovers and the Devil Arcana in the late 1600s (see "The Continental Tarots"). However, most Marseilles Tarot decks do not have any sigils or glyphs that indicate Hebrew letters, astrology signs or other overt occult correspondences. If one were just trusting in the momentum of "tradition" in Spain, one would expect the Spanish Marseilles to have correspondences like the Catalan Taroccos.

But I am inclined to believe that the most common astro-to-Arcana correspondences used in Spain with the Marseilles cards, at least by the turn of the twentieth century, were the ones presented in Joseph Maxwell's posthumous book called *The Tarot*. These correspondences clearly aren't derived from Hebrew sources, but are just as decidedly linked to traditional portrayals of the zodiac, the planets and other mythic figures, partaking more of the nature of European pagan folk associations than true "occult" technology.

I include these correspondences in this essay rather than in the Continental essay because it appears from the available evidence that the Spanish esotericists were the ones experimenting with various versions of the set published by Maxwell, while the French were sticking with those of Levi. One can see a version of Maxwell's correspondences on the illustrations included in *The Encyclopedia of Occult Sciences* (published anonymously in 1939), in the section about High Magic called "The Tarot, the Supreme Symbol." The Marseilles-style Tarot used as illustrations in the *Encyclopedia of Occult Sciences* as illustrations for the essay includes astrology correspondences clearly related to Maxwell's version, published after his death in 1938.

Dali's Tarot and the Euskalherria by Marixtu Guler, both mentioned below, also uses these exact correspondences. 1976 saw the publication of the Balbi Tarot, a Marseilles offshoot using a body of Arcana/ astrology connections that's another variant of Maxwell's system. This deck gives us the most accessible and sympathetic esoteric Devil card (Baphomet) in my collection. Balbi's Arcana present a blended combination of complimentary and clashing colors, creating powerful optical effects when used for meditation and "scrying." They also look very lively when laid out for a spread.

In 1977, on the six hundredth anniversary of the appearance of playing cards in Europe, Fournier commissioned the very first Spanish Tarot, the aforementioned *El Gran Tarot Esoterico*, created by Marixtu de Guler and rendered by Luis Peña Longa. This is the only Tarot I have ever been able to recommend to my Jewish students, who want a Tarot that will be respected by their rabbis.

The fact that this definitive Tarot also has Minor Arcana that exactly match the essay on the Spanish Tarot written by Eudes Picard in 1908 gives us another assurance that El Gran Tarot Esoterico is not a "fad" Tarot. It would be so helpful if Picard's book, Manuel Synthetique et Pratique du Tarot were translated into English with all illustrations reproduced so we could study more about the Tarot situation in Spain at the turn of this century.

In 1980 the English school was represented in Spain with the publication of the Hermetic Tarot by Godfrey Dowson. This Tarot is especially valuable for its inclusion of the spelling and zodiacal degrees of the zodiac angels, the Shemhamphorash, drawn from Old Testament sources and invoked through theurgy. Being of the English model, the angels are arranged differently on the suit cards than was traditional from the eighteenth century French decks that introduced them. The images seem strangely hallucinated, and the black-and-white format is a bit ominous compared to the brightness of other Spanish packs of cards.

Also in 1980 the Secrets of Tarot deck was reprinted in Spain following a 1955 first edition in Italy under the title Il Destino Svelato Dal Tarocco (aka the Cagliostro Tarot). This deck presents the French School alphanumeric pattern, but with Alexandrian-style Major Arcana imagery. The images on these Arcana are adjusted to portray more female figures, in the spirit of the Etteilla and the earliest handmade Tarot decks. The pity is, the Minor Arcana look utterly unrelated artistically, have only a little character of their own, and are printed top and bottom with divinatory pattern, also like the Etteilla Tarot. I am sure this defect affects the circulation of these interesting Arcana.

The Basque Mythical Tarot followed in 1982, with scintillating designs by Angel Elvira and support material written by Marixtu de Guler. This wonderful deck has undeservedly lapsed out of print, a situation that needs to be rectified due to the artistic and occult value of this unique deck. Ms. Guler also wrote the booklet for the next Tarot to emerge in Spain, the Marseillaise Tarot, which also seems to be unavailable at present. (Is there a Spanish-speaking student of Tarot who can account for the genius of this modern Tarot magus, Marixtu Guler? No doubt the history of Tarot would be greatly enriched if we knew more about her sources, her inspiration and the process she went through to create the monument of esoteric Tarot as her small but powerful collection of decks.)

In 1984 the Universal Dali Tarot emerged, created by the famous artist to please his Russian-born wife's love of the cards. In his Tarot he follows the alphanumeric pattern revealed in the Formulaire de Haute-Magie, published in 1907 by Pierre Piobb (a pseudonym of Comte Vincenti) and footnoted as being "according to [Paul] Christian." From this roundabout clue I assume that Dali (and Maxwell) were reproducing a pattern known by Christian to have been common in Spanish esoteric Tarots during the eighteenth century. The Dali Tarot, along with the aforementioned Balbi Tarot, show more alphanumeric relation to Joseph Maxwell's correspondences than to any other version.

Artistically, the Dali Tarot shows a direct correlation to the Royal Fez Moroccan Tarot, which was commissioned in the late 1950s though not published until 1975. Imitating the Waite-Smith Tarot, the Fez Tarot has very similar pictures card for card, replacing the geometrical arrangements of suit symbols that were traditional. In that sense, the Dali could be considered a hybrid Spanish/English/ pagan Tarot.

An interesting note on the Spanish Tarots is that the deck made by Augustus Knapp and Manly P. Hall in 1929 looks and feels distinctly like a Spanish Tarot except that the royalty are seated. These inspired versions of the Major Arcana display the Pope and the Charioteer in feminine form, like the oldest Gnostic-leaning decks. Yet Knapp and Hall employ the alphanumeric pattern of the Fratres Lucis archetypes, which seem to be the avenue through which the Pythagorean correspondences survived in Europe (see "The Continental Tarots"). This makes the Knapp-Hall Tarot a scholarly splice between the Hebrew Gnostic and the Pythagorean streams coming from antiquity. A modern Tarot with the Hebrew (Spanish) correspondences of the Gra is the Tarot of the Ages. This looks like a divinatory deck because every one of the suit cards is illustrated with a scene of human experience instead of showing geometrically arranged suit emblems as El Gran Tarot Esoterico does. The Major Arcana look Egyptian (modern interpretations of the Falconnier Tarot), but the astrology is old Hebrew. Nowhere is it explained why this combination of images, correspondences and cultures was chosen, but that is not a defect because all the imagery makes the deck more accessible to beginners. The fact that it matches El Gran Tarot Esoterico, though the two appear to have no direct relation to each other, seems to mean that the world of Tarot is maturing and becoming more scholarly about our traditions, even in decks prepared for the mass market. This is a development we can all applaud!

More could be written on the Spanish Tarot stream, especially as it concerns the cultures of Mexico, and Central and South America. Kaplan's Encyclopedia shows that versions of the Alexandrian, Etteilla and Papus Tarots have remained popular among Spanish speakers of the world, despite their lack of commercial impact in North America. More research is needed to put this fascinating and eclectic group of Tarots in proper perspective relative to the larger history of Tarot.

English Order of Tarot

by Christine Payne-Towler

A number of histories have been written to clarify the people and events connected to the founding of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, the most familiar of this century's Secret Societies and source of most of the Tarot decks sold today.

One of the best of these written works is Mary K. Greer's "The Women of the Golden Dawn," which not only chronicles the well-documented events that attended its founding, existence and eventual collapse, but also examines the role of powerful and magical women who were neglected in previous treatments of the subject.

From personal experience, I know Ms. Greer to be a scholar and a gentlewoman who is evenhanded to the extreme. Most of her published work has been either about the Order or the Tarot decks that have emanated from it, yet she retains her objectivity about their place in the history of Tarot. So it was to her book that I turned first in order to gain an overview of the events that created, and later destroyed, this association of talented, inspired, highly educated occultists who changed the face of Tarot for the twentieth century.

That said, I must add that I can present these events with only a fraction of Mary Greer's understanding. My primary focus for this website has been on the ancient Mysteries that Tarot preserves. Therefore, I will leave any more in-depth review of modern Tarots to future projects, where they can be given their due.

The goal of this essay is only to relate in the simplest terms those portions of Golden Dawn history that pertain to that group's treatment of the Tarot Arcana and their body of correspondences to the Hebrew letters, astrology, numbers, paths, angels and the rest of the panoply of Mystery School tradition inherited from our ancient and Renaissance esoteric ancestors. A curious person can reference numerous sources to find a fuller treatment of these fascinating artists, magicians and scholars and their tumultuous times. The bibliography of Women of the Golden Dawn makes an excellent starting point for your research.

A Brief History of the Golden Dawn

Eliphas Levi made quite an impression on the English Rosicrucians in 1853 when he visited Rosicrucian friends in London. One of those friends, Fred Hockley, decided to send his young apprentice, Kenneth R.H. MacKenzie, to visit Levi in Paris and find out more on the state of Levi's research into the mysteries of the Tarot. The two men visited several times over the course of a few days in the winter of 1861, and MacKenzie took copious notes.

Four years later in England, a Rosicrucian group was formed called the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, and it was made up of master Masons only. Kenneth R.H. MacKenzie was one of its earliest members, along with the Rev. A.F.A. Woodford (co-compiler with MacKenzie of the Masonic Cyclopaedia published in 1887), W. Wynn Wescott and S.L. MacGregor Mathers. Twenty years later, this same group (minus Woodford) were still associates, between them founding the Golden Dawn.

Even in these early years before the Golden Dawn, MacKenzie was fascinated with Eliphas Levi, so when he went on that visit to Paris in 1861 he made every effort to cultivate a personal relationship with Levi despite their language barrier. In the detailed notes he kept about their meetings, he enthused that theirs was a profound meeting of occult minds and that they shared ideas and compared experiences like old friends. A decade later he published an article about their meeting in the Rosicrucian, the short-lived magazine of the Societas Rosicruciana, describing a number of the subjects they had covered in their wide-ranging discussions.

This meeting had taken place before any of Levi's work had been translated into English, so MacKenzie was in effect helping the English Masons and Rosicrucians "discover" the important contributions that Levi was making through his publishing and teaching in France. At the point the article was published, Levi had been the Supreme Grand Master of the Fraternitas Rosae Crucis of Europe (with the exception of England) for over sixteen years already, and was to hold the position for two more years until his death.

Because of their imperfect French/English communications (neither spoke each other's language), the exchange was bound to be a bit inexact. MacKenzie, well-known as a creative ritualist and connoisseur of magical codes and cyphers, had wanted to show Levi some correspondences he had worked out for the links between Tarot and the Christian Cabbalah. It is not entirely clear whether Levi was responsive to these ideas or not because the only version of events ever reported was MacKenzie's.

For whatever reason, somewhere in the decade between the meeting and the publication of his article MacKenzie conceived the idea that Levi had intentionally "blinded" the astro-alphanumeric correspondences he used when talking about the Major Arcana of Tarot in his books. This is actually true of Etteilla, an earlier member of Levi's esoteric "lineage" in France, so perhaps this seemed a logical assumption at the time.

But in truth, as we have shown in other chapters, Levi was faithfully reporting the correspondences as they had come down through the Hermetic/Alexandrian writers of the first and second centuries AD, which then were picked up by the Renaissance magi during the Hermetic Revival. Levi did insert one correction into the ancient pattern of correspondences, but it was subtle and did not change the ancient number/letter connections, only two Arcana that were switched between the last two letter/numbers (see "The Continental Tarots").

MacKenzie Devises His Own System

Recalling that MacKenzie, Wescott and Mathers were lodge members in the Societas for years before the Golden Dawn was ever conceived, we probably can assume that they would talk to each other about their studies and their personal spiritual work. It is through this friendly association that Wescott learned of MacKenzie's project of "adjusting" the system that Levi had taught. Eventually MacKenzie's adjustment blossomed into an entire system of his own, but in his lifetime he never shared the details with Wescott and Mathers. It came into their hands only after MacKenzie died in 1886, when his impoverished widow was forced to sell the manuscript to Wescott.

The official story goes that in 1885, after the death of Fred Hockley, MacKenzie's mentor, a "cypher manuscript" was "discovered" among his personal effects. Because Hockley, the man who first introduced MacKenzie and Levi, was an avid collector of ancient magical texts, the Golden Dawn founders were able to claim they had discovered a cache of esoteric rituals and teachings that seemed ancient, authentic and more accurate than those of the French lodges. Among the papers was found a set of astro-alphanumeric correspondences that appeared to them to correct the "blind" they felt existed in Levi's work.

Three years passed between the "discovery" of the cypher manuscript and the founding of the Order of the Golden Dawn. Ostensibly, in that interval they were translating the manuscript, deducing that it described the workings of a German lodge, gaining permission to convene an English branch of this lodge, and fleshing out the quasi-Masonic rituals for their own use. The first lodge of the new order was founded March 1, 1888.

Let us remember what Dr. Keizer mentions in his essay "The Esoteric Origins of the Tarot": "The synthesis they created for the Golden Dawn rituals combined Rosicrucian and Christian Cabbalistic doctrine with the kind of layout used on a Masonic floor. The floor and officers represented Sephiroth, and initiation from 0=0 to 5=6 represented the upward ascent from Malkuth to Tiphareth." If we review the essay "The Confluence of the Ancient Systems," we can see what a challenging and sophisticated task they set themselves to.

The Story Comes Apart

Occult scholar R.A. Gilbert eventually managed to see through this myth of origins, revealing that MacKenzie (possibly with the aid of his old friend the Rev. A.F.A. Woodford) had superimposed the new correspondences onto the Renaissance Christian Cabbalah model (see "Kabbalah/Cabbalah") in such a way that they could present the "correction" as another historical tradition. Then, when it came into the hands of Wescott and Mathers, it was fleshed out into an entire lodge and grade system based upon the new correspondences. In this way, their new Secret Society had genuine traditional-seeming secrets of its own.

The deception was revealed to the rest of the members of the Order of the Golden Dawn in 1900, upon the appearance of an American woman calling herself "Madame Horos." She was passing herself off as the fabled German source of the cypher manuscript, the woman who had supposedly obtained for Wescott and Mathers the charter for their English lodge. Madame Horos presented herself to MacGregor Mathers as having come to help them with their "Isis movement" (the mother lodge of the Golden Dawn was called the Isis-Urania Temple). He formally introduced her to his group, the Ahathoor Lodge, as the very woman who had been their contact with the original German lodge.

It is not at all clear why he would do such a thing, as subsequent events show that he knew she was a fraud. The very day that Madame Horos was introduced to his group, Mathers wrote a letter to Florence Farr, one of the most active of the founding women of the Golden Dawn, denouncing Wescott and calling into question Wescott's avowed connection with the Secret Chiefs of the order. Mathers was clearly rattled, angry and feeling betrayed by the appearance of the impostor Madame Horos, as well as by internal difficulties that were threatening to break up his lodge from within. In the state of mind he found himself in that day, he must have felt he had nothing to lose. Upon receiving this devastating news, Florence Farr, who was a scrupulously honest soul, meditated on what to do. She formed a seven-member committee to investigate the matter. Together they wrote a letter to Mathers asking him to either prove or disprove these very serious allegations. He refused to answer any questions, pro or con, and dismissed Florence summarily from the Order.

Over the next few years, amidst much acrimony, the Golden Dawn flew into fragments, with each founder accusing the other of intellectual dishonesty of various kinds. MacGregor and his wife Moina Mathers were expelled from the Golden Dawn, Florence eventually resigned, and the movement, so illustrious at the outset, became principally a legend in its own time.

Twelve years after the dissolving of the original lodge, Aleister Crowley, himself a member, published the Golden Dawn astro-alphanumeric correspondences along with their grade rituals and other materials that had previously been kept private. People have responded warmly to the system as set forth by Crowley, so it has continued in use and has spread around the world.

Aftereffects of the New System

The eighteen-year life span of the Golden Dawn is merely a passing hour in relation to the history of Tarot. But in this case, it was a very significant hour. The effort the Golden Dawn undertook to create the impression of having an authentic body of teachings and practices was so convincing and so thorough that they singlehandedly managed to call into question the veracity of the two previous centuries of esoteric scholarship.

How were they able to so convincingly package their version as part of the historical record? For one thing, parts of the cypher manuscript were inscribed upon antique paper, giving it the right look of venerability. Also, its creator used a great deal of the older Christian Cabbalah paradigm that had been inherited from the Renaissance magi and the first and second century Hermeticists. In all honesty, however, the changes the Golden Dawn founders and followers instituted upon the Renaissance model rendered it no longer either Christian or Cabbalah (see "Kabbalah/Cabbalah").

Translate and Conquer

The main method used by English esotericists to insert their new version into the historical record was to become the primary translators of Eliphas Levi's works into English. In this way they were able to carefully craft footnotes and explanatory insertions into his works, thereby casting doubt upon Levi when his teachings diverged too far from those that the Golden Dawn was promoting. For example, the preface to the second edition of *The Mysteries of Magic*, a digest of the writings of Eliphas Levi collected by Waite, illustrates the typical commentary laced all through this compilation (available through Kessinger Publishing Co. in Kila, Mont.).

In his preface, Waite justifies the new ordering he has imposed upon Levi's writings. Waite abandoned the one-chapter-per-Arcanum structure which Levi favored in his magical writings, and which Levi's students felt "cast great light upon the mysteries of magical interpretation." Waite counters with these remarks:

"While I in no way deny that there is weight in this objection from the Kabbalistic standpoint, I submit that the great light mentioned exists mainly for those who are in possession of the true attribution of the Tarot keys, which attribution neither was nor could be given by Eliphas Levi in writing" (p. xiv-xv).

Furthermore, Waite complains that he has "incurred . . . some unpopularity for a time among extreme occultists by tabulating a few of the discrepancies and retractions which occur in the writings of Eliphas Levi, and are either typical of different stages in the growth of his singular mind, or difficulties willfully created for the express purpose of misleading the profane." He means us, dear reader; Waite says that Levi is willfully creating difficulties for us, the profane.

He continues: ". . . it is rather generally admitted by those who consider themselves in a position to adjudicate upon such matters, that Eliphas Levi was not a 'full initiate,' a fact which might account naturally for his occasional deflections from the absolute of infallibility."

In light of what we now know about Levi's Supreme Grand Mastership of nearly twenty years, about which Waite was fully aware, I just wonder what accounts for Waite's "occasional deflections from the absolute of infallibility"? "Those who consider themselves in a position to adjudicate upon such matters" must be Waite's own cronies and students.

In Levi's "The Key of the Mysteries" as translated by Crowley (published in 1959 by Rider & Co.), we reach a segment where Levi wants to talk about the construction of the Hebrew alphabet according to its three divisions--the three mother letters, the seven double letters and the twelve single letters. Levi had just launched into the line "Now, this is what we find in all Hebrew grammars" when we run into a footnote by Crowley. His insertion reads, "This is all deliberately wrong. That Levi knew the correct attributions is evident from a manuscript annotated by himself. Levi refused to reveal these attributions, rightly enough, as his grade was not high enough, and the time not right. Note the subtlety in the form of his statement. The correct attributions are in Liber 777.<A.C." Crowley makes it sound as if Levi kept a private list of the "correct attributions" which he could not share "because his grade was not high enough." Or is Crowley perhaps implying that the cypher manuscript contains Levi's annotations? Note the subtlety of the form of his statement!

Following is a quote from W. Wynn Wescott in his preface to *The Magical Ritual of the Sanctum Regnum Interpreted by the Tarot Trumps*, Translated from the Manuscript of Eliphas Levi (this too is available through Kessinger): "The twenty-two Tarot Trumps bear a relation to numbers and to letters; the true attributions are known, so far as is ascertainable, to but a few students, members of the Hermetic schools: the attributions given by Levi in his *Dogme and Rituel*, by Christian, and by Papus are incorrect, presumably by design. The editor has seen a manuscript page of cypher about 150 years old which has a different attribution, and one which has been found by several occult students, well known to him, to satisfy all the conditions required by occult science" (p. ix).

We can guess who those "several occult students" are. And in these few sentences, we can see the device by which all Levi's writings as well as those of his published followers, each scholars in their own right, are called into question on the "prior historical claim" of the cypher manuscript, which they each knew was a fake as they were writing those foot-notes. This was not a simple misunderstanding among friends. Wescott, Waite and Crowley are not saying "we like our correspondences better" or "there are other versions than Levi's". No, they are saying that Levi and his followers deliberately misinformed their public, and the English fellows have "the correct attributions," known only to "full initiates" like themselves.

These quotes are just the tip of the iceberg, I assure you. I have read many translations through the years and have never encountered a phenomenon like this anywhere else. In the innocence of my first studies in the 1970s, I could not understand why a person would bother to translate a book if they felt the author was a humbug! Little did I know the issues and the egos that were involved.

I possess two books written by Levi that were translated by W.N. Schoors and published by Weiser in the 1970s, *The Book of Splendours* and *The Mysteries of the Qabalah*. These volumes do not have all the extra commentary, so annoying and disparaging, that is found throughout the books translated by the English group. I would hope that future printings of these earlier translations will include a disclaimer about the commentaries, so that sincere

students reading them in present and future times don't have to wade through the thicket of "attitude" without a context.

A Lesson For The Future

To me, the real cause of the propagation of erroneous esoteric history is the fact that the English-speaking world, as a rule, does not feel the need to research what our "experts" tell us about the Tarot. William Wescott published several books before he cofounded the Golden Dawn, and in them he actually reveals the Hermetic/Alexandrian correspondences, presenting them without guile in their proper historical context. But few people compare those books with the Golden Dawn version and notice that the story had changed. Mathers had published a booklet in 1888, on the eve of the founding of the Golden Dawn, referring to the French Occult Tarot and employing the sequence and enumeration taught by Eliphas Levi. No one inside the Order seemed to question how different the Golden Dawn sequence was from the Continental mode. Aleister Crowley dropped many hints to lead his readers to the writings of Levi (which he, Wescott and Waite worked hard to translate into English), but very few people bother to look Levi up and read him for themselves. I am assured as well that Waite encouraged his students to look beyond his writings to see the truth for themselves, but most lay readers would not have the knowledge or motivation to question the legacy left by these three turn of the century esotericists.

I encourage you to acquire and read the English translations of Levi's works that are currently available, but if you do, be prepared for the fierce editorial commentary if the translator is affiliated with the Order of the Golden Dawn. Occasionally these translators will grant him a point, but the overwhelming impression is that Levi was not the magus he was thought to be. To achieve the true value from Levi's work, one has to learn how to read through this overlay, which seems also to have been carried over into those works of his currently available on the Internet.

Another way to finally clear up all this controversy would be for a non-aligned scholar of the Secret Societies to publish a book detailing the change of relations which emerged between the Continental lodges and the English ones. Such a project could also address the emergence of the modern Spanish school of Tarot, which also appeared at the turn of this century. Dr. Keizer mentions the French/ English rift in his essay "The History of Esoteric Tarot," but I am sure a full exposition of the interior philosophical, political and personality dynamics would help us all see those pivotal times in a clearer light.

Tarot Users Who Love Too Much

We in the West may be guilty of loving the fad of Tarot too much and the history too little. Because we crave novelty, something new and different, we overlook the ancient and long-term traditions that give Tarot its very form and content (see "Confluence of the Ancient Systems" essay). Those systems of thought and spiritual practice have not lost their value just because fashions have moved on! As a matter of fact, those most ancient strata of the Tarot mysteries, the Astrology Wheel, the Hebrew Kabbalah and its Hermetic/ Alexandrian counterpart, and the astrological angels of the Minor Arcana have been at the foundation of all the Mosaic religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam. These are truly the Western Mysteries, and they are just as relevant today as in Biblical times.

We also have to be clear about the "magical theory" we are bringing to the Tarot and the operations we might do with the cards. If we believe that these ancient letters, Arcana, numbers and angels refer to something real in the worlds within worlds that is this life, then perhaps the ancient correspondences, either the Hebrew or the Alexandrian/ Hermetic, are worthy of study and deep meditation. At least we know that generations of souls have walked this path and smoothed the road before us, working out the kinks and throwing light into the dark night of the soul. We have a developed and profound wellspring of philosophers, artists, magicians and healers to study and emulate in the work of becoming our own God-selves.

Of course there will always be pioneers, those who steer a course into uncharted waters, who refuse to stay between the lines. Innovative souls exist in every generation. We see these characteristics in the founders of the Golden Dawn, who like the Spanish School(s) departed from the Hermetic/Alexandrian model at the turn of this century. Again, perhaps all the questions can only be answered by some-one who has cordial relations with all the relevant lodges, someone who can shine a light on the revolutionary tendencies that were shaping Tarot at the end of the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s.

In the future, let us not be such passive consumers of Tarot but instead take the time to learn about the various systems available so we can evaluate them intelligently. Tarot is such a powerful tool that we should want to know what our options are, philosophically and spiritually. As we create a Tarot culture wherein imagination and inventiveness can be coordinated with the true history of the Western Mysteries, we will see scholarship and innovation become better partners rather than work at cross-purposes, as they sometimes seem to at present.

My hope is that in the twenty first century we can complete the excavation of this intellectual monument and see once again the beautiful architecture of Tarot as still strong and true to its Hebrew/Alexandrian/Gnostic/Renaissance roots. This project has only just begun. When we have more fully fathomed this treasure from our ancestors and more correctly apprehended its stature as a spiritual and philosophical vehicle of the highest subtlety, we will be better able to evaluate its variations and realize their best applications within our lives.

The Major Arcana

by Christine Payne-Towler

Over the years, friends have asked me in the course of compiling important minutiae of a comprehensible Tarot history, "Isn't this a bit too encyclopedic for the average Tarot user to care about?"

In most cases, authors have focused on one deck or, at most, one family of related decks in an effort to keep the material within one volume. They generally have not included scores of decks that are equally, if not more, interesting because they do not fit the pattern modelled by their "primary" deck.

A particularly daunting factor for the modern researcher consulting the Tarot "experts" of the early twentieth century has been the chorus of official voices saying "Tarot has no real history. Don't even bother to look up previous generation's masters. The decks were all pretty generic before Eliphas Levi decided to make up correspondences between the Major Arcana and the Hebrew alphabet." Evidence proves that nothing could be further from the truth, but because it is scattered across multiple disciplines, requiring much cross-checking, it has been easier to trust the "experts." Those turn of the century savants put up such a wall of denial about the origins of the Tarot that it has taken nearly a century for us to get over it!

In 1978, Stuart Kaplan published his first Encyclopedia of Tarot. As a result, anyone who did not travel or read outside the English language could finally have access to the Continental Tarots. The English family of decks are still the most available in America, but Mr. Kaplan staunchly keeps many Tarots available from all branches of the tradition in his U. S. Games Systems catalog. It is due to his commitment to providing a wide selection of decks for the American market that a person like myself can undertake a project like this one. Eternal gratitude goes out to him.

Because of these two situations--the lack of European Tarot decks circulating in the English-speaking world and the stonewalling by the "experts" of the early twentieth century-- there have been numerous fads and styles of Tarot recently emerging that have little or no grounding in actual Tarot history. Most of these come from sources honest enough to admit that they are reinterpreting tradition, or departing from it entirely, without making inflated claims about the "authenticity" of their versions. However, some Tarot creators have played fast and loose with history to add cachet to their decks (and books about them). This phenomenon frustrates the sincere student who wants to understand the origins of Tarot. Various partisan groups, each with their hallowed interpreters, disavow other interpreters within the ebb and flow of countless variations. How can we unravel the threads?

We can start by making a historical scan of the Arcana. In the Tarot Magic CD-ROM, Visionary Networks included a representative range of European historical Tarot decks, with relevant commentary and divination support, so both the new and ongoing student of Tarot would have the fundamentals close at hand. The present revival of Tarot deserves to be supported with creditable information drawn from the message of the images themselves. To do this involves interpretive risks that an encyclopedist normally would not allow herself to make.

However, in face of necessity, I have not departed from material that is on the faces of the cards for all to see. With this approach I hope to level the playing field beneath the feet of the modern competing versions and schools of Tarot. I realize that this will result in a much greater emphasis upon the European Tarot decks than on the modern English-style decks that Americans and the British are so fond of, but that will be balanced in our upcoming CD, in which we will showcase the decks of the pivotal early decades of the twentieth century. This first presentation is about the history of Tarot, and we hope it will assist modern Tarot students to have a larger frame of reference to refer to, as they compare and contrast the esoteric frameworks inherent in their Tarot decks.

Lest we forget for a minute the value of these images and their related teachings, let's review the context in which Tarot was being explored in the centuries of its crystallization. It rested upon, and contained images from, a rich seedbed of ideas and images retained from the mixing of classical and pagan societies of Europe, Africa, the Near and Far East. Astrology, sacred geometry and Kabbalah were already very old by this time and fully exposed to each other. The symbolic grid that related the cosmos to humanity, and both to the world of Nature, had been taught in the sacred universities from their founding by Alexander the Great until the beginning of the Renaissance.

Petrarch's famous fourteenth century poem *Triumphus* names six of the Arcana as stages of the mythological travails of Petrarch and Laura, his idealized and unconsummated love. Gertrude Moakley, in her study of the decks from the Bembo family workshop (a popular and prosperous artistic cooperative of the 1400s), thinks this poem served as inspiration for the Tarot, as it certainly did for the yearly Mardi Gras-like costume parades in which Italian nobles of the early 1400s played out the themes of the *Triumphus*. But we know from the history of art in Europe that the images of the *Triumphus* were in the public domain for centuries already, many integrated into official Church teachings because of their shared origins in Greek and Roman culture. Coincidentally or not, the Visconti Tarots began emerging in 1440, with the Mantegna archetypes following right along in 1465. As Kaplan makes apparent in his *Encyclopedia*, there seems to have been a conversation going on between the creators of these two original streams of Arcana, because certain images from one echo the other so closely. There also exists a codex in the Vatican from 1471 with twenty-two Major Arcana (Visconti-style) that are obviously derivative of the Mantegna images in the art. These clues seem to indicate a high-level dialogue between both ordained and lay esotericists who were roughing out a consensus version of something they all knew in common, but possessed in differing versions.

A century of rumors about cards and their use pre-dates the first Bembo deck, as documented by Kaplan in Volume 1 of his *Encyclopedia*. I am inclined to think that the return of the Hermetic texts to Europe over the course of the Renaissance brought the prototypes of the Alexandrian Arcana into the hands of the Continental metaphysicians. The Renaissance artists then refashioned the ideas to look and feel European, throwing out the symbolism that required a literate person to translate it. The result is the Marseilles stream of Tarot. Then two more centuries passed before the actual text and images became publicly available to "rectify" the traditional decks with the Alexandrian ideas again in the late 1800s. This is the conclusion reached by Oswald Wirth in his little booklet, *Introduction to the Study of Tarot*, and to judge by the character of the esoteric Tarot by Manly P. Hall and Augustus Knapp, one could not help coming to the same conclusion.

Don't let the fact that there were Tarot images in the Vatican lull you into thinking that students of the Arcana had a warm relationship with the external Church. This was the period when Rome finally managed to get astrology permanently banished from the ancient canon of the classical university curriculum in Europe. People were being imprisoned, tortured and sent to their deaths for being involved with groups who used these images. In particular, during the Cathar and Albigensian rebellions of the thirteenth century, the papermakers used heretical symbols (such as the intricate Grail cup shown as the Ace of Wands in the earliest decks) as their watermarks, risking persecution but unequivocally stating their politics. The Catalans of Spain used astrological symbols as trade logos in their businesses as well, and these same symbols show up on the very first Spanish Tarot decks (see Fournier's *Catalog of Playing Cards*, Volume 2, p. 9). Does it not seem natural then to think that teachings and beliefs repressed in one form might come up in another? Generations of souls lived and died for these images that you might have them to contemplate and meditate upon in this century. We do not want to be guilty of taking this hard won legacy from the philosophers of antiquity for granted!

This compilation of the Arcana has been arranged chronologically, so the reader can more easily visualize the unfoldment of the ideas inhabiting the Arcana in the minds of the Tarot illustrators and their teachers. Generally speaking, even though the Tarot had a roughly standard form from its appearance, each Arcanum (letter/title/number/sign or planet) was likely to have several different versions appear in the 1400s and 1500s. But by the 1600s, a standardizing force had appeared, which we explore in the Major Arcana essay and the essay on the Continental Tarot decks. Another wave of creative proliferation happened between the late 1700s and the late 1800s, as overt esotericism replaced the veiled magical references of previous centuries. It is this progression which you will read about in these essays.

Over the years, even with my growing collection of decks and books, most notably Kaplan's *Encyclopedia*, I became increasingly convinced that there must be certain places I should look to get "insider information" that was not in the public domain. This is why you will find an essay among the others on the bookshelf by my dear friend and ordaining Bishop, Dr. Lewis Keizer. He can speak as a scholar of the Mystery Schools, and as an initiated member of both the Martinists and the Order of the Golden Dawn. Dr. Keizer and I share a compelling interest in the cultivation of effective tools for operational magic and organized self-cultivation. Those who are similarly inclined will want to further investigate the means by which the cards leave prediction behind and enter into the domain of self-cultivation. This approach leads directly back to the mind-set originally shaping the cards at their inception in Europe, widening the significance of Tarot to address the perennial quest for redemption, healing and transcendence.

When choosing the Tarot decks for the divination section of the Tarot Magic program, we had certain technical limitations. Images take up much more space in the CD format than does text. Therefore, for these essays, I did not hold myself to just those Tarots. I looked at every image I could get my hands on and commented on every one that seemed relevant. Nevertheless, I will have missed some, and I hope to hear from my readers about that.

My greatest frustration is that we cannot show each version of each card mentioned in the text. This is a case in which a picture is truly worth a thousand words. Because of this, you will enjoy this essay to the fullest if you have access to Stuart Kaplan's Encyclopedia of Tarot, Volumes 1 and 2, as nearly all the Tarot decks cited in this essay are illustrated there. A great resource for color and detail in the classical Tarots is the Tiny Folio^Å called The Art of Tarot by Christina Olsen, published in 1995 by Abbeyville Press Publishers in New York.

The Minor Arcana

by Christine Payne-Towler

When the Major Arcana is removed from the Tarot, a pack of cards remains that is almost identical to a modern deck of playing cards. Earliest Tarot manuscripts make a clear distinction between the twenty-two Majors (Trumps) and the rest of the cards. Stuart Kaplan cites this as evidence that they originated as two separate entities.

Kaplan points us to a deck of cards called Mamluk, which may have originated in Turkey, or which came to Europe from Asia through Turkey. It has four suits numbering one through ten with four or five royalty each, for a total of fifty-two or fifty-six cards. A pack from the 1400s is in the Topkapu Museum in Istanbul, and may represent the originals from which the Italian suit symbols were drawn. Stuart Kaplan also mentions the Trappola decks as an alternate form of Minor Arcana Tarot; these have the expected four suits, but with only three royalty and six numbered cards each.

Both these types of cards appear in Europe during the same time frame as the earliest Tarots, so it's difficult to say for sure if they preceded Tarot or sprang up along with it. Their presence suggests that the Minor Arcana can and did stand alone in some packs and that they possess an internal structure independent of the Majors.

Historians believe such cards as these may show us how the twenty-two Major Trumps became a seventy-two card deck. If the Mamluk was actually a progenitor of the modern Tarot, then we would have to assume that its authors were in harmony with the synthesis of the Kabbalah, Pythagorean number theory and astrology that you will read about in this essay. It would be very hard to retrofit the interface of these three distinct symbol sets over a pack of cards if those cards weren't originally designed to accommodate them.

If your deck is designed for divination, it has pictures of humans involved in various activities, and you do not notice the resemblance to playing cards nearly as much. But the striking and obvious feature of an esoteric Tarot is a stark geometric, numerical and elemental treatment of the numbered suit cards, along with royalty that exemplify the zodiac and the characters that enact its central myths. As such, it looks almost exactly like a common bridge deck.

The Four Elements

The common denominator of the Minor Arcana from all decks is that they belong in suits--the traditional four suits of the bridge deck (hearts, clubs, spades, diamonds) or their earlier, more elemental forms (Cups, Wands, Swords and Coins). The Minor Arcana can be subdivided further to differentiate the royalty from the numbers, but they all participate equally in the four-way breakdown by element-- water, fire, air and earth. Additionally, these four elements symbolize the four "worlds" of traditional magical practice: the worlds of the mind, heart, will and body. The four seasons, marked by the equinoxes and solstices, are also drawn into the symbolism of the suits by representing time and its passage through the quadrants of the year. In the case of the Spanish-influenced Tarots particularly, even though the symbols of the elements are occasionally interchanged one for another, there are still always four that embody the values of the elemental worlds.

In the course of examining the aces and the royalty of a number of older Tarots, I began to see patterns I now believe were part of the common knowledge shared by Tarot makers and practitioners from the first appearance of Tarot in Europe in the early 1440s. I want to suggest what I have come to see in these Tarots, but let us think of these ideas as working hypotheses rather than fixed theories. I hope they prove interesting enough to stimulate future publications from those who can enlighten us further.

The Suits and Their Symbolism

The four suits have been used as vehicles to carry symbols and images drawn from underground spiritual movements too controversial to stand in print in their own right. Each element represents its own mythos clearly enough for those who know how to look for it, but veiled enough to deflect the suspicion of the Inquisitors should a deck fall into their hands.

For example, the suit of Cups in some esoteric Tarots seems to be dedicated to the heresy of the True Royal Family of Europe, which asserts a bloodline purportedly stemming from the marriage of Jesus of Nazareth and Mary Magdalen. This lineage was supposedly transplanted into southern Spain when Mary Magdalen fled the Holy Land after the crucifixion.

Those Tarot decks which support this theme will show the cup in the hand of the King or Queen boiling, smoking, or full of blood.. The knight may evoke echos of a Templar, and the Page may appear shackled or in front of an ancient toppled tree. The suit of Wands can be seen bearing the Mason's marks which spell out the numbers one to ten, possibly representing grades of initiation in the secret lodges of Europe. Each grade would be a tempering achievement of the will toward the Divine, through the self-divining practices mapped out within the orders. The suit of Coins has been attributed, card by card, to the planetary governors of ancient astrological pantheons, regularly invoked through Hermetic and later Renaissance talismanic magic. The numbered Coins are often inscribed with sigils drawn from Gnostic, Hebrew and Persian magical grimoires.

Only the suit of Swords seems to marginally evade this type of overlay of esoteric themes, although the Ace of Swords is often embellished. The Swords may have received different treatment because they carry the inherent meaning of ideological conflict, wars and communication problems, a universal dilemma in every generation, sect and situation. With careful scrutiny, one can see these themes riding alongside the regular, divinatory, simplistic meanings of the suit cards as agreed upon in the common tradition.

As we view the interior architecture of the suit cards, you may be surprised at how much symbolism can be packed into such stripped-down imagery. It is easy to miss the profound depth built into the Minor Arcana if you do not know to look for it, because in the Hermetically inspired Tarots, the cards themselves seem so plain. Every attempt was made to refrain from stimulating emotions with the cards so the profundity of the symbols and interior correspondences could register on the unclouded mind. This approach allows the reader to construct a wide range of meanings for any given card rather than rely on a cartoon that may limit its significance and application to the current situation.

The cards 1-10 of each suit simultaneously embody the Gods of Number, the main energy centers in the human body (called Sefira by the Hebrews), and the planets in the solar system. Anyone who had procured the so-called classical education of the Renaissance would be able to recognize how each system corresponded to the cards, so that just seeing the suit symbols and the Arabic numerals on the faces of each card would bring up associations from sacred geometry, Kabbalah and astrology. The magi of the sixteenth or seventeenth century would have learned to "triangulate" between these three systems as they studied the meanings of the Minor cards, and their understanding of what any given card represents would be enhanced by that expanded view. Thus used by one who truly understands it, Tarot is truly a philosophical machine.

The Hermetics of Number Theory in the Minor Arcana

Inherent design principles, organic and repeated everywhere, attract the attention of thinking souls no matter what their language or culture. From very ancient times, philosophers recognized that Nature inclines toward certain arrangements and away from others, and canny thinkers began to see the ratios involved--literally, to "rationalize" the geometry of Nature. By the height of Egyptian culture, two thousand years before the life of Jesus, numbers themselves were seen as gods to be handled very carefully in order not to disturb their dispositions.

The turning point between the mentality of antiquity, which envisioned humanity as the pawn of Nature and the gods, and the beginning of the modern worldview, which turned toward self-cultivation and the development of the human powers of mind, is marked by the work of Pythagoras, a sixth century BC teacher, scholar and prophet. By the time of Pythagoras, mathematical thinking had penetrated the geometry hidden within whole numbers. An even more sophisticated symbolism emerged to portray the geometric solids proceeding from numbers, revealing the special properties of each number in its own world, resonating at its own frequency. From this perspective, the relations between numbers or their frequencies gave birth to harmonic theory, which Pythagoras revealed to the world through the medium of music, but which governs relations macrocosmically amongst the stars, and simultaneously, amongst the atoms. It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that all of Nature at every level is related through dynamics which could be expressed as interwoven harmonic ratios that are interacting.

Pythagoras used numerals as his first principles. In his philosophy, the whole numbers embraced and illustrated the Great Laws of Nature. He studied the properties of numbers and their relations not only in the realm of music but also in the realms of astronomy and philosophy.

The quintessential figure that Pythagoras invented to visually express his philosophy, called the Tetractys, is composed of ten discs arranged as a pyramid, each disk bearing the geometric figure of a whole number. We have shown it here in two forms--first as described above, and second with the internal relationships between stations in the pyramid lined out.

Call this the Mysticism of the Decave, the religion of base-ten enumeration. Contemplation of this remarkable doctrine leads right into sacred geometry and harmonic theory, and illustrates the classical understanding of beauty: symmetry, proportion, harmony, ratio and grace. Classical Greek culture reached a pinnacle in art and architecture in the century following Pythagoras, and his fame spread to what was then the ends of the world.

Every numbered card in a Tarot deck partakes of the innate geometry of the number that rules it. One is a whole, so every ace represents pure potential in one of the four elements. Two divides and polarizes, so each two expresses a dichotomy. Three gives polarity a fulcrum to balance upon, mediating extremism and harmonizing each of the elements. Four crystallizes and solidifies, so potentials acquire a framework on which to actualize. Five forces individuation and challenges creativity, eliciting vision and imagination. Six is yin and yang, two threes intertwined, fertile and furthering. Seven strives for the mastery depicted by the spiritual triangle surmounting the material square. Eight is the test of interlaced squares, implying the wheel of the year and the challenge of survival from season to season. Nine is three threes, the "triple ternary," balance of balances, the so-called perfect number. Ten folds the circle of the numbers into a cycle, recapitulating the one at the next higher level. (In Tarot terms, the tens are each transforming into the ace of the next element in the chain of ascent/descent.) In the different elemental worlds, the numbers will appear with different emphases (like the difference between the Five of Swords and the Five of Wands), but the principles of the single digits rule the numbered suit cards of Tarot.

Extending this line of reasoning, the Major Arcana cards that bear the single digits are also reflected downward into the numbered suit cards. So, for example, the Hierophant, number five, rules the fives in all four suits, while the Chariot stands behind all the seven cards, the Justice underlies the eights, the Hermit upholds the nines, and the Wheel personifies the tens. You really are supposed to see, for example, the qualities of the Emperor embodied in the numeral four, implying the cube, the 90-degree angle, and the principle of materialization in each of the elements.

These are all examples of the same principle at work. A student's job is to learn these correspondences until they are second nature.

The Kabbalah Tree's grid pattern that links the ten centers is a linear diagram made up of three vertical bars connected by a matrix of horizontal and diagonal bars interwoven to resemble the scientific drawing of a molecule. This diagram represents the way in which humans are "made in God's image." If you imagine this "molecule" superimposed upon your body, your backbone aligned with the Middle Pillar, it is easy to sense the five nodes that appear at the points where the horizontals, diagonals and verticals converge. Two shorter pillars, each with three nodes, close the sides of the diagram, representing the left and right eyes, hands, and legs.

The system is similar to the Hindu chakra system, but the emphasis in the Hebrew Middle Pillar is on the number five rather than on the seven chakras of the East. The nodes of the two side pillars express, distribute and administer the energies aroused and pooled in the Middle Pillar. The version of the Kabbalah Tree illustrated here represents a diagram of our energetic circuitry after the fall from Eden to eros. This "fallen" Tree no longer resembles the divine original, Adam Kadmon, which was the signature of the original creation (see essay on Kabbalah/Cabalah).

To restore ourselves and the fallen creations, according to the Kabbalists, our souls must retrace the steps we took in falling. Rising from the bottom of the Middle Pillar we first encounter Malkuth, the earth, foundation, root, body. Next up is the node called Yesod, which rests around the gonads and balances our hormones, emotions, feelings, psychic life and instincts. The Moon is traditionally equated with Yesod. The next node above is Tifareth, which encompasses what the Hindus would separate into two different chakras called Will and Heart. The Hebrews did not see a way in which an individual could have a personal will that contradicted divine will, so they lumped the two together in what was called the "heart." The sun of our solar system is equated to Tifareth, standing at the center unifying and organizing the whole, around which everything circulates.

Above Tifareth is Da'at, a node that exists as potential in everyone but which a person has to work on to activate. This corresponds to the Hindu throat chakra, the power of the Holy Word to create by fiat. This power is something that must be earned through effort and striving, aligning the lower nodes and directing will toward overcoming the distractions of the left and right pillar.

When divine order is restored, Saturn will occupy this center. As the last visible planet in the solar system, it is the symbol of limits, discipline, examinations and natural consequences. It is Saturn who occasionally makes us eat our words. He is also the one who sentences us to live out our most frequently repeated fears and pessimisms. He is the lord of the bottom line, the have-to's that no one can escape. The ancients used to say that Saturn was the final judge of whether we reincarnated again and again or whether we could pass on from this world into a higher state. (see also the essay "The Gnostic Tarot").

At the top of the Middle Pillar is Kether, which would correspond to a fusion of the third eye and the crown centers in the Hindu system. Actually, the point that Kether represents is the pineal gland deep in the brain, the organ that metabolizes light for the body. All the vertical channels--left, right and center-- emerge from this point to descend into matter; conversely, all the channels converge on this point when ascending toward more refined states of being. The set of three nodes on each pillar left and right represents the two eyes, two arms and hands, and two legs and feet. The three to the right in the diagram are called the Father Pillar, and their rising action is oriented toward contemplating the inner workings of God. The pillar to the left in the diagram, called the Mother Pillar, is directed in a descending manner, showering attention upon the outer world of things, beings, time and space. In relation to the distinct genders of the two outer pillars, the Middle Pillar is considered to be androgynous, neither male nor female, but partaking in the nature of the Divine Child Within.

What must be noted here, and what the Hebrew people managed to conceal from the Gentiles for several centuries after the invention of the printing press, is that you have to "back into" this diagram when superimposing it onto your body, so that the Mother Pillar stands on your right side and the Father Pillar stands on your left. Energy surges up the left side, over the top, and down the right before plunging into the earth below, only to surge up the left side again. This is part of the message of the Wheel of Fortune card in the Major Arcana: We each exist within a circulating vortex of life force which we must learn to manage and utilize. The first organizing principle is that it all circulates around the heart.

Astrology and the Minors

Next for consideration is the zodiac of the 360-degree heavens wrapped around the Earth that has been distributed among the numbered Minor cards. For purposes of prediction and ritual applications, these could be the most well-used group of correspondences of the whole canon.

The great genius of the Babylonian numbering system is that Babylonian astrological priesthood devised a scheme whereby the fundamental unit of measurement is expressed in both spatial and temporal terms simultaneously. To do this they had to:

- (a) work within the ancient world's already-established preference for counting on our ten fingers,
- (b) determine a number which when multiplied by ten would express in whole numbers the full circle of the visible and invisible sky wrapped around the earth: the formula is $(10 \times 3) \times 12 = 360$,
- (c) harmonize the divisions of space marked out by the formula with the then-traditional Mansions of the Moon (an earlier, lunar division of the zodiac) and determine which twelve major constellations would be used to anchor the new zodiac for all future time, and
- (d) develop the correspondence between one degree of movement in space and one unit of time elapsed in the course of making that movement. (This formula states that it takes four minutes of time to move the stars rising over the eastern horizon by one degree.)

In the process of inventing the modern paradigm of time and celestial motion, the Babylonians employed the Indian Brahmin concept of zero, so helpful in sophisticated calculations that go beyond the single, whole numbers. The entire world uses variations on this astrological system, and our modern space program would never have happened without this creative interpretation of the boundless distances and time scales presented by the spin of the Earth on its axis while pursuing its yearly trek around the sun.

When the Minor Arcana are drawn into this scheme, we again have to face the issue of fitting a 10-based form of counting onto the 360-degree sphere mapped by the ancients to track the ticking of the cosmic clock. The accommodation made was very clever: Taking into account the bias in this enumeration system for 3x10, each sequence of suit cards is divided into three threes, with each card representing ten degrees of zodiacal space, (five degrees for a card upright and a different five degrees for the card reversed). This leaves one card left over in each element to represent the equinoxes and solstices which mark out the four seasons. It's essentially the Wheel of the Year, with either the aces or tens standing in for the four high holidays celebrating the changing of the seasons. We see this system illustrated at the top of each Porta della Stella Minor Arcana card, to help the user "find themselves" in the zodiac.

Some schools of Tarot go even further into the astrology of the Minor Arcana, attributing a planetary ruler to each 10-degree segment of each sign, and including these subrulerships into the divinatory meaning of the card. The French esoteric group were the first to print the Hebrew angel-names for each 5-degree segment of the zodiac right on the cards. These angels are to be prayed to, contemplated upon, or evoked when asking for help with the issues represented by the cards in a spread and/or the hot spots in a person's birth chart (see the essay "Kabbalah/Cabbalah").

The Royalty

Now that we have covered the underlying constructs inherent in the numbered cards, let us turn our attention to the royalty who complete the Minor Arcana.

It is well known that the zodiac is represented in twelve of the sixteen royal personages pictured through the four elements, but different Tarots deviate in how the twelve are derived from the sixteen. The most standard pattern, matching the method used in the 1-10 cards above, distributes the royalty around the seasonal calendar, placing the fire cards (usually the Wands) in the spring, the water cards (most often Cups) in the summer, the air cards (usually Swords) in the fall, and earth cards (mostly the Coins) in the winter. Used this way, the Kings are the cardinal signs starting into each season, the Queens are the fixed signs at the center of the seasons, and either the Pages or the Knights are used to symbolize the mutable signs that close out each season. (Whichever royalty is left over, whether the Knight or the Page, is used as a messenger or harbinger of change in each of the four suits.) Tavaglione's Tarots demonstrate this pattern on the royalty. That scheme is simple and easy to remember, and quite possibly very old, but it is not likely to have much appeal to an astrologer because it glosses over the way in which the elements and the modes actually interact within the unfolding seasons of the natural year. If we start with Aries as the cardinal sign that initiates spring, we see the correspondence of the Wand (fire) with spring. But the sign that naturally follows Aries is Taurus, which is indeed a fixed sign yet is of the element earth, not fire. The next sign following Taurus is Gemini, a mutable sign indeed but of the element air, not fire.

In astrological fact, no element rules for an entire season uninfluenced by the other elements. So the more sophisticated, and possibly more modern, esoteric Tarots apportion the Wands royalty to the fire signs, the Cups royalty to the water signs, and so on, dropping the connection with the seasons and more accurately representing the flow of natural time around the wheel of the year. The English-influenced Tarots use a modified form of this pattern. As above, the Knights or Pages not corresponded to the mutable signs become messengers and bringers of change, like the stagehands between acts of a theater piece who rearrange the sets for the advancing plotline. I, for one, like to use the astrologically attuned method, with the Queens as the cardinal signs, the Kings as the fixed, the Pages as the mutable, and the Knights as the agents of change between the seasons.

Much benefit can be derived from studying the first ten Major Arcana lined up with the Tetractys, the Numbers 1-10, the Sephira of Kabbalah, and the planets of the solar system in their mythological personalities. After you have explored this expanded array of correspondences for your first ten Arcana, look again at how those Arcana/numbers might express themselves in the numbered cards of the four suits. The graph on page 3 will help you remember the parallel correspondences between the three systems as they apply to the Minor Arcana.

The Major Arcana Cards

by Christine Payne-Towler

The Fool

This Arcanum has mutated profoundly throughout its history. Its original image was the Beggar, who appears sound of limb but vacant-minded, raggedly dressed, with feathers in his matted hair (Pierpont Morgan Bergamo Visconti-Sforza tarocchi, mid-1400s). Stuart Kaplan (Encyclopedia of Tarot, Volume 2), in his essay on The Fool (pp. 158- 9) explores the significance of the white shirt and pants, the droopy stockings and the feathers worn in his hair or on his belt, all associated with the spirit of Lent during the spring carnival in Renaissance Italy where Tarot was born.

The Mantegna Tarot of 1459 shows us Misery by portraying the lowest level of human life, an injured and exhausted beggar being attacked by a dog. Tarots from this same era used the image to editorialize about the causes of such misery: the Charles VI Tarot (1470) shows a Madman wearing a hat with bells and rabbit ears, tattered shirt and loincloth, teased by boys in the street, while Ercole d'Este (1475) shows him prey to lust, with the little boys pulling off his loincloth to reveal his insatiable arousal. Clearly, no respect was being accorded to anyone who embodied this archetype in the fifteenth century! By the next century, this character harnessed his entertainment potential by becoming the more formal Jester with his trademark multicolored outfit and puppet-headed wand (anony-mous Parisian deck, early 1600s). The village idiot image had not faded away, however (Mitelli, 1664).

The Marseilles image (1748) merges the entertainer with the idiot, giving us the multi-colored costume and now-familiar walking away pose of the Fool, with a snapping dog pulling off his pants from behind. The Arcana of Court de Gebelin (1787) and Etteilla (late 1700s) repeats this image exactly. The Tarocco Siciliano cards of 1750 differentiate the Fool (No. 0) from Miseria (unnumbered), including both for good measure.

A century later, Etteilla's Fool had mutated into the Alchemist, still dressed in his traditional jester garb but walking tentatively forward with his hands over his eyes. This concept is further revealed on the "Alexandrian" Blind Fool card, who stumbles his way between the shards of a fallen obelisk while a stalking crocodile lurks in the shadows. All these versions of the Fool comprehensively depict a person who is ignorant, driven by the basest needs and urges, and who has fallen into the lowest human estate of poverty and deprivation. At best he is a carnival entertainer, a shyster; at worst he is lost and vulnerable because of his self delusion. Not until the twentieth century do you see the Waite image of the soul before its fall into matter, untainted by contact with the city and its ills. Modern decks take from this image the mountainside scene, the butterfly, the potential misplaced step that will send him tumbling, all on faith that this is a historical Fool image. In truth, the Fool was meant to represent already fallen humanity preparing to take the first step toward self knowledge, and eventually, The Gnosis.

The Magus

Earliest versions of the Magician can be seen in the Visconti-Sforza family of Tarots (mid-1400s). Named the Mountebank, he is seated on a cubic hassock, manipulating objects on the table before him. This image continues largely unchanged for centuries. Both hands are down close to the table, although the left hand holds a long, slender, upright wand. The d'Este Mountebank seems more active, leaning over his table, left hand reaching down, right hand raising his chalice (fifteenth century). Catelin Geoffrey's Tarot (1557) crowds the card with onlookers, and the Mountebank is clearly doing tricks with cups and dice, still with both hands down, again one holding a wand. In the Rosenwald images from the early sixteenth century, the interesting detail is the rabbit eared hat which we saw first in the 1470s on the Charles VI and d'Este Fool.

Most Tarots of this century emphasize more or less the performance aspect of his workings by the presence or absence of an audience (anonymous Parisian Tarot, early seventeenth century, and later Piedmontese or Tarot of Venice, late seventeenth century). The anonymous Parisian Tarot shows a dog and a monkey at the feet of the Magus, another indication of his variety show. The Juggler card by Mitelli (1664) assumes an entirely different aspect, the magician dancing with a dog and a drum. However, this version was not taken up in the common Tarots. The ubiquitous eighteenth century Marseilles deck brings us back to the traditional image, with the suit symbols on the table before the stand-ing operator. Both the Marseilles and the contemporary de Gebelin Arcana (1787) add the lemniscate hat, the "sideways 8" symbol of eternity crowning him. The Magus image from Etteilla (as in the Grande Oracle des Dames, 1890) continues the tradition of the prestidigitator working the crowd; he lacks the lemniscate and bears the dismal title Maladie. In the earlier versions of this Arcanum a much stronger emphasis is placed upon

the performance aspect of the Magician than in twentieth century Tarots. Although this card is named for the Magus, a person who could calculate astrology charts and shamanically enact magical rituals for special spiritual effects, by the debut of Tarots in Europe, this sense of the word "magician" was lost. The presence on the table of suit symbols, however, implies that this person is adept at more than sleight of hand.

We are used to thinking of the Magus as one who can demonstrate true hands-on magic (as in healing, alchemical transmutation, charging of talismans and the like). The modern Magus is understood to be a person who can complete the circuit between heaven and earth. We sometimes forget that at the birth of Tarot, even a gifted healer who was not an ordained clergyman was considered to be in league with the Devil. For protection's sake, the line between fooling the eye with hand jive and charging the world with magical will was left vague in the early Tarot imagery. Waite's image of the solitary ritualist communing with the spirits of the elements, with the formal arrangement of symbols and postures between left hand and right, is a token of the freedom we have in the 20th century to declare our spiritual politics without fear of reprisal. The older cards were never so explicit about what the Magus was doing. Keep your mind open with this card, and imagine yourself manifesting something unique, guided by evolutionary forces that emerge spontaneously from within.

The High Priestess

Earliest versions of this image portray the Popess (Bembo's Visconti-Sforza, 1475) robed in gold, with triple tiara, holy book and bishop's staff. She lacks only the pectoral cross to complete her High Church costume. The various versions of the Mantegna proto-Tarot (1470) modify this image on the Pope card, but she remains unambiguously female. In the same pack, No. 40, Fede (Faith), shows a woman holding a cross on her left and elevating a chalice with the right over which a shimmering Host levitates. The Cary-Yale Visconti (1440-45) also includes an Arcanum called Faith, an enthroned woman with a large gold crucifix in her left hand, her right making the single-finger sign of the Monophysites; an aging and shrunken Pope sits below the dais at her feet.

We can only gaze in awe at these images because at the time they were in circulation, the Catholic Church was waging holy war against the Gnostic sects who promulgated these pictures and allowed women to seek ordination to administer the sacrament. The idea of a female pope or priest was a heresy of the highest order. The mere ownership of such an image could have you condemned to death! Volume 1 of Kaplan's Encyclopedia gives us some tantalizing clues about who this Popess might be in history. The Fournier Visconti-Sforza cards show her in a brown nun's habit. The Catelin Geoffrey Tarot from 1557 shows her with the key to St. Peter's Cathedral! Even the "Alexandrian" Tarots, whose provenance is unknown though definitely medieval if not older, show the Priestess as an educated, high ranking member of a temple community, with the same book and triple crown.

A number of Tarot artists took the noncontroversial option of dropping the High Priestess as such but substituting something else to fill the space. Moors and satraps replace the Popess and Pope, Empress and Emperor in the tarocchi di Bologna from the 18th century, and the Spanish Capitano replaces her in the Vandendorpe Tarot, an eighteenth century Belgian pack. Another device used was the substitution of Juno and Jupiter for the Popess and the Pope (J. Gaudais pack, 1850). Mitelli's Tarot of 1664 doubles up on Popes, one bearded Pope sitting and the other standing, the beard a shorthand reassurance of maleness.

We see more triple crowned Popess cards reemerging through the sixteenth and seventeenth century Tarots (the Rosenwald Tarot and the anonymous Parisian Tarot in the Bibliothèque Nationale) as the power of the Church to suppress the spread of cards waned. This version of the High Priestess as Head Mother of a nunnery would be familiar to a Renaissance eye, representing a woman's one opportunity to become literate and powerful in her own right. In her role as teacher and guide, she would train new initiates in meditation and prayer in order to quiet their minds and develop receptivity to the boundless mind of God. Seated between the twin pillars of reason and intuition, she is a witness to all but partaker of none.

One remark from Volume 2 of Kaplan's Encyclopedia deserves special attention. On page 161 he states, "The Popess holds a book; in art, a sealed book often appears in the hands of the Virgin Mary after her ascension into heaven. The Virgin Mary enthroned with a book personified the Church." He also mentions that there is a painting of Isis in the Vatican wherein she sits between two pillars that hold up a veil stretched between them; an open book rests upon her lap. This version of the Popess, whether Egyptian, Gnostic or Christian in origin, has had real staying power, as we do not see any significant mutations of this image again until the mid-1700s. Etteilla's Tarots portray the Priestess as Eve, first mother of humanity, about to make the fateful decision that precipitates our kind out of

mythical time and into history as we now know it. This image has several variations because the Etteilla Tarot was "adjusted" several times over its last three hundred years of existence. Earliest Etteilla decks show the Tree of Life beside Eve and a vortex of energy around her, the Magus being recast as Adam in such decks. Later printings changed the vortex into a snake twined around the tree. This image intentionally casts the Priestess into the era preceding Christianity, reviving the ancient Snake and Bird Goddess from our preliterate past. Guler's El Gran Tarot Esoterico, commissioned by Fournier on the six hundredth anniversary of Tarot in Europe, also depicts the Priestess this way but puts a pomegranate into her hand to indicate the mysteries of Persephone. (Demeter is correspondingly portrayed as the Empress.) In keeping with the Gnostic character of earliest Tarots, there is no judgment placed on either the Eve archetype or the earlier Popess version despite the Church's ongoing campaign against women's involvement with matters sacred.

In overview, this Arcanum represents human Wisdom, whether as the Gnostic Popess, Priestess of Isis, the ancient Snake and Bird Goddess, Persephone or as Eve before the "fall" into historical time. For the accused heretics who revered her in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, she was the prophecy of the coming Age of the Holy Spirit, female personage within the Christian Trinity. On the journey of self transformation, once the Fool decides he wants the self mastery to become a Magus, The Priestess or Popess serves as his first teacher, representing the Inner Life and contemplative study of Nature and the Mysteries.

The Empress

In the Visconti-Sforza Tarots, the Empress has nearly the identical attributes that she has today. Seated on her throne and robed sumptuously, she holds on her left side a shield with a black eagle emblazoned upon it and in her right hand a long, slender, golden wand. She is given four servants in the Cary-Yale Visconti deck but not in any of the others from this group. She always has a crown, occasionally large and ornamented. This image is near-universal among the early Tarots.

Starting with the Jacques Vieville Tarot from the 1660s, the image was reversed, and she seems to have stayed that way ever since. Court de Gebelin (1787) kept to the older arrangement. At this same time, the bulbous finial which had earlier been a mere detail on her wand (occasionally a fleur de lis) began appearing as the now-familiar orb and cross talisman, usually at the top of her wand. Stuart Kaplan tells us that this talisman "signifies sovereignty over the earth. Surmounted by a cross, it was used by the Holy Roman Emperor" (Encyclopedia, Volume 2, p. 161).

The title Empress has also shown remarkable constancy, although during the French Revolution, when titles were out of favor, she was occasionally given other monikers such as La Grande Mère ("the Grandmother" from the French Revolutionary Tarot by L. Carey, Strasbourg, 1791). Her image suffered far less erosion than the Priestess because it was more easily explained to the Church.

There have been two notable exceptions to this stability. Here they are mentioned in chronological order, based on when they first appeared in card form for mass production. However, the second could be older than the first, we just don't know (see "The Continental Tarots"). The Etteilla Tarot first appeared at the end of the eighteenth century, right on the heels of the Court de Gebelin/de Mellet manuscript, after the Tarot of Marseilles assumed its present form. Etteilla's Empress is not personified at all; we see instead an Edenlike image he calls "the Birds and the Fishes." This card has caused endless confusion among encyclopedists and is almost always misattributed. The title "Protection" tells us that Etteilla equated the Empress with wild nature, fertility and the stability of natural law. The second exception is the "Hermetic/ Alexandrian" stream of Tarots drawn from the Fratres Lucis document published by Paul Christian in 1870 (see "The Continental Tarots").

The Falconnier

Tarot is the first public version of these images, used as illustrations for a book called Hermetic Pages of the Divinatory Tarot published in 1896. They were meant to be cut out, colored and applied to cardboard for a do-it-yourself Major Arcana pack. Here the Empress is Isis-Urania, barebreasted and in profile, sitting on a cubic throne covered with eyes (a reference to Hermes). Behind her is the glowing orb of the sun, twelve stars arch overhead, her feet rest on an upturned crescent moon, and instead of a shield in her left hand, she holds the eagle itself. The staff in her right hand has a crossed orb on the top.

These two exceptions have been the primary inspirations for the modern Empresses of Waite, Wirth and Knapp-Hall. The men who created these decks were Tarot scholars attempting to present a "definitive" Tarot, yet all three

were more influenced by the maverick Tarots than the very steady traditional image repeated so often from the 1450s to the present. All of them added the nimbus of solar light and the crown of stars; the Knapp-Hall even adds a live eagle on her arm. Wirth and Waite include various plant forms, perhaps in reference to Etteilla. Of the "traditional-style" modern esoteric Tarots, only the El Gran Tarot Esoterico has used the Marseilles as the foundation for her image, and in that deck she was given two lions from the Strength Arcanum, the four phases of the moon on her crown, an ear of corn (signature of Demeter), black bat wings and Mars as her planetary attribution (as in the Gra version of the Sephir Yetzirah).

It seems safe to say that this Arcanum, from ancient to modern, portrays the Great Mother, as in her title in the Revolutionary Tarot. This is the ancient, aboriginal, pre-Christian Goddess for whom the Priestess serves as handmaid. In medieval Europe it could have been argued that the Empress was a representation of whatever Queen currently ruled the land, an explanation that may have satisfied the Inquisitors. But the scholars of the Renaissance and beyond would have had no doubt about her inner identity, although she could not be shown as the "woman clothed with the sun" until after the French Revolution. The Empress is the fertility principle of the planet who feeds us all, delights us with flowers and fruit and terrifies us when her mood swings destroy our plans with heavy weather and plagues. She is the Mother of Embodiment, the source of natural law, and she who recycles us when we die; we upset her at our own peril.

The Emperor

We find several versions of the Emperor among the earliest handmade Tarots: in the Brambilla Tarot, 1440-45, he is middle-aged, seated, holds the wand and crossed orb in his hands, and wears a long gold robe to the foot.

In the Cary-Yale Visconti Tarot at Yale University, the Emperor is wearing armor and seems younger. His servants stand in the four directions. Both these Emperors show the imperial eagle on their clothing and/or hat. In the Visconti-Sforza Tarot of 1450, the Emperor is older, has a long white beard and gloved hands, and the crossed orb is raised before him. He's not looking at it, though--his gaze seems to search the far distance. Perhaps these Emperors show a resemblance to the noblemen they were created for. The Mantegna proto-Tarot (1470) includes several images that have influenced the Emperor Arcanum. Re (the King), a young, clean-shaven man, sits ramrod-straight on a hard, backless throne, wears a spiky crown and holds a narrow wand. Imperator (Emperor) is older and full-bearded and sits on a padded throne embellished with curtains. His long robe cocoons his slouched figure, but is pulled up to show his shins and feet crossed at the calf. One hand holds the crossed orb of sovereignty. An eagle stands at his feet. Elements of both these images have found their way to the Emperor Arcanum over time.

In the Charles VI Tarot of 1470, the Emperor is an amalgam with armored torso but the skirt of a long robe. His crown is smaller, the orb is lacking the cross, and his wand has a fleur de lis finial. Two small servant boys kneel at his left. The Rosenwald Emperor (early 1500s) is minimalist; he is face-front, crowned and bearded, and holds a wand on the left and orb at right. The Catelin Geoffrey Tarot cards from 1557 show the Emperor fully armed under his robe, holding a sword clutched against his breast and crossed orb on his knee. In all these cards so far, the Emperor either looks out of the card full-face or is turned away at a 45-degree angle.

In the Piedmontese or Tarocchi of Venice cards (late 1600s) the Emperor is shown for the first time in profile, a detail that may be linked to the proposed emergence of the Fratres Lucis manuscript or an earlier prototype version, to which the early Marseilles Tarots were adjusted in this very decade. This Emperor sits on a more chairlike throne with arm rests; the eagle is portrayed on the shield at his feet and his crown is now an elaborate helmet. He brandishes a very formal and decorated wand. For contrast, let's look at the Hermetic/ Alexandrian images, (the Falconnier Tarot published in 1896 but quite likely older): Here we see the Emperor with body facing forward but face in profile, holding the usual wand with (uncrossed) orb at the top. His legs are crossed under a short pleated skirt, and the crown on his head represents his mastery over the material world. If there is a connection between these two, it is the head and face in profile and the different but equally odd-shaped hats they both wear.

The Mitelli Tarot (1664), in excluding both the Popess and the Empress, has added an extra Emperor and Pope. The first Emperor is seated, is bearded (older), and holds a geo-graphical globe and a wand. The second Emperor is beardless (younger), is standing, and holds the usual wand and crossed orb. The anonymous seventeenth century Tarot from Paris (p. 135 in Kaplan's Encyclopedia, Volume 1) shows us a new view: The Emperor is standing, striding through the landscape, dressed in armor and carrying something that looks obscure but is more likely to be his shield than an eagle. His spiky crown has a long feather billowing from it. Etteilla, a contemporary of de Gebelin

in the late 1700s, eliminated the human imagery completely from the Emperor, and promoted it as No. 1 in his amended order, representing the first day of the divine creation described in the Hermetic Pymander. Stuart Kaplan would disagree with me, but I feel The Ideal (aka Chaos) is Etteilla's Emperor card, and he means it to represent "everyman," the male querant. It is alternately pictured as either a radiant sun beaming between parted clouds (late 1700s) or the earth surrounded by the rings of the planets (1800s). The latter variant is an image of great antiquity, used by early Kabbalists and later Gnostics (it also appears in the Mantegna cards) to represent the descent of the soul into matter. Later variations of Etteilla's Emperor call it "Enlightenment," as in the dawning of higher consciousness (nineteenth century Etteilla version, p. 142 of Kaplan's Encyclopedic, Volume 1). Because we now know that Etteilla was a Mason and studied the Hebrew and Greek creation myths, I am inclined to rename his Emperor "Adam Kadmon" (see "Gnostic Tarot"). The Waite-Smith Tarot returns the image to more familiar territory except for the addition of ram's heads prominently displayed to override more traditional associations of the Emperor with Jupiter (as shown in the previous two centuries' Arcana from Etteilla, Levi, Papus and Wirth to the Falconnier family of decks). Variations in the intensely interesting Emperor from El Gran Tarot Esoterico include deer horns in a leather crown, a feathered cloak much like that of the Empress who preceded him, and a black bird sitting in a tree in the background. These trappings cast him into the deep prehistory of Christianity, as does the glyph of the sun hanging in the air (the earliest Hebrew correspondence to the number four and the letter Daleth). I see him as the Grain King who is sacrificed after a year of royal living, his limbs thrown into the fields in the fall fertility ritual. In the development of this Arcanum, common themes of the historical stream of images are remarkably similar, with even the lone dissenter, Etteilla, opting for a more grandiose version of the same idea. The Emperor is the boss or leader, the head of state, the most exemplary and powerful person in the realm. His word is law, and the positive outcome in affairs of state is directly proportional to his well being and happiness. The more enlightenment and cosmic perspective he possesses, the better life is for all under his reign. He has mastered the realm of the Cube, the world of matter and of manifestation. The Hierophant or Pope This image has been subject to several modifications due to the political and religious climate of the times in which Tarot first appeared. In the Visconti-Sforza Tarot from Bembo, the Priestess is called Popess and is often dressed in ecclesiastical finery, undermining the exclusivity of the Pope's role and making both genders of equal rank. The male, bearded Pope is shown in triple crown making ecclesiastical gestures, but holds no tokens of his rank. The Von Bartsch Visconti-Sforza (date unknown) at least gives him a proper papal staff. Among the published versions of the Mantegna cards, the Pope is unambiguously female, although referred to by the encyclopedists as if male. Perhaps that is because Albrecht Durer's version of the Mantegna Pope (from the early 1500s) is so clearly masculine. The Goldschmidt cards from the mid-fifteenth century show a more typical patriarchal Pope with the fascinating variants of a Catholic bishop's mitre, a mysterious anchor inlaid in the wall beside him, and a checkerboard black and white floor mosaic repeated in several cards from this deck (said to be from either Provence or Italy) and in the contemporary Guildhall cards (possibly German). One of the Visconti-Sforza tarocchi cards from the Victoria and Albert Museum also shows a checkerboard floor under the Death card. We notice that in the early 1400s, this checkered pattern shows up several times in relation to Tarot, still a rare subject in those days. The two examples given by Kaplan in Volume 2 of his Encyclopedia show large scenes of Tarot players, either sitting in a room with a checkerboard floor (a fresco now at the Sforza castle in Milan, circa 1450) or framed in the checkered arches of a fresco in one of the arcades at the Issogone Castle in Val D'Aosta, circa 1415-1450. Perhaps the checkers on those early decks show a relationship to the "scene" those fifteenth century frescoes represented. (We notice that the checkered theme disappeared until it was recently revived on the Tarots of the French and English lodges of the late nineteenth century. I take it as a signal of their various Masonic affiliations, since their rituals were always played out on a floor similarly checkered in black and white.) The Gringonneur Pope from the mid-fifteenth century is shown with cardinals flanking him. His profile is left-facing, and he holds the key to St. Peter's Cathedral in his right hand and the Gospel on his lap with his left. The contemporary Pope from the d'Este cards wears a more elaborate triple crown, holds up the two-fingered blessing with the right hand and grasps a chunky, gilt Grail Cup on his lap in his left hand. In the following century, the Rosenwald Tarot shows the Pope in face-front pose, with triple crown and scroll in right hand. Catelin Geoffrey's Tarot from 1557 gives us a triple-crowned Pope with the triple-crossed staff as well as the keys to St. Peter's Cathedral. The Mitelli Tarot from 1664 includes two Popes as mentioned in the Priestess entry, both bearded, both wearing the triple crown; one Pope is seated on a throne with a paper in his right hand, while the other stands empty-handed. A refreshing break from all this Catholic symbolism appears upon the French Revolutionary Tarot by L. Carey (1791). Due to anti-royalist politics of the time, the Priestess became Juno and the Hierophant became Jupiter. He is nude save for a strategically floating scarf, and he straddles the back of an eagle, holding thunderbolts in both hands. (His counterpart, Juno, is tastefully dressed but barefoot, and riding on a peacock.) Notes from Fournier's Catalog of Playing Cards Volume 1 tell us that, in regard to the contemporary tarocchino from Bologna (No. 36 in Fournier's

section on Italy), ". . . the Popes and Emperors are shown with heads and shoulders of Negroes and satraps according to the dictates of the Papal Authority." Perhaps the Pope didn't want these Arcana to be confused with any historical Europeans past or present! In the eighteenth century Tarots, two pillars appear behind the Pope, perhaps another clue to the timing of the appearance of the Alexandrian/Fatidic Egyptian Tarot which places the Pope between them (though in those decks he was called the Master of the Arcanes). Contemporary decks by Jean Payen, the Marseilles, the N. Conver Tarot and the Lando all seem to have adopted this device. Court de Gebelin repeats the pillars, puts servants at his feet, and introduces the name The Heirophant. The same Tarots that replaced the Popess with the Spanish Capitano (the Vandendorpe and the pack by Jean Galler) have replaced the Pope with Bacchus astride a wine keg, with a headdress and loincloth made of grapevines, swigging from his bottle with evident glee. Etteilla, ever the iconoclast, replaces the personification entirely with "Secrets," showing the zodiac filled with the stars of day and night. I believe that this was his way of emphasizing that the teacher of the Mysteries is not as important as the Sacred Sciences themselves. The Pope or Heirophant has from ancient times represented the head teacher in a sacred university, an institution that the Roman church had overtaken and co-opted to its curriculum by the fifteenth century. Etteilla chose to point to the university of Nature from which his students should seek initiation and where they would not be denied. As this Arcanum developed into the twentieth century, we see the older debate over the gender of the Heirophant returning. Knapp-Hall and Papus make it unambiguously female, while Waite-Smith and Wirth show him with full gray beard. In the end, there is no difference, really. The Heirophant teaches practical applications from the book of natural law, revealing those secrets hidden in every-day matter, the cycles of moons and tides, the links between the body and the cosmos. Because the monasteries were the only places a person could learn to read and write in the Middle Ages, the Heirophant is the one to whom a student would petition for entry, and NO. 5 SECRETS ETTEILLA TAROT 11 s/he sets the curriculum for the neophytes' course of study. With right raised hand in the attitude of blessing, s/he links herself with the ancient lineages of Melchizedek, first initiator of the Hebrew priestly tradition, and passes on the lineage teachings. All self-generated shamans of any tradition inherently belong to this lineage. Lovers The Pierpont-Morgan Bergamo tarocchi "Love" card (mid-1400s) shows a handsome young man advancing from the left and a beautiful woman standing to the right, both in medieval clothing reflecting royal status, as if they were reiterations of the Empress and Emperor. They are meeting and shaking hands below an upright, blindfolded Cupid who appears to be ready to drop an arrow onto the man's head. The contemporary Cary-Yale Visconti portrays the same couple but on opposite sides, in a manicured garden under a sumptuous canopy furnished with a bright red couch. A blindfolded cherub flying above is now about to drop the arrow on the woman. This image too was called Love. Kaplan, in Volume 2 of his Encyclopedia, likens these images to "betrothal portraits" popular in Germany and later in Italy. Such portraits typically show the couple linked by Cupid, who carries two arrows but no bow. The arrows are meant "that they might love each other equally" (p. 164). The Charles VI Tarot from 1470-80 calls this Arcanum the Lovers, and shows several couples dancing and romancing; two cherubs are at the ready, bows drawn, to pierce some members of the crowd with their barbs of love. Kaplan, in Volume 1 of his Encyclopedia, says the Lovers card is represented in the Mantegna Tarocchi (1470) by cards No. 20, Apollo, and No. 43, Venus, suggesting the identities of the royal couple who come together under the auspices of this Arcanum. The Rosenwald Tarot cards from the sixteenth century reveal a man on bended knee before a woman, while above them a blindfolded angel with female breasts and male genitals prepares to shoot the woman in the heart with an arrow of love. Note that this ambivalent gender association shows up a century later as one characteristic of the "new" Devil Arcanum influenced by the reforms of the 1660s. We know this angel is not meant to be a devil figure, however, because the wings are distinctly feathered rather than black and leathery as would be those of a demon. In the mid-1600s we enter a time of mixed influences. This card tends to have a large number of variants through the years, giving us numerous subtle changes in interpretation from one pack to another. Several that might be especially interesting are mentioned below. But the image that eventually became standard, first on the Marseilles family of Tarots and later on Etteilla and all the French Esoteric cards, was the Two Paths, showing a young man at a fork in the road, standing between two women who represent different possible destinies for him. This image first shows up on the Jacques Vieville and Jean Noblet Tarots, both from the early 1660s in France.

By the early seventeenth century, the anonymous Parisian Tarot shows a very quizzical version of the Lovers. The woman appears on the right, human but with what seems to be gray angel wings that match those of the cherub overhead. Her gaze and hands are focused on his lap. We see him diagonally from behind as he straddles a hassock, looking at her face and embracing her chest. The cherub has an arrow ready to release, pointing at the man. Is he receiving sexual attention from an angel? Is this love or lust? Giuseppe Maria Mitelli's Tarot (1664) does not help us with this question, as he shows only the chubby cupid standing on earth though possessing wings, arrows holstered, wearing a blindfold.

He holds a flaming heart in his left hand. One Tarot from 1750 shows an interesting variation (Tarocco Siciliano cards). This pack presents the Arcana in a different numerical order than usual, so the Lovers image is numbered 8 instead of 6. A woman and a man are in the open landscape, the requisite cherub on a cloud above them. The cherub's bow is drawn, ready to shoot the man. This man is caught in a moment of shock, recoiling at what the woman is presenting. She is holding up another arrow, which has apparently already been released into her. It seems the man is not as receptive and peaceful with the prospect of love as the woman!

Aside from these amusing but inconclusive variations, the primary image for the Lovers goes forward as some variation on the "new" (in the 1660s) Two Paths image. In that formulation, the young man (the Magus?) who is standing at a fork in the road must choose between a modest angel and a primitively dressed nature girl (meant to imply sexual availability). Between them, the two women represent virtue and vice. The cherub is aiming the arrow at the man in the center of the image as if to imply that the responsibility for all consequences of this Choice will be borne by the chooser (meaning the person who draws this card).

The main variant of the Choice card is shown by the Jean Payen, Marseilles, Court de Gebelin, N. Conver and Vandendorre Tarots. All show a marriage ceremony being performed by an older priestess who stands in the same position the "vice" woman would have, to the left of the young man. This produces the same silhouette as The Choice, but the temptress image is replaced by the priestess (or Holy Mother) image.

. This priestess is ceremonially uniting the couple at a crossroads in the manner of a pagan handfasting. The priestess sometimes has her back turned to the viewer of the card, which can make it unclear whether she is older and making a marriage or younger and competing with the bride for the attentions of the young man. Usually the artist will have taken the time to detail a headdress for the extra woman if she is meant to be more than a flirtatious competitor of the bride. In each case, the cherub hovers overhead either targeting the groom or aiming between the bride and groom. Almost never are either of the women made the explicit target of the cherub's arrow. A modern version appears in the F. Gumpfenberg Tarot, 1807-1815 (Kaplan's Encyclopedia Volume 2, p. 344). This card shows a beautiful young girl having to choose between a young king and a handsome warrior. The cherub is aiming at the warrior, while the young king is trying to pull her away with him. Even in this case, it is not the girl who is in the sights of the cherub! There must be an implicit lesson showing through in this Arcanum, implying as they all do that in this kind of situation the man (symbolically the ego and the will) is the deciding factor rather than the woman (referencing the heart).

Etteilla returns the Lovers to the church, now presided over by a priest in the nave of his chapel. We have no particular evidence to link Etteilla to the Church, although we can now be sure that he was a Mason and esteemed among his peers. He may be echoing the Adam C. de Hautot Tarot (1740s) or the Sebastian Ioia Tarot (mid- to late 1700s), both of which show the sacred marriage being performed by a man. But it is just as likely that Etteilla picked this version of the Lovers card because it allows him to transplant the Heirophant onto the Lovers Arcanum. In this way he frees up one card to name after himself: No. 1, Etteila (also called "le Consultant" and "Ideal") implying, it seems, that he is the Heirophant of the Tarot. In other Etteilla-style Tarots, this card gets the label Chaos, which in light of the Poimandres theme that Etteilla was following, was referring to the primordial state before creation began.

The Lando Tarot is less specific about which version of the Lovers we are seeing, but in any case it includes the classic "Two Paths" silhouette. Even the Milanese Tarot by F. Gumpfenberg (late eighteenth or early nineteenth century), which is the deck the individual members of the Golden Dawn school were instructed to work with before they each created their own personal decks, shows the Two Paths/Marriage formula.

The Waite-Smith Tarot offers a surprising formulation of this Arcanum, depicting a naked Adam and Eve apparently before the events of the "fall." He stands on the right before a tree with ten flaming leaves (representing the Kabbalah Tree) and she on the left before a tree laden with red fruit and where a serpent is climbing into its branches. One can say that Waite is projecting the Bembo-style Royal Couple backward into the primordial myth, and reminding us of our august origins, our original divine natures, before we misused our powers of will. A similar Adamo & Eva card exists from a card game called Labyrinth by Andrea Ghisi (1616), and perhaps that is what Waite is referencing.

In choosing to add these Gnostic and Hebrew implications to the meeting of the Queen and the King, he has superimposed a biblical mythos onto an otherwise pagan Sacred Marriage image. This has not been a bad thing in itself. Waite's Lovers card is one of my favorites in his Tarot. But in so doing he left aside the important lesson of The Choice at the crossroads, the challenge to mature and commit, which has been the dilemma of the young man on the Lovers Arcanum since the 1660s. He also eliminated the Priestess, representing feminine Wisdom, the link to the Sophia bonding force that draws the partners together and binds them over time. The Lovers card in all its glory and variety has referred to the sex/love/commitment/consequences continuum and how to stay balanced within it. This card has been more variable than some because there are so many nuances of opinion about sex and relationship across cultures and centuries. But doubtless this Arcanum is about the issues raised by real human relationships, since the protagonist is shown in the act of making a life-changing choice. One cannot have it all. To partake of a higher ideal requires self discipline. The path of pleasure eventually leads to distraction from spiritual growth. The gratification of the personality eventually gives way to the call from spirit as the soul matures.

Chariot

The Cary-Yale Visconti Tarot (1440-45) portrays a man directing a pair of horses who pull the Chariot, occupied by a robed noblewoman under a blue canopy with gold stars. She holds the Visconti dove that has a nimbus of energy around it. In the Visconti-Sforza Tarot, the horses are winged, and the lady seated in the cab gets along without a driver. In her gloved hands she holds a thin wand on the right and a crossed orb on the left.

The Charles VI Tarot (mid-1400s) changes the gender of the person in the Chariot. It shows an armored warrior wearing a red hat, holding an ornamental ax and standing on the dais of a float pulled by two white horses. They are coming at us full-front. The No. 45 Marte (Mars) card from the Mantegna cards seems directly related. In the Rothschild Tarot (late fifteenth century or early sixteenth) at the Louvre in Paris, the Chariot shows a male figure with winged helmet on a raised platform. The horses pulling his vehicle, while looking at each other, are in fact diverging. With his hands full of the symbols of authority and victory and no reins in sight, one wonders how he will control the implicit dilemma. The Rosenwald Tarot from the early 16th century depicts the charioteer in the same dilemma, but standing. The Catelin Geoffrey Tarot (1557) gives us a more controlled image: The man is holding a bouquet of flowers and the groomsman is holding the horses' bridles. In the early seventeenth century anonymous Parisian Tarot, the laurel crowned man is piloted by a youth or cherub who holds a whip over the steeds. The bottom part of the card is difficult to read because of clumsy coloration over faint outlining, but it looks like the steeds may be swans.

Mitelli's Tarot (1664) shows Venus in the chariot, nude except for a golden ribbon around her ribs and a golden scarf billowing behind her. Her chariot has no steeds, consisting instead of a rolling throne with stairs leading down to ground-level in front. The "ground" in question is, however, a cloud, as evidenced by the birds at her feet. She pulls up on a set of reins which pierce downward through the cloud, presumably to the world below. Her empty right hand is outstretched, her expression benign. To my eye, this card has a distinctly Gnostic flavor.

The Tarots I have identified as the "turning point" from folk Tarot to esoteric Tarot are the Jacques Vieville Tarot and the Jean Noblet Tarot, both from the early 1660s. The Vieville pack shows the interesting detail of human faces upon the Chariot. This may show a relationship with the prototype manuscript for the eventual Falconnaire Tarot, which I have suggested started circulating in the Secret Societies at this time. In that stream of Tarots which has emerged from this source (including the St. Germaine Tarot and the modern Ibis Tarot), the Chariot is pulled by sphinxes with human faces.

Stuart Kaplan suggests that the Vieville Tarot is the prototype for the Belgian Tarots, but in those that he illustrates (Adam C. de Hautot, 1740s, Antoine Jar and Martin Dupont in the 1800s), the horses just look like horses. The Jean Noblet form seems to represent the standard model from this time forward. Sometimes it is difficult to tell if the person in the Chariot is male or female, with the crescent-moon shoulder pads and the beardless face now becoming standard features. In some, the arrangement of the armored breastplate could suggest a female figure.

By the eighteenth century, the male charioteer clearly outnumbers versions where the rider is a woman or a goddess. Occasionally the image proceeds away from the viewer or is in profile (as in some of the Etteilla Tarots), but more often it comes straight out of the card toward the viewer. The sense of dynamic motion is always emphasized, often with oversized, studded wheels which, it is implied, are whirling the Chariot along the road. In the esoteric Tarots from the cusp of the twentieth century, for example the Oswald Wirth, Knapp-Hall, and the Waite Tarots, a lingam

and yoni image, sometimes winged, appears on the front wall of the Chariot. This symbol often refers to the sexual mysteries of combining the opposites. But in this context, because only one person is riding the Chariot, the implication is that this one person is becoming androgynous. This approach is made distinct in a 1935 pack called the British Tarot, which shows a distinct pair of breasts on a seemingly male charioteer.

In every case of this card's appearance, there is a triumphal feeling, as if the charioteer is being celebrated for a victory at battle or is being paraded through the streets as a hero (or heroine). The card appears to congratulate high achievement, a signal of a soul empowered in the world. The huge wheels and frisky steeds speed up the rate at which the driver's will can be realized, and make more of the world accessible to one ambitious enough to take the reins. There is real danger here because of the increased rate of change and its power to magnify mistakes in judgment, but like a seasoned warrior, the charioteer stays attentive to the road before him.

Justice

In the Visconti-Sforza Tarot of 1450, the seated image of Justice, her sword held upright on her right and scales held up in the left, is vaulted over by a fully armored, beardless knight with chin-length blonde hair who sits astride a skirted horse, unsheathed sword in right hand. I think what we are seeing here is the two sides of Justice--the contemplative side and the active side. Alternately, the Charles VI pack depicts the Justice seated on a cubic throne, holding an upright sword in her right hand and a hand-held scales in her left. Resemblance to the Justice Arcanum can be seen in the Mantegna card No. 37, *Justicia* (with both sword and scales, plus a leggy bird with a fruit held in one foot). The Rosenwald Tarot images present a version of the same thing (early sixteenth century).

In the early seventeenth century anonymous Parisian Tarot, Justice is shown standing in a field, sword and scales in hand but blindfolded, and with the Janus face (a young woman to the front, a bearded old man to the back). This device harkens back to antiquity and usually implies the benefit of hindsight that comes with long reflection. In this case both faces share the blindfold.

Mitelli's Tarot shows Justice unblinded in an outdoor setting, her one-shouldered dress flowing in the wind and revealing one breast. Her right hand holds the sword, the left the scales. In the intervening century separating this from the Sicilian Tarocco (1750), the only thing that has changed significantly in this Arcanum is that Justice is seated in the later pack, and her emblems have switched hands. From this point on she has almost no variations aside from the occasional pair of wings or a two-pillars allusion formed from the uprights of her throne rising behind her. Neither Etteilla (whose images we know were deliberately skewed from the usual order) nor Waite felt free to editorialize much on the image, although in the Waite Tarot, Justice was switched from position 8 to position 11.

One interesting image from the illustrious *El Gran Tarot Esoterico* shows Soloman as the figurehead instead of a female Justice. He is holding aloft a small infant by the feet. With a sword in his other hand, he prepares to cut the infant in half. This image represents a famous incident from the Bible in which Soloman was able to determine which of two women was the infant's real mother by their individual reactions to his proposal to divide the baby equally.

The standard meaning of this Arcanum is conscience, the moral sensitivity that is supposed to put us into others' shoes and evoke our compassion and sense of fairness. The great antiquity of this image has represented a standard for humane and equal treatment between humans of all kinds since the time of Soloman. By providing a fulcrum that helps balance competing needs against the greater good, and by using the two-edged sword to symbolize the exactitude necessary to make these adjudications, this Arcanum puts us all on notice that not one detail misses the inner eye of the conscience. The treatment we mete out to others will be received in our turn.

Hermit

The very oldest image we associate with the Hermit of Tarot is probably an illustration of the poem *I Triumphi* by Petrarch, composed during an 18-year period starting in 1356. Stuart Kaplan shows a set of fifteenth century illustrations of the Triumphs, and the *Triumph of Time* is a perfect prototype for the Hermit. He stands on his float or chariot on crutches, bald, bearded, robed and winged. Two stags pull him, and two hourglasses stand on either side of him. Stuart Kaplan tells us that "the hermit is well-known in medieval and Renaissance art as a man of great virtue and spiritual strength. Often in paintings his presence is a reprimand to sinners who are frolicking and carousing" (*Encyclopedia*, Volume 2, p. 167).

In the Visconti-Sforza Tarot of 1450, an old and bent but sumptuously dressed man with a tall staff carries before him an hourglass, contemplating the passage of time. The Charles VI version (mid 1400s) shows a similarly well dressed old man, lacking staff but still contemplating the hourglass, with cliffs rising beside him. The uncut sheet of Minchiate cards from the late fifteenth century (p. 128 of Kaplan's Encyclopedia, Volume 1) shows the well-dressed old man on crutches, bellypack at his waist. A pair of transparent wings rises behind him and between them rises a six-sided pillar along the line of his backbone. Another early sixteenth century image from the Rosenwald Tarot shows the bent old man on crutches, but it has left out the wings, hourglass, staff and/or pillar entirely.

In Catelin Geoffrey's Tarot (1557), the Hermit is shown as an older tonsured (or balding) monk with rosary in his belt, walking away from us. He is entering a curtained doorway with a lantern held low before him. It doesn't appear to be an hourglass. In the anonymous Parisian Tarot from the early seventeenth century, the Hermit is now emerging from the curtained archway, and he has a cane as well as his hand-held lamp. (The shape of whatever it is he is carrying is indistinct, but it seems to have a lampshade over it.) The secret door in both cases would most probably represent a portal to the Inner Sanctum where the ineffable mysteries can be contemplated without interruption.

Giuseppe Maria Mitelli (1664) evokes the classical image of Father Time, a naked old man with flowing beard and large gray wings. He shows no visible infirmities, but leans on crutches anyway, reminding us again of our original image from I Triumphi. As of 1750 and the publication of the Tarocco Siciliano cards, the essential details had been codified as a robed and hooded old monk with flowing white beard, a lamp held up on the right; a short crutch on the left supports him.

In the late sixteenth century decks from Jacques Vieville and Jean Noblet, a new detail enters the picture--the arrangement of his cloak partially covers his lantern. This detail, found in all the Falconnier Tarots modeled on the Fratres Lucis document, which I think has been circulating since the 1660s, also appears on the Jean Payne Tarot (1743), the Marseilles (1748) and the Court de Gebelin images (1787). A serpent at the feet of the Hermit is a feature of the Egyptian-style Tarots as well, but that doesn't appear until the F. Gumpfenberg Neoclassical Tarot from 1807.

Other contemporary decks followed the example of Etteilla, whose Hermit Arcanum reveals his light unshielded. The Tarocchini di Bologna cards (eighteenth century) sidesteps the issue by portraying the Hermit in his older form as a well-dressed old man on crutches, downcast but with large wings, standing in front of an unbroken, ornamented pillar. Another eighteenth century image from an uncut set of Minchiate cards (Kaplan's Encyclopedia, p. 52) reinstates the lame old man but adds an arrow piercing the hourglass and a stag resting beside him. We see the stag again in the Spanish El Gran Tarot Esoterico, which we are using in this CD Rom to represent the ancient Hebrew correspondences. This image, attributed to Eliphaz Levi, includes a serpent at the Hermit's feet leading him into hidden knowledge of the Kundalini.

Turn of the century Tarot "experts" differ as to which version they emulate. The Waite-Smith Tarot falls with Etteilla into the camp of the uncovered lantern, in a land where no serpent lurks. Both Oswald Wirth and Knapp-Hall show the occulted light of the Levi-inspired versions, complete with a stylized serpent at their feet. Few maintain loyalty to the oldest formulations, especially after the Marseilles became the prototypical "traditional Tarot."

Given the many parables to be found in spiritual literature about "entertaining angels unaware" (as implied by the Hermits with the angel wings), and considering also the interesting later variation of cloaking or uncloaking the light, it seems obvious that this Arcanum's major intergenerational theme reminds us that the most powerful and interesting souls will often appear unbidden in a "plain brown wrapper," wearing the simple garb of an anonymous monk, often appearing aged or infirm. The pillar or column behind him in some cards reminds us not to judge his power by his apparent fragility.

The challenge of The Hermit is to be able to recognize the Teacher in this humble disguise. He will not make it easy for the student to acquire his wisdom because it takes time and long contemplation to fathom what he is illuminating with the lantern. He often speaks wordlessly or in ancient and barbaric tongues, communicating with the elements, the animals, the laws of Nature. While the hourglass was an identifying feature of the earliest Hermit cards, the more modern ones have shifted the metaphor, showing more or less light released from his lantern. But every Hermit card

reminds us of the value of time spent away from the everyday hubbub of community life in order to destimulate the soul and learn to join with the mind of Nature.

Wheel

The Brambilla Tarot (1440-45) shows the classic blindfolded Dame Fortune at the center with four people around her on the stations of and Typhon in Coptic, is pictured with the qualities of a reptile, suggesting the unconscious, instinctive residue of our animal nature. So the visual formula is "change is certain; learn to control impulsiveness and embrace the law of cycle. Wisdom will grow through experience."

Mitelli (1664) changes the approach drastically, putting a wagon wheel under the seat of naked Lady Fortune. She is posing with it, holding up an open purse from which pour coins and jewelry. Her hair is blowing in the breeze. The logo for his card could be "easy come, easy go." This image was not taken to heart by the masses, and by 1750 and the Sicilian Tarocco, we have a fairly conventional image again.

Etteilla, on the other hand, uses the image of a crowned monkey on a tree branch, perhaps making a statement about inept leadership among the "royalist" lodges. A man, a serpent twined around him, is descending on the left while a little gray mouse is ascending on the right. The rolling hoop hovers mid-bounce above a rocky landscape. The angle at which the monkey holds the wand hints that it is he who is keeping the hoop rolling. When we think of the times in which Etteilla lived, a period that encompassed both the American and French democratic revolutions, one can imagine the poignancy Etteilla must have felt as he designed this card!

Etteilla's Tarots were the most popular of the end of the eighteenth century and the first part of the nineteenth, and a Catalan version was the first standard Tarot printed in Spain a century later. Because of this, variant images crept in, including a revival of blindfolded Lady Fortune, this time robed and standing on a wagon wheel (Delarue Etteilla, circa 1880-90).

In the nineteenth century the images return again to a more traditional look, but the creature at the apex begins to mutate afresh, showing variations of a crowned woman resembling Justice, a little king, or an indeterminate "beastie" that could be a variation on the Sphinx. One "modern" concept of the Wheel has followed the Waite-Smith "wheel in the sky" image that includes the four creatures of the elements and quarters.

Others have followed the Oswald Wirth version which uses a very stylized Wheel on an elevated frame in a crescent moon boat, bobbing on choppy waters as the Wheel turns with the action of Azoth (the rising force) and Hyle (the falling force). This image is a near-exact copy of the Egyptian-style Arcana, which I see as the influence for all the Wheel cards with a sphinx at the top. El Gran Tarot Esoterico combines the crowned monkey of the Etteilla with the white bear of the late fifteenth century Minchiate, here seen rolling a great stone Wheel of Time. This is the plight of the secret royalty of Europe, the clan of the Holy Blood, to patiently wait out the reign of the "crowned monkey"-the Church and its made-up royalty.

A simple explanation of this card from its ancient form to the present is change; the Wheel will keep on rolling, churning events in a ceaseless progression of ups and downs. No one can escape its action, which feels good when we are rising and terrible when we are falling. The figure balanced on the top has a moment of eternal clarity, but the only unmoving part of the Wheel is the hub that pivots on the crossbar that holds it up. Whether it is moved by the action of the Angel of Time, a disembodied Hand of Fate turning a crank or the natural law of eternal return, we are each bound to occupy all the roles at one point or another in our life's journey. The predictability of the Wheel is its lesson, and that's something we can take comfort in. If you don't like the look of things right now, just wait a bit--it's bound to change. Of course, if you do like the look of things right now, enjoy it while it lasts because it's bound to change!

Strength

In the image called Fortitude from the Cary-Yale Visconti (1440-45), a beautiful lady with a corona-patterned aura rides the golden lion sidesaddle. The Pierpont Morgan-Bergamo Visconti-Sforza tarocchi (1475), also called Fortitude, shows a strong young giant, probably Hercules, swinging a club to kill the lion at his feet. The Charles VI Tarot of 1470-80 depicts a young lady with a dark halo, seated on a cubic throne, breaking a pillar with her hands. The Mantegna tarocchi (1470) presents us with a similar image called Force in which the woman is wearing a lion-

embossed helmet and breast-plate with a live lion in the background. She holds a wand with a knobby end in her right hand and breaks the pillar with her left.

In the Rosenwald Tarot from the early sixteenth century, a mild-looking woman sits next to an unbroken pillar, her arms wrapped around it. A contemporary deck, the anonymous Parisian Tarot found in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, shows us the familiar image of a woman wrestling with and/or taming a lion. She leans down from her throne to handle the beast, and her scarf billows behind her.

Giuseppe Maria Mitelli's deck (1664) retains the woman standing with a broken pillar, although there is no indication that the woman broke it. Her one-shouldered dress exposes her left breast, and she holds a scarf in her right hand.

A French pack circa 1720 (see Stuart Kaplan's Encyclopedia Volume 1, p. 146) shows us a man of royal rank opening the jaws of a lion with his bare hands. This hearkens back to the Hercules image of yore. But the Tarocco Siciliano of 1750 prefers the symbol of the woman with the pillar instead of the lion.

Etteilla's images are all versions of the lady with the lion, although the beast is usually asleep at her feet. This approach emphasizes the taming power of Lady Strength rather than the brute force of Hercules. This theme is also reflected in the Falconnier Tarot from 1896, first of the Alexandrian-style Tarots to be published, but quite possibly older than Etteilla's Tarots.

A most beautiful Major Arcana tarocchi with art from 1893, the Vacchetta, shows both the lion and the unbroken pillar with the calm and lucid Goddess standing between them. She looks away into the distance, while the lion frolics beside her and licks her hand. This synthesis combines the most non-violent elements of the earlier themes we can trace in this card.

In the Strength Arcanum, the animal nature, so fierce and frightening in its primal form, has been tamed and brought to heel under the direction of our finer, more subtle (feminine, interior) self. The will and passion of our untamed nature does not need to be "broken" but instead refined and brought to consciousness so that all levels of creation, inner and outer, might come into harmony. The feminine soul-force shows a strength and persuasive power that can induce cooperation from others, stilling disruptive energies and bring-ing the planes of being into harmonious relationship.

Hanged One/Prudence

Illustrated in one version of this card is the medieval custom of hanging traitors or their effigies by their feet. This shaming image represents punishment or, alternately, the state of debt and delinquency and its repayment. In the earliest Visconti-Sforza image (1450), a youth in his undervest with tie-on sleeves and hose is suspended, upside-down by his left leg, from a square frame. The right is crossed behind the left, and his hands are tied behind his back. He gazes pensively into the distance as his hair hangs around his face. Alternately, the Charles VI pack from the mid-1400s shows the Hanged Man holding bags of gold coins in his hands, hanging from his right leg, with an orange feather peeking from behind him like a tail.

The Mantegna (1470) introduces the first image of Prudence, a woman holding an elaborate mirror in her left hand, a caliper in her right. She has a Janus head--young female face looking forward, older bearded male face looking back. This symbol is usually employed to suggest sober reflection in the light of past experience. The same face also appears on the Mantegna Theologia card, implying that the state of mind behind those two faces participates in two worlds at once, presumably with the "feminine" side in the world of spirit and the masculine side in the world of matter.

The Rosenwald Tarot of the early sixteenth century shows the hanging man again, arms untied, holding a full bag in each hand, preventing the contents from spilling out. The Catelin Geoffrey Tarot (1557) also returns to this earlier image of a hanged man, but in this case the man is tied by both feet, hands bound behind him, swinging from an L-shaped gibbet. There appears to be a ruffle of red feathers around his waist which could refer to the Lenten Fool, No. 0, harbinger of the spring carnival. In keeping with the Hanged Man's traditional attribution to Libra, those feathers could symbolize the Spring Fool being sacrificed at the onset of fall.

In the early seventeenth century anonymous Parisian Tarot, the Hanged Man's hands are free, and with the right hand he holds some-thing so it will not drop. The left hand makes an open-palmed blessing like a priest. He's hanging from his left leg with the right one crossed behind, and his foot is tied with a rope.

Never one to conform, Mitelli (1664) features a man asleep on a throne, with his head resting in his arms on a pillow. Another man stands behind him, arms raising a large mallet overhead, ready to strike a blow from which the sleeping man will never awaken. This image is so specific and so unique that it looks like an event from local history.

A card called Prudence in a French pack from the late eighteenth century (p. 337 of Kaplan's Encyclopedia Volume 2) shows us an effeminate or beardless youth standing like an upside-down Hanged Man on his left foot with the right leg crossed behind, hands on hips. The Vandendorre Belgian Tarot from the eighteenth century follows suit. But the Tarocco Siciliano cards from Modiano, Italy (1750) take the image to its lowest common denominator: We see the back view of a gentleman in frock coat, knee britches and hose, hanging dead from the branch of a tree, arms tied behind him. Versions like this violate the unwritten rule of this card, which is that however painful or tortuous the treatment of the Hanged Man at the time, it is specifically not fatal.

A most interesting form of the Prudence card emerges in Etteilla's Tarot, which we now know was an attempt at restating the Hermetic creation mythos as detailed in *The Pyramider*. Here she resembles the Hebrew Matronit and the Gnostic Sophia, aware that the serpent at her feet is an initiator and teacher, not a demon. Her subtle smile and lifted skirt imply an understanding of the serpent's place in the great scheme of things. No longer does she contemplate only, but instead she actively accepts her fate and whatever are its natural consequences in the world in which she finds herself.

Both the Falconnier and the Waite packs represent the Hanged Man, as do the majority of Tarots in history. This seems to imply a certain fatalism compared to the Prudence formulation, with its suggestion of learning to work with our fallen state instead of against it. This shows again that the Etteilla Tarot was not just a whimsical distortion of the Arcana, but an attempt to upgrade the Arcana at the dawn of more liberal times. If he failed in some cards, he succeeded with others, including this one.

This card invariably indicates the lack of ability to help yourself through independent action. Whether this is because one is trussed and awaiting judgment or because one is female or too young to be taken seriously and therefore relegated to a passive role, there is no avenue for the will to win back its freedom until this situation has passed. This is a time to be philosophical, to study and meditate upon your circumstance, to make your resolutions for the moment when you become free again. Only those who possess wisdom, patience and optimism will be able to see through the present humiliation and limitation in order to grasp the inspiration one can gain from such an experience.

Death

In many of the oldest Tarot decks, including the Cary-Yale Visconti from 1445, the reaping skeleton rides a pale horse over fields filled with the body parts and blood of various Arcana characters. Alternately, Death is an archer in the Pierpont Morgan-Bergamo Visconti-Sforza tarocchi (1450), with the curve of the bow articulated like a spine. He stands at the brink of a precipice, testing the edge with his bony toe. The Charles VI pack (mid-1400s) shows a skeleton dressed in a yellow smock riding a dark horse. His big death's-head grin expresses his glee as he chops away at the pope, cardinals, king and others who are being trampled underfoot. The early sixteenth century Rosenwald Tarot echoes the Charles VI image, but with less drama. In Catelin Geoffrey's Tarot (1557) the reaper is standing, shovel over the right shoulder and scythe skimming the ground on the left. A wan crop of straggly hair and empty eye sockets are especially ghastly. The landscape is unremarkable.

Stuart Kaplan, in Volume 2 of his *Encyclopedia of Tarot*, states that "beginning with Vieville's deck of the mid-seventeenth century, the figure of Death is seen on foot with his scythe. . . . This image persisted until Waite revived the old form with his depiction of Death as a skeletal knight on horseback, carrying a banner instead of a scythe." He seems to be correct on that; although we see one standing Death a century earlier, the convention changed precipitously after Vieville's Tarot. Several Arcana display this radical change appearing in the mid-1660s in the Vieville and Noblet Tarots, and I assume the Devil card is one example of this phenomenon.

When we look at the Falconnier Tarot, which I am suggesting is one of several Alexandrian-inspired versions of the Fratres Lucis manuscript circulating in Europe since the Middle Ages (the manuscript I suggest inspired these changes), we see a standing Devil reaping a field of severed limbs, much like Vieville's modification.

By the early seventeenth century, Death had sprouted what looks like wings, as in the anonymous Parisian Tarot. Little gore is visible, and the scythe is the reaper's only tool. A lone plant grows in the background. In the Mitelli Tarot from 1664, the skeleton benefits from a better sense of anatomy, but seems bland, with scythe on the left and hourglass held aloft on the right. A little pyramid stands in the background on the left side. (The attributes of scythe and hourglass are also associated with Father Time as well as Death.)

In every case, Death represents the time of harvest, as the ubiquitous scythe testifies. Unless the fruits of summer are harvested, they are lost to winter's harshness and the people do not eat. This Arcanum portrays the action of winter on the landscape—lush greenery is cut back, revealing the bones of the earth. The season of dark and cold separates the annual plants, which live and die in one year, from the perennials, which can take refuge in their root systems until the following spring, then sprout anew. As the scythe cuts the cords that link us to the past, it liberates us to go forward without fear, because we have nothing to lose. We can see that everything pruned away is recycled for the fertility of the future, so there is no loss despite the changes the seasons bring.

Temperance

In the Pierpont Morgan-Bergamo Visconti-Sforza pack (mid-1400s), the Temperance card depicts a long-haired blond woman in a blue dress covered with gold stars, pouring an invisible substance from a silver urn to a gold one. She stands at cliffside looking down as she pours.

The Charles VI Tarot of 1470-80 makes the substance pouring between the urns more visible, but that and the woman's dark halo are the only outstanding features. The Mantegna tarocchi shows Temperance pouring the invisible substance again, with a dog at her feet looking at himself in a mirror that has a snake eating its own tail as a border. In Catelin Geoffrey's Tarot (1557) Temperance pours from an urn to a basin, showing less association with alchemy than with washing up. She is at least making a significant health statement in her times! Another variant of the Temperance image in the early centuries of Tarot might show her seated, but it seems to make no difference to the meaning whether she is enthroned or afoot.

The Temperance from the anonymous Parisian Tarot from the early seventeenth century seems unremarkable, unless you can make sense of the jumble of forms to the right of the woman. It is also difficult to read what happens to the stream pouring from the upper urn—does it land in a second one at her feet? The paint job makes the underlying image unclear. She may be standing cliffside or next to a body of water. Mitelli (1664) has turned her back to us, but otherwise she is as we would expect her, pouring from the right-hand urn to the left-hand urn.

The Vieville Tarot, which with the Noblet Tarot marks a turning point in Tarot history, gives us an interesting variant on the Temperance Arcanum. In this case, she holds a bird-topped wand (or a wand with an elaborate fleur de lis) on her left and pours from the urn in her right hand into another vessel at her feet. A banner imprinted with the words Fama Sol waves beside her, clearly an alchemical reference. This version persists among later Tarot decks, but less often than the image which the Marseilles Tarot immortalizes, that of Temperance pouring the liquid between vessels held in each hand.

Over time, Temperance acquired wings, although exactly when is difficult to pinpoint because Kaplan does not always include Temperance in the groupings of Arcana he displays. Vieville's Tarot lacks them, but Noblet's Tarot has embraced them. As Kaplan mentions in Volume 2 of his Encyclopedia, this Arcana has seen less variation than others in the first four hundred years, so he probably did not feel it necessary to display every single Temperance card.

The consensus on this card appears to be nearly complete. The female figure is a reference to the soul, and she is mixing a blend of subtle energies that will presumably be employed in the further evolution of the personality. The key to meaning in this card is its title, a pun on the process of tempering metals in a forge. The metals must undergo much violent handling, extremes of temperature and endless folding and pounding, but the end product is infinitely superior to the original raw ore, fresh from the earth and utterly unrefined. In this image, the soul volunteers the ego

for a cleansing and healing experience which may turn the personality inside-out, but which brings out the gold hidden within the heart.

Devil

Authentic early images of the Devil in the Tarot are extremely scarce. For some reason this card is missing from nearly all the oldest Tarots. Perhaps the controversial nature of the image made it more subject to abuse. A very early image of the Devil Arcana can be seen in the Rothschild Tarot or Minchiate cards at the Louvre in Paris. The image is of a composite demon with chicken feet and legs, a remarkably human face in its abdomen, wings, tail, horns, goat ears, shaggy fur or feathers, and a huge gobbling maw with the remains of several people hanging out of it.

A figure very similar to this appears on the Tower card of the Catelin Geoffrey Tarot (1557). This is a conception right out of the ancient stone churches dotting Europe, which were carved inside and out to represent the teachings of the Gospel (interwoven with pagan tradition) for the non-literate masses. The reference is to the "hairy wild man" of paganism, Pan the god of the wilds, and the animal side of ourselves. The image from a Parisian woodcut circa 1530 shows very clearly the same kind of creature. Kaplan says "He is the Devil of the folk, rather than fine art" (Volume 2, p. 172). The Hebreo Devil card from the sixteenth century, cited by Kaplan in his Encyclopedia (Vol. 2, p. 297), is another classic folk-style Devil. Later Tarot decks which want to reference this theme show the Devil and its minions covered with hair.

This image was predominant even into the seventeenth century, and expresses the traditional concept of the lamia, werewolf or vampire, the monster that haunts the superstitious mind in the dark of night, threat-ening to steal one's soul. This primordial fear was cleverly harnessed by the Church when it was equated with the biblical Satan. The anonymous Parisian Tarot features a terrifying Devil as a composite demon with chicken feet, goat legs, face in his abdomen, bat wings, hairy arms, tail and an insane expression. He holds a red pole with fierce raking claws at one end and a heavy iron chain hanging from the other.

The red tongue sticking out of his gray beard completes the look. The Mitelli Tarot (1664) shows a powerfully built, nude man/demon with bird feet, pointed ears and curving horns growing from his hairline. He carries a trident, has leathery wings, and sits with his feet upon a dragon-snake.

On an alternative track, the Jean Noblet Tarot, one of the earliest examples of the Marseilles Tarot decks (this one published in Paris in the early 1660s) introduces important changes to the older demonic image. This shift adds a new gender alignment to the Devil, that of the androgyne. Female breasts and male genitalia introduce new information on the card. The Devil also acquires for the first time a male and female demon chained to the pedestal upon which s/he stands. It looks as if a distinctly new image began circulating among cartomancers at this time which influenced their thinking and showed up on nearly every Tarot after this pivotal date.

The Pierre Madenie Tarot of 1709 continues to make the Devil androgynous with the new feminine breasts just above a curvaceous waist, complimented with black bat wings and accompanied by the two primordial humans chained to his pedestal. Madenie and his contemporaries are a little ambiguous about what is below the beltline of this Devil, but the Claude Burdel Tarot of 1751, showing unmistakable male genitalia, again makes explicit the issue of mixed or double gender for the Devil. The Grimaud Marseilles deck, first published in 1748, presents the image we are now accustomed to see as traditional.

All the Tarot decks from this era seem to be reflecting this new, more esoterically com-posed version of the Devil. Court de Gebelin mirrors it nearly exactly, Etteilla has a rare moment of accord with the collective consensus, and we see a near-total agreement on this image right up to the twentieth century. Even among those dissenters who revert to the older, all-male lamia version of the Devil (e.g., Edoardo Dotti, 1862; the Tarot pack by J. Gaudais of 1860) often choose to include the later addition of the wild man and woman chained to the pedestal.

This card's sudden mutation in the mid-1660s is a powerful argument for a new source of inspiration entering the Tarot canon at just this time. And if we compare this new mutation to the Typhon card of the Alexandrian Tarots, one sees the salient details of the change prefigured; the female breasts and male phallus, the bat wings, the horn(s) on the head, the two figures, male and female, chained at Typhon's feet. Although the Westernization of this image thinned the Devil's waistline (in later times made very narrow and feminine) and gave it a goat-like rather than

crocodile head, it would be very difficult to argue that the Typhon formulation had nothing to do with the transformation of the Devil Arcanum, from the shaggy figure out of a medieval bestiary into the refined Baphomet image of Levi, Papus, Wirth, Esoterico, Balbi, and the other Continental esoteric Tarots.

Scapini's modern restorations of the missing Devil cards from the Pierpont Morgan-Bergamo Visconti-Sforza tarocchi pack and the Cary-Yale Visconti tarocchi deck (fifteenth century) are wonderful, as is all his work, but it is not likely that the originals were similar. The Scapini images show the two people chained to the pedestal under the Devil, a detail which emerged only in the later 1600s in response to the Hermetic/Alexandrian document that inspired the Falconnier Tarot. Of the other modern Esoteric Devil cards, the Waite-Smith image is the most familiar, showing us the very early, male, bird-footed Devil but including the chained demons on the pedestal. Dali's image deliberately echoes the Fool, showing a hermaphroditic soul being pushed into his/her deepest desires—a very Gnostic image!

An overview of the Devil Arcanum shows us the realm of the Taboo, the culturally created, rejected and undigested shadow side that each of us is burdened with due to our acculturation. This is in fact the core of our individuality which we cannot get rid of but will never succeed in taming. From its earliest versions, showing the lamia or vampire-demon, this card evoked the Church-fueled fear that a person could "lose his soul" to this wild, animalistic force. The amended version that emerged in the mid-1600s shows us a more sophisticated version called Typhon, a hermaphroditic amalgam of the four elements, enslaving the animal nature in men and women.

By the 1800s the concept had refined into the scapegoated Goddess, whose esoteric name is Baphomet. Volcanic reserves of passion and primal desire empower her labor to overcome the pressure of gender-based role assignments and experience true freedom of soul. Tavaglione's fully realized image portrays the magical, theurgical formula for harnessing and transmuting primal and obsessive emotions into energy toward enlightenment. As a part of the Gnostic message of Tarot, this frightening but awesome passion and power must be reintegrated into the personality to fuel the soul's passage from mortal to immortal.

Tower

The Tower image, like that of the Devil, has not survived through history as well as the other Arcana from the oldest Tarots. This could be a side effect of the Church persecutions of all things occult or Gnostic. Then again, it may just be because the royalty who commissioned the earliest Tarots didn't want to be confronted with images of themselves in physical or political danger, or pursued by demons from the pits of Hell.

Nevertheless, some ideas can be derived from looking at the earliest versions that we do possess. A massive Tower is the only subject of the Charles VI Tarot (mid-1400s). Its front is shown intact, but the backside is cracking, dropping pieces and revealing flames licking from between the bricks. By the time of the Catelin Geoffrey Tarot (1557) we see only the door of the Tower, at ground level, with gray smoke and yellow flames belching out the windows. Three beings are crossing paths at this stone archway; a gray, chicken-legged demon with mad humanoid face is reaching out for, and locking eyes with, a man who has a viola on his shoulder, his bow ready to play. The musician is walking briskly into the melee, but looks back at the touch of the demon. A wailing woman with her arms in the air flees something she sees behind the door, oblivious to everything else around her. The Rothschild Tarot or Minchiate cards from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century show a pile of broken bodies before the door of the Tower, with another person ready to jump off the ramparts. Flames are licking out from all the windows. No demon is present to complicate matters.

The early seventeenth century anonymous Parisian Tarot shows a very disturbing image. Little is made of the Tower, but smoke and flames are everywhere. One nude woman crouches with her arms over her head, another runs screaming through the devastation. A gray faced demon with a man's body raises a red club, perhaps to dispatch the crouching person. Another dwarfish demon with what looks like a horn growing backward from his head appears to be straddling and/or embracing several amorphous flesh-colored forms slanting away from the top of the card. Everything is falling and askew, an impression increased by the sloppy coloring job. The Mitelli Lightning card (1664) is a revelation of clarity by comparison, dispensing entirely with the tower and showing a single man being struck by a zigzag bolt of fire.

Two other images emerge in the pivotal 1660s, one of which becomes the Marseilles standard called the House of God, seen on the Jean Noblet Tarot circa 1660 (Kaplan's Encyclopedia Volume 2, p. 309). This shows the familiar

crowned Tower being hit with a bolt of lightning from the sun, releasing a shower of falling sparks, knocking the top of the Tower right off, and plunging its two occupants to their deaths. Stuart Kaplan retells the Arthurian legend of the "Dolorous Stroke" as a possible subtext for this image (on p.174 of Volume 2 of his Encyclopedic), as well as cites the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, a traditional connection. We can assume there were other well known correspondences to this Arcana even in the 1600s, however.

Not only do we have the demonic images on the earliest Tower cards to factor in, but the Jacques Vieville Tarot, chronological and physical partner to the Noblet Tarot, shows another version of Arcanum No. 16, one which becomes the norm for the subsequent Flemish Tarots. In this version a young man expresses wonder at the sight of a large tree under a cloud containing the sun. Drops of something white or transparent fall through the sky, and neither a tower nor lightning are apparent. This image is named "Lightning" but evades entirely any of the ramifications that have to do with the House of God.

Perhaps the awestruck young man is contemplating the amazing powers of Nature at work in the landscape. Or could this be Adam, rediscovering the Tree of Life after winning his way free from the depredations of the Devil? In his caption for the pictures of the Adam de Hautot Tarot (1728-48), Kaplan tells us that "according to the Bibliothèque Nationale, [this image] may have once been The Star, portraying one of the shepherds on the night of the Nativity of Christ, with the star of Bethlehem blazing and sheep at the foot of the tree." This is a far cry from our original images from the 1400s, and never caught on with the majority despite its Gnostic evocativeness.

In the majority of these images, disaster is striking or has just struck. The demons of madness and despair are released from ancient hiding places, and Nature conspires with human evil to destabilize the people. One unwritten subtitle of this card is "The Act of God" because the upheaval is collective, impersonal. Yet let us remember the patrons for whom these images were created (nobles and clergy, the educated rich) and we realize just who will lose altitude fastest should the towers start to fall. In that sense, lightning is a fitting karmic response to the guilt of those whose fortunes come from abuse of the land and its residents. A more fitting modern subtitle could thus be "Revolution from Below," indicating drastic enough change that a poor person has new cause for hope of better times. Although the Tower comes packaged as a classic crash and burn experience, it also levels the playing field for everyone, providing all who survive with a fresh start as equals.

Star

The Visconti-Sforza Tarot (1475) shows a long-haired blond woman wearing a blue dress embellished with golden stars, covered by a red robe lined with green. She is looking up and reaching out with her left hand to touch a star in the heavens. The Charles VI pack (mid-1400s) shows two mature men in robes, one with a star map in his hand, pointing up at a brilliant gold star with eight points in the heavens above them. These men epitomize the two earliest representations of this concept: the astrologer who charts the Star, or the Spirit of the Star, and bridges the gap between heaven and earth.

The Rothschild Tarot or Minchiate cards from the late 1400s to early 1500s now at the Louvre in Paris show us a fascinating image. Figures much like the Emperor and the Pope carry an elaborate crown between them. They bump into a Fool-like person who hails them with open arms, as if he is a long-lost brother. An eight-pointed star hangs overhead. Are these unlikely three about to become the Three Wise Men? The suggestion is that each of them is being led by the Star.

The anonymous Parisian Tarot from the early 1600s shows a learned professor in mortar-board hat sitting at his drafting table with protractor in hand, looking up at an eight-pointed star in the upper left corner of the card, partially obscured by the border. The Mitelli Tarot of 1664 uses an interesting variant of the Star. A man with a heavy load slung from the staff over his shoulder carries a lit lantern through the night. His head is down and his stride is long. Overhead are six small stars and one very bright one, all with six points, lighting his way. Another variation emerges with the Tarocco Siciliano cards from Italy in 1750. Here a man on horseback balances a giant sphere or covered hoop sporting the design of an eight-pointed star, of which we see the bottom half. There is a carnival or Triumphal feel to this picture, entirely at odds with the quiet, contemplative, meditative trend of the other Star cards considered. This formulation, like Mitelli's, did not catch on with the larger marketplace.

The form that did catch on and become standard is the young, nude woman by the bank of the water, pouring from two vessels into the water and onto the earth. The Marseilles, the Falconnier and the Waite image all align with this

form of the Arcana, as does the Knapp-Hall Tarot, Oswald Wirth's Tarot, and El Gran Tarot Esoterico. We see this as the traditional image now, but it is in actuality one of many that have been named the Star.

Despite the changes from deck to deck, the overall idea of the Star is the reconnecting of one's soul with a larger frame of reference outside of personality, community or worldly accomplishments. The soul (always shown as female in Tarot) is responding to forces affecting it from outside this world, forces that provide the personality with such sureness and orientation that it can ignore what anyone else thinks. Remembering the Gnostic myth of the soul's descent from on high, the Star card implies a new remembrance of our exalted origins and attraction to the path of return. An alternate title for this card is "Celestial Mandate" in that it refers us back to our reason for being, our mission in this lifetime. This Arcanum reminds us that each of us is a secret agent enacting Divine Will through our moment to moment lives. If we let go of the idea that we are supposed to be in control of our lives every minute, we can study and reflect upon the synchronicities that are constantly nudging us through our days. Thus we become conscious of the invisible help focused on us, and we understand our place within and value to the larger cosmos in a new way.

Moon

In the Visconti-Sforza Tarot of 1450, a long-haired blond woman wears a red slip over a blue dress bound with a silver cord for a belt. Her right hand grasps the moon in the sky while the left hand tries to control the belt ends, which are flapping in the breeze. She stands at cliff side but looks at the moon. In the Charles VI pack (mid-1400s) we see an older magus with a white beard, seated at his desk, with a zodiacal globe of the heavens on a stand behind him.

He is using a compass to erect a chart of the Moon, whose image from the heavens is reflected in the paper under his hands. The Gringonneur Tarot (mid-1400s) shows not one but two magi, with compasses and sky map, "who measure the conjunctions of the stars and planets" (Stuart Kaplan's Encyclopedia Volume 1, p. 115). The Rothschild Tarot or Minchiate cards (late fifteenth or early sixteenth century) show two philosophers crowned in laurel, the one on the left with a sophisticated astrolabe sculpture in hand. Each also holds a caliper or angle measuring tool, and the person on the right points to the moon above. There are no connotations of lunacy or disorientation here.

One early seventeenth century anonymous Parisian Tarot propounds a different idea for this card entirely. A nude woman in a tall tower lets down her hair and exposes her back for the man with a harp seated in the garden below. We see the archway and door he could enter to reach her, yet he stays and makes music. A full moon looks down benignly from above. In contrast to the Lovers from this Tarot described above, this card shows some restraint and an aesthetic sensibility. It could be referring to the growing tradition of courtly love saturating Renaissance culture at this time. Another idealistic Moon card is seen in the Mitelli Tarot (1664), where a young woman standing with a hound at her feet leans on her staff and looks into the heavens; she is crowned by a crescent moon. She seems to be making a reference to Diana or Artemis, goddess of the purity and natural sacredness of wild places.

The Tarocco Siciliano from 1750 gives us another variation. A man is asleep under a tree, and a woman stands over him making gestures as if to point out his limp state. Kaplan refers to the cloud around the moon as being ominous and the face on the orb as diffident, uninterested. Is she sad? Mad? Is he sick? Under the influence? The card does not specify. But we know that the Moon Arcanum has often been used to symbolize special shamanic states of mind, such as those reached through dreams or deep trance work, so there are multiple possibilities about what is going on in this image.

The Marseilles Tarot decks, which were emerging as a separate style in the late 1600s, show us the now-familiar Two Towers image in which the path rises from a pool containing a crawfish or crab at the base of the card. The moon emanates an otherworldly glow to the tune of two baying dogs who stand at the base of the towers, between which the path runs to the horizon. Although this may seem to represent a departure from previous Tarots that we have evidence of, a similar Arcanum No. 18 image appears on the Alexandrian Tarots modeled from the Fratres Lucis manuscript (or its prototype) purportedly circulating in Europe since the Middle Ages. The difference is that in the Alexandrian-style version, called the Twilight, the towers are pyramids. In truth, these two Moon cards are more similar to each other than to any earlier images in the stream.

The Moon Arcanum always refers to our deepest body-mind states, the ones where, within a protective cocoon of deep relaxation, we are brought to the finest pitch of sensitivity and imaginative impression-ability. Here we dream

and trance, have visions and receive insights, wash in and out with the psychic tides and experience deep mystical and/or terrifying realities beyond our ordinary senses. The full moon and/or eclipse charted by the magi (as in some of the earliest Moon images) imply one mechanism that Nature uses to dilate the soul. The variants of the courtly lovers (representing right use of the sex force) or the man "sleeping it off" under the tree (use of drugs to alter consciousness) are also traditional avenues for touching the primal body/mind outside our conditioning. The human curiosity for knowledge of "higher states" has propelled us to the frontiers of consciousness, where we cannot always control what happens. This Arcanum represents the ultimate test of a soul's integrity, where the barrier is removed between the self and the unknown, and the drop reenters the ocean of being. What transpires next is between the soul and its Maker.

Sun

One of the earliest images of the Sun Arcanum is the one on the Gringonneur cards (agreed to be from the mid 1400s). A young and beautiful woman with fair hair is shown with a staff and drop-spindle, walking through an Eden-like landscape, complementing its beauty with her own. The sun looks down impassively from above. An uncut sheet of Minchiate cards, circa late fifteenth or early sixteenth century (Volume 1, p. 128, Kaplan's Encyclope-dia) shows a seated version of the same spinning woman, although the Sun has a decidedly stern face in this card. The Charles VI Tarot from 1470-80 displays this theme as well.

This image did not become the standard form, however, giving way (or giving birth?) to other formulations within only a few decades. In the Visconti-Sforza Tarot of 1450, a muscular cherub on a leaden-green cloud holds up the red and radiant face of the Sun, which beams aggressively over the landscape below. Gareth Knight, in his book *A Treasure-House of Images*, mentions that this particular version "is an image that has resonance with the Mysteries of Orpheus and the Holy Grail, ancient Celtic Mysteries, and the esoteric Christianity associated with Salome and John the Baptist" (p. 72). I do wish he had explained that line of thought further!

Alternately, the Ercole d'Este cards (1475- 80) shows an old man sitting on the edge of a huge overturned wine keg and carrying on a discourse with a man who is standing and facing him. A large gold Sun with silver emanations shines in the dark sky above. The early seventeenth century anonymous Parisian Tarot takes a different tack, putting a blue ape in the image, which appears to startle a woman who was combing her hair. It is unclear to me what the ape is holding up between itself and the woman, but Gareth Knight says it is a looking glass. A radiant Sun shines down upon the scene impassively. On the other hand, the Mitelli Tarot, another unique pack from later in the same century, shows the Greek god Apollo with his lyre, haloed in golden light, his purple cloak tied loosely around him. Perhaps these two are mirroring each other, the truly beautiful and harmonious Apollo contrasted with the false beauty and glamour of vanity, truly the "ape" of our higher values.

The Tarocco Siciliano cards from 1750 seem to continue the innovative trend in this image, showing the Cain and Abel murder being enacted under an "ominous cloud" that surrounds the impassive Sun. This image reflects in human terms the dismal characteristics that guarantee our continuing estrangement from Eden, damning humankind to generations of strife and fighting. It is here that "original sin" becomes personal.

The Marseilles image which became the standard by the early 1700s shows us two toddlers protected from wild Nature by a brick wall that stands protectively between them and the greensward. Being "back to Eden" after the global reconciliation to come is implied. This reconciliation, sacred to all the Old Testament believers from antiquity, resolves the tension between all opposites (symbolized by the two children, ambiguous in both gender and age).

The Alexandrian model of Arcanum No. 19, exemplified on this CD in the Ibis Tarot, is called "Love" in the Falconnier version and "The Beaming Light" in the Fatidic Egyptian Tarot from 1901. This image shows the two children grown, of opposite genders, holding hands within a circle of greenery. A symbol of sexual union hangs in the sky above them. If these two Sun cards were made in respect of each other, the Marseilles version represents a naive approach to the resolution of the opposites compared to the one portrayed on the Egyptian-style decks!

Etteilla chose the mixed image called "Enlightenment." The bottom half of the picture shows two naked infants playing around what looks like a sepulcher or monument in a woodsy setting. Perhaps their new lives represent the victory of life over death. In a sort of split-screen effect, the upper end of this image is a scene in deep space, at the

birth of a star. He might be trying to say that when we become conscious of our true cosmic identities, we are no longer so tied to birth and death.

When his time came to represent esoteric Tarot for the twentieth century, Waite chose to hark back to the earliest versions showing a cherub, only this time riding a horse and carrying a banner, seen against the walled backdrop of the Marseilles image. We could infer that in this formulation, the opposites are united within the self, in the Divine Child Within.

Because The Sun Arcanum personifies the goal of self cultivation and self initiation in the classical scheme, the overall theme of this card is "back to Eden" or "reversal of the fall from grace." It is here that one's original nature or preconditioned being can be encountered in health and safety. The limitations of time and space are stripped away; the soul rests and is refreshed, protected from the chaos outside the garden walls. Life reassumes its primordial goodness, truth and beauty. If one person is portrayed, it is usually shown as a human incarnation of the Divine. When two humans are shown, they are usually designed to express a resolution of the tension between opposites on all levels. It is for this reason that this card is read in a spread as saying "you can do no wrong."

Judgment

Called the Angel in the Cary-Yale Visconti, winged spirits blowing long trumpets hang in the blue firmament while below the earth is parting to release the souls of the dead into their resurrection. Most emerge naked, but one is emerging in full ecclesiastical regalia. The Visconti-Sforza Angel image, from 1450, shows a third entity in heaven with the trumpeting angels, this one a grand fatherly patriarch with blue robe, flowing white beard, red gloves, and an upright sword in his right hand. Another patriarch emerges from the tomb between two nude maidens who are also emerging. The Charles VI pack shows two angels with trumpets blowing a blast that raises seven nude men and women from their graves (mid-1400s).

Luckily the trend toward greater population on this Arcanum ended here. Catelin Geoffrey's Tarot (1557) scales it back to one trumpeting angel and three resurrected souls (two women and one man) all nude. Mitelli (1664) is so minimalist that he only presents the trumpeting angel, and viewers are left to come to their own conclusions about the results. The Tarocco Siciliano cards from Modiano, Italy (1750) changes the Angel image into an image of Jove, and it is numbered to be the last card in the Major Arcana sequence in this family of Tarots. He sits on a throne with an eagle at his feet, his upraised hand full of descending thunder-bolts.

The robe wrapped casually around him reveals his strength and vigor. This could be seen as a very patriarchal image, implying continuing punishment for fallen humanity rather than the reconciliation of opposites which often informs this Arcanum. The Marseilles image is now our classic reference for this card, and there is very little substantial difference between this and the Alexandrian version, the Etteilla versions, and the versions of Papus and Wirth. A settled consensus seems to inhabit this card through the last three centuries of Tarot, which seems to mirror the concern amongst most world religions: that believers be assured that this life, this body, this personality and gender, are not all there is to look forward to.

This Arcanum, called Judgment but usually picturing the Resurrection, represents the great reunion that the ancients believed would happen once every world age, when the group of souls who had been reincarnating together is gathered up and taken "home" to the place of origin outside the solar system. Then the World is seeded with a batch of new souls and the process starts over. In this great reunion, every personality you have ever been and every soul you have done deep work with comes back together to consciously complete the process. In personal terms, this portrays you as becoming so spiritually transparent, so clear a channel, that the buried talents and gifts of past incarnations bloom through you in this lifetime. You can afford to open yourself trustingly because what emerges is of consistently high quality. You effortlessly manifest as a multi-talented, multi-dimensional being, and you assist in evoking that response in others.

World

This Cary-Yale Visconti Arcanum from 1445 centers on a portrait of a Renaissance village, complete with little lake, people fishing from the bank and a knight errant riding by. We see the Goddess in the firmament above, rising from a crown whose headband hangs high above the scene. She presides over her World serenely, a thin wand in her right hand and the orb of sovereignty in her left, an upper-case Empress.

In the Charles VI pack (mid-1400s) a similar globe or world-ball showing towns and villages in the folds of a hilly landscape lies under the feet of a blond woman looking much like the Strength, Fortitude and Temperance figures from the same deck. She holds a golden wand in her right hand, a golden ball in her left. The Italian tarocchi cards of the early sixteenth century, which are divided between the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts, also show this configuration on its World Arcanum. The imagery appears to have started out feminine, pointing to a Gnostic inspiration.

In 1450 the Visconti-Sforza Tarot portrays two muscular male cherubs holding up a globe that shows a walled city on an island surrounded by a turbulent sea. The Ercole d'Este image again contains the rolling landscape with towns and trees dotting the hills. This time a chubby cherub with green wings sits above, and a golden eagle with outstretched wings holds up the ball from below. The Eagle has had esoteric connections since biblical times, and has also served as a totem of the Empress and her family.

The late fifteenth or early sixteenth century Minchiate cards in the Bibliothèque de l'Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts shows, in Kaplan's words, "a mythological god or warrior atop an ornate stone wheel" (Vol. 1, p. 128). His winged helmet has Hermetic associations. His right hand holds a wand topped with a winged, gold-trimmed orb and the left holds another orb, with the t-cross inscribed on it and surmounted by an equal-armed cross.

The anonymous Parisian Tarot from the early seventeenth century uses an androgynous figure covering itself with the drapery of a curtain held up on a rod behind it. This symbol, the "veil of the Mysteries," is an ancient Hebrew concept which is not usually illustrated though often mentioned by early Kabbalists. This idea can be related to the Ain-Soph Aur or "triple-veiled nothing" of the Kabbalists. This self-complete being strides across a globe that seems to contain the sun, the planets and the signs, and which has the classic band-and-raised-cross trimming that is usually seen on the globe in the hand of the Empress or Emperor. Stylized faces in the clouds blow upon the globe, presumably to keep its contents rotating.

A bit later in the seventeenth century Mitelli shows the World as a huge stone which a burly naked man struggles to lift from a kneeling position. This could be Hercules or Sisyphus performing monumental labors to defend humans from the judgment of the gods. The Tarocco Siciliano (1750) echoes this image, but the boulder is banded with the glyphs of the zodiac signs, like a giant calendar-stone.

The Marseilles image, most familiar of all, is of a woman, haloed man, or androgyne dancing or standing in space, surrounded by an oval wreath of leaves. Usually the image is unambiguously feminine, but the Vieville World card from the early 1660s de-emphasizes the breasts and gives it a halo, like the familiar Christian images of Christ Triumphant. Stuart Kaplan reveals a wealth of detail about ways in which the Marseilles image resembles religious pictures of the Last Judgment (Encyclopedia, Volume 2, p. 179), and he also includes the Christ Triumphant image rendered on a beautiful piece of carved ivory from the eleventh century which could double as the World Arcanum without changing a detail. Kaplan also introduces the idea that the earliest female World cards might have been intended to represent a female Christ, which indicates a distinctly Gnostic mentality.

Another Marseilles variant, the modern El Gran Tarot Esoterico, which with its correspondences refers us back to the very ancient Hebrew versions of the Sephir Yetzirah, portrays a divine person with both breasts and male genitalia within a blossoming wreath, surrounded by the "four beasts of the Apocalypse," a popular formulation of this Arcanum. This Tarot may be chronologically modern, but the reference is to the same themes that Kaplan details in the slow slide of this Arcanum through both male and female forms over the centuries.

The Etteilla Tarots feature a substantially similar image, although the gender of the figure may be either male or female, depending upon the edition. When it is female, she is usually accompanied by two tall, narrow pyramids on either side. The image is called "Voyage," perhaps implying traveling around the world.

This Arcanum is called The Crown of the Magi in the Alexandrian Arcana, which resembles the Falconnier Tarot and is drawn from the Fratres Lucis manuscript purported to be from the Middle Ages. It shows a regal woman seated under the heavens. The skies are filled with a winged lingam and yoni symbol within a floating wreath, accompanied by the creatures of the four elements. The woman plays upon a three-stringed harp, each string representing one aspect of the human endowment (body, mind and soul).

We cannot see this detail on the Falconnier or the Fatidic Egyptian Tarots published between 1896-1901 because Kaplan left those Arcana out when he photocopied those Tarots for his Encyclopedia. But the Ibis, the St. Germaine Tarot, and the Sacred Tarot from the Brotherhood of Light all record this detail, so I feel safe to assume the older ones do too. If the Alexandrian-style Arcana do prove to have had an impact upon the Marseilles images of the late 1600s, this card would have to be cited as a counterargument.

Perhaps the tension created by a female image appearing on the World Arcanum, after several centuries of Christ-centered iconography, was too great to allow a return to the older, Sophianic conception of the earliest Tarots.

Most of the images in our modern Tarots, made at the turn of the twentieth century, follow the Goddess-oriented line of thought from the earliest versions of the card. Oswald Wirth, Manly P. Hall and A.E. Waite all give us virtually the same idea. Interestingly enough, Hall's World card rearranges the suit symbols held by the four angels/animals of the elements in an intriguing and unexplained way. Perhaps the fact that his Tarot shows a strong leaning toward the Spanish style gives us the hint we need to further examine his elemental attributions, because the Spanish Tarots are the only ones that switch the elements on the suit symbols in their Tarots.

The predominating idea of the World Arcanum is the presiding intelligence, called Sophia or Wisdom, that upholds the platform for life on this and all worlds through infinity. A more accurate title would be "Soul of the World" because the (usually female) figure who has become our standard World image originates in Hebrew, Gnostic and alchemical lore. She stands between heaven and earth as the Cosmic Mother of Souls, the Wife of God who protects us from the karmic forces we have set loose on Earth in our immaturity and ignorance.

Where the Empress secures and fertilizes our terrestrial lives, The World Arcanum's Goddess invites us into cosmic citizenship once we have come to know our soul's potential for it. Just as the Chariot (No. 7) stands for success in achieving a separate self, and the Temperance (No. 14) represents achievement of mental and moral health in the cauldron of culture, The World (No. 21) announces the stabilization of the soul's Immortal Being, accomplished without the necessity of dying. Hence this card, like the Sun, is reputed to have no negative meaning no matter where or how it appears. If the Hermetic axiom is "know thyself," this image represents what becomes known when the true nature of self is followed to its uttermost end.

The Suit of Coins

by Christine Payne-Towler

The suit of Coins, usually symbolized by a solid gold coin, represents first and foremost, your body, health, vigor, and genetic heredity. It can be seen as the capacity to "ground" and relax, attuning to the rhythms of Nature within and without.

Emotionally, the coin symbolizes a feeling of abundance, security, safety and general freedom from threats to survival. When you feel safe, you are free to be creative, not hampered by fear and reactivity. The theme of prosperity is not limited to a financial experience. Even the poorest person can be enriched and increased by the experience of a golden moment, contact with goodness, or beauty.

Coins can also symbolize strengths or gifts, sources of support which provide for you, based on your own efforts or those who came before you. Such gifts can include family money, marketable skills, insider connections, a special cultural heritage, etc. The biblical use of the word "talent" for a monetary unit offers us an interesting play on words. Whether as a coin or as a capability, a talent is a potential, an ability, ready to be spent in actualization of a goal. Those who are willing to invest themselves, their time, money, and labor, deserve the rewards of effort. The coins provide those rewards, as well as supply the means to earn and deserve them. Think of the Coin as the symbol of the "currency" you possess for protecting your sovereignty in this world.

Whether it's intellectual, entrepreneurial, artistic, or any other "property" you command, including the sheer brute energy and strength to outwork those around you, Coins symbolizes the value of your assets. If you can translate that into a way to pay your bills and take care of your family, you have mastered Coins. As the saying goes, "wherever a person's gold is, there is their heart too." The Coin is your values, the things you love, are attracted to and collect around yourself.

In alchemy, the metal gold not only represents a standard of external value in collective culture, but stands as a symbol of purity among the other metals because it is naturally brilliant, warm to look at and feel. At the same time, it remains malleable and easily blended with other metals. Because of these qualities, gold came to be seen as Solar energy cast into substance, showing forth the highest evolution of the element earth and pointing to the inner light which inspires all forms. At its highest manifestation, gold symbolizes the Body of God, the world of matter itself.

Likewise, the Coins are the seeds of all the "things" in this world, all drawn out of the infinite creativity of Nature. The earliest European Tarots show the personalities of the Planetary Gods on the coins of the Tarot, often arranged by their orbital placements around the sun, from the innermost Mercury to the Ring-Pass-Not, Saturn (the other planets were not yet known).

Ace of Coins

The Ace of Coins is usually pictured with a garden or agricultural backdrop to emphasize the potential of this Ace to serve as a seed. If this "talent" is planted and tended carefully, it will sprout and reward you with a good harvest. Think of it as the seed of your future fulfillment. An ace represents the first step to your goal, but if that step is repeated, it can cover great distances. Generally, the suit of Coins indicates the tangible realities in daily life, but in the case of the Ace, it could be symbolizing the "winning idea," the game plan or blueprint for eventual materialization. Occult tradition sometimes sees this Ace as representing the "alchemical gold," the light within matter, the Third Eye or Kether in your energy-body. This association implies focused meditation upon the light within, structuring one's personality upon the archetype of humanity enlightened. By practicing this meditation, it was taught that one eventually gains enough control of the celestial radiance to heal the body, untangle the emotions, and complete the growth of the soul.

Two of Coins

The Two of Coins generally features a youth juggling, with two coins flying about him in figure-eight fashion, or just the coins without the youth, one shown heads up, the other tails up, both still flipping in the air. It is clear that until one or the other coin drops, the final call cannot be made; there is more to learn before a decision can be made about appropriate action. This card counsels patience, so do not allow circumstances to hustle you. The figure-eight image is called a lemniscate, and is a symbol of immortality and eternity. It says "No need to hurry. You have all the

time you need to work this out, no matter how things appear right now." Implied within this scenario is the idea that changes are in the works, but you will do better to stay calm until you have more information. Everything is in flux.

Three of Coins

The Three of Coins is traditionally the card of genius. Here we usually see a master craftsman consulting with his masons on how to install a beautiful stained-glass window into the nave of the cathedral. This designer is often likened to Leonardo da Vinci or Michaelangelo, visionaries who outdistanced their peers in both talent and productivity. This masterwork is being proudly showcased for future generations to worship under, an object of personal and civic pride for the whole community. On occasion, the genius is portrayed at his studio, alone and burning the midnight oil in a creative ferment--driven to draw, paint, invent, or whatever work genius is bringing into creation. As a subtext to the rewards of genius stand the hours, days and weeks of intense concentration solving the problems that great works entail.

Four of Coins

The Four of Coins has been used to express the paradoxical aspect of material security, the two-edged reality that results when you have been well supported and protected. It all sounds idyllic until one investigates the level of demand that prosperity places upon people--the pressure of big decisions, responsibilities toward dependents or employees, even tougher decisions in times of instability. An immature person thrust into such a position would lack the perspective to sensibly assess risks and rewards, would be vulnerable to bad advice or surprise developments, could even put the lives of his loyal assistants at risk. This card also points to the subtler dependencies that comfort encourages, allowing laxness and self-indulgence to quietly invade one's reserve of willpower. The person this card represents needs to move slowly and deliberately if change is required, as the consequences will affect more than just her or himself.

Five of Coins

The Five of Coins is the card of desire and gratification, expressed in classical tradition as flattery, promises, both the seducer and the object of his seduction. There is an undeniable excitement pictured in the attraction of opposites, and we have all had delightful moments of magnetism with a stranger. However, if promises are only spoken to achieve short-term gratification with no intent of follow-through, or the attraction appears as competition to the relationships one should be concentrating on, the long-term cost won't be worth the thrill of the chase. The implication is that the appearance of a viable relationship does not always bear out, so don't put anything of real value at risk over this infatuation. And since the suit here is Coins, this is as likely to be related to business as to pleasure. Try to remove glamour from your thinking.

Six of Coins

The Six of Coins is the card of patronage and generosity, with all the strings attached. The picture shows a rich man giving alms, feeling smug and self-satisfied, reputation enhanced from his giving, but without having helped anybody really better him or herself. Sometimes there is an inference that the giver will be expecting something back for his "generosity," perhaps sexual favors. A higher octave would be signified by a patron of the arts, someone who rescues a talented person from oblivion, but then wants to dictate what the artist can produce or who he can work for as his fame grows. Inequality of power is always a factor in this card, and the person being "helped" in this model needs to be extremely careful not to trade off her or his heart and soul for a shortcut to fame or fortune. Meanwhile each player in this scenario needs to examine their investment in playing out a domination dynamic.

Seven of Coins

The Seven of Coins is a paean to the humble laborer who is willing to show up every day and sweat in the sun for next season's bounty. The traditional concept is "cultivation," the attitude that slow and steady wins the race, with patience and confidence in nature's assistance. The protagonist of this card doesn't make excuses, isn't whimsical or moody, is dedicated and sees the job through. Of course, it's no good to count your chickens before they hatch, but there's no question that the person who is vigilant over a project is more likely to get the desired result. Someone who works with Nature, cooperating with her ways, will waste less energy and time than the person who works against Nature. As a side meaning, we sometimes see this normally humble farmer in a moment of frenzy, betting the crop on the roll of the dice. This represents a moment of dementia, addiction, or desperation which hopefully will not last long enough for him to lose everything!

Eight of Coins

The Eight of Coins is the card of works. We see here the successful artisan spending time at his bench, hammering out the commissions he has attracted because of his skill. His name is synonymous with "the best in its class." He is so popular that he can barely keep up with demand. Therefore, he is paid whatever he asks and accepts only the most prestigious requests. If there is a problem in this card, it has to do with the trap of workaholicism, the feeling of being so indispensable that you will not ask for help or delegate any part of a project. There is also the issue of becoming so identified as the creator of elegant objects that the personal identity of the creator is consumed by the works themselves. The maker seldom gets to have a home life, time off, friendships or the like. This card lobbies for a balanced perspective.

Nine of Coins

The Nine of Coins points to a person who is financially secure enough to live in a truly comfortable way, the "lifestyle of the rich and famous." This is about someone supported by her own business, inheritance, or ownership of property. This is one person in ten thousand. This extraordinarily lucky and well endowed individual has turned a historical accident into a personal opportunity and has the vision and strength of character to hold onto his or her gains against all odds. Do not be fooled at the apparent ease displayed on this card; the person pictured is at the tail end of a long and stressful process of winning the right to be taken seriously, and all of those graces have been paid for several times over.

Ten of Coins

The Ten of Coins, the capstone of the numbered Coins, represents the final result of cumulative efforts--perhaps generations of effort--culminating in such wealth, abundance, and enterprise that it supports a whole castle or town full of people. The first layer of meaning refers to the dynastic pride of accomplishment which has established this family as a lineage of entrepreneurial souls. The flow of resources is so abundant and well established, even the retainers of this family experience abundance, coloring the whole realm with pride and self-respect. This fortune impacts the destiny of all the families who live in the shadow of this noble house, from the liege lord's personal minister down to the lowliest servants. This is the sense in which nobility obligates its possessors, and the obligation must be passed down from generation to generation along with the wealth and privilege.

Page of Coins

The Page of Coins is a student of abundance. This person's attention is focused on learning the natural laws that pertain to increase, multiplication, compounding, and all forms of growth. Whether the study is about farming, the stock market, or culturing new medicines in the lab, this Page wants to understand the underlying mechanism that supports the creation of abundance. You may see this person in the position of the attendant or junior partner, but that is only appearances. That demeanor of humility or servitude will soon enough disappear, as the Page's sense of mastery increases. By studying the example of everyone around him, successful and unsuccessful, he is building a game plan which will lift him from obscurity and place him squarely among the ranks of the "haves." He just has to collect the necessary education and experience, which he is doing right now.

Knight of Coins

The Knight of Coins is the most peace-loving of the Knights, the overseer of fertility and growth. His period of ascendancy is during the quiet years between conflicts, when everybody can concentrate together on raising the collective standard of living. His horse is usually huge and thickset, more suitable to pulling a plow than riding swiftly into battle. His temperament is easygoing and relaxed, he's moving at the rate of the flow because he knows that you can't hurry time. Seeing the bigger picture, like a farmer plan-ning for future decades, he doesn't allow momentary fads or fancies to distract him, and he doesn't take seriously people who do. One can feel his stability and dedication; he is totally responsible and even somewhat predictable when it comes to his projects. He is earthy and gentle, as simple as deep as the soil he tills and the flowers he loves.

Queen of Coins

The Queen of Coins is endowed with enormous good sense and problem-solving energy, but she is not entrepreneurial. She loves to advise, encourage, and empower those she gets involved with, studying their problems with them and setting them up to solve their difficulties. Traditionally she is the Sibyl or Oracle, perhaps a Tarot reader, who made herself available to people in need, no matter what social class or situation they came from. In modern times, she will be found educating, healing, managing disaster aid programs and handling the money from a charity drive. In every case, she does not see the benefits that exist in her life as belonging solely to her. She feels

the needs of "her people" and will spend freely of her time, energy, skills and money to see that nobody is abandoned. For this, and because she likes to work in an atmosphere of beauty, enjoyment, and abundance, she is sometimes accused of being profligate. But she works hard, and sees no reason to deny the rewards of a job well done! Everyone who comes in contact with her feels enriched by her obvious enjoyment in living.

King of Coins

The King of Coins is someone who has accomplished a lot in life, but has also arranged his affairs such that he has a lot to show for it. Possessing a practical genius for working the ways of the world, he loves building businesses. Because he's good at it, he gets himself invited to the biggest deals in town. He has the power to make or break people financially, and although this does not always earn him love, it certainly earns him deference and respect. In previous centuries this king took on the character of Midas, who wanted everything he touched to turn to gold, until his little daughter reached out to him, touched him and froze in her tracks. He learns the hard way about the drawbacks of looking at all of life through the lens of business. In his highest manifestation, this King has figured out the exact worth of wealth and the tax it extracts, and has matured in his thinking to reflect Values rather than just profits and power.

Suit of Cups

by Christine Payne-Towler

In the majority of European esoteric Tarots, the suit of Cups refers to the element water. The suit symbol is usually a large drinking cup or communion cup, like the mysterious Grail chalice, occasionally shown pouring forth with holy water or other sacred fluids.

Associations with this cup include the Holy Grail; a fountain of love; the Cornucopia, containing all good things that make us happy; the Krater, stone cup of the Mysteries, containing Soma, psychedelic elixir of mushrooms and cannabis pollen; communion cup of the Catholic Mass; the Pomegranate cup of the Egyptian cult of Isis and the old Hebrew mysteries. It sometimes refers to the Blood Mysteries, symbol of the ultimate sacrifice, whether it's menstrual blood, the blood of a sacrificed animal, or the blood of Christ. There are times when the cup is also used to symbolize sacred sexuality, with its connotations of merging and bliss. In each case the symbolism reflects the heart of life, bonding and nurturing support, deep soul satisfaction, and becoming one with a greater whole.

Commonly, the Suit of Cups rules the psyche or emotional life, dreamtime, the lunar, tidal, monthly cycles of subjective experience. It refers to all aspects of the inner life, from fantasy and imagination to great heights of ecstasy, deep wells of grief, and the immense calm of spiritual security. This the world of feelings, the heart, our close emotional and spiritual ties. It represents all the ways in which people can be touched and moved in our non-verbal, empathetic, sensitive and intuitive natures.

As the imagery implies, the suit of Cups is pregnant with meaning for Western esotericism. This suit has been used to carry the traces of an underground belief held in certain Gnostic Catholic circles in southern Europe about the lineage of a Holy Family founded by Jesus of Nazareth and his wife, Mary Magdalen. According to this belief, Mary of Magdala was taken to Europe along with her child/children after the crucifixion, for their protection during the troubles in Jerusalem. The family settled in southern France, founding a dynasty which eventually rivaled the Roman Church, provoking both the Crusades and the Inquisition as a result of Rome's attempt to eliminate their influence in Europe.

The queen of Cups is therefore regularly portrayed as the Grail Queen (see *El Gran Tarot Esoterico*), unambiguous icon of the Arthurian legends. If she is being indicated indirectly, she'll become an idealized and dreamy Venus-like figure (see the *Medieval Scapini Tarot*), occasionally, the Black Madonna, patron saint of many villages on the Iberian Peninsula (the *Alexandrian Tarot decks*). Sometimes attributes of all three are present, as in a Black Queen with naked breasts who carries the Pomegranite Cup (*Ibis Tarot*).

These various guises reveal her role as All-Woman, Sacred Virgin, Lover, and Mother, simultaneously a living woman and a reinvention of the ancient Great Mother, still beloved despite any overlay of patriarchal Christian dogma and symbolism. These Tarot decks are the most likely to imply that the cup is full of blood rather than water.

If the cup in the hands of your King of Cups burns, bubbles, smokes, or flames, you are probably looking at a Tarot informed with an alchemical theme. This references a person who is actively cultivating spiritual powers (practices which the Roman church strictly anathematized). In those Tarots, the Page is often shown with his cloak draped over his cup or a lid covering its fullness, and with a downcast demeanor. He's the royal heir, forced to live incognito, banned from his inheritance and his proper role in history. The *Knapp-Hall Tarot* goes to the length of showing his "lineage tree" broken in half behind him.

There exists a small group of esoteric Tarot decks that use the suit of Cups to symbolize the element air (the realm of the mind) rather than the element water. These are the Spanish-influenced or Iberian Tarots from Spain, Portugal, and the southern coast of France. These Tarots relocate the Holy Grail away from the sentimental and emotional life, focusing it in the philosophical sphere, the realm of the mind. Here the Cup is a symbol of the Soul's consciousness, receptive and open to Divine Inspiration, experiencing communion with higher planes and higher intelligence. It refers to subtle states of medi-tation and contemplation, an active, aware receptivity to the Divine Word.

Such Tarots show symbols of the astrological air signs (Gemini, Libra, Aquarius) built into the designs of the royalty of Cups, and will also show a preponderance of butterflies, birds, insects and flowers adorning the suit of Cups, even sometimes extending over the whole deck. They also have a higher percent-age of female images in the Major Arcana, with especially suggestive and sympathetic imagery associated with the Devil card. These clues imply contact with the most ancient Hebrew mysteries, carrying Gnostic, Alexandrian, and Moorish influence barely hidden beneath the ubiquitous Catholicism imposed from Rome.

Examples of this family of Tarots are El Gran Tarot Esoterico, the Salvador Dali Tarot, Euskalherria, Balbi, and the Royal Fez Moroccan. This group of decks is the most colorful, most diverse, and most unexplored school of Tarot re-represented in the Tarot Magic selection.

Ace of Cups

The Ace of Cups shows a hand holding up an overflowing cup, which fountains forth an endless stream of water, wine, blood, or soma for the people's refreshment and healing. It is an unfailing source of balm for body, heart, and soul. It suggests that you can relax into a safety net of love, support, and communion.

Three of Cups

The Three of Cups, often called "consent" or simply "yes," this card implies a spirit of agreement, mutual support, encouragement, and teamwork. Regularly pictured as three women celebrating their connectedness in a dance with lifted cups, it can be called "sisterhood," a mutual admiration society. It represents all the benefits of harmonious relationships.

Four of Cups

The Four of Cups refers to a restless time, where a person has become dissatisfied with life, emotionally uncomfortable. Feeling stagnant and longing for change, the heart is questioning its options.

Five of Cups

The Five of Cups traditionally portrays the mess that is left after an emotional upheaval, such as a tantrum or fit of rage. Consequences run the gamut from a hangover and lost wages, to abuse and ruined relationships. The title "inheritance" suggests the cross-generational legacy of these tragedies. These same family patterns magnified become war.

Six of Cups

The Six of Cups represents a refreshing openness and innocence, a willingness to learn, and an optimism that things will get better as we grow together in understanding. The traditional title "The Past" reminds us of our original natures, when we were young and enthusiastic, when anything was possible and the future was an open book. We are to remember that this same freshness, those new possibilities, are always with us, even now.

Seven of Cups

The Seven of Cups typically refers to works of the imagination, the use of dream and vision to invent a future different than the life one is currently living. This card reminds us that our outcomes are not set in stone. We can raise our hopes and expectations and upgrade our results. Do not be fooled by the title "Fantasy," for this card indicates the magical quality of the awakened imagination.

Eight of Cups

The Eight of Cups is often used to signify a great disappointment, an emotional setback, betrayal, an injury to the heart. Some Tarot decks illustrate this principle by showing a young woman who has just been molested and then cast aside by a stranger passing through her village. His heartless act has left her vulnerable, with potentially drastic consequences to bear. This is a hard card, but a realistic one, warning against misplaced trust and unguarded vulnerability.

Nine of Cups

The Nine of Cups is traditionally called "Happiness." This card often shows the inn-keeper on a Saturday night, doing a brisk business and grinning broadly at the thought of his profits. The rewards are not all monetary, however. This happiness also includes the fulfillment of family and right livelihood, healing and gratitude.

Ten of Cups

The Ten of Cups traditionally signifies family and community, often showing a celebratory scene including many generations, crowned by a rainbow signifying the end of hard times. Love and support extends in all directions, in a grand emotional safety net, inclusive of all.

Page of Cups

The Page of Cups represents a poetic, mystical, emotionally open young person, still tender and idealistic, given to flights of imaginative fantasy. This person is exquisitely refined and fine-tuned, but his sense of groundedness in reality has not yet entirely filled in, so he's easily tossed about by impersonal forces in the environment. This Page must work to achieve a stronger will and more calculating mind to balance all that sensitivity.

Knight of Cups

The Knight of Cups was usually titled "Homecoming," indicating the long journey this Knight has traveled to find his true heart's home. Often he is on a journey of return after long estrangement from all he holds dear. His taste for adventure is exhausted; there is no more romanticizing of battles or travel in strange lands. Now he wants to go where he will be recognized, wanted, welcomed, and where he doesn't have to fight at every turn. He has the attitude of one who is "older and wiser," the prodigal son.

Queen of Cups

The Queen of Cups is usually portrayed as a feminine, sensitive, vulnerable woman who is supremely understanding and offers unconditional love. She is the classic "feeler," sometimes to a fault. Her natural empathy and caring expose her to everyone else's emotions and needs. But she occasionally has difficulty identifying her true self-interest in the midst of her responsiveness to others. So sometimes she appears slightly unfocused or perhaps overwhelmed, filled as she is with emotions or "spirits." She represents the Grail Queen and the Goddess of the Family.

King of Cups

The King of Cups is traditionally portrayed with a watery background, seated on a throne, holding the Cup of Mystery in his hand. Occasionally this cup is fulminating like the mouth of a volcano, emanating light, but never boiling over. The person referred to by this card is so deep that he doesn't need to speak to communicate strength, passion, and commitment. Sometimes he is robed like a priest or shaman. Intense and intuitive, he is a force to be reckoned with.

The Suit of Swords

by Christine Payne-Towler

The symbol of the sword, dagger, scimitar, or knife represents the world of mind, the realm of thought and ideation where we frame beliefs and values, personally and socially. It points to the rational mind, that faculty which compares, contrasts, balances, and names the processes governing relationships and ex-changes, from economic to romantic.

Parallel associations refer to the element air, indicating awareness, consciousness, clarity and insight. We look for a dispassionate objectivity in this suit to clarify mixed motives and mixed up emotions. This scalpel blade also exhibits the qualities of sharp analysis, verbal precision, the inquiring, critical mind in action.

Sometimes we experience the action of the blade as alienating because it can be surgical, distancing, or emotionally disconnected. At worst case, the Sword energy can exhibit a streak of insensitivity.

Because "Sword" is a cipher for "Truth," this suit-symbol cleaves through denial and obstructionism, revealing the underlying motives and actions that stand behind appearances. This is the reason for an undertone of contention and struggle that runs through this suit: people are not always truthful with themselves, much less with each other!

Translated into the common events of everyday life, the sword represents contracts and legal forms, the laws of the land, the judicial system, verbal agreements, and all of the shared assumptions it takes to make up our collective reality.

This suit is invariably the one used to register the potential for conflict built into every communication, whether it's one-on-one or debate in the Senate. Every conversation brings with it the risk of misunderstanding.

Yet there are still facts to be conveyed and information that needs to be exchanged. We must therefore strive for objectivity, subordinating our personal version of events to the greater truth. You must know there is a price to be paid in this world for attempting to tell the truth, and the two-edged Sword of Truth represents the trade-off. The sword is two-sided because its user shall be liable to the same judgment that he dispenses upon any other.

In the esoteric sense, the Sword represents the Holy Word, the act and art of naming things for what they really are. Spiritual sources from multiple traditions agree that when you find the real name of a force, a thing, a spirit, you have the power to command that thing. The inverse of this concept is that when you assert your fears as if they were realities, they are "empowered" through your breath, speech and/or imagining to come to pass.

Psychologists tell us that our subconscious believes every word that we say and take in! Perhaps this suit is calling us to accountability, reminding us to watch what we say, listen to, repeat, fantasize, or ruminate on in our unguarded moments. Beliefs can too easily limit what we are able to envision and what choices we perceive we have.

In those Tarots where the Swords are given to the water signs, the emphasis is subtly changed to reflect the ways we use our minds, our words, imaginings and beliefs in negative and disturbing ways. The Swords will be shown influencing the currents of the underground river (psychic and soul life), creating turbulence and upsetting emotional harmony. When the card shows the water in a relatively calm aspect, it is because the individual has gotten enough control over distracting and distrustful forces to have neutralized them, or at least put them in perspective. This version of the Swords demonstrates how easily our serenity can be upset when feelings are ruffled, how sharply and defensively we can react when our sensitive egos take offense.

So although the outer appearances in the situations reflected by the Swords cards may appear the same whether the Swords are air or water, the causes, motives and inner processes will be subtly different as you study the card in the spread. The water variation implies that the cause of conflict is rooted in interior psychic and spiritual phenomena; subjective currents are being stirred up as the inner life confronts new revelations from the deep dark unconscious.

This deviation from the standard pattern is one hallmark of the Spanish school of Tarots--El Gran Tarot Esoterico, the Dali Tarot, Balbi, the Euskalherria, and Pumariega are currently available examples of this type of Tarot.

Ace of Swords

The Ace of Swords, a single upraised sword, represents your prime motive or guiding ideal, that vision which guides you through the outer vicissitudes of life with a single-minded clarity. It is sometimes shown piercing a silver and/or laurel crown, an optimistic formulation implying evolution, progress, a sense of hope and victory. It is occasionally shown pointed downward, a darker message which refers to sacrifice, challenges, and a critical environment.

Two of Swords

The Two of Swords usually represents conflicting ideas or visions which must be reconciled by communication to arrive in a harmonious place or complete strategic negotiations. Mixed signals prevail. While being under the impression of communicating, opposite sides are missing each other entirely, with possibly drastic consequences. In the best case, a frank discussion would clear the air and serve both sides, but one cannot expect that in every instance with this card.

Three of Swords

The Three of Swords has traditionally signified separation, termination, a breakup of a relationship or family, and all the tragic emotions attendant upon such events. Some cards show the horizon in the upright position filled with storm clouds and lightning flashing ominously, while the reversed horizon is clearing and brightening, ready for sunny weather. The positive side would be finally ending a draining and frustrating association, and becoming free again. Cards to the past are cut as you release loved ones to their own recognizance.

Four of Swords

The Four of Swords sends a strong message to take some time out, surrender worldly concerns and retreat to a place of serenity sheltered from the hustle and bustle. The oldest images suggest a visit to "the sepulcher of your ancestors" to contemplate your mortality and breathe in the dust of those who brought you here. On a vision quest or pilgrimage to your own center, you can contemplate your roots, values and goals. Here you will see your own place in the flow of time and unfolding generations.

Five of Swords

The Five of Swords traditionally references the grim and sobering process of cleaning up the battlefield after a rout. The war as a whole has not yet been won or lost, but in this skirmish there were grievous losses. The advice connected with this image admonishes the loser to study carefully what went wrong so that a new strategy can be devised and further setbacks forestalled. There is a need to regroup and rethink the game plan, discover your blind spots, the weak links, and take corrective measures before getting back into the field for another round. In these modern times, when the "battle" is more often being "fought" with words, laws, and contracts instead of weapons, we have even more reason to examine our approach, style, strengths and weaknesses. If we have underdeveloped communication skills or lose our objectivity in tense moments, our ability to reach our goals and dreams will suffer.

Six of Swords

The Six of Swords has been associated with science and its objective methodology employed through the generations to sift fact from superstition, build facts into theories and theories into laws we can trust and use to improve our lives. One early title for this card was "The Navigator" who has learned enough about the relation between Earth and the Heavens to be able to set a course across trackless oceans and arrive at a chosen spot on distant shores.

At the time of the first Tarots, this skill was considered akin to magic, so few were the individuals who understood the principles involved. So the person who draws this card is typified as a person with special knowledge, an insight into sophisticated techniques that may be powerful enough to effect a rescue in a dangerous time. Other related titles common to this card are "The Path" (out of danger) and "The Way Through."

Seven of Swords

The Seven of Swords is the card of mental preparedness, acquired through the use of imagination, the rehearsing and visualizing of desired achievements. A representative phrase might be "the habit of mind of a natural winner."

The image most often associated with this card is that of a canny warrior who has infiltrated the enemy camp on the eve of a fateful battle and is checking out their preparations and stealing their swords--a move guaranteed to demoralize them and undermine their performance in the upcoming confrontation. Putting it in modern terms, those who draw this card need to "work smarter, not harder," think long and deep, study all the angles, and put themselves in the shoes of their competition. As a result, they will have such a thorough grasp of the whole situation that there will be no surprises, and no excuses for anything but success. Advance preparation justifies the optimism of the "natural winner."

Eight of Swords

The Eight of Swords, often called "The Test," usually pictures a warrior running a gauntlet, subjected to harsh examination, who finds out just how tough he is or isn't in the process. Life provides us with plenty of experiences that put us in situations of close scrutiny, whether it's an entrance exam for college, a decisive job interview, or even the tough conversations that follow upon a breach of trust in a primary relationship.

Sometimes the challenge or obstacle course has nothing to do with other people, as when an inventor has to face the question "Does it really work?" This card shows what happens to that good idea in real time, where the rubber meets the road. The Test represents your chance to vindicate the time and energy spent in getting ready for this big moment. In most cases, you will either pass or fail, with little middle ground.

Nine of Swords

The Nine of Swords has special resonance with the Middle Ages because it figures the plight of a woman who is alone in the world during the centuries when women had no personal rights, no ability to inherit property or use the law in their own defense. So we see her sitting up in bed weeping, grieving and in fear of abandonment because of her vulnerability, wondering what will happen to her now that her protector (father, brother, husband, or son) is gone.

The swords above her head may indicate that the loss has come through warfare or some other cruel conflict, the outcome of which has left her behind as chattel, the spoils of war. What we are really looking at is the price of pride, which creates losers as a side effect of idealizing the winner. The woman in the picture represents the concerns of the heart, the damage to the soul and to the vulnerable ones when the ego-mind becomes so invested in control and domination that it does not count the human costs. A sensitive, subtle, heartfelt approach to nature (the „feminine^{3/4}) is trampled and thrown aside in service to a "winner takes all" mentality.

Ten of Swords

The Ten of Swords represents finality, as in "It's over." As is easy to grasp from the picture, there is no hope for revival here. The limit has been reached, a line has been crossed, and there is no turning back. In some situations this may be felt as a tragic loss, but it often brings with it a paradoxical sense of release and closure. The waiting and wondering are over, there is no more ambiguity. You can rightly let go and move on because there is no more progress to be made here.

Emotionally and psychologically, this card appears when one is exhausted and used up, at the end of the line of caring and responding and trying to make a difference. When a person feels like this card looks, they have reached burnout and can no longer be held responsible for anything, and therefore can be forgiven for caving in or ceding the fight. The simple instructions are: Go no further along these lines!

Page of Swords

The Page of Swords represents a messenger, an emissary or liaison between separate camps, charged with faithfully representing one side's communications to the other.

Because of this role, we do not think of this Page as a servant but rather as a diplomat, facilitating sensitive negotiations, often under difficult conditions. He is acting as the "eyes and ears" of his employer, so he is sometimes called "The Watchman." Even kings are powerless if this Page chooses to use his access to sensitive information for his own gain, as is implied by his other name, "The Spy." He could even be working as a double agent, playing both sides against each other to serve his own agenda.

His title of Page is really camouflage in itself, serving as protective coloration so he can move among the people unrecognized, collecting information anonymously. His vigilance often conceals an ulterior motive. He is a watcher who must himself be watched, because he dreams of someday taking matters into his own hands, preempting the plans of his employers.

Knight of Swords

The Knight of Swords portrays the restless mind, aroused by thoughts of offense or defense, storming around searching for a target to pounce on. He often feels slighted, has a chip on his shoulder, and bristles with a hostile attitude. His usual method is to look for someone to blame for his irritation. Then, in an attitude of righteousness, he gives himself the job of "correcting" the offender. Jumping easily to conclusions, he "shoots first, asks questions later," and is therefore often guilty of overkill.

This is not to say that he does not have his heroic side; a single-minded combativeness can have its value. However, even when he is doing the right thing, he is likely to be doing it for the wrong reasons. Apt advice for this card is to deeply question your motives for what you are about to do. Forethought will help you discriminate between righteous and unrighteous causes. Discipline any traces of impulsive judgmentalism!

Occasionally you will see, implied by the detail on the card, that the person inside the armor could be a woman rather than the expected man. There is some evidence that the tradition of knighthood included a certain number of "anonymous knights" who took mythic names and veiled their true identities. Living on the road with few or no servants, they served as freelance defenders of travelers, champions of the little people against the exploitation of both highway robbers and the wealthy classes. Odds are that some of these knights errant were camouflaged women, and that idea is preserved with this unusual treatment of the Sword Knight.

Queen of Swords

The Queen of Swords was traditionally known as the widow, crone, or divorcee, the woman "no man would have." Nowadays we see her as a model of self-sufficiency, independence, and high intellect. She often has extremely high standards due to her subtle sensitivities, which can be perceived by those around her as being critical and hard to please. Her true motive is to refine the world, to upgrade people's understanding so everyone can have the space they need to individuate, to become truly themselves. She is not interested in conforming, which may be why she has a reputation for "being difficult." She is too intelligent to be confined to the role of housewife or nursemaid, although she is perfectly competent in those areas when she wants to be. She chooses her associations, and her aloneness, to serve her own agenda, and is seldom caught up in dependency relationships, at least not for long. Her critical intelligence is not always comfortable to be around, but she can be counted upon to see through superficialities and put her finger on the truth of the situation.

King of Swords

The King of Swords is the adjudicator, the wise judge, a mediator. He helps parties in conflict discover common ground and build upon it, and guides societies to see their greater good. His archetype is Solomon, ancient law-giver and philosopher of the Jewish Old Testament. Sometimes appearing cool and detached, he can be misunderstood as not caring.

But emotional displays are simply not his medium, nor is he moved by appeals to sympathy or pity. With the philosophical overview that comes from long experience, he listens deeply, watches closely, and speaks last. In the end, his evenhandedness and objectivity have earned him the respect he receives from his community, and those who cannot work out their problems come to him voluntarily for advice.

Occasionally this King is subtly detailed to imply that he is a woman in male armor. If you notice this theme in your deck, it is a reference to Joan of Arc, the Maid of Orleans, archetype of a devout and inspired woman warrior, who was mystically led to abandon her social role to defend what she saw as the greater good. Although she was martyred young, her model crystallizes the message that sometimes the good of the whole is more important than the good of the individual, and in that case, even if you lose, you win just for being there.

The Suit of Wands

by Christine Payne-Towler

Key words for the suit of Wands include energy, will, desire, and charisma. The wand symbol is, at its most primitive, a rough club of wood, sometimes showing sprigs of new green growth emerging from its weathered grain, occasionally aflame like a torch. A more refined version shows a magical wand or staff, collecting and focusing life force according to the user's will. Like a conductor's baton, this symbol leads and directs the unfolding action, and the participants instinctively know to follow the one who holds this symbol of authority. Because the element connected with Wands is fire, the qualities of boldness, ambition, drive, competitiveness, and initiative are highlighted. Whenever a Wand card appears, actions are being taken or suggested, change is in the works, and a challenge to the will is implied.

The more esoteric Tarot decks reveal that Wands symbolize the life force, also known as Kundalini, Qi (Chi), or Prana (the animating energy that fills every living thing with vitality, without which nothing could live). Through the correspondence with fire, Wands also represents the light that conquers darkness, whether it's a candle in the window or the sun at the center of the universe.

This metaphor applies to the Wand of Prometheus, a hollowed-out branch within which he smuggled coals of fire from the realm of the gods to bequeath to humans in the ancient Greek myth. Scientists today speculate that the human mastery of fire was the first catalyst toward the development of civilization. A further wrinkle on that myth is that in the Hebrew alphabet and the Phoenician (mother tongue of all Indo-European languages) before that, the letters of the alphabet were said to be originated by ancient priests observing the constellations in the night sky and noting down in "tongues of flame" the glyphs those constellations described. Prometheus is one form of the god Mercury, who traditionally rules all alphabets, numbers, glyphs, signs, symbols, and writing in general.

So the code of "fire from heaven" not only refers to the arts of cooking, forgery, pottery, and other early technologies, but also the skills of reading and writing, mathematics, codes and ciphers, and all the sophisticated tools we humans have invented to raise our consciousness, become more accountable, and invent the world we now inhabit. Wands represents the inventive, entrepreneurial spirit, the quest for excellence and greater command, and the power that belongs to whoever can wield this force skillfully.

Ace of Wands

The Ace of Wands symbolizes a pivotal act, or fateful step, that will set loose the chain of events leading toward your desired goal. As such, it refers to a birth or new beginning, the inauguration of an endeavor, and the necessary commitment to see a project through. It embodies the aroused Will, and one-pointed, aims at the bull's-eye.

Two of Wands

The Two of Wands--so often portrayed on this card as crossed wands--imply a deadlock due to energies working at cross-purposes. This could refer to an internal situation, an equal split between optimism and pessimism, for example, or a situation where you feel "damned if you do, damned if you don't." It could be a standoff with another person, or with limitations externally imposed upon you.

There may be a creeping dread of self-doubt, perhaps that you have bitten off more than you can chew. Give yourself a moment to take in the full implications of your situation. Regain your bearings before launching yourself back into action. Deal with concerns before they become regrets!

Three of Wands

The Three of Wands symbolizes an inner balance that allows you to feel reasonable optimism about new endeavors you are committed to. In the illustrated Tarot decks, the protagonist is standing on his balcony, watching his ships leave the harbor, loaded with trade goods for far-off ports, dreaming of the fortune he will reap if all goes well.

He must be patient and trusting, because he will have to wait at least a year to find out how his ships have fared, and meanwhile he has a lot of resources tied up until they return. Only those truly confident in their ideas and abilities would take such a risk. This card represents the energy a person needs to undertake great adventures and accomplish notable deeds.

A detail that sometimes appears in the more esoteric Tarots is a winged wand with two snakes twining around it, called the caduceus, which is Mercury's wand. This is an ancient symbol of the healer or shaman, one who can travel between the worlds to rescue souls from death or possession. Perhaps the feeling of empowerment this card represents points to the internal mechanisms of self-healing. Perhaps it refers to the courage it takes to be an entrepreneur or an inventor, which is in itself a magical process bringing not only opportunity for success, but an awakening to higher potentials.

Four of Wands

The Four of Wands is the teamwork card, illustrated by two couples who have come together to create something profitable and enduring and grant a gift to the future such as a factory, hospital, theater or university. They represent the founding families of the future metropolis that will grow around their inspiration. It will take time to build on such a grand vision; eventually other people of ambition and talent must be attracted to this nucleus for it to fulfill its potential. What we see here is the start-up, the founding visionaries committing their energies to designing the blueprints and laying the groundwork. This partnership is the prototype for society or any grouping where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Five of Wands

The Five of Wands symbolizes struggles caused by ambitious maneuvering and the spirit of competition, which jostles to push the self forward at the expense of others. There is a fine line between demonstrating personal excellence and making others feel like losers. It may be necessary to ask yourself who really benefits when we all fight so hard for such small rewards. Am I serving a negative, manipulative agenda when I start applying battle metaphors to business? Even when your only motive is to be the best you can be, to get yourself noticed and define what is unique about you, it is still sensible to minimize the number of egos bruised in the process lest your successes be celebrated alone.

Six of Wands

The Six of Wands represents the respect and acknowledgment due to you for your efforts to solve the problems of your community. The image is most often that of a victory parade after the celebrated general has helped the troops win a pivotal battle. It took the whole tribe to win the victory, of course, but it was the leader's heroism and clarity under pressure that inspired them to overcome. Your "team" is thrilled that you made them into winners. Relax and let them celebrate, even let them lionize you for awhile. They are seeing in you their own better selves a victory indeed!

Seven of Wands

The Seven of Wands shows a person who is nearly always successful in working his or her will in the world. This is a person who is truly gifted, standing head and shoulders above the rest, a standard-setter and exemplar who exceeds previous conceptions of what is possible. In the history of the Tarot, this person would most likely be an admired and feared warrior who has vanquished overwhelming adversaries, but nowadays your stellar accomplishment could just as easily appear in the world of the media, politics, the arts or business. Beware of the creeping smugness that begins to appear with this card. Being successful does not make you invincible, and it does not indemnify you against errors! Enjoy your "fifteen minutes of fame," then get back to your tasks or your head will swell, to the detriment of your ability to succeed again.

Eight of Wands

The Eight of Wands often shows a flight of spears or staffs moving through the air in formation, as if a hidden group of archers had let fly all at once. The title of the card will often echo the idea of swiftly unfolding events, whether of intentional design or unpremeditated. There are also versions which emphasize the agricultural cycle, paralleling the yearly crop cycle with the swift growth of children into adults with children of their own. In each case, the emphasis is on the necessity of change and the challenge to keep up with it. With the turning of the seasons we are constantly being plunged into precipitous change, and there is no remedy but to live with that in mind. Speed up! Get Busy! Do it now! There is no time to waste.

Nine of Wands

The Nine of Wands almost invariably indicates a need for rest, some time out to mend wounds and savor victories. Although it's hard to do, cede the field to fresher teammates for now. Release the ego's attachment to being the one

at the top. In the pictured Tarots, the protagonist is shown as too exhausted to be effective in defending his gains, yet resisting the suggestion to ask for help or just step down. He or she hasn't had the chance to totally heal from past blows, and is still up there taking another beating. This is the fix that comes from making oneself irreplaceable. Fight off the maniacal thought that only you can save the day! Stop rebuffing loved ones who want to help you.

Ten of Wands

This card represents an all-out effort, an obsessive commitment to a task that demands everything you have. The person in the pictured cards is in no position to rest until he makes it inside the stout walls of the well defended castle in the distance. If he fails, he will become prey for the highway robbers after dark. It doesn't matter that he's overloaded and underfed. With this card, you just have to do whatever it takes to get to completion, and nothing can be allowed to interfere.

Page of Wands

The Page of Wands is a unique individual, a nonconformist, often quite a bohemian, and independent by nature. He requires little in the way of outside affirmation or approval. Perhaps a malcontent, often an innovator or inventor, this Page will only serve others until he figures out how to get others to serve him. His freedom is so important to him that he would rather go as a peasant among strangers than inherit a fortune with strings attached.

Don't be fooled by his humble appearance. He is a future captain of industry or world conqueror, now serving his apprenticeship. He's sometimes seen planting his staff like a flag-pole into the earth, out in the wilderness where he can start fresh, without having to make any compromises. You might think of him as a wild card.

Knight of Wands

The Knight of Wands is a rabble-rouser and fire starter, a feisty and easily provoked character who attacks first and asks questions later. This Knight is quick to anger and enjoys a fight, so much so that he experiences some disappointment at the thought of diplomatic solutions. In his own fantasies he sees himself as trying to help, rescuing the world from its own craziness by imposing his sense of order on the space around him. His vices are bossiness, paranoia and overkill. But sometimes his energy is perfectly appropriate, like when his assertively protective nature is defending threatened treasures or interfering with dark forces. The trick is to keep a sense of proportion when this Knight unleashes his fire, because he really enjoys intense experiences and is always ready to take it to the next level. Once in awhile, that kind of kamikaze intensity is perfect, but on a daily basis, it is exhausting.

Queen of Wands

The Queen of Wands represents the natural manager, an organizational type whose gift it is to create teams and assign tasks, seeing to it that the job runs smoothly and all phases of the operation are keeping up with each other. She'll be sweating in the sun along with her crew, inspiring everybody to keep up and keeping the job fun with her infectious energy. She is the best kind of supervisor to have because she is so much like a challenging but encouraging mother who knows you have it in you to do your best work under her direction. She believes in her charges, and they work hard to please her. She is not, however, sentimental. Like a good farm wife, she views her crops, her animals, even the people who work for her, as necessary tools for the achievement of her goals. If any aspect is no longer productive or cost-effective, or if it's time to take the lambs to slaughter, she can let them go without a second thought. Do not look to her for sympathy.

King of Wands

The King of Wands represents the classic conquering hero. He's a charismatic leader, entrepreneurial and ambitious, and is always creating new adventures. He does this because he hates to stay home and "mind the store"-- he gets to feeling itchy and restless, bored with the predictable. If you need a crusader or someone to take on a big challenge, he's your man. He prefers and needs a big assignment, and would rather lead than follow. It could be said that he has a bit of an ego, as evidenced in his enjoyment of flattery. Always a performer, he overachieves in situations where it will be noticed, but in private he wants to be served and adored like the head lion of the pride. Ever the benevolent despot, he makes life wonderful for those he loves, and the opposite for those who displease him.

How do Tarot Cards Work?

Tarot Cards are merely the tools professional readers use to tap into a special state of mind consciousness -- a state where the reader has learned to turn off their imagination and tune into their intuition. When a seeker poses a question to a reader, they are consciously and subconsciously opening a doorway or opportunity for shared consciousness.

Dr. Carl G. Jung (1875-1962) a noted Swiss psychologist dedicate most of his life to this shared consciousness research. His work showed that our subconscious mind has the ability to not only absorb and retain ideas, impressions, and events around us but can also share thoughts or impressions with others through a Universal Consciousness. His theories under pin many aspects of modern prediction.

We are all familiar with our subconscious mind's ability to recall past events and details that our conscious mind has blocked or forgotten. This is the basis of modern hypnotherapy or hypnosis. Hypnosis works because our subconscious mind is like a huge image library that is receptive to our conscious mind and environment. But how do we communicate between our subconscious and conscious minds? One clue can be found in our dreams where we experience images, impressions and carry on conversations without ever uttering a word or opening our eyes to the conscious world. When we dream our conscious and subconscious minds communicate through an informal language of images and impressions. Tarot formalizes this process. By committing to memory specific meanings associated with the images of the Tarot and through the formal practice of tuning-in to their intuition to develop impressions, the professional Tarot reader is able to bridge this gap between the conscious world and that of a universal consciousness.

The Language of the Tarot

It is through the highly symbolic language of the Tarot that professional Tarot reader's communicate with and through their subconscious mind. Professional readers have committed to conscious and subconscious memory, several hundred meanings associated with various types of questions and the images and impressions the Tarot inspires. Between the variations of question categories (prosperity, spiritual, social, wellness, transition, et. al.) and the seventy eight (78) separate and distinct images of the Tarot, a rich and robust pictorial language emerges. While the seventy eight Tarot cards are the basic alphabet of a reader's language, to add even more variety similar to the capitalization, underlining, italicizing, or strike-out found in the written language of the conscious mind, Tarot cards take on new meanings and variations depending upon the card's orientation (upright or reversed). This symbolic alphabet is one part of the language, the next part is the sentence structure and grammar of the Tarot -- card spreads and layouts.

Tarot Spreads and Layouts

To pull this symbolic conscious-subconscious alphabet together to form meaningful words and sentences that enables reader's to convey meaningful messages from this shared consciousness requires knowledge and skill in using several card spreads or card layouts. Tarot spreads vary in size (number of cards), layout, and intent. A professional Tarot reader has not only committed to memory an arsenal of spreads, each designed to address specific types of questions and situations within the seeker's life, but has also practiced and demonstrated this ability before a community of peers. Certified professional Tarot readers must not only demonstrate that they can recall from memory meanings for each card in both the upright and reversed orientations, but must also demonstrate skill and excellence in using various types of spreads.

Tarot d'Or

Documentation and Instructions

The following is an English translation of the French text included with the revised edition of the lovely Tarot d'Or. We are pleased to be able to make this document available through our website, courtesy of the deck's creator, Joelle Balle.

Introduction

A new energy, a new Tarot. Joëlle Balle offers you a new way to approach Tarot, with freedom and in simplicity.

For more than 20 years, I have devoted my time to developing my psychic, psychological and spiritual intuition. My quest has led me to different countries where I was able to take part in various initiatory teachings. It is however, thanks to Tarot, in France that I have found my place and where I develop my true dimension.

For over a decade now, I have taught hundreds of pupils, and they use the Tarot in their daily life as a tool for personal development and in all fields: material, spiritual, emotional, and in their relationships.

I have created a new Tarot for you. The Tarot d'Or is a healer, because it transforms negative energy into constructive energy.

The Tarot d'Or is easier to understand than the Tarot of Marseilles or other Tarots. It is more dynamic, energetic and therapeutic. It will help you connect with your higher conscience, your inner child, your identity. It will help you to know yourself!

I wanted to create an initiatory Tarot. It had to be joyful so that you will enjoy using it and discovering the multitude of symbols that are hidden in each card. It is an excellent tool for communication and allows us to confront our fears, go beyond our limits and little by little transform our whole lives. You will become more confident, serene and balanced. You will also develop your creativity in order to realise your dreams. Life's synchronicity will become second nature to you. Children will also enjoy using the Tarot d'Or.

Please contact me if you wish to have consult with me, or get information on the seminars that I organise in France and abroad.

You can also join me on my website: www.generationtarot.com.

When one meets Tarot, you are already prepared!

Tarot is an initiatory, a psychological and a spiritual tool which is used for gaining self-knowledge

INITIATION: Understanding the Tarot d'Or is a way of connecting to your higher conscience, to your soul, to the invisible world of synchronicity.

SPIRITUAL: It will bring you faith, love, joy, generosity, and a willingness to help others. It unites the heavens and the earth.

PSYCHOLOGICAL: It allows you to break out of the limits of rationality. It will give you strength to face your trials and to understand that they are necessary. With the help of the Tarot d'Or, you will be able to analyse any repetitive unhealthy patterns. This new self-awareness will allow you to change your life in a positive manner.

KNOWLEDGE: As when you read a book, you will want to learn more and more. To learn about yourself, your family and the history of mankind. You will develop in all fields and will be able to realise your dreams. You will also learn to listen to your intuition and trust it. Armed with this new knowledge, it will be as if you are being re-knownn, or re-born, similar to a resurrection.

MATERIAL: The Tarot d'Or will help you develop all your qualities, in order to live your life to the full by using all your potential. Abundance will be yours.

All the elements in the Tarot d'Or are symbolic. They are archetypes, which we need to learn to decipher and which will form a story. You will be able to connect them with each other. By decoding these symbols, you will gain ancestral knowledge which has been coded and veiled. By studying the Tarot d'Or, an alchemical process of inner transformation will take place. This process can be long. Patience will be an asset and a sense of humour will be indispensable.

The Tarot d'Or reveals teachings that past Masters have passed down to us to allow us to evolve, to grow with wisdom, with love, by attaining self-knowledge and by becoming the true builders of our own lives and for all mankind.

You will discover great self-strength as you learn to understand and love Tarot.

Discovering Tarot is like taking a road which leads from a known world to an unknown world. It is a path that begins in darkness but which leads to light. From a world of ignorance to a world of knowledge, of awakening, where you will no longer be blind.

Life will receive a new impulse, changes will appear and your whole being

will take on a new sense. Tarot asks us to be like alchemists and to transform our lead into gold!

ARCANUM WITHOUT A NUMBER ***THE ALCHEMICAL QUEST***

Your task: To step on the road to evolution.

Magic phrase: Freedom to explore new possibilities.

This card symbolises Man in search of his soul.

A person is on the point of departure carrying a half-opened suitcase, with only the Tarot d'Or inside it. He is walking on the deck of a ship, which is in fact a chessboard, as well as the web of the universe. The sun beneath his feet indicates a change in the plane of his consciousness. He moves forward on his quest for light, for it lies before him. Barefoot, he feels free. He has left behind many things and many people, but what does this matter?

Possessing no number, this card serves as a joker, a wild card, and allows you to get out of any uncomfortable situation.

It will help you overcome those periods when you have the blues, moments of discouragement. This card will always allow you to rebound and start anew. A touch of folly enlivens you - without folly, life can be so dull! Your past experiences make up your riches and you know how to take advantage of them. But all the same, you should take care not to run away from reality and obligations.

With this card, you can do anything. You aspire to live out your destiny to the full, to be adventurous, even to move to other shores.

You have the heart of an adventurer! So don't delay living or you may live with regrets!

You do not like your freedom being curtailed and you are right! However, you must respect the liberty of others to attain perfect balance.

Gemstone: Rock crystal or quartz crystal correspond to this card. Crystals are pure light, white light, which is what all human beings seek to attain.

ARCANUM NUMBER 1 ***THE MAGICIAN***

Your task: To be the hero of your life, so create your adventure! To develop the divine which is within you.

Magic phrase: Point of departure, willpower, action, work. Learn and discover.

A new challenge is calling you, opportunities lie before you. A new kind of energy is felt.

You are this Magician, and in the bag, which also symbolises karma, are all the tools that you need for your work. The 4 elements, air, water, fire, earth, are represented on the table by the cup, the coin, the baton and the sword.

You are already prepared like in initiate to face your destiny.

You have energy, much intelligence, and courage. The Magician wears a heart. You wish to fill up your cup with love, and when it is full, you will be able to offer it to others.

Seek all the strength that you can find within you and choose the road which will lead you to success. Do not doubt yourself. Have self-confidence. If you were not able to connect to this confidence in your childhood, you will have to conquer it. You must use the sword to vanquish your enemies which are your fears, wake up the sleeping princess who is your soul and who wishes to be freed.

You are the seeker in search of spirituality and you step on to the path. Your trials will need to be faced and seen as challenges to be overcome. Even if you trip and fall, you will get up and each time you will be a little stronger. The two pillars of your inner temple will invite you on this initiatory journey.

Gemstone: Rose quartz bring gentleness and tenderness. They will help you connect to your inner child.

ARCANUM NUMBER 2

THE COSMIC MOTHER

Your task: To use the key to pass through the veil of unknowing.

Magic phrase: Knowledge opens the door to cosmic awareness.

How can one know without learning? Knowledge comes from the stars.

In this card, a woman holds a sacred book. It speaks of Knowledge. Of cosmic laws. When you act in the law, you have balance, and your actions are just. This is called dharma. In the beginning, it's as if you're in a labyrinth, you are like someone blind and seek your path. Self-knowledge allows you to remove all the dark veils in order to reveal your true identity: your divinity. Step by step, by overcoming the emotional states that disturb you, you will acquire equanimity.

The cosmic mother is connected to the world of stars, to the whole cosmos. She unites the heavens and the earth. What is above is as below, nothing is separated. Her realm is spiritual.

The cosmic mother gives you the keys that open the gate of the tower! This closed tower represents symbolically the divine energy, the Kundalini, the serpent who unwinds, in order to vibrate at its highest level, and to unfold

completely in the 16th card: "The House of Life".

The Cosmic Mother represents a woman who guides you through an initiation, who acts as a mid-wife, as a mother. She holds all secrets. She can represent the relationship to the mother.

Gemstone: Jasper calms the nausea of pregnancy and gastric troubles.

ARCANUM NUMBER 3 ***RIGHT ON TARGET***

Your task: To express your creativity clearly.

Magic phrase: To think is to create.

After having passed the initiation of the Cosmic Mother, you have to aim at your target right in the middle, and score a bull's-eye. You must use this knowledge for your inner development and personal life. There are different symbols that explain this. The goal must be the **1000**.

The Hebrew letter, the final Aleph, has the numerical value of 1000 and means: the final apotheosis of the adept who meets the father again. The goose, who symbolises cosmic order (cosmic law) unwinds the Moebius ribbon or the yin/yang. Perfection.

With this card, you will learn how to put into practice the difficult task of harmonising the three different levels which are: **Thought, Speech, Action**.

Fix an objective and forget all else until you have reached it. This is important in order to succeed in any enterprise.

Choose a task and carry it to its finish with an absolute concentration on the goal to be reached. This will prevent your energies from being depleted or dissipated.

Once they are in harmony with each other, these three levels activate a process which liberates one's intelligence and energy . And therefore great self-confidence is attained. This card betokens success.

The feminine archetype of this card represents creative power over the earth. (Fertility, goddess mother.)

Gemstone: Blue calcedony helps keep ideas clear and helps in clear self expression.

ARCANUM NUMBER 4 ***THE CONQUEROR***

Your task: Construction, responsibility, generosity.

Magic phrase: Uncover the gems of your inner treasure, and display them to gladden others.

With **The Conqueror** you will be able to make that which you have conceived, something that exists in reality.

In this card, The Conqueror carries by way of a sceptre **a planet**. The sceptre symbolises command and inner royalty. He wishes to conquer and expand his territory as well as protect it. He is a builder. He represents the man, the father, virility, just authority. He possesses calming strength.

His legs in the shape of a 4 symbolise the square, the earth. In numerology, the 4 is the earth. He is well grounded in matter. He is stable and asserts power over the material world.

Gemstone: Jade helps maintain balance between the sky and the earth.

ARCANUM NUMBER 5

UNION

Your task: To communicate, create bonds of understanding and friendship.

Magic phrase: The union of hearts is the bridge that links people.

The two columns of the Temple are very important in this card. They represent the union between the sky and the earth. The arch of alliance symbolises stability and the rainbow links us to another dimension: the dimension of faith.

The two people hold each other's hands and look to the future, straight ahead. What is important is the future, what is to come! Union amongst people will ensure peace on earth. Do not be dogmatic and believe in your spiritual power! The card heralds a blessing, a union, a marriage between two beings. It is the symbol of understanding, harmony and communication. Have a larger view on life and be more open to others. The body's health depends on peace of mind. Heartwounds must heal.

Gemstone: Emeralds bring peace and harmony. It is said that they heal heartwounds.

ARCANUM NUMBER 6

LOVE

Your task: To love.

Magic phrase: Listen to your heart and have confidence in yourself.

This card represents Love.

A donkey is moving slowly towards Isis, the Egyptian God, who is seated and

serene on her throne. He will fall into the cup of love. The winding path of love can be a long one. Watch out! The roses has thorns and often causes hearts to bleed.

Love is always a question mark, for it can never be certain that you truly possess it. Love has a thousand faces, and many choices will need to be made in one's lifetime. These are the laws of attraction and repulsion.

Love means giving and receiving. One cannot possess love, but do not doubt its existence. Have confidence in your heart. Only your heart truly knows, because love is beyond reason. Human love leads to universal love.

Seek love, and each encounter will unveil love a little more. Do not be afraid to love and to be loved. Love makes one beautiful. The most important aspect of this card is to have confidence in yourself.

Gemstone: The ruby is red, like blood, like a heart. It is the stone of love.

ARCANUM NUMBER 7

ENERGY

Your task: To take difficult and courageous decisions which will help you to progress.

Magic phrase: Be the Master of your destiny.

A prince is riding on his chariot, full speed ahead! The galoping horses are pulling together.

He is blue, like Krishna on his chariot of fire.

You have a solid grasp on the reins, and have taken control of your life. You know where you are heading.

This card is the result of your choices and decisions concerning all your undertakings and your autonomy in general. It is a transformation, a form of initiation.

You are experiencing good, positive energy and are on the way to success. You hardly recognise yourself. Nothing and nobody will prevent you from reaching your goal! You are determined!

But be careful all the same not to go too fast. Success must be attained in stages.

You control and have mastery over your destiny. There is movement in this card, because you do not feel like keeping still. Perhaps you even wish to travel. This is the card that represents success on a material level and for any undertaking in general.

Gemstone: Citrine provides mental stability.

ARCANUM NUMBER 8

EQUILIBRIUM

Your task: To be fair and balanced.

Magic phrase: Equilibrium is acquired by working on oneself and by the understanding of karma.

A tall oak towers over you. Its roots are impressive. They symbolise your rootedness in this life as well as your knowledge of your past. The oak represents wisdom, stability, balance.

A yin-yang sign is in the middle of its trunk. This symbol embodies both the harmony and the infinity of all things.

The scale represents karma, action and reaction, good and evil, and the eye represents conscience. The heart should be as light as a feather. All must be in perfect equilibrium. This is what one calls dharma. There is no need for self-justification!

Rigour and resolution in all one does is required. When it comes to the final reckoning, overseen by the Goddess Maat, the justice of man is not as severe as divine justice.

Mental strength will provide great energy. Be truthful, do not lie, and neither must you lie to yourself. Being true to oneself means that one no longer flees one's inner self. This card represents the awareness of right actions. It teaches you self-defense and also how to fight.

Gemstone: Snowflake obsidian has powerful magical qualities. It is the stone of truth.

ARCANUM NUMBER 9

THE ENCHANTER

Your task: Patience, study, wisdom, prudence.

Magic phrase: The crisis you are going through will be make you a better person.

The Enchanter is a sage. He is alone, but he is not sad.

This arcanum speaks of silence, solitude and slowness. Nothing seems to move, but that is just an illusion.

Three hares dance for the moon. In the Buddhist doctrine, the hare means renunciation and confidence in a future liberation. This card also symbolises

emotional instability.

You feel rather lonely as you realise all you still need to learn and understand, and how much time you still need to wait in order to get the results you are counting upon! Be patient, soon you will see the end of the tunnel. The light will return. Changes will occur sooner or later.

Time is needed for things to mature. You need to learn to go within yourself, to feel comfortable with who you are. You are your own best friend. Accept this initiation. One is always alone with oneself.

Gemstone: Aquamarine helps to preserve the purity and innocence of the heart and mind. It enables us to see ourselves as we really are.

ARCANUM NUMBER 10

FORTUNA

Your task: To not simply submit to Fate. To make the the wheel turn rapidly.

Magic phrase: Dare to take your life into your own hands in order to create your destiny.

A wheel turns, a ship sails, the wind blows! So much movement! The numbers represent luck. Get luck that brings success on your side by daring to turn the wheel of destiny. You must seize the opportunities that cross your path.

"Destiny leads those who accept. Those that refuse are dragged". (Seneca)

We are all bound to the wheel of destiny. It is the cycle of successive incarnations. Each incarnation carries within itself the experience of evolving. Chance will lead you there where you must be, for it carries God's signature.

If you are at the bottom, you will once again rise to the top. But the reverse is also true. Become aware of your repetitive patterns and conditionings. In other words "Know thyself". Change implies a new state of mind. This card speaks of the end of a cycle.

You must let yourself be guided by your inner compass. Take time to think about yourself, and really listen to yourself. You may tremble, but you must find the courage to take your destiny into your own hands. All that seems to you impossible to do is perhaps only the result of your limited thoughts.

Gemstone: Rhodocrosite, a remarkable transmitter of energy, allows for the integration of physical, mental and emotional aspects, when it is carried next to the skin.

ARCANUM NUMBER 11

THE LIFE FORCE

Your task: To master and tame your instincts.

Magic phrase: A new beginning on a different level.

The colours of this card symbolise fire, energy and the intensity of life. It is linked to the astrological sign of Leo.

A certain physical violence and mental aggressivity can arise.

The ego must be controlled in order to give the best of yourself. The mind must control desires, including sexual desires.

The force is within you, but you must channel your energies and master your emotions. When this happens, a miracle will appear.

The salamander symbolises strength, peace and confidence amidst the troubles of life.

Gemstone: Carnelian helps one master one's emotions. It calms anger. For concentration.

ARCANUM NUMBER 12

THE REVERSAL

Your task: To empty your mind by meditating.

Magic phrase: Working towards self-awareness provides inner strength.

You are hemmed in a situation which is proving difficult to get out of.

You feel blocked and psychologically perturbed.

The situation itself, in which you find yourself, is blocked. You are immobilised in spite of all your efforts. You feel tied and imprisoned. You feel sorry for yourself.

The message of this card is: **LET GO!!** Relax, accept this temporary situation. Learn to look at things differently by self-questioning. It is vital to forget about yourself and your problems, or else you'll end up completely stifled.

Free yourself from your anxieties by just letting things take their course, but this does not mean you must not care. It's a question of mental relaxation. Time is of the essence in this card. It is necessary.

This card is linked to old memories. You need to unravel the psychological

knots that fetter you. You need to understand and analyse them.

Gemstone: Amber is 50 million years old. It will help free you from your bonds and karmic knots.

ARCANUM NUMBER 13

THE PASSAGE

Your task: To learn to die in order to be reborn.

Magic phrase: The caterpillar always becomes a butterfly.

A caterpillar crawls on the ground before becoming a butterfly. A willow weeps...

This card represents transformation and radical change. It is always a very intense period. Do not cling to the past.

To learn how to die, is to learn how to live. It is the theme of death for re-birth.

Illness, the loss of a loved one, or a trial such as a separation or a job loss, are difficult situations to go through, to handle and to endure. This is a delicate passage, as with any mourning period. Attachment to the past must slowly disappear. The wounds will heal, life will go on. It is a change in one's conscience.

Gemstone: Hematite helps circulate energy. It aids anemic conditions, physical weakness, tiredness. It stimulates courage and strength.

ARCANUM NUMBER 14

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

Your task: To help those who are in need.

Magic phrase: Reconciliation with yourself and with others.

A fairy inside an amethyst cave holds two dolphins, one golden and one silver, in her hands.

A web has been woven in the water, showing the alliance between what is above and what is below, between the invisible and visible worlds.

Telepathy between all beings exists. With this card, you can be sure that you too are telepathic. Learn to listen to the messages from the angels.

You are healed of the past. You feel calm and your mind is serene. You begin to feel in harmony with yourself and to appreciate whom you are... This is a very Venusian and angelic energy.

At last you feel the sweetness of life. Congratulations! You have learned patience and tolerance towards yourself and others. You wish to help them - go ahead. You have become a guardian angel.

Gemstone: Amythists bring luck, give strength and protection.

ARCANUM NUMBER 15

THE UNLOVED

Your task: To free yourself from your egoistical desires.

Magic phrase: Use your creative energy for the service of good.

A person is split down the middle. One side is golden and there is a key which brings freedom from desires. This side represents freedom. The other side is black, and represents temptations and binds, the unconscious. Too much greed creates domination and limitations.

On one side is the devil, on the other a being of light. Human beings contain both these opposing characters which create great torment and guilt. This is what is known as good and evil. The rope symbolises attachments to the things of the world. Know pleasure without binding yourself to it.

The coloured circles indicate the energy centres or the chakras, which spin inside and outside of you. There are seven important ones. Some vibrate at different frequency levels.

The more you enjoy life, the more your energy will grow. Free your sexual and creative energies, your self-expression, love and intelligence. Trust your intuitions. Do not bind yourself to worldly things.

Gemstone: The Unloved has eyes of malachite. Malachite, as with all green stones, restores the 4th chakra, the heart. This stone brings harmony and creativity.

ARCANUM NUMBER 16

THE HOUSE OF LIFE

Your task: To enter into the Temple, your inner house.

Magic phrase: Enter into the spiral of spirituality.

The two columns are now only one. This card is fusion by cosmic fire.

What is hidden will appear. What is badly built will fall down. A tower rises, in the shape of a spiral.

Lilacs cover the sky, a shower of light lightens the bottom of the well. Light always wins.

This card represents an explosion, a fireworks display, like a burst of laughter! The universe opens out to give you its gifts and blessings. Learn to accept them, even if they are not what you had planned for. These gifts can be the crumbling of a situation that was not good for you. This card puts things in their right place. Do not be rigid and stubborn. Loosen your mind and give your ego less importance.

This tower is your body, your temple. It also represents your house, your home.

Gemstone: Opals are iridescent. All colours are reflected in it. It helps us to reach higher spiritual planes.

ARCANUM NUMBER 17

THE STAR

Your task: To forgive and to give affection to those around you.

Magic phrase: Do not waste your energy any longer, find your place.

A beautiful young woman opens her arms in a gesture of abundance. She is surrounded by a blazing blue star with five branches, symbol of divinity. It is the light of spirit that brightens the world. We are all stars that have come down to earth.

She is joined to her star by her golden hair. The peacock, symbol of the soul, invites you to rise up in freedom.

Lotus flowers bloom on this river, the Egyptian myth of the creation of the world. Here is the power of both creativity and compassion. It symbolises the knowledge that, through successive reincarnations, allows one to attain nirvana, the final stage of supreme illumination.

You are free from all your fears and anxieties. Hope is reborn, life becomes untroubled and wonderful. You are also more humble, you help others with compassion. You can give life.

Gemstone: Turquoise reflects our deep and secret soul. It is very protective and has the faculty to absorb negative thoughts and feelings.

ARCANUM NUMBER 18

MOON-SUN

Your task: To hold on to your dreams.

Magic phrase: Mix the colours and paint your future.

This is indeed a strange landscape. It is still night. The dawn will soon rise. The moon is smiling at you and the pale sun still waits to be painted with the

palette of colours! This card is the promise of your destiny. The ultrasound baby speaks of a birth. We are in the maternal archetype. A project or an unconscious desire to create. A period of gestation. A dog is hiding! The dog symbolises obedience and fidelity. Be faithful to your dreams, jump over the fence and go forward to the unknown, the land where your dreams are fulfilled. The future! Even if you are scared, you are going to have to face it some day. Creative imagination lives in you, let yourself be cradled, but watch out for illusions. You are looking for the sun in the middle of the night... Do not let doubt and sadness overcome you. Get out of the shadows. Hidden emotions can cause physical ailments. Imagine, visualise, et free yourself through action.

Believe in yourself and in your dreams, they are yours so cling to them, they are your birthright.

Gemstone: Moonstones help with creativity, release emotions, and help overcome shyness. It is the stone of hope and purity. It counterbalances dissatisfaction and greed.

ARCANUM NUMBER 19

JOY

Your task: To share with the warmth of generosity and with a spirit of fraternity.

Magic phrase: Joy exists even in the little things of life.

A huge sun dominates the card. The golden light is within your reach. You have found the door which leads you out, you are content, harmonious, great joy washes over you. Jubilation fills you as you realise you have won the game. You wish to share, to dance and to laugh. Communication with others becomes easy. You are reconciled with yourself, as well as with your body. You no longer suffer from any complexes. Your heart beats to the rhythm of life and you just express joy. Your partner is also happy to see you like this! You can collaborate with others, you feel at one with those around you. Success in work or another field is certain.

A couple is formed, love, a friendship. The Father archetype.

Gemstone: The beautiful yellow colour of Topaz is like the sun. It emits a powerful healing power. It influences blood circulation. It is very efficient in aiding circulation in the limbs, or if they are cold.

ARCANUM NUMBER 20

THE MUSIC OF THE UNIVERSE

Your task: To respond to the call of the divine.

Magic phrase: Renewal and rebirth to a higher consciousness.

As in the springtime, here we see transformation and rebirth! You leave behind you the bare bare winter, and come out victorious and healed.

This card speaks of a resurrection, a rebirth. Fears diminish little by little. A new way of approaching life is revealed to you. You have, after all, crossed this wasteland pretty much on your own. Today you know what you want and what you are worth. You are true to yourself. Your friends and family recognise you for whom you are. The angel whispers good messages that you now understand. People may judge you because others may not always agree with you. Do not feel guilty about this and continue on your way. You have finished an initiatory cycle.

Music frees emotions.

Gemstone: The beautiful blue lapis lazuli contains nuggets of pyrite. In ancient Egypt it was called "the stone from heaven". It reinforces one's determination, one's kindness, and is the stone of friendship. It helps those who are overworked and helps overcome depression.

ARCANUM NUMBER 21

FULFILMENT

Your task: To reach complete self accomplishment. Leave nothing to chance.

Magic phrase: Realisation of Unity.

This is one of the most powerful cards of the Tarot d'Or! The cosmic egg.

The 4 elements united in the 5th.

It announces a triumph. The mirror is decorated with the seven colours of the rainbow. In the centre, you are as a king or a queen of the world. The 12 astrological signs can be found on this card. They represent the totality of the fulfilled being. Happy and proud, your programme of self transformation is a success. You are a mirror for others. Now you realise that even the most difficult things can be accomplished. Everything becomes clear, a wide inner smile illuminates you. The card speaks of maternity. It represents divinity, the woman.

Wings seem to grow on you. The world opens its arms, so open your arms likewise to it! This is unity, there is no more separation between you and others.

You feel as if you are blessed by the heavens. A sensation of well-being overcomes you, you realise that your life has no limits.

This card is an invitation for travel, to discover other countries and lands. This new breath of energy revives your needs to get moving, to go out and meet

new faces and have new experiences. So give yourself these pleasures that are a part of life.

Gemstone: Black tourmaline helps develop noble sentiments. It aids the mind to be clear and precise. It can also be rainbow-coloured.

Reading the Cards

Some examples of Tarot spreads

The Tarot d'Or is the mirror of the soul

It is not easy to remain neutral when one does a reading. If you are a beginner, ask someone to do it for you, although you must participate fully.

Before each reading, relax for a minute or two. Close your eyes and try to empty your mind.

1 card spread

The easiest spread is to choose a card at random every morning. This will give you an idea of the atmosphere of the day. Keep this card near you all day long. This exercise will help you connect to the Tarot d'Or and to make it yours little by little.

3 card spread

You can do this spread for any questions you may have.

Past, present, future. Ask the Tarot d'Or a question. It can be in any domain to do with your emotional life, your working life, your relationships, or your psychological, spiritual or financial concerns. It can concern any doubts you have or decision making you need to do.

The cards may be drawn upright or reversed.

Mix your cards face-down on a table, and choose three cards.

The card you will put on the left represents the past, what you have been or what you have experienced.

In the middle is the present, what you are experiencing at the moment.

On the right is what will occur, the advice and insights concerning your question.

If a card is reversed, choose another card and put it below the reversed card. This will cancel the blockage, and will give you some advice for some positive action or energy.

The transformation spread

This spread can be done every three months. It's a spread that requires great attention, as it is very deep and psychological.

It is composed of seven upright or reversed cards.

The first three cards must be put on the left, and represent what you need to transform in your life, or in your way of thinking or acting.

The middle card represents you in the present time. Upright or reversed.

The last three cards must be put on the right, and represent your future.

Take a long time to study the first three cards, because they are very important in order to understand the other four. If you are aware of what you need to transform, you will be able to transform your future.

If some of the cards are reversed, draw a card to put underneath each of these reversed cards, in order to cancel the blockage.

In any reading you do, you should express all your feelings and thoughts. Understanding will be gained through a dialogue between you and the Tarot d'Or or the tarot reader.

My best wishes go with you for your exploration of the Tarot d'Or. I hope it will assist you in connecting to your true identity, to your inner self, and also that you are able to plan a better future thanks to this better understanding of yourself.

-- Joëlle Balle
2003