

INTRODUCTION TO TAROT

Lesson One

This course acquaints you with Tarot . . . one of the most effective aids to spiritual progress ever bequeathed to man. **All** human progress, no matter in what field of being or activity it may be manifested, depends on spiritual progress. Man does not live by bread alone!

Even as we might introduce you to a wise and helpful counselor, so these Tarot lessons will give you the same uplifting benefits which we, and countless others through the ages, have derived from this source of wisdom and inspiration.

It is not our purpose to give you a mass of more or less occult knowledge **about** Tarot. Mere unassimilated knowledge not put to practical use is no better than undigested food which, no matter how it may please the palate, passes through the system without nourishing. So in this course you will be given instruction in the practical and daily **use** of Tarot, for only through such usage and application can its marvelous and truly magical benefits be obtained.

You may have a long history of academic education, or you may not have finished high school. You may have a real interest in symbols, or you may think symbols are of no concern to you and your affairs. You may have a good memory, or a bad one. (If it is a bad one, it will soon improve, provided you use Tarot as we shall explain it.) You may be a marvel at concentration, or suppose yourself to be the world's undefeated mind-wandering champion. Begin to **use** Tarot just where you are and you will effect decided, even startling, changes for the better.

Accompanying this lesson you will find a copy of HIGHLIGHTS OF TAROT, and the Tarot Tableau. When you cut the tableau apart, as you will later on, be sure to preserve the parts entitled THE PATTERN ON THE TRESTLEBOARD and THE EMERALD TABLET. In HIGHLIGHTS there are also directions for coloring the Keys; but we recommend that you do not follow these at present as this will come later in Tarot Fundamentals, the course which follows this one and gives complete instructions for coloring your Tarot Keys. We have included the coloring instructions in the HIGHLIGHTS OF TAROT booklet mainly because we have found that so many of our members wish to color more than one set as they advance through the different portions of the Qabalistic teaching. Therefore having coloring instructions condensed into one area is an added convenience for such purposes.

If anything you read in HIGHLIGHTS gives you the notion that Tarot is so abstruse and occult that it is way over your head, dismiss that notion. So far from being over your head, Tarot, right now, is in your head and in your heart—in all your mental and physical make-up.

If you never learn a Hebrew letter or an astrological symbol, or anything else in the lists of attributions given in HIGHLIGHTS, you can still use Tarot successfully. It is not at all necessary to learn how Tarot is put together.

Some people, of course, wish to know as much about Tarot as possible, ie., its history and technical construction. Indeed this is necessary for gaining certain kinds of more advanced esoteric knowledge. Later this will be made available for those who qualify. Now, however, we shall not burden your memory with a single fact which you cannot put to immediate and practical use.

You have hopes and fears, longings and frustrations. You have problems you'd like to solve. You may be seeking a better job. Or it may be that your physical organism seems to be in need of some adjustment. Whatever may be the particular situation in which you find yourself, whether it be good or bad, you wouldn't be human if you hadn't, down in your heart of hearts, a desire for a greater measure of freedom than you now enjoy.

Precisely that greater freedom is what you will experience if you gain skill in using Tarot. To do so it is necessary to practice, and the early stages will require some effort and a great deal of persistence. All, excepting those pathologically subnormal, can learn to use Tarot, for it is based on a principle of mental activity common to all. It is a principle we have all been using since early childhood. There is nothing new about it and nothing unfamiliar. The only novelty is in the application.

The principle is this: all our basic thinking is done in pictures. We **see** before we say. Pictures form in our minds before we label them with words.

Sometimes our pictures are not as clear as they might be. Usually this is because most of our schooling puts too much faith in the supposed virtue of mere words. We spend so much time reading and talking, and so much of our education is no more than learning words and formulas by rote, that we have let our power of vision fall more or less into disuse—to our great disadvantage.

Whatever initial difficulty you may have in learning to use Tarot may be traced to the bad habit of thinking in words without being sure these mental labels are attached to any real pictures. At this point, we say nothing of the disasters which result from getting wholly mistaken labels on our mental pictures. Nor shall we discuss as yet the dangers we invite when we content ourselves with hasty mental snapshots often taken with our mental cameras out of focus.

Our first steps will be very simple. Begin by using the actual Tarot pictures. Sit in a comfortable chair and give five minutes every day to looking attentively at one of the twenty-two Tarot Keys. Do this preferably in the morning as soon as you have finished dressing, and before eating breakfast. If this is impracticable, any other time of day may be selected, so long as it is approximately the same hour every day.

Spend just three days on each of the Tarot Keys. Thus the total time given to Tarot practice during this entire course will be just fifteen minutes per Key, a total of five hours and thirty minutes over a period of eleven weeks. Hence nobody can offer the excuse that he hasn't time for this study.

Nobody who reads this lesson can say he hasn't five minutes a day to use as he likes. And precisely that, and no more, is all the time you have to set aside for the actual practice of looking at the Keys. It is important, in fact, not to spend **more** than five minutes at this.

That anything so apparently easy should produce remarkable results may seem hard to believe. But the wise men who invented Tarot hit upon a simple way to overcome a difficulty which besets every person who tries to control his mind.

For thousands of years it has been known that extraordinary powers are latent in every human being and that these powers may be directed by anybody who can keep his mind from wandering. Thus we have whole libraries of books about concentration, and the more we read the more does it seem that concentration must be a very difficult matter.

An old Oriental writer says we are close to adeptship when we can keep a single image before the mind's eye for just a few minutes. To accomplish this without external aids is very difficult. Thus Tibetans and Hindus have pictures called **mandalas** which are used as aids to concentration. Images of the gods serve a similar purpose.

Tarot is a device which consists of pictures designed in accordance with the actual operation of man's mental activities. Look at a Tarot Key attentively for five minutes. During this time your state of consciousness will be similar in form and content to that of a great Adept as he contemplates some aspect of his own mental activity. Furthermore, through the agency of this Key and image and your contemplation of it, your consciousness will automatically begin to tune in to the consciousness of those of high spiritual estate . . . even to the Adepts of the Inner School. You may not become aware of this immediately, though some do. However, patience and perseverance will inevitably bring their reward and probably sooner than you expect.

We caution you not to devote more than five minutes at a time to the practice of looking at any one Tarot Key. You are not yet an adept. Thus your brain is not at present adjusted to carrying the full load of an adept's consciousness about anything whatever.

Holding one of these Tarot Keys in your mental field for five minutes has a definite and beneficent physical result. Do not try to increase the benefit by longer sessions with the Key. We have given a reason in the preceding paragraph, and this is only one of several. Among others is what science calls the law of diminished returns. Some coal will feed a small fire. More will increase the heat. Too much will smother it.

Read this week's lesson at least twice during the coming week, and as often as you may find it necessary to make sure that you understand it thoroughly. Read it whenever you find a good opportunity. Don't make hard work of it, or of anything else connected with your Tarot study. Above all don't try to commit anything to memory.

When you receive this lesson, look at Key 0 during the five minutes so as to get a general impression of the design. Next day give a little more attention to the details. The third day see if you can find anything not mentioned in the brief paragraphs of description in HIGHLIGHTS and in this lesson. If you do see anything that seems to be important, or that rouses your curiosity, make a note of it and ask yourself, "What does this mean?" Sooner or later you will get the right answer and it will come from **within**.

During the first weeks the results may not be particularly impressive. Sometimes it occurs that remarkable reactions are experienced from the very beginning. As a rule, the effect of Tarot practice is **cumulative** rather than immediate.

Suppose you have gone through life feeling unloved or unlovable. This becomes a deep-seated subconscious pattern which manifests in your environment. It expresses itself in your relationships with family, friends or business associates. We are in continuous contact with each other on subconscious levels. If we feel unlovable, we call forth from ourselves and others the type of conduct which brings rejection. Change the inner pattern and you change your relationships from unhappy to happy ones. Tarot will help you to do this. Its practice gradually helps you to **know** who and what you are and the results become manifest in your everyday life.

As we learn to feel and live the positive states of mind, we transform our personalities. This gives us greater ability to change our environment. Affirmations are helpful, but they do not go far enough. Tarot practice is designed to bring about the transmutations which are required for mental and spiritual growth. It will work, if you **work** it. Often no striking reaction is noticed until one comes to a Key which has relation to some sensitive point in one's own mental make-up. This may be a strong point or a weak one; but one feels definitely that he has a special affinity for one or more of the Tarot Keys.

There is a profound occult reason for this. Yet you should be on your guard against paying more attention to one Key than to another, especially during this introductory course. Every one of the Keys is a picture, remember, of some aspect of yourself. The subject matter of the Tarot series, from beginning to end, is always **yourself**. No matter what a picture may look like, it is invariably a picture of **you**.

Thus Tarot has to do with the one thing which really interests you more than anything else in the world. If you suffer from mock modesty, or some other complex such as psychologist mention, you may not be willing to admit that nothing interests you so much as yourself. If you are a healthy-minded, normal person, you know this is true, and will admit it readily. If

you are really what is called an “advanced soul”, there is nothing else that interests you. All wisdom is the matured experience of those who obey the injunction, “Know Thyself.”

All ethics rests on the same foundation, for nobody who is wanting in self-knowledge can practice the Golden Rule. All science, no matter in what field, has the same basis and the same objectives. For whatever science the human race possesses is the collective result of the research and invention of human selves, and every force known to physicists and chemists is a force at work inside man as well as outside him. The Wheel of Tarot is really the wheel of human nature. By keeping this always in mind you will avoid making Tarot a mere set of pictorial symbols.

KEY 0. THE FOOL



In your HIGHLIGHTS OF TAROT you have read a brief explanation of this Key, and in the Table of Attributions of the same booklet you will find that the Fool is the Tarot picture of superconsciousness and of cultural power.

If any of the other details mentioned in the booklet happen to stick in your memory, well and good; but make no endeavor to commit to memory any of the material in HIGHLIGHTS. You may see the reason for some of the attributions. Others may seem far-fetched. You will, however, find in the following paragraphs all you need to know in order to lay a foundation for thorough understanding of Key 0.

All the Tarot Keys have two distinct levels of interpretation. There is the outer, superficial significance which may be seen at a glance. Then there is the deeper, inner meaning which may be brought to the surface of consciousness without effort or strain

by the simple act of looking attentively at the Key.

Superficially, the Fool is a picture of a heedless, sky-gazing man, just about to fall from a great height into a deep abyss. It corresponds exactly to all proverbial wisdom concerning the folly of having one's head in the clouds.

Even if you get no further than this with Key 0, it has a valuable lesson. One does run the risk of grave dangers when he is so engrossed with actual or metaphorical sky-gazing that he pays no attention to his present situation. Thus the first lesson of Tarot is this:

Don't project yourself so far into the future that you lose sight of where you are. Dreams and visions and ideals have their proper place; but he who loses himself in the contemplation of airy nothings unfits himself for dealing with the practical affairs of life.

At the deeper level of interpretation, the Fool is a picture of what we must use in all our endeavors to attain a greater measure of freedom. Various names have been given to this power. You may call it any of those listed in HIGHLIGHTS. You may term it God. You may call it your real **Self**. Names are only labels, some better, some worse, than others. Keep on using the one you are accustomed to unless some of those given in our booklet seem to come nearer to being adequate.

The more important thing to have in mind as you look at Key 0 is that it is really the most perfect and most complete aspect of yourself. It is the part of you which is above and beyond your external personality. Above and beyond your thinking, conscious mind. Part of your very **Self**, remember—or even more truly, the **Whole** of you, of which mind, body, and all else entering into your seemingly separate personality are but parts.

This is a picture of the absolutely free and perfect Being which is the animating principle and core of your outer personality. It bears the number Zero because 0 is by no means a symbol of mere nothingness.

In occult arithmetic, 0 stands for absolute Unity, for that **One Reality** which is before all beginnings. This is nothing we know directly. We cannot sense it. We cannot define it. We cannot prove that it really exists because it is beyond all our logic and our reasoning just as it is beyond every other conceivable limitation. Yet the unanimous report of the wise is that this **One Life-power** is a real presence which pervades the universe, and Those Who Know bear witness that, beyond knowledge of the ordinary sort, and beyond the limits and definitions of logic, there is possible an experience of this Eternal Youth whose life runs through creation and is the fount of vitality for all lesser lives.

Closer examination of the picture will show you that though the Fool stands close to the edge of a precipice, there is room for him to take another step forward. The esoteric tradition which has come down to us from the original inventors of Tarot says this detail of the symbolism signifies an eternal truth. No matter how far the Life-power may advance, it can always take another step.

On the personal level of interpretation, as it applies to you, this means that you never come to the very limit of your possibilities. Sometimes you may wander into a blind alley, but even then you can always retrace your steps a little and come to a place where further progress is possible.

There are profound metaphysical and philosophical reasons for the selection of the title of Key 0. We need not enter into them here. Yet one reason is obvious. Men of superior vision are

usually looked upon by their contemporaries as being rather foolish. Every great prophet, every great inventor, every great discoverer has been jeered at.

Here it might be well to add that it does not follow that every tomfool is really a man superior to his fellows. We must not fall into the error of those primitive tribes who regard madmen as being divinely inspired. A good many supposedly civilized persons seem to embrace this error, even today. Consider the hypnotic effect of a Hitler or a Mussolini upon their deluded followers. Glance at the advertisements on the religious page of any metropolitan newspaper and you can see for yourself that psychosis is often mistaken for prophecy.

During the three days you look at the picture of the Fool, make no conscious effort to interpret the symbols. If an idea comes to you, make a note of it.

Provide yourself with a loose-leaf notebook. Don't make any special endeavor to fill it. An idea may come to you any time and you can jot it down on a piece of paper or the back of an envelope. As you progress with this work you'll find yourself taking a little time, one or two evenings a week, to look over your notes and add to them. Interest grows with attention and the longer you work with the Tarot Keys the more will they intrigue you.

The main practical use of Key 0 is to put you in touch with your inner sources of power. After you have looked at the actual picture for three consecutive days, you will find that you can summon it before your mind's eye easily. Just think about it and you will see it.

Thus you can hold your mind to this particular form whenever you desire. And you will find that even a momentary glimpse of this gay traveler through the higher spaces will give you a lift.

Try it whenever you are beset by a mood of depression. Don't try to suppress the mood. Just look at the Fool. Look at the actual picture and keep it handy. Glance at it mentally if you are away from home.

Soon actual experience will convince you that somehow there is always a positive reaction. We might take pages to explain the psychological reasons for this, and if you are one of those who want to know **why** Tarot works its wonders, you will have plenty of opportunity to learn as you progress in the B.O.T.A. curriculum. Just now, it is more important to know that it **does** work and this simple and easy practice will soon convince you that there is an almost magical potency in this picture. It is a sure antidote for depression.

KEY 1. THE MAGICIAN



With this Key, the principle of contrast which runs throughout the Tarot series comes into operation. Every Key is in some sense the opposite and complement of the one which precedes it. Also, the twenty-two Keys fall into eleven contrasting pairs: 0 and 1, 2 and 3, 4 and 5, and so on.

The contrasts are, as a rule, quite obvious. Thus a magician, or wise man, is clearly in contrast to a fool. The Hebrew letter ב, Beth, printed on Key 1, suggests the sphere of human life, and the family affairs which go on indoors, because it means "house". But the letter א, Aleph, on Key 0 means "Bull" or "Ox", and has to do with what goes on in a field outside the special limitations of human environment.

Again, the number 1 is the number of Beginning, but 0 is the sign of the absolute Unity which is before all beginnings. In the Bible, the very first letter of Genesis is ב, and in the Zohar, one of the principal collections of profound Qabalistic interpretations of the Scriptures, much is made of the distinction between Aleph as the first letter of the alphabet, and Beth, with which, says the Zohar, creation began.

Comparison of the two pictures shows many other contrasts. The Fool stands on a barren height; the Magician in a garden. The Fool is evidently preoccupied with his vision of a distant height, far beyond him, across the abyss. The Magician is concerned with what goes on in his immediate vicinity and he looks down toward what is below him. The Fool's possessions are not in use and he carries them in a wallet slung over his shoulder. The four implements of the Magician are spread before him on his table and thus they are ready at hand to use as occasion arises.

Perhaps the most important detail of Key 1 is the position of the Magician's hands. With his right hand he lifts a wand upward toward the sky. His left hand makes the universal gesture of attention, pointing with extended forefinger toward the fertile earth at his feet.

The Magician, therefore, is a symbol of what psychology calls self-conscious awareness, or objective mind. This is the ordinary waking consciousness of human beings. It is the planning mind, the mind which comes to grips with our daily problems, and its basic function is attention.

Alert watchfulness is the key idea of this picture. Here is a representation of what wise men see with their mind's eye when they consider the mental function of concentration. To your inner consciousness this Key says:

“Be alert. Remember that all the power you can direct comes from a higher level. Make it your first concern to relate yourself to that Source of power. Your place in the scheme of things is to act as a transformer of energy. Force flows **through** you to whatever you give your full measure of attention. Nothing can withstand the mental force of one who has mastered the art of concentration. Yet concentration is as easy as pointing your finger. It is only fools and charlatans who are responsible for the erroneous notion that there is anything particularly difficult about concentration. Just watch, and keep at it. Then you will be able to see through and into the things which constitute your environment, instead of merely looking at them.”

As HIGHLIGHTS says, the garden represents the subconscious field whence come the hidden powers man may direct in his quest for increased freedom. These powers are symbolized by the lilies and roses. The lilies stand for various aspects of truth and to this their white color also refers. The roses are symbols of human desires.

There are four lilies because all possible human knowledge falls into four main categories. To explain this here would be to go beyond the range of this introductory course, but we mention it to show that every detail of Tarot symbolism has a definite meaning.

There are five roses because every object of human desire has relation to one or more of the five major senses. Modern psychology adds other senses to the fivefold classification which was current when Tarot was invented; but for all practical purposes it is accurate to say that the fulfillment of any human desire includes the bringing about of conditions which may be experienced by our senses.

The Magician cultivates these flowers. He improves them, and by force of his control of their development takes them far beyond the conditions spontaneously provided by nature. He is a transformer and transmuter of experience. Taking things as he finds them, he watches until he perceives the underlying principle at work in what he observes. Then he applies that principle in novel ways so as to produce a different situation.

This is the whole method of science, and the four implements on the Magician's table refer to the means employed in meeting and dealing with the actual conditions of human environment.

The first means is symbolized by the wand. This is simply a pointer and is really an extension of the pointing forefinger. The first requisite for the solution of any problem is to give it one's full attention. Every problem contains its own solution and that solution is perceived by attentive observation. Such is the beginning of all science. Simple watching.

The cup stands for the second mental tool. This is imagination. Observation collects experience. Imagination shapes it as a cup shapes what is poured into it. What we call "laws of nature" are simply man's collected experiences made into a pattern by acts of imagination.

The third means is action, typified by the sword. We may know a great deal and we may have fine perceptions of relationships, but until we **do** something, nothing is changed. Our action invariably tears down something in order to replace it with something else. No matter how constructive we may be, this is true of all effective action.

Persons who talk about having nothing but constructive thoughts are making meaningless noises. You can't build a house unless you cut down trees, or quarry stones, or take clay and mould it into bricks. You can't paint a picture unless you take the color out of the tubes. The statue never appears until the sculptor cuts away the stone which hides the figure he has imagined. Controlled and wisely directed destruction is the principal tool of civilization.

Finally, there is the finished product, and this is represented by a coin because everything made by man's ingenuity has value. Nor should we permit ourselves to indulge in the silly scorn for money which finds spurious support in a bad translation of a passage in the New Testament. Poverty is no mark of spirituality.

Money is a wonderful invention, and when rightly used, a blessing. In spite of what the King James Version says, nowhere does the Bible condemn money. What it does condemn is **lust** for money. Lust and love are poles apart. To love anything or anyone is to have respect for that thing or person, and love insures proper regard for right use. He who lusts for things or persons is a stranger to love, seeking only selfish personal gratification and having no proper understanding of the object of his base desire.

Thus the coin is one of the most important symbols in this picture. For no small part of the sorrows of our day may be traced to two great errors, **lust** for money and contempt for it. Those who have a proper respect for this device whereby all values may be measured, as all values in science are measured by means of mathematics, understand that money is one of the greatest human devices for the promotion of the general welfare.

The time will come when this measure of value will be used aright, because those who love justice and mankind will revive the ancient science of money.

Key 1, then, is the picture you use to develop your power of concentration, to make you more alert, and to evoke from your inner consciousness powers which will enable you to deal more satisfactorily with practical problems.

Key 0 puts you in touch mentally with the limitless Source of all power. Key 1 calls into action the mental activities whereby you may apply this power to the end of changing the conditions of your life for the better.