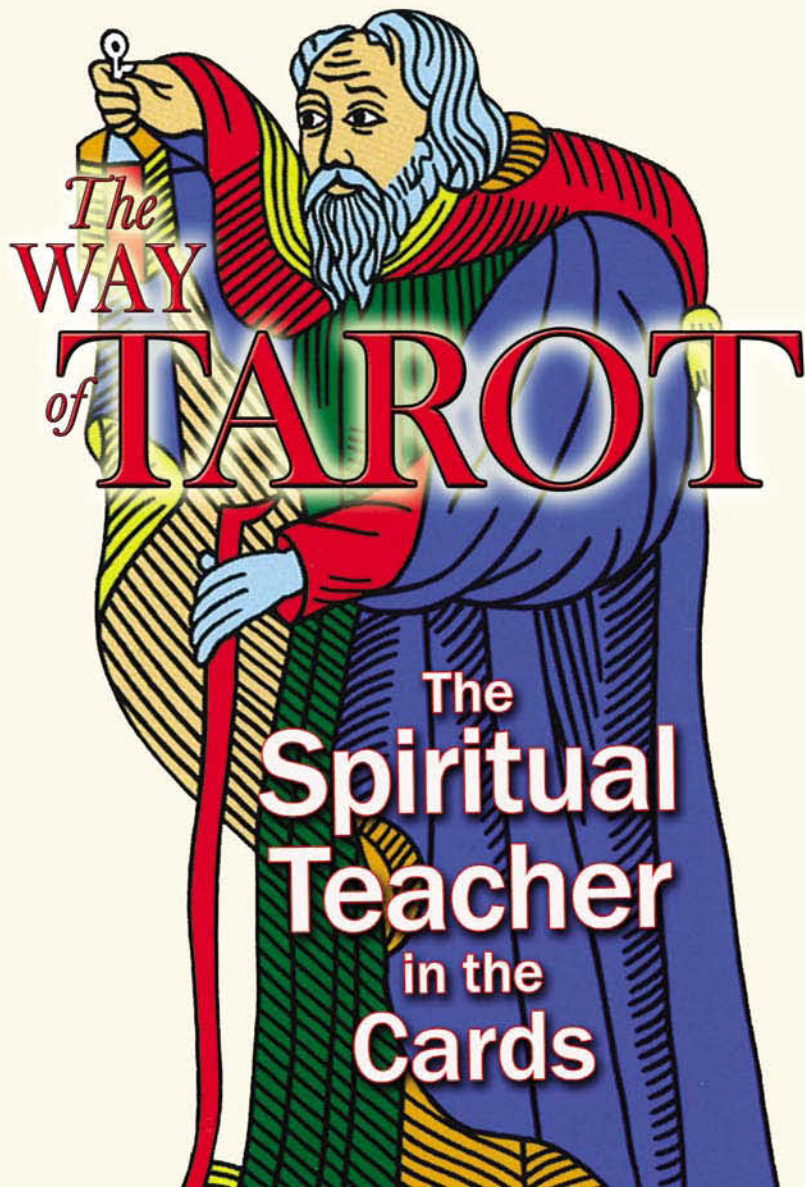


Alejandro Jodorowsky  
and Marianne Costa



The  
**Spiritual  
Teacher**  
in the  
**Cards**



# *The* WAY *of* TAROT

## **The Spiritual Teacher in the Cards**

Alejandro Jodorowsky  
and Marianne Costa

Translated by Jon E. Graham



Destiny Books  
Rochester, Vermont • Toronto, Canada



Destiny Books  
One Park Street  
Rochester, Vermont 05767  
www.DestinyBooks.com

Destiny Books is a division of Inner Traditions International

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Illustrations © 1997 by Camoin Éditions

Originally published in French under the title *La Voie du Tarot* by Éditions Albin Michel, 22, rue Huyghens, 75014 Paris  
First U.S. edition published in 2009 by Destiny Books

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### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Jodorowsky, Alejandro.

[Voie du tarot. English]

The way of tarot : the spiritual teacher in the cards / Alejandro Jodorowsky and Marianne Costa ; translated by Jon E. Graham.—1st U.S. ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p.     ).

ebook ISBN 978-1-59477-656-4

print ISBN 978-1-59477-263-4 (pbk.)

1. Tarot. I. Costa, Marianne. II. Title.

BF1879.T2V6513 2009

133.3'2424—dc22

2009028132

Printed and bound in the United States of America by Lake Book Manufacturing

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Text design by Jon Desautels and layout by Priscilla Baker

This book was typeset in Garamond with Baskerville and Franklin Gothic used as display typefaces

Inner Traditions wishes to express its appreciation for assistance given by the government of France through the ministère de la Culture in the preparation of this translation.

Nous tenons à exprimer nos plus vifs remerciements au gouvernement de la France et le ministère de la Culture pour leur aide dans le préparation de cette traduction.



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# Preface

How does one write a book about the Tarot? It is like trying to empty the sea with a fork.

For more than forty years, Alejandro Jodorowsky has been investigating the dynamic and multiple aspects of the Tarot through readings, lessons, discoveries, conferences . . . If it had been necessary to transcribe this work in its entirety, we would have ended up with tens of thousands of pages—each equally impassioned and disorganized, each touching on the various aspects of this art that refuses to let itself be imprisoned within any kind of rigid structure.

As this was not possible and we needed one book, and only one book, Alejandro and I chose to present the Tarot from a variety of different perspectives that would allow this book to serve both as a manual for beginners and a serious tool for experienced Tarot readers, while giving all its readers a work that would be a pleasure to read.

This is why all the parts of this book include an introduction written in the first person by Alejandro, retracing the unique path he has carved out over a lifetime in the company of this demanding teacher and powerful ally known as the Tarot.

With respect to all the technical parts, our chief concern was to be faithful to the extreme plasticity of the Tarot, which is light and profound, linear and multidimensional, gamelike and complex. It refuses to be reduced to any one of the countless possibilities it opens. This is why we sought to create a book that could be read either in sections



or straight through, in which each subject is both summed up briefly and discussed in great depth, and whose illustrations provide a ceaseless echo to the text, based on the truth that the Tarot constitutes first and foremost an apprenticeship in seeing.

The book has been organized into five parts. The purpose of the first part is to familiarize the reader with the overall structure of the Tarot and its numerological and symbolic foundations. The second part examines each card of the Major Arcana, while the third does the same for the Minor Arcana. The fourth part represents what we intend to be a first step in the dynamic reading of the Tarot: the study of pairs, the various combinations between two and more cards. For all intents and purposes, every element of the Tarot is linked in this fashion to all the others. Finally, the fifth part is dedicated to the actual art of reading the cards.

We want to take this opportunity to thank Barbara Clerc in particular, who has been transcribing and archiving the unpaid lessons and readings given by Alejandro Jodorowsky. She put all these archives at our disposal. Without her, they would have remained only part of oral tradition.

MARIANNE COSTA

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# Introduction

I first met the cards when I was seven years old living in Tocopilla, a small Chilean port town nestled between the glacial Pacific Ocean and the mountainous plateaus of Tarapaca, the driest region on Earth, where not a drop of rain has fallen in centuries. The town merchants would close up shop at noon until five every afternoon because of the extreme heat. My father, Jaime, would lower the metal shutter of his Casa Ucrania [Ukraine House]—which sold feminine undergarments and household items—and go play billiards at Crazy Abraham’s, a Lithuanian Jewish widower who had washed up here under mysterious circumstances. In this warehouse where women never set foot, the normally competing merchants declared a momentary truce and gathered around a green table where they showed off their virility by making cannon shots. According to Jaime’s philosophy a child’s brain was already formed by age seven, and should be treated as an adult. So on my seventh birthday he allowed me to go with him to play billiards. The deafening noise made by the balls striking each other and the white and red trails they left across the olive-green felt failed to impress me. What did catch my eye and fascinated me was a card castle. Crazy Abraham was obsessed with building large castles out of cards. He would leave these huge and imposing constructions, no two of which were ever alike, on the bar counter far from any drafts until he got drunk and intentionally knocked them down, only to immediately begin building another. Jaime would mockingly tell me to ask the “loony” why he did



this. Smiling sadly, he would give a child the answer he did not wish to give to adults: “I am imitating God, little one, the one who creates us, destroys us, and with what’s left of us, he rebuilds.”

As an antidote to the boredom of provincial life, my father would invite a group of friends over to play cards for hours on Saturday evenings and Sundays after lunch while my mother, Sara Felicidad, the only woman present, served beer and canapés, like a shadow. The rest of the week the cards slept under lock and key imprisoned in a dresser. These decks fascinated me, but I was forbidden to touch them. According to my parents, they were only for adults. This gave me the idea that cards, wild beasts that could be tamed only by a wise man—Jaime in this instance—had magical powers . . . As the players used beans instead of chips, every Monday my mother, perhaps to release the pain she felt at being excluded from the game, boiled them for soup, which I would slurp down with the feeling that it was giving me some of their powers.

Being the son of Russian immigrants, my physical appearance was quite different from that of the native Chileans and left me without any friends. My parents were wrapped up for ten hours a day in the Casa Ukrania and had no time for me. Weighted down by the silence and solitude, I began examining the furniture in their room in hopes of finding a detail that would reveal the faces hidden behind their masks of indifference. In a corner of the closet, between the perfumed clothes of Sara Felicidad, I found a small rectangular metal box. My heart began beating faster. Something told me I was about to receive an important revelation. I opened it. Residing inside was a Tarot card called “The Chariot.” It showed a prince driving a flaming vehicle. Tongues of fire had been added with lines of black ink and colored with yellow and red watercolors. Who had gone to the trouble to transform the original drawing by adding flames? Lost in my thoughts, I did not hear my mother coming in. Caught in the act, I confessed my guilt and handed her the card. She took it from me reverently, clutched it to her chest and broke out sobbing. When she recovered her calm, she told me how her late father had always carried this card in a pocket of his shirt, close to his heart. He had once been a Russian ballet dancer who



was over six feet tall and had a leonine mane of blond hair. He fell in love with my Jewish grandmother and followed her into exile, although under no obligation to do so. In Argentina, clumsy as he was in everything concerning the details of everyday life, he climbed on top of a barrel full of alcohol to try to adjust the flame of a lamp. The cover of the container gave way, and he fell into the alcohol, still holding the oil lamp in his hands. The liquid burst into flames, and my grandfather was burned alive. Sara Felicidad was born one month after this atrocious death. One day, her mother, Jasche, told her how she had found the card, intact, among the ashes of her beloved husband. One night after the burial, the flames of *The Chariot* appeared without anyone having drawn them. My mother harbored no doubt about the veracity of this story. In my own childish innocence, I believed it too.

When I was ten years old, my parents sold their business and announced that we were moving to Santiago, the capital. Losing my home so abruptly plunged me into a venomous mental fog. I expressed my suffering by growing fat. Transformed into a little hippopotamus, I dragged myself to school, eyes glued to the ground, under the impression that the sky was a cement vault. My pain was compounded by the rejection of my classmates when they noticed that my penis had no foreskin in the showers after gym class. "Wandering Jew," they shouted, while spitting on me. The son of a diplomat recently arrived from France spit on the back of a card and stuck it to my forehead. Bursting with laughter, my classmates shoved me in front of a mirror. It was one of the Arcana from the Tarot of Marseille, "The Hermit." I saw in it my infamous portrait: an individual with no territory, alone, numb with cold, feet injured, walking for an eternity in search of . . . what? Something, anything at all, that would give him an identity, a place in the world, a reason to live. The old man was holding up a lamp. What held up my millennial soul? (Faced by the cruelty of my companions, I felt that my weight was a pain that had been transported for centuries.) Could this lamp be my consciousness? And what if I was not a vacant body, a mass inhabited only by anguish, but a strange light that traveled through time, borrowing various vehicles of flesh in search of that unthinkable being my grandparents called God? What if the unthinkable was



beauty? Something like a pleasant explosion broke through the barriers imprisoning my mind. My sorrow was swept away like dust. With the anxiety of a shipwreck survivor, I set off in search of a port where young poets got together. It was called the Café Iris. Iris, the messenger of the gods: she who united Heaven and Earth and was the feminine complement of Hermes! And someone had stuck upon my forehead a Hermit! This was the café-temple where I would meet friends: actors, poets, puppeteers, musicians, and dancers. I would grow up among people who were desperately seeking beauty like me. During the forties, drugs were not in style. Our conversations, fueled by creative fervor, lingered over a bottle of wine that no sooner empty would be replaced by another one. At the break of dawn, famished and drunk, we would run to the Botanical Gardens to burn off the alcohol. A sixty-year-old Frenchwoman, Marie Lefèvre, lived with her eighteen-year-old boyfriend, Nene, in a narrow basement apartment facing the park. She was poor, but there was always a full pot of soup simmering in her kitchen, a chaotic magma that contained the leftover food the neighboring restaurant gave her in return for card readings for its customers. While her naked lover snored away, Marie, wrapped in a Chinese dressing gown, served us full bowls of the delicious broth in which we could find fish, meatballs, vegetables, grains, noodles, cheese, chicken livers, beef belly, and lots of other delicacies. She would then do a Tarot reading, using cards she drew herself, on the stomach of her lover, who even a cannon blast would not wake up. This bizarre contact with the cards was decisive for me; thanks to this woman, Tarot remains forever connected with generosity and boundless love in my heart.

Sixty years have gone by since then, and, following her example, I have always given card readings for free. At a time when I felt like a prisoner on the cultural island that my country was then, Marie Lefèvre predicted: "You will travel across the entire world, without stopping, until the end of your life. But hear this well, when I say world I am talking about the entire universe. When I say end of your life, I am talking about your current incarnation. In reality, you will live in other forms for as long as the universe lives."

Later in France I worked with Marcel Marceau, who bestowed



on me the greatest honor ever granted in his troupe: to show, while motionless in a suggestive pose, the placards announcing the title of his pantomimes. This was how, transformed into a statue of flesh, I traveled through a number of countries for five years. Marceau put all of himself, body and soul, into each performance. Afterward, exhausted, he would lock himself away in his hotel room for many long hours. On the next day, without visiting the city, he returned to the theater to rehearse a new sketch or to correct the lighting. Alone in these countries where often I did not even speak the language, I visited museums, picturesque streets, and artist cafés. Little by little I took on the habit of looking for esoteric bookstores where I could buy Tarots. This was how I managed to put together a collection of more than a thousand different decks: alchemical, Rosicrucian, kabbalistic, gypsy, Egyptian, astrological, mythological, Masonic, sexual, and so forth. All of them consisted of the same number of cards, seventy-eight, divided into fifty-six Minor Arcana and twenty-two Major Arcana. But each of them was illustrated differently. Sometimes the human figures were transformed into dogs, cats, unicorns, monsters, or gnomes. Each version included a booklet in which its author proclaimed himself to be the bearer of a profound truth. I did not grasp either the meaning or the use of these very mysterious cards, but I bore a great affection for them, and finding a new deck filled me with joy. Naively, I was hoping to find the one Tarot that would transmit to me what I was so anxiously searching for: the secret of eternal life. During the course of one of my journeys to Mexico as Marceau's assistant, I made the acquaintance of Leonora Carrington, a surrealist poet and painter who had had a love affair with Max Ernst during the Spanish Civil War. When Ernst was imprisoned, Leonora went mad, with all the horrors that implies but also with all the doors that this malady opens in the prison of the rational mind. Inviting me to eat a skull made from sugar with my name carved on its forehead, she told me: "Love transforms death into sweetness. The bones of the skeleton of the Thirteenth Arcanum are made of sugar." When I realized that Leonora used the symbols of the Tarot in her work, I begged her to initiate me. She answered: "Take these twenty-two cards. Examine them one by one and then tell me what you feel is



the meaning of what you see.” Overcoming my shyness, I obeyed her. She rapidly wrote down everything I said to her. When I finished, with my description of The World, I was soaked in sweat. With a mysterious smile on her lips the painter whispered to me: “What you just dictated to me is the secret. As each Arcana is a mirror and not a truth in itself, become what you see in it. The Tarot is a chameleon.” She then immediately made me a gift of the deck created by the occultist Arthur Edward Waite with its nineteenth-century-style drawings that later became very fashionable among the hippies. I believed that Leonora, whom I viewed as a priestess, had given me the key to the luminous treasure at the core of my darkened interior without realizing that these Arcana only act as stimulants of the intellect.

On my return to Paris, I began frequenting a café by Les Halles, La Promenade de Vénus, where once a week André Breton would meet with his surrealist group. I allowed myself to offer him this Waite Tarot, expecting his approval while hiding my pride. The poet examined the cards of the Arcana attentively with a smile that gradually transformed into a grimace of disgust. “This is a ridiculous deck of cards. Its symbols are lamentably obvious. There is nothing profound in it. The sole valid Tarot is that of Marseille. Its cards are intriguing and moving, but they never surrender their intrinsic secret. One of them inspired me to write *Arcanum 17*.”

An ardent admirer of this great surrealist, I threw my card collection into the trash, keeping only the Marseille Tarot, or more specifically the version published by Paul Marteau in 1930.

But if, like Breton, I grasped very little of the meaning of these cards—which, next to Waite’s seductive images, seemed hostile, especially all those of the Minor Arcana—I decided to engrave them in my memory, hoping thereby that whatever my intellect was incapable of deciphering would be understood by my unconscious. I began memorizing every symbol, every gesture, every line, and every color. Little by little, aided by my stubborn patience, I managed to visualize, although imperfectly, the seventy-eight Arcana with my eyes closed. During the two years this experiment lasted, I went every morning to the National Library of Paris to study the Tarot collections donated



by Paul Marteau and the books devoted to this subject. Until the eighteenth century, the Tarot had been incorporated into a game of chance, and its profound meaning went by unnoticed. Its drawings had been mutilated or changed, decorated with portraits of nobles, using the deck to reflect the pomp and ceremony of the royal court. Each line said something different, often contradicting the others. In reality, instead of speaking objectively about the Tarot, authors turned it into their self-portrait interwoven with superstitions. I found Masonic, Taoist, Buddhist, Christian, astrological, alchemical, Tantric, Sufi beliefs, and so on.

It could be said that the Tarot was a domestic servant eternally working for a doctrine that was external to it. But the most surprising fact that I discovered was this: ever since the Protestant pastor and Freemason Court de Géblin (1728–1784) published the eighth volume of his encyclopedia, *Monde Primitif* [Primitive World] in 1781, which attributed characteristics to the Tarot that were esoteric and not merely related to games, nobody had truly examined the Arcana, neither he nor his disciples. Not realizing that these cards are a visual language that demands to be seen in its entirety and in every detail, Géblin mistook his fantasies for realities and stated that the Tarot came from Egypt—“Hieroglyphs belonging to the Book of Thoth salvaged from the ruins of an age-old temple.” He published a poor copy of the Marseille Tarot from which he eliminated many details; he granted a zero to Le Mat\* and baptized it “The Fool” to give it a negative meaning: “It has no value save what it gives to the others, exactly like our zero, thereby demonstrating that nothing exists in madness.” He added a leg to The Magus’s table; changed The Emperor and The Empress into King and Queen, The Pope and Female Pope into High Priest and High Priestess; baptized the nameless thirteenth Arcana “Death”; was mistaken about the number for Temperance, on which

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\*Mat also means “Death” in Arabic and Hebrew, and has come into the common French through the game of chess, meaning checkmate. The posture of Le Mat and Arcana XIII are exactly the same, as if Arcana XIII was an X-ray of Le Mat. The main thing is, many of the Tarot’s names have plural meanings in French. For instance *le mâât d’un navire* is the mast of a ship. [Mat is an archaic word meaning “madman” or “beggar.” —*Trans.*]



he printed a XIII; decided that the person in Arcana VII driving The Chariot was Osiris Triumphant; named The Lover “The Marriage,” The Star “Sirius,” The Devil “Typhon,” The World “Time,” and The Hanged Man “Prudence” (while placing him right-side up); he removed the original colors as well as the original framing that consisted of an initiatory rectangle formed by two squares. He claimed he was correcting the “errors” of the original by doing this.

Following this publication of the first esoteric treatise on the Tarot in *Monde Primitif*, occultists began raving in earnest, neglecting to give any deeper examination to the drawings of the Tarot of Marseille, believing Court de Gébelin’s copy and his Egyptian explanations to be the authentic esoteric truth. In 1783, a then-fashionable seer, the barber Alliette, under the pseudonym of Eteilla (1750–1810), created a fanciful Tarot with links to astrology and the Hebrew Kabbalah. Then Alphonse-Louis Constant, alias Eliphas Levi (1816–1875), despite his vast intuition, turned his nose up at the Tarot of Marseille, which he deemed “exoteric,” and, in *Transcendental Magic: Its Doctrine and Ritual*,<sup>1</sup> drew “esoteric” versions of The Chariot, The Wheel of Fortune, and The Devil. He established that the twenty-two Major Arcana were illustrations of the Hebrew alphabet and discarded the fifty-six Minor Arcana. This idea was adopted by Gérard Encausse, who, under the pseudonym of Papus (1865–1917), created a Tarot with Egyptian figures illustrating a Hebraic kabbalistic structure. Following these attempts to graft all sorts of esoteric systems onto the Tarot, thousands of books based on a nonexistent “tradition” were written seeking to prove that the Tarot was the creation of the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, the Hebrews, the Arabs, the Hindus, the Greeks, the Chinese, the Maya, or extra-terrestrials. Some even mentioned Atlantis and Adam, to whom was attributed the sketching of the first cards under the instructions of an angel. (For religious tradition, sacred works are always of heavenly origin. The realization of the symbolic system was not left up to personal inspiration of the artist but was granted by God himself). The word *Tarot* would be Egyptian (*tar*: way; *ro, rog*: royal); Indo-Tartar (*tan-tara*: zodiac); Hebrew (*torah*: law); Latin (*rota*: wheel; *orat*: speak); Sanskrit (*tat*: the whole; *tar-o*: fixed star); Chinese (*Tao*: the indefinable prin-



ciple); and so forth. Various ethnic groups, religions, and secret societies have claimed to be its father: Gypsies, Jews, Masons, Rosicrucians, alchemists, artists (Dali), gurus (Osho), and so on. In it can be found influences from the Hebrew Scriptures, the Gospels, and Revelation (in cards like *The World*, *The Hanged Man*, *Temperance*, *The Devil*, *The Pope*, *Judgment*); teachings from Tantra, the *I Ching*, the Aztec Codices, Greco-Latin mythology . . . Each new deck of cards contains the subjectivity of its authors, their vision of the world, their moral prejudices, their limited level of awareness . . . As in the story of *Cinderella*, in which each of her half-sisters is prepared to cut off one end of her foot so she can wear the glass slipper, every occultist alters the original structure.

To make the Tarot conform to the twenty-two paths of the Tree of Life that join the ten Sephirot of kabbalistic tradition, A. E. Waite exchanged the number 8 of Justice for the number 11 of Strength, transformed *The Lover* into *The Lovers*, and so forth, thereby falsifying the meaning of all the Arcana. Aleister Crowley, an occultist belonging to the Order of the Temple of the Orient (OTO), also changed the numbers and the drawings (and thus the meaning), as well as the order of the cards. Justice became Adjustment; Temperance, Art; and Judgment, Aeon. He eliminated the Knights and the Pages and replaced them with Princes and Princesses. Oswald Wirth, a Swiss occultist, Freemason, and member of the Theosophical Society, drew his own Tarot, into which he introduced not only medieval costumes, Egyptian sphinxes, Arab numbers and Hebrew letters in the place of the Roman numerals, Taoist symbols, and the alchemical version of *The Devil* invented by Eliphas Levi, but also drew inspiration from the clumsy version of *Court de Gébelin* (see his *Tower*, his *Temperance*, his *Justice*, his *Pope*, his *Lover*), appearing to assert that the Tarot of Marseille was a folk—or, in other words, common—version of *Gébelin's Tarot*. The thousands of adepts of an American Rosicrucian sect declared that the Egyptian Tarot of R. Falconnier—a shareholding member of the *Comédie-Française*, who drew and published it in 1896, dedicating it to Alexandre Dumas the younger—was an original sacred deck. Three centuries of dreams and mystification!



A sacred work is by essence perfect; the disciple should adopt it in its entirety without attempting to add or subtract anything whatsoever. No one knows who created the Tarot, nor where, nor how. No one knows what the word *Tarot* means or to what language it belongs. Nor does anyone know if Tarot was like it is from the beginning or if it is the end result of a slow evolution that would have begun with the creation of an Arab card game called *naibbe* (cards) to which the Major Arcana and those whimsically called the Honors or Court Cards were added over the course of the years. Simply creating new versions of the Tarot of Marseille, anonymous like all sacred monuments, by imagining it is enough to change the drawings or the names of the cards to achieve a great work, is pure vanity.

What was the intention of the creator of this nomadic cathedral? Was one lone human being capable of giving shape to such a great encyclopedia of symbols? Who was capable of amassing such knowledge in a single lifetime? The Tarot is crafted with such great precision, its internal relations and geometrical unity are so perfect, that it seems impossible to believe that this work was achieved by a solitary initiate. Merely the invention of the structure, the creation of the personages with their dress and their gestures, and the establishment of the abstract symbology of the Minor Arcana requires a great many years of intense labor. The short span of a single human lifetime would not be enough. Eliphas Levi, in his *Transcendental Magic*, if we read between the lines, expresses this insight:

It is, in fact, a monumental and singular work, strong and simple as the architecture of the pyramids and consequently enduring like those—a book that is the sum of all the sciences; that can resolve every problem by its infinite combinations; that speaks by evoking thought, is the inspirer and regulator of all possible conceptions, the masterpiece perhaps of the human mind, assuredly one of the finest things bequeathed to us by Antiquity, a universal key. It is a truly philosophical machine that keeps the mind from straying while leaving its initiative and liberty; it is mathematics applied to the absolute, the alliance of the positive and the ideal, a lottery of thoughts



as exact as numbers; it is finally perhaps the simplest and grandest conception of human genius.

To imagine the Tarot's origin (card games had already been banned in the statutes of Saint-Victor of Marseille Abbey for those pursuing a religious vocation in 1337), we need to go back at least to the year 1000. During this era in the south of France and in Spain, it was possible to see a church, a synagogue, and a mosque cohabitating in healthy conditions of peace and in close proximity to one another. The three religions respected each other, and the wise men of each had no hesitation about discussing things with their counterparts and learning from their contact with one another. The Christian influence is obvious in Arcana II, V, XIII, XV, XX, and XXI. The four Hebrew letters, *Yod-Hay-Vav-Hay*, which designate the deity, can be distinguished in the head of the skeleton of the nameless Arcana, and the ten Sephirot of the kabbalistic Tree of Life can be seen on The Hanged Man's chest. Muslim symbols appear in the Minor Arcana. For example, on the top of the Ace of Cups there is a circle with nine points that by all evidence represents the initiatory enneagram. It is possible that a group consisting of sages from the three faiths, foreseeing the decay of their religions—which, out of a thirst for power, would inevitably stir up hatred between the sects—and the forgetting of the sacred tradition, worked together to deposit this knowledge in a humble card game, which amounted to preserving and concealing it so that it could travel through the darkness of history until it reached a remote future where individuals of a higher level of consciousness would decipher its wonderful message.

René Guénon, in *Symbols of Sacred Science*, writes:

The people thus preserve [in their folklore], without understanding them, the debris of ancient traditions sometimes even reaching back to a past too remote to be determined. In so doing they function as a more or less “subconscious” collective memory, the content of which has manifestly come from somewhere else. The things so conserved are found to contain in a more or less veiled form a considerable body of esoteric data.<sup>2</sup>



J. Maxwell, in *Le Tarot, le symbol, les arcans, la divination*,<sup>3</sup> is the first author to have gone back to the Tarot's origins, recognizing that the Tarot of Marseille (the one by Nicolas Conver) is an optical language and needs to be looked at in order to be understood. Later, Paul Marteau, in his book *Le Tarot de Marseille*,<sup>4</sup> in imitation of Maxwell, reproduced the cards, analyzed them one by one, detail by detail, taking into consideration their number, the meaning of each color, and that of each gesture of the figures. However, although he pursued the true path of Tarot study inaugurated by Maxwell, he made two mistakes. On one hand, the deck he uses is only one variation of the original. His drawings are exact copies of the Tarot of Besançon published by Grimaud at the end of the nineteenth century; Grimaud was only reproducing another Tarot of Besançon published by Lequart and signed "Arnoult 1748." Marteau also permitted himself to alter certain details, as this made it possible for him to commercialize the deck and receive royalties from it as the author. On the other hand, he kept the four basic colors imposed by the printing machines, instead of respecting the old and more varied colors of the hand-painted decks.

Unable to find any Tarot closer to the authentic one than that of Paul Marteau, I devoted myself to it reverently. I realized that if anyone could teach me how to decipher it, it would not be a teacher of flesh and blood, but the Tarot itself. Everything I wanted to know was right there between my hands and before my eyes, in the cards. It was essential to stop listening to the explanations founded on the "tradition," the concordances, the myths, the parapsychological explanations and allow the Arcana to speak for themselves. To integrate the Tarot into my life, beyond memorizing it, I performed actions with it that rational minds would probably consider childish. For example, I slept every night with a different card under my pillow, or spent an entire day with one of them in my pocket. I rubbed my body with the cards; I spoke in their names, imagining the rhythm and tone of each of their voices. I visualized each figure naked, imagined its symbols covering the sky, completed the drawings that disappeared in the frame: I gave full bodies to the animal that accompanies The Fool and to the Pope's acolytes, extended the Magician's table until its invisible fourth leg was revealed,



imagined from where the veil of The High Priestess hung, saw toward what ocean flowed the stream that nourished the woman of The Star and where the pool in The Moon went. I imagined what The Fool was carrying in his pocket and The Magician in his pouch, the undergarments of The High Priestess, the vulva of The Empress and the phallus of The Emperor, what the Hanged Man was hiding in his hands, to whom belonged the decapitated heads of Arcanum XIII, and so on. I imagined the thoughts, emotions, sexuality, and actions of each figure. I made them pray, insult, make love, recite poems, heal.

As the word *Arcanum*—Major or Minor—is not printed on any part of the deck, we should not see the cards as “a secret, hidden thing, a thing that is occult and extremely difficult to know.” It was up to me to give them a name: Engravings, Cards, Figures, Arcana, Victories, the choice was open. As the words *Epée* [Sword], *Coupe* [Cup], *Bâton* [Wand], and *Deniers* [Pentacles] were already there, I opted for *Arcana* (Major and Minor), then for an alphabetical order: A for Arcana; B for Bâton; C for Coupe; D for Deniers; E for Epée; F for Figures.

I developed my knowledge of Paul Marteau’s Tarot for more than thirty years, organized workshops, and gave classes, teaching it to hundreds and hundreds of students. In 1993 I received a postcard in which Philippe Camoin, direct descendent of the Marseilles family that had been printing Nicolas Conver’s Tarot since 1760, told me about the auto accident in which his father, Denys Camoin, had died. This tragic death had affected him deeply, especially as the municipal authorities had taken advantage of the tragedy to expropriate the property of the printing house, demolish it, and erect a dental school. He could not get past his mourning and following futile attempts to rejoin society, Philippe Camoin became a hermit. He spent ten years shut up in his father’s house in the small town of Forcalquier with no other communication with the world except that provided by a satellite antenna that allowed him to receive more than one hundred different channels on his television. This was how he was able to learn the basics of a dozen languages. The cathode screen became his interlocutor. He thought he could smell the odor of the people appearing on the screen. When he had a problem or a question, he pressed his remote control at random and, as if by



magic, an image, a broadcast, gave him a response. One sleepless night, when the clock said three o'clock, he asked this question: "What should I do to continue the family tradition interrupted by the death of my father?" and he pressed a button. I appeared on the screen responding to a journalist. Philippe had the feeling I was addressing him in particular. Several days later he repeated his question, and I reappeared on the screen. This phenomenon occurred a third time. This was why he decided to return to the world and write me to request a rendezvous.

When I saw him arriving, it was impossible to tell his age. He could have been fifty years old or twenty; one could have described him as a sage as easily as one could have said a child. He had difficulties expressing himself. Long silences interrupted every word that fell from his mouth. He gave the impression of saying nothing that was personally inspired, as if everything was being dictated to him from a faraway dimension. The transparency of his skin revealed that he was a vegetarian. He had a tattoo at the base of each of his thumbs. There was a moon on the left and a sun on the right. He wanted to attend my Tarot classes. The other students wondered if Philippe was mute. He had immense difficulty establishing relations with human beings. It was easier for him to communicate with beings from other worlds. The god Shiva moved him because, although he was a divine entity spreading love and fertility, all the demons obeyed him.

I decided to undertake a therapeutic initiative using psychomagic. If the death of his father had broken the bonds connecting his son to the world, it would be necessary to reconnect Philippe to the family tradition in order to restore them. To do this, I suggested we together restore the Tarot of Marseille. At this time, I was under the impression that this task would simply involve eliminating the small details added by Paul Marteau, and perhaps refining some of the drawings that, over time, copy after copy, had eventually been passed down in a confused fashion. Philippe welcomed my proposal enthusiastically. He realized that this was the reason he had sought me out. I spoke with his mother and asked for her help. After the death of her husband, she had donated a considerable collection of Tarots to different museums, and she provided us with letters of recommendation. We were always warmly welcomed, and



we were allowed to obtain slides of all the cards useful for our research. Madame Camoin also kept an important collection of printing plates dating from the eighteenth century. At the end of a year of research, we realized just how immense was the task awaiting us. It was not a question of changing a few details or giving a few lines greater precision; it required the entire restoration of the Tarot by giving it back its original colors, painted by hand, and the drawings that generations of copyists had erased. Fortunately, while only fragmentary portions survived on some copies, parts that supplied the missing pieces appeared on others, allowing the entire image to be completed. We had to work with powerful computers, thanks to which we were able to compare the countless versions by placing one image on top of the other, versions that included those of Nicolas Conver, Dodal, François Tourcaty, Fautrier, Jean-Pierre Payen, Suzanne Bernardin, Lequart, and so on.

We worked together on this restoration for two years. Philippe reconnected with the world and showed evidence of extraordinary skill. He used a computer like an expert. The complexity of the task required more powerful machines. With no worry about expense, his mother provided the technical elements we needed. The difficulty of this restoration work resided in the fact that the Tarot of Marseille is made up of symbols that are closely intertwined and connected to one another; if a single line is altered, the entire work is adulterated. A large number of printers of the Tarot of Marseille existed during the seventeenth century. Eighteenth-century Tarot decks were copies of the earlier ones. We therefore cannot accept that any eighteenth-century Tarot could be the original. It is extremely likely that Nicolas Conver's version from 1760 contains errors and omissions. While the drawings were hand painted originally, the number of colors the industrial machines used by eighteenth-century printers could produce was limited. Depending on the printer, the lines and colors were reproduced with varying degrees of fidelity. Those who were not initiates simplified the symbols tremendously. Those copying them added errors to errors. On the other hand, we observed that some Tarots have identical and superimposable drawings, and yet each contains symbols that do not appear on the others. We deduced that they had



been copied from the same Tarot, an older version that is now missing. It is this original Tarot that we wanted to restore.

We had stumbled upon an apparently insurmountable problem: no museum owned a Tarot of Marseille that was complete, ancient, and hand painted. Our work was halted for a time that seemed like an eternity. Suddenly I remembered that on the Plaza Rio de Janeiro in Mexico City, sixty yards from the house I used to live in, lived the antiquarian Raul Kampfer, a specialist in Aztec and Mayan relics. In 1960 he had tried to sell me an old “French” Tarot painted by hand, for which he wanted ten thousand dollars. Obsessed with the Waite version at that time, I did not find it interesting, and in any case it was far too expensive. And then I forgot about it . . . Miracle: near to where I once lived was perhaps the valuable example that we so desperately needed!

Philippe and I left for Mexico and, gripped by excitement, knocked at the antiquarian’s door. A young man answered: it was the son of Raul Kampfer, who had died. The young man kept the objects left behind by his father religiously in one room. He did not know if a Tarot was hidden among them. He asked us to help him look for it. After a long and extremely anxious time, we finally discovered it in a cardboard box at the bottom of a suitcase. The boy sold it to us for a reasonable price, and we returned to Paris with our prize. This Tarot served us as the essential guide for restoring the former colors by computer.

As our work advanced, I was going through a series of actual spiritual short-circuits. I had spent so many years grafting Paul Marteau’s Tarot onto my soul, giving every detail the deepest meaning possible—something I could do by placing a boundless love in the Arcana—that certain changes affected me like stabs from a knife.

Basically, the restoration work demanded that part of me, in the name of change, accept its death. By transforming the two dice of Paul Marteau’s Magician—one showing the 1 and the other showing the 5 (making 15, the number of The Devil), and hiding on their opposing faces a 2 and a 6 (*Yod*, 10 + *He*, 5 + *Vav*, 6 + *He*, 5), which allowed me to say that the demon was only a mask of God—into three in the restored version, the three faces adding up to seven ( $3 \times 7 = 21$ , The World), compelled the alteration of these symbols into absolutely dif-



ferent ones, which forced me to make exhausting mental efforts to substitute them for the ones I cherished.

The same thing happened to me with The Emperor's white shoes. I was used to thinking that the powerful monarch took steps of irreproachable purity as full of wisdom as his white beard. But in reality the shoes were red and his beard as blue as the sky. These were the steps of a conquering activity, similar to the cross on the scepter that imposed its mark on the world, and the beard of a man who was sensitive, spiritual, and open, one more intuitive than intelligent. In The Lover, to my great chagrin, I had to forget the parallel I had drawn between the central figure, whom Marteau depicted barefoot, and Moses, who took off his shoes in order to hear the voice of Him on High in the burning bush. It was painful to accept that this figure had red shoes as active as those of The Emperor or The Fool, which gave his love a less divine and more earthly appearance. Marteau's Hanged Man was not suspended by one foot, whereas he was in our version. I had to transfer from a figure who had freely decided not to act to another one who welcomed his bonds like a cosmic law against which he could not rebel, which signified that freedom was, for him, obedience to this law. In Marteau's Arcanum XIII, the skeleton is cutting off his own foot: self-destruction. In ours he has a blue foot as well as one arm and a spinal column of the same color, a constructive action repeated in his scythe, where the old red was blended with this heavenly blue, signifying a seeding of the spirit. Marteau's Devil brandishes a sword by the blade, stupidly wounding his hand, whereas in ours this hand is holding a torch, casting light in the darkness. In The Tower three initiatory steps and a door appear, which implies that the two figures are not falling but have left joyfully and of their own free will . . . and so many other details that changed my vision.

Of course, I needed time to abandon Marteau. I began by mixing the two decks, which I presented all together to the consultant. Gradually the old deck appeared to wither like autumn leaves, while the new one seemed to acquire a more intense energy each day. One Wednesday morning, in the garden of my home in Vincennes, I buried my beloved Paul Marteau Tarot at the foot of a bushy lime tree with the



sorrow of a son burying his mother, and planted a rosebush on top of it. That very evening at the café Saint-Fiacre where I gave my free Tarot readings once a week, I used for the first time—and forever after—the restored Tarot. This first time coincided with Marianne Costa coming to my table. My meeting with her was just as important as that with Philippe Camoin. Without Marianne, I would never have written this book. Even if it is difficult for the rational mind to accept that nothing is accidental in nature, that everything that happens in the universe is caused by a preestablished law, that certain events are written in the future, and that the effect precedes the cause, the appearance of my collaborator seemed like the work of a destiny established by an inconceivable being.

Marianne was first my student, then my assistant, and we ended up reading the Tarot together, therefore fulfilling what was indicated by the Arcana: The Emperor—Empress, The High Priestess—Pope, The Moon—Sun. The initiate needs his female complement, and vice versa, for both to attain a reading guided by Cosmic Consciousness.

A. J.



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**PART ONE**

*Structure and Numerology  
of the Tarot*

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# Opening

## *The Tarot Is a Complete Entity*

The majority of authors of Tarot books are content to describe and analyze the cards one by one without imagining the entire deck as a whole. However, the true study of each Arcanum begins with the consistent order of the entire Tarot; every detail, tiny as it may be, begins from the links that connect all seventy-eight cards. To understand these myriad symbols, one needs to have seen the final symbol they all form together: a mandala. According to Carl Gustav Jung, the mandala is a representation of the psyche, whose essence is unknown to us. Round shapes generally symbolize natural integrity, whereas rectangular forms represent the mental realization of this integrity. In Hindu tradition, the mandala, the symbol of the sacred central space, altar, and temple, is both an image of the world and the representation of divine power, an image capable of leading the one contemplating it to illumination. In accordance with this concept, I thought of organizing the Tarot as if I were building a temple. In all traditions, the temple summarizes the creation of the universe, seen as a divine unit that has exploded into pieces. Osiris, imprisoned in a chest by his jealous enemies and his brother Seth, was cast into the waters of the Nile, mutilated, dismembered, then resuscitated by the breath of Iris. Symbolically, the Arcana of the Tarot are a chest in which a spiritual treasure has been deposited. The opening of this chest is equivalent



to a revelation. The initiatory work consists of gathering together the fragments until the original unit has been restored. You start with a pack of cards, you mix up the Arcana and display them flat, which is to say you cut the God into pieces. You interpret them and put them back together in sentences. In a sacred quest the initiate reader (Isis, the soul) puts the pieces back together. The God is resuscitated not in an immaterial dimension but in the material world. A figure, a mandala, is composed with the Tarot so that the whole thing can be seen with a single glance.

This idea that the cards were not conceived one by one—as separate symbols—but as parts of a whole did not appear to me all at once. It was a long process fueled by vague intentions, but over the course of the years I made discoveries that provided convincing proof that this “complete entity,” the Tarot, desired to create union.

I organized the cards by placing the even numbers on my left and the odd numbers on my right, because in Eastern traditions even numbers are considered passive and the odd numbers active, and because the right side is considered active and the left passive. I compared the ornamentation of Western temples with Eastern ones. On the facade of Gothic cathedrals, for example, Notre Dame of Paris, an androgynous Jesus Christ, standing between an earthly dragon and a heavenly dragon, gives us his blessing. On the portal to his right (or to our left as spectators) stands the Virgin Mary (femininity, openness), and to his left we see a priest dominating a dragon with his staff (masculinity, activity). Conversely, in Tantric Buddhist temples, the male deities are placed facing our left side and females our right side. The explanation for this is that Buddha is not a god but a level that every human being, if he or she performs the great spiritual work, can attain. The believer ceases to be a spectator and takes a place between the male and female principles, transformed into a temple. Conversely, Christ is a god, and no believer can become him, only imitate him. Eastern saints are Buddhas. Western saints imitate their God—which is the reason cathedrals behave like mirrors. The right side of the building represents our left side and the left side our right. The Tarot of Marseille, a Judeo-Christian creation, indicates to us in The World (XXI)



that we should use it like a mirror: the woman is holding the active baton in her left hand and the receptive retort in her right (see p. 40).

Taking these details and others, which it would take too long to list here, as my guides, I gradually shaped groups of cards that one day finally took the form of a mandala. I obtained a swastika, the symbol of the creative whirlwind around which the hierarchies it creates fan out. This symbol, which obviously indicates a circular movement around the center, the action of divine principle on manifestation, was long considered to be an emblem of Christ. In India it was made into the emblem of the Buddha, because it resembles the Wheel of the Law (*Dharmachakra*), but also the emblem of Ganesh, the god of knowledge. In China, the swastika symbolizes the number ten thousand, which is the sum total of beings and manifestation. It is also the original form of *feng*: it indicates the four directions of squared space of the Earth as a horizontal expansion emanating from the center. In Masonic symbolism, the pole star is depicted at the center of the swastika, and the four arms (the Greek letter *gamma*, whose shape is that of the square) of which it consists are the four cardinal positions of the Big Dipper around it (the Big Dipper symbolizes a guiding or enlightening center).

I should acknowledge, though, that the Arcana can be organized into one whole in countless ways. As the Tarot is essentially a projective instrument, there is no definitive, unique, perfect form within it. This is consistent with the mandalas drawn by Tibetan monks using different-colored sand. They all resemble one another but are never alike.

Our study of the Tarot begins with the understanding of this mandala. It is not possible to analyze the parts without understanding the whole. When one knows the whole, each part acquires an overall significance that reveals its ties with all the other cards. When one plays an instrument in an orchestra, it resonates with all the others. The Tarot is a union of the Arcana. When, after many years, I managed to successfully put it all together in my first consistent version of the mandala, I asked it: "What purpose does this study serve for me? What



kind of power are you able to give me?" I imagined the Tarot answered me: "You should acquire only the power of helping others. An art that does not heal is not an art."

But what does it mean to heal? Every illness, every problem is the product of a stagnation, whether it be one that is physical, sexual, emotional, or intellectual. Healing consists of regaining fluidity in one's energies. This concept can be found in Lao-Tse's book, the *Tao te Ching*, and in an even more precise fashion in the *Book of Changes*, the *I Ching*. Could the Tarot correspond in some way or another to this kind of philosophy? Knowing that the optical language of the Tarot could not be imprisoned within one single verbal explanation, I decided to adopt as my motto the words of Buddha, "Truth is what is useful," by giving the four Suits a meaning that I would never dare claim to be in any way unique or definitive, but one that would be the most useful for the therapeutic utilization I sought to give to the Arcana. It seemed to me that instead of using the Tarot like a crystal ball, making it a tool that enabled exotic seers to penetrate hypothetical futures, I would put it into service for a new form of psychoanalysis: Tarology.

My initial tendency, when attempting to organize the cards into a mandala, was to obtain a symmetrical shape. After many fruitless attempts, I could see the impossibility of such a task. I remembered that during my first trip to Japan, the guide leading me around the ancient imperial palace pointed out that no walls were ever constructed in a straight line and that no windows or doors were divided into symmetrical squares. In Japanese culture, the straight line and symmetry are considered to be demonic. Actually, the study of sacred art shows that it is never symmetrical. The door of the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris that is located to our left is wider than the door situated to our right. All symmetrical art is profane. Nor is the human body symmetrical: our right lung has three lobes, while our left one has two. The Tarot reveals that it is a sacred art because the upper portion of any card is never identical to the lower, nor the left side to the right. There is always a small detail, sometimes very difficult to make out, that breaks the resemblance. For example, the Ten of Pentacles, which at first glance seems perfectly symmetrical, holds in



one of the lower corners (to our right) a pentacle that is different from the rest. It has only eleven petals, whereas the pentacles located in the other three corners have twelve (see p. 307). The flower on the lower end of the central axis has two short light-yellow leaves, whereas the two leaves of the flower of the upper end are longer. I think that the creators of the deck intentionally drew minute details to teach us how to see. The vision our eyes transmit to us changes depending upon our level of awareness. The divine secret is not hidden, it is right in front of us. Whether we see it or not depends upon the attention we give to observing the details and establishing ties between them.

Once aware that beneath an apparent symmetry the Tarot is forever denying repetition, I began to realize how the Minor Arcana were arranged in accordance with a law that could be stated as follows: Out of four parts, three are almost identical, and one is different. And out of the three that are equal, two have more resemblance to each other. In other words:  $([1+2] + 3) + 4$ . Examples of this are multiple. Here are but a few:

- Out of the four Suits (Swords, Cups, Pentacles, Wands), three bear the names of manufactured objects (sword, cup, pentacle) and one bears the name of a natural element (wand). Among the three first Suits, two objects resemble each other more (cup and pentacle stand on a surface); the third is different (a hand holding a sword in the air).
- The Pages of Swords, of Wands, and of Pentacles are wearing hats. The Page of Cups is bareheaded. In the Swords and the Wands, the points of the *V*'s are turned toward the center; in the Cups it is turned toward the outside.
- In addition to the symbol that corresponds to them, the Queens of Wands, Cups, and Pentacles are lifting an object with their other hand. The Queen of Swords is not.
- Three Kings are inside a palace; the fourth is in nature. Three are wearing a crown, the fourth a hat.
- Three of the Knights' horses are blue; the fourth is white.



And so forth.

If we look for examples of this law in different religions, mythologies, or reality, we find, for example:

- In Christianity, three (Father, Son, Holy Ghost) plus one (Virgin Mary). Of the first three, two are immaterial (Father, Holy Ghost); the third (Jesus Christ) is embodied. In other words: ([Father + Holy Ghost] + Jesus Christ) + Virgin Mary.
- In the four Gospels, three are similar (Mark, Matthew, Luke), and one is different (John). Of the three that are similar, two share almost a complete resemblance (Mark, Luke), with the third slightly different (Matthew). In other words: ([Mark + Luke] + Matthew) + John.
- The Kabbalah makes a distinction between four worlds: three immaterial worlds divided into two that form the Macroposopus—Atziluth (Archetypal) and Briah (Creative)—and one that is the Microposopus, Yetzirah (Formative). This trio feeds the Fiancée, Asiah (Material). In other words: ([Atziluth + Briah] + Yetzirah) + Asiah.
- The Four Noble Truths discovered by Gautama, the Buddha: suffering, desire, greed, the Middle Way. In other words: ([suffering + desire] + greed) + the Middle Way.
- The four castes of ancient India. Action in the material world: the *sudras* (workers), the *vaïsyas* (merchants), the *kshatriyas* (warriors). Action in the spiritual world: the Brahmins (priests). In other words: ([*sudras* + *vaïsyas*] + *kshatriyas*) + Brahmins.
- In the four elements, three are similar (air, water, fire) and one different (earth). Among the three that are similar, two are more so (air, fire), and one is different (water). In other words: ([Air + Fire] + Water) + Earth.
- On the human face, the ears, eyes, and nostrils are double, whereas the mouth is single. The eyes and ears are separated, while the nostrils combine into one nose. In other words: ([Ears + Eyes] + Nostrils) + Mouth.



Thanks to this formula, we can organize the four temperaments of the body (nerves, lymph, blood, bile); the four trios of the Zodiac (Aries-Leo-Sagittarius, Gemini-Libra-Aquarius, Cancer-Scorpio-Pisces, and Taurus-Virgo-Capricorn); the four phases of alchemy: the work at the yellow stage (*citrinitas*), the work at the red stage (*rubedo*), the work at the white stage (*albedo*), and the work at the black stage (*nigredo*); the four states of matter (gas, liquid, solid, and plasma); and so on and so forth.

Finally, by studying several alchemical engravings in *The Rosary of the Philosophers*, I found confirmation for the Tarot mandala.



## NUMEROLOGY

If I give The Fool the role of infinite beginning and that of infinite ending to The World, if I grasp that the Pages, Queens, Kings, and Knights, as they bear no numbers, could not be identified within each of the Suits as the numbers 11, 12, 13, and 14, I am left with six series of ten numbers: Swords from One to Ten, Cups from One to Ten, Pentacles from One to Ten, Wands from One to Ten, Major Arcana from The Magician to The Wheel of Fortune, and again from Strength to Judgment. If I wanted to understand the essence of the Tarot, I had to visualize these ten numbers with their six aspects. For example, the One includes the four Aces plus The Magician and Strength. The Magician is represented by a man and Strength by a woman. The Sword and the Wand are active symbols, while the Cup and the Pentacle are recep-



tive symbols. What this showed me was that these ten numbers could not be defined as male or female but were androgynous at all times. In traditional numerology, however, I discovered that the number 1 was claimed as the first odd, active, male number representing the Father, the unit, and number 2 was the first even number, one that was passive and female, representing the Mother and multiplicity. It was impossible for me to support this antifeminist esotericism in which the numbers, 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10, labeled as “feminine,” were synonymous with obscurity, cold, and negativity, and where the odd numbers, 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9, were exalted as male and associated with light, heat, and the positive. To avoid this, I eliminated all concepts of masculinity and femininity when defining the ten numbers. I chose to associate the even numbers with receptivity and the odd numbers with activity. A woman can be active and a man receptive.

I also found in a large number of books a definition of 2 as duality,  $1 + 1$ . This seemed quite clumsy to me when applying it to the Tarot. Because, if we adopt this theory, all that remains to be done is to interpret each of the following numbers as simple additions of units of one: 3 would therefore be  $1 + 1 + 1$ ; 4 would be  $1 + 1 + 1 + 1$ ; and so on up to 10. There is another esoteric tendency to give numbers a meaning based on the result of internal additions. The most complex of all would be 10, whose meaning would be different depending on whether it was the result of  $9 + 1$ ,  $8 + 2$ ,  $7 + 3$ , or  $6 + 4$  (the result of repeated numbers such as  $5 + 5$  being excluded). As there is no reason for this system to stop with simply adding two figures, it leads to aberrations like  $10 = 1 + 2 + 3 + 4$ , or  $10 = 3 + 5 + 2$ , and so forth.

A symbol is a whole, just like a body. It would be ridiculous to claim that the human body is the sum of two legs + two arms + one torso + one head and, by continuing along this path, + one liver + two eyes, and so on. It is similarly absurd to define each of the ten numbers in the Tarot as the sum of other numbers. To understand its message, we should consider each of these numbers as an individual with its own particular characteristics.



# To Begin

The Tarot deck appears as a complex and disconcerting whole to the beginner. Some cards seem easier to interpret than others, as they are charged by symbols that are more or less familiar. Some represent human figures, while others depict geometric designs or objects. Some carry a name, others a number, and others are not even titled or numbered. This leads to a great temptation to rely on already familiar structures such as astrology or various kinds of numerology to start studying this deck. But like all consistent systems and all works of sacred art, the Tarot contains its own structure that it is our duty to discover.

In many kinds of initiation, it is said that through language, human beings can approach the truth but never grasp it; and that, conversely, it is possible for them to know the truth through its reflection in beauty. The study of the Tarot can therefore be undertaken as a study of beauty. It is through looking, through placing our trust in what we see, that its meanings will gradually reveal themselves to us.

In this first part of the book, we propose to look at what clues the Tarot gives us to understand its structure and its numerology. From these foundations, we will construct a mandala that makes it possible to organize the entire deck into a design that we can encompass with a single glance. In this mandala, the seventy-eight cards of the deck form a balanced design and a coherent whole.

To construct the mandala, it is first necessary to become familiar with the Major Arcana, the four Suits of the Minor Arcana, the func-



tion and value of the cards, and the symbology of the numbers that underlies the entire organization of the Tarot and connects each of its elements to the whole.

We will then examine the meaning and several different possible systems of organization of the eleven colors present in the Arcana of the Tarot.

**Note:** Because we consider the article to be an integral part of the names of the cards in the Major Arcana, we write them out as The Fool, The Magician, and so on. (See also pages 118–19.) Further, we decided to use “figures” to designate the Arcana that depict human beings.

Finally, the order of succession of the Suits in the enumerations and in the descriptions will be generally as conventionally accepted: Swords, Cups, Wands, Pentacles (or from lower to higher: Pentacles, Wands, Cups, Swords). The illustrations, however, show the Suits arranged in the order that is inspired by the laws of orientation reflected in The World: Cups (top left), Swords (top right), Pentacles (bottom left), Wands (bottom right). See pages 40–50 for more information.



# Composition and Rules of Orientation

The Tarot of Marseille is composed of seventy-eight cards or Arcana. The term *Arcanum* is derived from the Latin *arcanum*, which means “secret.” It directs one to a hidden meaning, a mystery defying rationality, and appears appropriate to us to the extent that we are using the Tarot not as entertainment but as a game charged with an inexplicit meaning that we must gradually uncover.

The seventy-eight Arcana of the Tarot are divided into two principal groups: the twenty-two Arcana known as the “Major” and fifty-six Arcana called “Minor.” This traditional denomination is echoed in the popular game of tarot and numerous card games by the dual notion of the suit and the trump: one category of cards is designated as being more powerful and capable of overpowering all the others.

The Minor Arcana permit us to examine the more ordinary and also more personal aspects of intellectual, psychological, and material life. We shall see that they refer to different degrees of our needs, emotions, and thoughts, whereas the Major Arcana describe a universal human process, which encompasses all the spiritual aspects of being. The two paths are initiatory and complementary; it could be said that the Minor Arcana, with their four Suits, are like the four legs of a table or an altar, or like the four walls of a temple.



## IDENTIFYING THE ARCANA

All the Arcana are held within a black rectangle whose proportions are that of a double square.

The Minor Arcana are subdivided into forty numbered cards representing the series of 1 to 10 for each of the Suits: Swords, Cups, Wands, and Pentacles. These cards have no cartouche; and in the 1 to 10 series in Swords, Cups, and Wands, their numbers are written on both sides. The series in Pentacles are unnumbered. The sixteen figures of the Minor Arcana, also called Court Cards (perhaps because they depict individuals of the nobility), are in series of four: Pages, Queens, Kings, and Knights (the reason for this order will be explained later, p. 51). They all bear a cartouche at the bottom of the card indicating their name, except for that of the page of Pentacles, where it appears laterally on the right side (from the viewpoint of the person looking at it) of the card.

To distinguish the figures of the Major Arcana, we have one very obvious clue: the Major Arcana all include a cartouche on top in which their number is inscribed. This cartouche is empty in the case of The Fool, but it is present nonetheless, whereas the Court Cards have only a lower cartouche in which their names are inscribed (except in the case of the Page of Pentacles, which we shall revisit). The Major Arcana therefore possess two cartouches, the one on the top with the number and the one at the bottom of the card with their respective names, except in the case of the Thirteenth Arcana, which is also known as “The Nameless Arcana.”

## THE MAJOR ARCANA

### *First Contact*

To familiarize yourself with the Tarot, the simplest thing is to begin by identifying and understanding the Major Arcana, all but one recognizable because of their upper cartouche. These cards are twenty-two in number, numbered in Roman numerals from I to XXI, plus The Fool (who gave birth to the Joker in popular card games).



Spread them out on a table in the following manner: remove the first and last card from the deck of the Major Arcana, in other words The Fool and The World (XXI). Then arrange the Major Arcana into two rows in numerical order from I to X and XI to XX, and frame them with The Fool (who appears to be coming to meet this double row) and The World (who seems to be looking at them while she dances). When arranged like this, it is possible to see that the Major Arcana are organized into two series (see the following pages).

Look at the Arcana arranged in this fashion and note any details that spontaneously come to you. Pay particular attention to the direction in which they are looking: sometimes turned toward the right, sometimes toward the left, and in certain cases straight ahead, with certain individuals who appear to be looking directly at us (like Justice, Arcanum VIII; the face of The Sun, Arcanum XVIII; or the angel



The first series of the Major Arcana (I to X) depicts human figures or animals in identifiable situations. The top of these cards, in most cases, coincides with the head or heads of the protagonist(s), except in the case of Arcanum VI (The Lover), in which the sky is sheltering a sun and a child-angel. We could label this series as "light," as it depicts images with historical or social connotations.



in The Judgment, Arcanum XX). Some images may inspire sympathy or revulsion, joy or fear. These reactions arise from our education and personal history: the Tarot is a powerful projectile tool in which our gaze will identify already known models, which will initially cause us to react in accordance with habitual behavior patterns.

For example, numerous people are frightened by Arcanum XIII, which depicts a skeleton. In our civilization, this image is identified with death. But on taking a closer look at it, we perceive that the figure is blue, red, and flesh colored: it is a living, active skeleton that is a force of transformation in motion. To accept this interpretation of Arcanum XIII, we must begin by recognizing the first movement the sight of this card inspires in us. The same holds true for all the Major Arcana: this figure will appear seductive, while another will seem repulsive or antipathetic. One will remind us of a benevolent grandfather, another



In the second series of the Major Arcana (XI to XX), the figures and situations take on a more allegorical and less realistic character. We could label this series “dark,” as it seems to unfurl within a mental and spiritual universe similar to a dream. Mythical personages appear, angels and devil; starting with Arcanum XVI, the sky is full of energetic manifestations of heavenly bodies and divine emissaries.



an overbearing boss, a seductive mistress, or a strict aunt. Don't fear to gather your impressions. Note how you feel during this initial contact with the Major Arcana. You will undoubtedly perceive a myriad of details, some unique, some common to two or more cards. Trust your eyes; they are the best tool you have for guiding you through your discovery of the Tarot.

Next, begin to mark down the common points between the cards that are either below or above each other, those that share the same degree on the decimal scale.

For example, between the I and the XI, the shape of the hat is almost the same. A similar situation unites II and XII: one is sitting on an egg, the other is suspended like a fetus or a chicken waiting to be born. The common point can also be the direction in which they are looking, as is the case between Arcanums III and XIII or IIII and XIIIII; or even the number of protagonists and how they are arranged, such as between Arcanum V and Arcanum XV, in which a larger central figure looms over two smaller acolytes. Between Arcanum VI and XVI, we see the first intervention by a celestial element, the cherub in Arcanum VI and the multicolored plume in XVI. We could say that between The Chariot and The Star, the common point is the starry firmament, depicted in the form of a dais above The Chariot and directly present as a cosmic element in The Star. Just as in many civilizations the Moon-Sun couple represents the cosmic parental couple, we can see a couple with a human face formed between Justice and The Hermit. Finally, The Wheel of Fortune and Judgment clearly represent, each in its own way, a decisive moment in which a cycle comes to a close and sparks the opening of a new life.

### **The Arcana of series I to X perform their actions directed upward.**

The Magician is raising his wand, while The Empress, The Emperor, The Pope, and the prince in The Chariot are lifting their scepters.

The High Priestess is looking up from reading a book; the three figures in The Lover are united by the cherub flying above them; The Hermit is raising his lantern; and Justice is pointing toward the sky with her sword like the sphinx on The Wheel of Fortune.



The Arcana of the series XI to XX perform their actions directed downward.

The woman depicted in Strength is handling the muzzle of the animal, which is pushing its head against her groin.

The Hanged Man is suspended with his head pointed toward the ground.

The skeleton of Arcanum XIII is mowing down the deep black soil with his scythe.

The angel Temperance is pouring her liquids or fluids from a higher vase to one beneath it.

The Devil is ruling over two imps whose feet-roots are buried in the dark ground.

The two individuals in The Tower are walking on their hands while looking at the earth.

The Star is emptying her amphorae into a river flowing by her feet.

The influence of the Moon in Arcanum XVIII is even affecting the crustacean looking at it from the depths of the water.

The Sun is blessing a pair of twins.

In Judgment, an angel is delivering his musical summons to a man, a woman, and a child, who are emerging from their tombs in resurrection.

These interpretations are given by way of example. You can agree with them or not; we will subsequently see how they fit into the detailed study of the Major Arcana (part 2). These details and others that may catch your eye are all clues that will enable us to gradually identify the numerology of the Tarot.

## THE TAROT IS PROGRESSIVE

Now take a look at the way in which the numbers of the Arcana are written. You will note something that at first glance will seem to be an anomaly: IIII (The Emperor); VIIII (The Hermit); XIIII (Temperance); XVIIII (The Sun).

Indeed these Roman numerals are traditionally written as follows:



$$\begin{aligned}
 4 &= \text{IV} &= 5 - 1 \\
 9 &= \text{IX} &= 10 - 1 \\
 14 &= \text{XIV} &= 15 - 1 \\
 19 &= \text{XIX} &= 20 - 1
 \end{aligned}$$

In the corresponding Arcana of the Tarot they are written:

$$\begin{aligned}
 4 &= \text{IIII} &= 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 \\
 9 &= \text{VIII} &= 5 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 \\
 14 &= \text{XIII} &= 10 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 \\
 19 &= \text{XVIII} &= 15 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1
 \end{aligned}$$

The numerical notation is therefore organized in a solely progressive manner. The Tarot refuses to consider the 4 as a  $[5 - 1]$ , the 14 as a  $[15 - 1]$ , the 9 as a  $[10 - 1]$ , and the 19 as a  $[20 - 1]$ . This detail gives us a key to understanding the Tarot. What is indicated here is that it tends to add rather than subtract. In other words, it describes a process of advancement and growth by one degree after the next.

This discovery inspires us to proceed by additions and not by subtractions when we study the Tarot.

These simple observations already allow us to form a consistent





organized pattern of the Tarot based on its own structure. In fact, based on three facts:

- ▶ the Tarot is progressive
- ▶ the highest value of the Arcana is XXI
- ▶ the Tarot proceeds by additions

we can place the cards in numerical order and connect them in pairs in eleven couples whose sum total gives us 21. This will then give us the diagram below.

This pattern suggests new parallels and comparisons between the Major Arcana. If 21 (XXI) represents realization and is the highest value in the Tarot, each of the additions suggested here can be a possibility and a path toward this realization.

For example:

- The Fool and XXI. The fundamental energy is embodied in total realization.
- I and XX. A young man or a young mind on the path of initiation receives the irresistible appeal of the new consciousness.

To grasp the twenty-two Major Arcana in a single glance, you can use this pattern that connects them in eleven pairs that each add up to a sum total of 21, the figure of realization (see pp. 398–99).





- II and XVIII. A woman, a priestess, relies upon the light of the Universal Father to understand a sacred text.
- III and XVIII. Another woman, creative, sensuous, and embodied, plunges into the intuitive mystery of the feminine.

And so on . . .

The issue here is not to detail all these encounters between two cards. They will be studied later (see part 4). But in its simplicity, this first organizational outline of the Major Arcana permits us to understand that the Tarot is constructed as an organic and harmonious whole. By using its structural elements, we can construct patterns that allow us to better understand it. If one accepts the metaphor of the Tarot as a structured being, a mind-body endowed with its own dynamic, we could say that it is ceaselessly inviting us to dance with it.

### *The Fool and The World: Spatial Organization of the Tarot*

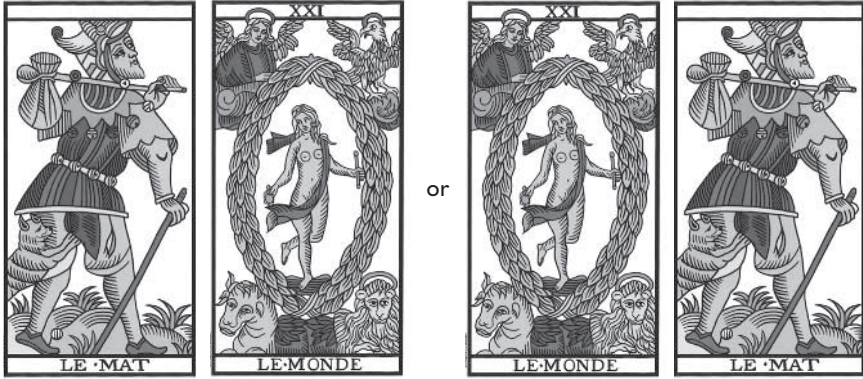
The Fool and The World, the first and last cards of the Major Arcana series, can be considered as the Alpha and the Omega of the Major Arcana, the first and last rung or grade, the two points between which all possibilities are deployed. The Fool would therefore be a perpetual beginning and The World an infinite culmination.

If you place one next to the other in this order, it is obvious that The Fool seems to be determinedly headed toward the oval of The World, in which the naked woman appears to be calling and attracting him toward her. The Fool can be considered here as the fundamental energy that has no definition, meaning it has no limits. This is how the Bible and numerous divine cosmogonies present the divine creative energy: an activity without limits or precedent that has emerged from a nothingness that knows neither time nor space. But if The Fool remains alone, he runs the risk of endlessly revolving around his staff. Creative energy can exhaust itself purposelessly if it does not materialize within a realization, a world, or a creature. From this perspective we can see The World framed by four elements like four car-



dinal points with, at the center, the woman-soul-matter inseminated by the energy of The Fool.

But the order of the cards is essential.



In fact, if we place the cards in the order The World, The Fool, the situation is completely different. The World is no longer the realization of anything but is an imprisonment desperately gazing into the void of the past, a difficult beginning whose sole possible exit is a pure and simple liberation. This is what The Fool appears to be doing as he escapes from this confinement (we can imagine that the blue animal nudging him forward has been stirred into action by the blue oval of The World). But in his efforts to flee, The Fool is not really going anywhere in particular. Just like the space at which the woman of The World is staring remains empty, the path of The Fool here opens on nothingness.

These observations allow us to see that the Tarot, in addition to its progressive structure, *possesses its own orientation in space* that will be a deciding factor in the construction of the mandala as well as in the readings to come. The choice made by its creators to add cartouches written in French, in Latin letters, should give us yet another clue: the Tarot is to be read in the same direction one writes, from left to right. We can therefore deduce that its “timeline” will borrow the same scheme: from the extreme left, what has already been experienced or done; to the center, what one is in the midst of experiencing or doing;



to the extreme right, what one will be able to do or not do, experience or not experience. These observations consist, in fact, of placing the Tarot in its cultural context, which is that of southern Europe during the Middle Ages.

### *Arcanum XXI, Mirror of the Tarot and Key to Its Orientation*

Let us now give closer examination to the card of The World. We have seen that, as the maximal value of the Major Arcana, it symbolizes culmination, the greatest realization the Tarot can offer us.

We are going to see that this card is also a mirror in which the entire structure of the Tarot is reflected and summarized, and one that presents itself as a key to its spatial and symbolic organization.

On this card we see an oval of blue foliage surrounded, on the four corners of the card, by four figures who cannot help but remind us of the vision of Ezekiel: an angel, a flesh-colored animal that could be a bull (or a horse), a lion, and an eagle. The Christian symbolism is interpreted here with great freedom insofar as in the middle of these four elements is not the (male, bearded) figure of Christ that we see, but definitely a naked woman, indicated as such by her round breasts, the length of her hair, and the curves of her hips. Here the Tarot, although permeated with religious symbolism, distinguishes itself as an image-maker unrestrained by dogma.





This female figure dancing in the center of the oval could be an allegory of the soul of the world, into which The Fool breathes his cosmic energy. The four figures surrounding her can then be interpreted as the four constituent elements of reality, the four cardinal points, and the four corners of the real world.

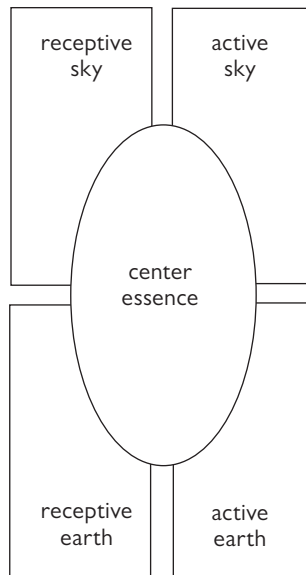
In many cultures the known world is defined as a four-sided form, a square or a cross, to which is added a fifth central element, an axis or meeting point that joins and surpasses the four directions. The symbolism of the human hand, with its four fingers opposable to the thumb, is reminiscent of this structure. We could see in the card of The World a proposition of similar organization: in the center is the dancing soul, the essential being present in each of us, a receptive essence animated by a creating breath.

On the four corners are four energies whose arrangement we should note: in the lower part of the card we find two earthly animals, one a herbivore (the flesh-colored animal) and the other a carnivore (the lion). There are two winged beings on the upper half: an angel, a figure representing the unconditional giving of love and bearer of the divine message; and an eagle, a predator beast, but one whose symbology refers to grandeur, ascension, and the human capacity to raise itself to the heights. The card of The World is clearly structured with one part Heaven and the other part Earth. If we look at the shape and proportion of the cards of the Tarot, we will realize that they are rectangles whose height is exactly two times greater than their width, hence a double square: the square Earth beneath the square Heaven. It will be our duty, then, in the study of the cards to keep in mind this dual terrestrial and celestial dimension, in the center of which the carnal and spiritual process of the human being is developing in accordance with the geometry of the Tarot.

Let's now look at how the right and left sides break down. On our right when looking at the card of The World, we find the two active predator animals and a wand in the hand of the naked woman, the symbol of active power. The eagle and the lion are both carnivores. The first is a male bird of prey (he has a black phallus between his claws), and the other a wild carnivorous beast that is also male (lionesses do not have manes). Both are active: the lion on the Earth and the eagle in the sky.



On our left are two figures who are predominantly flesh-colored, one of whom we have already seen is an herbivore animal traditionally dedicated to service and sacrifice, and the other an angel, the messenger of divine love. On this side the woman is holding a purse or a flask, which is to say a receptive container. Traditionally, psychologically speaking, the left represents the receptive and stabilizing forces as opposed to the active right. If we use our study of *The World* as our basis, the Tarot seems to function like a mirror that reflects the image of our right and left while preserving the notion of the upper celestial and the lower terrestrial. A simplified diagram gives us this:



This structure in five parts, or rather four parts plus a center, cannot help but remind us of the structure of the Tarot itself:

- ▶ the twenty-two Major Arcana, which represent archetypes capable of casting us back to the discovery of our essential being, could figure in the central oval;
- ▶ the four series of the Minor Arcana should then find their places at the four corners of this “map of the world,” if we are able to organize them in accordance with this dual composition between active and receptive, between Earth and Heaven.



## THE MINOR ARCANA

### *Organizing the Four Suits*

The Minor Arcana are subdivided into four Suits—Swords, Cups, Wands, and Pentacles—that offer numerous details enabling us to establish a correspondence between them and the four symbols of The World.

To grasp this, begin by assembling the cards of the four Suits in four distinct packs: Swords, Cups, Wands, and Pentacles. You will thereby obtain packs of fourteen cards, each containing the ten cards of a value progressing from I to X and four figures whose “rank” and “family” are inscribed on the card.

Each of these packs will then be divided into two smaller packs. In the first you will place the cards numbered I to X, and in the other the figures, ranked in the order Page, Queen, King, Knight. When you are done you will have eight packs.

First remove the Pages from each Suit and arrange them as follows (see the following page):

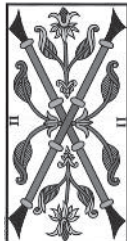
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### **To Tell Swords and Wands Apart**

Here are the reference points that will help the beginner:

- Curved in shape, the Swords are displayed in an oval of a predominantly black color, with blue and red sections. In the odd-numbered cards a sword is drawn in the middle of this oval. The even-numbered cards have floral motifs in the center.
- Straight, Wands are arranged in the form of an X-shaped cross. They are predominantly red in color with blue centers and black at the ends.

Two of Swords  
and Wands



Seven of Swords  
and Wands

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The four Pages arranged in accordance with the orientation outline (see p. 49)

These Pages provide us with certain clues about their respective symbols that corroborate the parallel with the card of The World and the spatial organization of the Tarot.

The Pages that we have placed on the left hand are actually holding their symbols in the hand that corresponds to our left hands in the mirror, the receptive hand, while the two Pages on the right are holding the Sword and the Wand\* to our right. Similarly, the direction in which their feet are pointing also indicates their degree of receptivity or activity.

The Page of Swords, with his feet pointing in two different directions, is of an active tendency with a receptive tone. His symbol, the sword, is pointed toward the sky. Active and celestial, he is kin to the eagle on the card of The World.

The Page of Cups is resolutely heading toward the west—both

\*[*Bâton* can mean both wand and staff. For the sake of simplicity I have chosen the traditional Suit name of Wands, though in some instances the cards of this Suit are depicting what we would call staffs rather than wands. —*Trans.*]

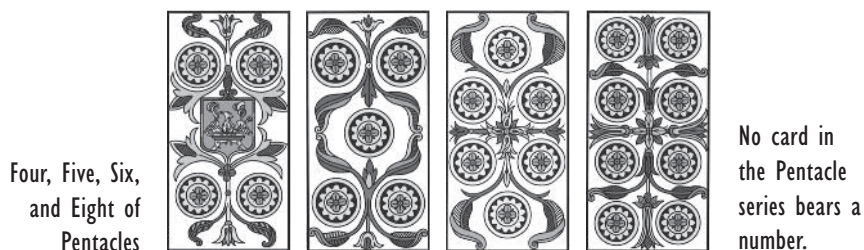


his feet are pointing in this direction, indicating total receptivity. Furthermore, his symbol (the cup) is pointed toward the sky. Receptive to the heavens, the cup would therefore be incorporated into the symbol of the angel on the card of The World.

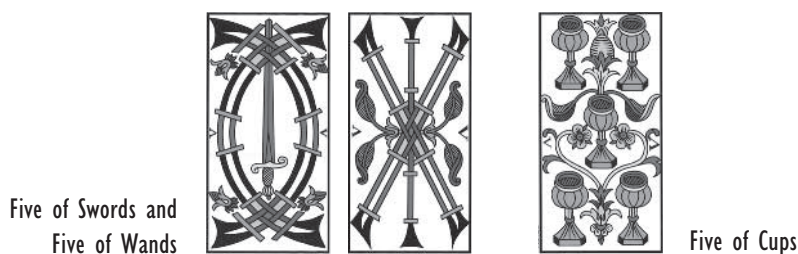
The Page of Pentacles, his feet pointing in each direction, could be described as “receptive/active.” His symbol is present both on the ground and in his hand, as gold found in the mine becomes money, but it is also placed on the left side of the card. Receptive to the Earth, it is akin to the flesh-colored animal on the card of The World.

The Page of Wands is determinedly headed toward the right. He is active, and his symbol, the wand, is resting on the ground. Because his activity is directed toward the Earth he is therefore identified with the lion on the card of The World.

As corroboration for these observations, we can find supporting evidence in the four series of ten cards. You will note that three of these series are numbered on the sides with Roman numerals: Swords, Cups, and Wands. But let us take a look at the Pentacles:

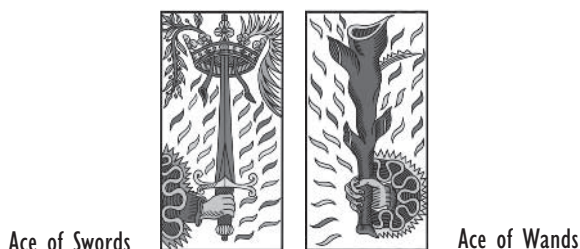


In Swords and Wands, the numbers share the identical direction; for example, in the Fives, the point of the V (which, we shall note, is a little bigger in the Wands) is directed toward the center of the card. Conversely, in the Five of Cups, the tip of the V points toward the edge of the card.

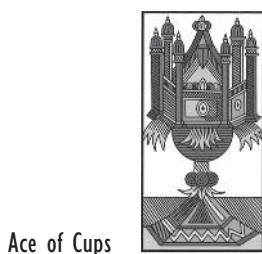




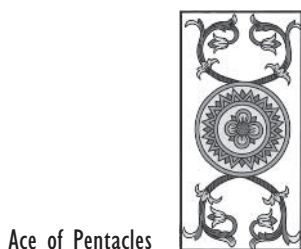
Now let us take a look at the Ace of Swords. Surrounded by shapes that we will call flying sparks, it is held by a hand (with its back visible) that emerges from out of a shape that we will call a cloud. The Ace of Wands, also surrounded by flying sparks, is grasped by a hand (showing its palm side) emerging from inside a cloud. The two Aces therefore share an important point in common.



The Cup is depicted erect and motionless like a temple.



Finally, the Ace of Pentacles, with its sprouting branches, can be visualized in every direction, lying like a gold piece sitting on a flat surface. It is different from the other three symbols. (For more on the Aces, see p. 271.)



We can also note that the name “Pentacles” is different. Whereas Sword, Cup, and Wand are written in the singular on all the Court cards, Pentacles is in the plural.



Now let us revisit the card of The World to look at one point of agreement with these observations. The angel, the eagle, and the lion each have a halo. The flesh-colored animal does not. Because it is different from these other three, it is logical to think that it corresponds to the series of Pentacles.

We have seen that the card at our right corresponds with activity, terrestrial for the lion and celestial for the eagle in the sky. The similarity (both are beasts of prey) reflects the similarity between the Sword and the Wand. The sword is forged by the hand of man, whereas the wand grows from the earth. This lets us draw the correspondence between the former with the eagle and the latter with the lion. The Cup, symbol of the Grail, can be attributed to the angel.

### CORRESPONDENCE AMONG THE SUITS, THE ELEMENTS, AND THE ENERGIES OF THE HUMAN BEING

The four Suits of the Tarot *are not* the four elements of alchemy or other systems (Sword/air, Cup/water, Pentacles/earth, and Wand/fire), and even less, as claimed by Eliphas Levi, influenced by the Arthurian legend, can the Sword be attributed to the earth and the Pentacles to air! On the other hand, we can inaugurate a system of *correspondences* that seems consistent with the symbolism of the Minor Arcana and which, without falling into forced comparisons, lets us use the Tarot as a tool for understanding human beings. Choosing this interpretation is in line with what Buddha says: “Truth is what is useful.”

So let us see what we can observe that will allow us to construct a useful reading methodology. The Tarot is divided in accordance with a structure of 4 + 1: four Suits or symbols, and one series of Major Arcana. It so happens that in the card of The World, four animals or beings surround the blue oval in which a female figure is dancing. We can therefore think that these four elements represent four human energies, distinct from one another but all necessary, joined by a single consciousness.

The sword, the traditional symbol of the Word, is a weapon that is



forged, tempered, and sharpened, just as one hones one's intelligence, if only in the learning of language. It represents intellectual energy and corresponds to the eagle of Arcanum XXI, capable of lifting itself to the heights and adopting a higher point of view. The element of the Sword could be air.

The cup, the Christian symbol of the Grail, is a chalice, a worked tool that is completely receptive. In antiquity it was a symbol for love. The Cup can therefore represent emotional energy. The Ace of Cups resembles a cathedral and reminds us that constructing love is the labor of the goldsmith. It corresponds to the angel of Arcanum XXI, the divine messenger. Its reference element could be water.

The wand grows naturally; it is not manufactured. On the other hand, one can choose it, one can prune it. It represents the strength of growing nature, creative and sexual power. The attraction we feel toward another cannot be forged: desire is not a voluntary action—either we lust for someone or we don't. Sexuality is not an energy we manufacture, but we can channel it, and sometimes sublimate it. Similarly, the attraction of an artist for a form of expression, and the artist's talent, are mysterious givens, but ones that are deployed through work. Inspiration is received before it is implemented. We have seen already that the Wand corresponds with the lion of the card of The World. Naturally combustible, its element could be fire.

The pentacle is both received (like the mineral present in the ground) and partially forged (coins are struck). Similarly, our bodies are shaped by our actions, but nonetheless are something we receive once and for all. Similarly again, the planet Earth, which is the life territory for the human race, is one and complete, but it is exploited and transformed by the activity of its inhabitants. We can therefore attribute to Pentacles the representation of physical energy, the needs of the body, territorial imperatives, and questions concerning the body or money. We have already seen that the Pentacle corresponds with the flesh-colored animal. Its reference element could be the earth.

In English playing cards, the two receptive Suits, Cups and Pentacles, gave birth to the red symbols of hearts and diamonds. The two active Suits, Swords and Wands, became the black symbols of spades and clubs.



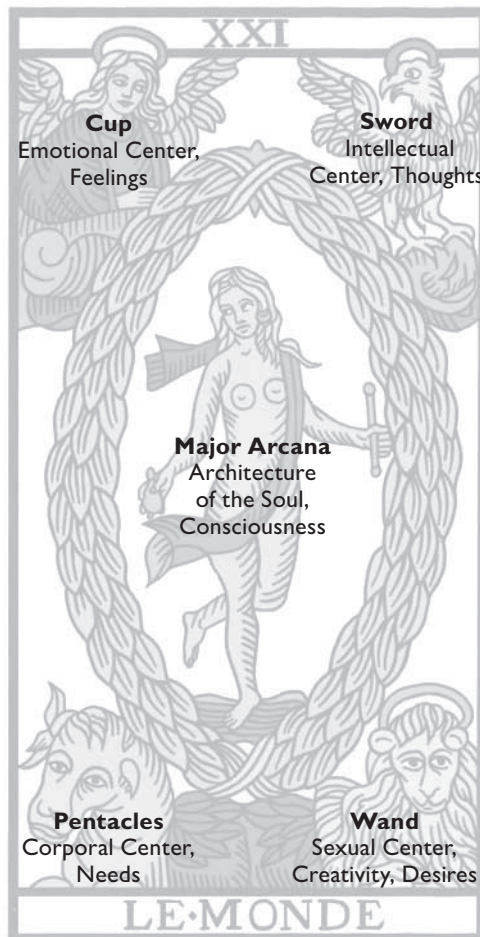
At this juncture, we are now able to provide the following possible reading of the card of The World (see below) as an orientation key for understanding the internal organization of the Tarot.

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### **Arcanum XXI, Orientation Key to the Tarot**

The Major Arcana represent the archetypes of the path of Awareness and can be attributed to the element of ether. They correspond to the naked woman who is dancing, joining activity and receptivity with her red and blue veil, and harmonizing the four energies.

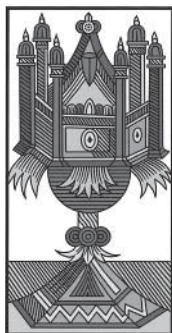
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## The Correspondences of the Tarot

The energies of the Cup and the Sword are placed in the square of the sky (Heaven square). See page 42. They presume an awareness and are specifically human. The energies of the Wand and the Pentacles are placed in the square of the earth. They form the base of all living species capable of reproducing—human or animal.



### CUP

#### Loving

#### *Emotional Energy and Feelings, the Heart*

Love, positive and negative sentiments, friendship. Talent, forgiveness, generosity, adoration. The opening of the heart, joy, faith, mysticism.

**Element:** water

**Body:** rib cage, heart



### SWORD

#### Being

#### *Intellectual Energy*

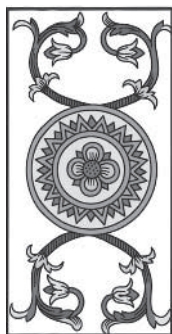
Language, the Word, thought, concepts, ideas, intellectual activity. Ideas transmitted by culture, society, myths, and religions.

Conceived ideas and

consciousness. Mental labor, meditation, language as weapon or prayer.

**Element:** air

**Body:** head



### PENTACLES

#### Living

#### *Material Energy*

The body, health, physical appearance. The place where one lives, territory, clothing, food, house. Profession, economic life, prosperity, money. One's place in the world, social

relations. Cells, atoms, our constituent molecules, the planet Earth.

**Element:** earth

**Body:** at the level of the feet (flat on the ground like the Ace of Pentacles)



### WAND

#### Making or Doing

#### *Sexual and Creative Energy*

The reproductive instinct, fertility, desire. Creative energy, imagination, conscious and unconscious production, the

possibility of creating, of inventing. Vital enthusiasm, power, the healing force, instinct. The vital force, growth, the vocation of populating the planet and the universe, the overcoming of obstacles through creativity.

**Element:** fire

**Body:** at the level of the pelvis where the genital organs are located, as well as the *hara* cited in Eastern traditions



This system of concordances, which is confirmed by detailed study of the Minor Arcana, is extremely useful for reading the Tarot, because it makes it possible to touch on all aspects of life from the most concrete to the most spiritual, without excluding anything of what it means to be human. If we accept this reading grid, it will perpetually enrich our approach to the Tarot and to ourselves.

### *Initial Contact with the Figures of the Minor Arcana*

The figures of the Court Cards also fit into a design that allows us to gain a better understanding of the Tarot. But because of their posture, the personages of each Suit also symbolize an attitude and psychological path with regard to their element.

It is interesting to notice the evolution in each Suit of the symbol that is represented by each of the figures. The Page of Pentacles is contemplating a small pentacle he is holding in his hand and is unaware of another that is buried beneath the ground like a treasure. The Queen of Pentacles is lifting in front of her a pentacle that is larger than the one held by the Page. The King has mastered two pentacles, one that he is holding in his hand and another smaller one that is floating in the air. This spiritual pentacle grows even larger in the card of the Knight, reaching the size of a heavenly body. Similarly, the initially rustic wand of the Page becomes sculpted with the Queen, is even more finely worked with the King, and ends up crossing through the hand of the Knight like an immaterial object. The initially receptive (blue) sword of the Page of Swords, then the more active (red) sword of the Queen, grows proportionately with each of these figures until it has become almost a lance in the hand of the Knight. Finally, the cup starts as a simple flesh-colored vessel, then becomes a sealed chalice, then open again, and finally floats above the palm of the Knight of Cups like a truly miraculous Grail.

To understand how the figures are organized, we can place them on stage as if role-playing around a palace symbolizing their Suit. We therefore have four palaces representing the four energies. Each Ace will be the castle for the figures of its Suit, symbolizing the corresponding energetic center: Pentacles, material center (needs); Wands, sexual center (desires); Cups, emotional center (feelings); Swords, intellectual center (thoughts).



**The Pages.** Each Page represents a duality and a hesitation with respect to his Suit. “To be or not to be?” the Page of Swords seems to be asking himself as he prepares to sheathe his sword. “To love or not to love?” the Page of Cups seems to be wondering, ready to close his cup. “To do or not to do?” could be the question of the Page of Wands, uncertain whether or not to raise his club. Finally, the Page of Pentacles seems to be hesitating between the pentacle he holds in his hand and the more secret one buried in the ground: “Keep or spend? Save or invest?” *We will therefore represent the Pages outside at the door of the palace, hesitant to enter. The moment the Page enters the palace, he becomes the Queen.*

**The Queens.** The Queens identify completely with their Suits, the center represented by a palace, scorning the outside world to dwell within. They live as property owners, their gaze fixed firmly on their respective symbols (for the Queens of Swords, Cups, and Pentacles) or, in the case of the Queen of Wands, with both hands over her stomach that represents the creative and sexual center, with a third additional hand that has just added its presence there. *The Queens will therefore be represented as inside the palace, absorbed in their Suit.*

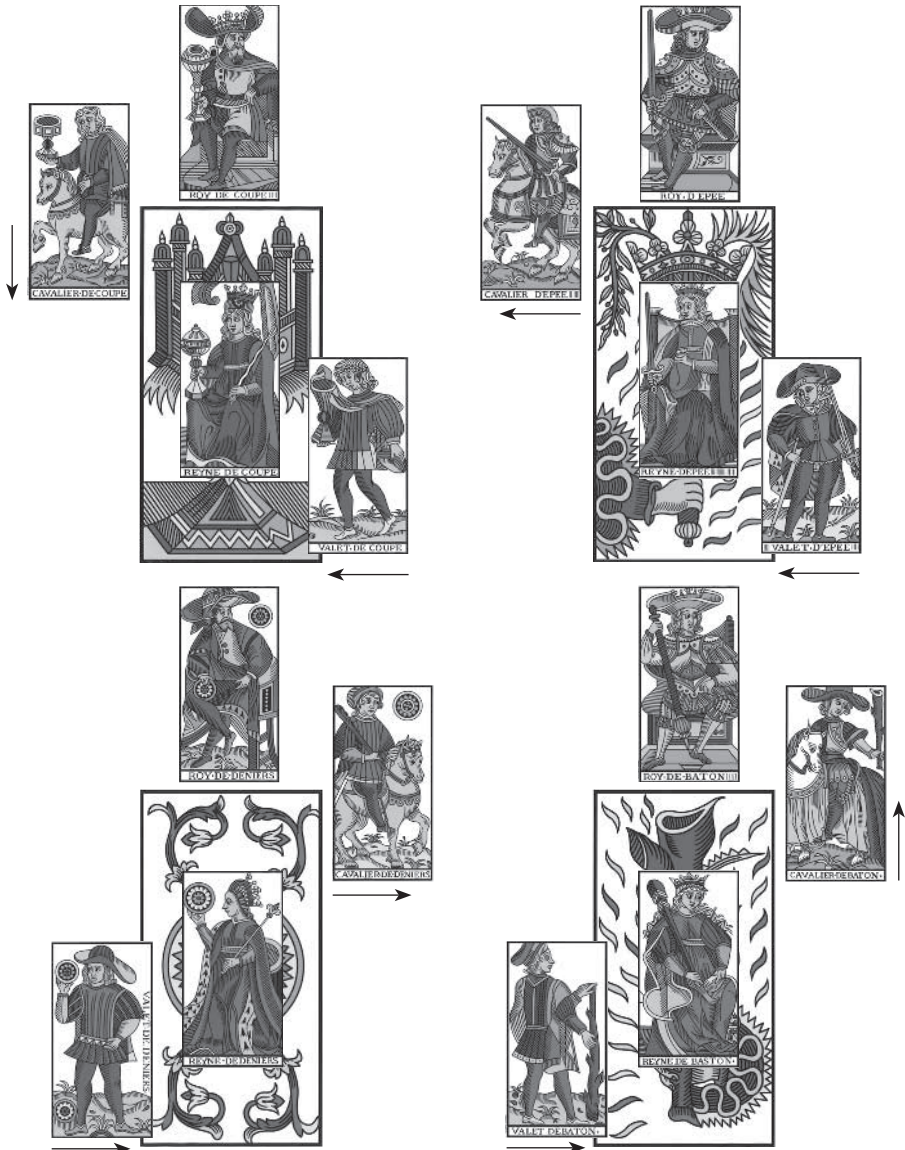
**The Kings.** The Kings and the need for detachment appear at the same time. The Kings know their kingdoms and castles, but they also realize that there is a whole other world on the outside, which is to say other energies besides the ones represented by their Suit. All the Kings carry their symbols with authority (the wand of the King of Wands is even the largest of this series) but are looking away and into the distance. *We therefore represent the Kings as the top of the palace, contemplating the frontiers of their kingdoms and already aware of other kingdoms beyond their borders.*

**The Knights.** The Knight is born out of the acceptance of one’s own limits and the awareness of the Other and others, embodied by the King. This figure carries the energy created by the work of the Page, Queen, and King to the outside. The Knights are symbols of communication, supply, and, why not say so, conquest, transmission, and unification. In a certain way they correspond to the prophet. This is why, as they are already in the



process of surpassing their symbol, the Knights have been named as last in the list of figures.

The diagram of this can be seen below.



The organization of the four Suits according to their place in the Tarot suggested by The World (see p. 49), and the order of the figures around the palace



## SUMMARY

- ▶ The Major Arcana are presented in two series of ten cards (I to X and XI to XX), framed by The Fool and The World (Arcanum XXI).
- ▶ The Tarot is first and foremost an art of interpretation that operates through projection.
- ▶ It advances using addition, not subtraction. It is essentially progressive.
- ▶ It is read like Latin script, from left to right, and can also be visualized in the same direction as a timeline moving from past to future.
- ▶ It is oriented like a mirror inside a double square. The side to our left is receptive, the side to our right is active. The upper square represents the sky and the lower square the Earth. In the center a third area represents the realm of the human being.
- ▶ Arcanum XXI, The World, functions like a condensed version of the Tarot's orientation, dividing space into four parts (right and left, top and bottom) that form the corners of a cosmogony.
- ▶ This orientation reappears in the Minor Arcana:
  - Swords—active toward the sky
  - Cups—receptive toward the sky
  - Wands—active toward the earth
  - Pentacles—receptive toward the earth
- ▶ From this we can deduce the foundations for a useful and consistent system of correspondences in the reading of the Tarot as a tool of self-knowledge, in which the four Suits are associated with the four vital energies of the human being:
  - intellect for Swords
  - emotional center for Cups
  - sexual center for Wands
  - material center for Pentacles



# The Numerology of the Tarot

The human mind has a frequent tendency to adopt a preexisting system to understand something it does not yet know. This is how the Tarot has been incorporated into all manner of structures. Its twenty-two Major Arcana have encouraged a concordance with the Hebrew alphabet, but others have also applied constructions upon it borrowed from astrology, various forms of numerology or geometries, or even systems explaining the world created by multiple cultures. In the final analysis, these comparisons are useful only if they are temporary. There is a value to shedding light upon a system using the concepts from another, but seeking to force them to conform at all costs only results in useless mutilations.

In other words, as one of our first tasks, it is our duty to discover and integrate the original organizational numerology of the Tarot. It is the foundation, the first degree of understanding the Tarot. It will not yet allow us to read it, but it will enable us to integrate all its principles. This numerology will later become a measuring system that permits us to read all the decks based on the structure of the Tarot of Marseille. Integrating the numerical construction is like holding a key that, like musical notation or a grammar, gives meaning to the projective interpretation of the Arcana.

This construction is the product of a meticulous observation of the



two decimal series of the Major Arcana and the four decimal series of the Minor Arcana. Several corroborating details on the cards will be studied more specifically in the second and third parts of this book in which the Arcana are described individually.

To facilitate matters, the Tarot's numerology is presented in this chapter in a more overall form without entering into the details of all the cards, but by presenting the most significant examples.

## WHY A DECIMAL NUMEROLOGY?

What are the clues in the Tarot that set us on the trail of a decimal numerology?

The Major Arcana offer two series of ten Arcana framed by The Fool, which can be considered as the archetype of initial energy, and The World, which can be considered as the archetype of realization (see pp. 32–33). The number 21, which is the number of this last Arcanum, could put us on the scent of a numerology of 7 in 7. Aren't the faces of the three dice on the table in Arcanum I (The Magician) showing figures that add up to 7? And don't the Minor Arcana each consist of fourteen cards?

This trail is tempting, but it would lead to attributing to the Court Card figures the values corresponding to the numbers 11, 12, 13, and 14. There is nothing in the details of the Minor Arcana that permits us to do this. If the Tarot wished to indicate this path to us, the Minor Arcana would be openly numbered up to 14.

Nor do the numerological systems of 3 in 3 or 5 in 5 apply to the study of the Arcana of the Tarot.

In reality, common sense indicates to us that just as the Tarot of Marseille includes cartouches written in French, it places itself within the culture of the decimal system. The ten is viewed in this culture as a totality subdivided into ten degrees that evolve from one to the next, in a constant transformation of reality. This permanent impermanence is the incessant passage from one state to another, comparable to the cycle of the seasons. The sequence of numbers can be compared to a seed that germinates to engender a plant, which in turn will create a

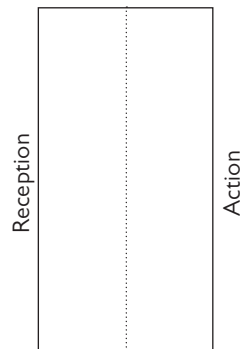
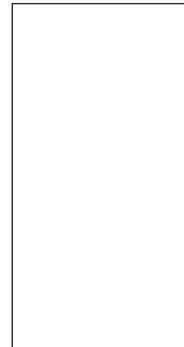


bud, then a flower that will transform itself into a fruit, the perfect product of the tree that bears it. After reaching maturity the fruit will fall, thereby freeing the seed, which will enter the ground and start the entire process over again.

## THE RECTANGULAR DIAGRAM OF NUMEROLOGY

Just as we used the card of The World (Arcanum XXI) as an orientation model, we are now going to establish a model inside of which the numerology of the Tarot will be spread out. Justification for this model is provided in the following pages by details from the Tarot itself, but for the sake of clarity it seemed preferable to us to present it first before examining the stages leading to it.

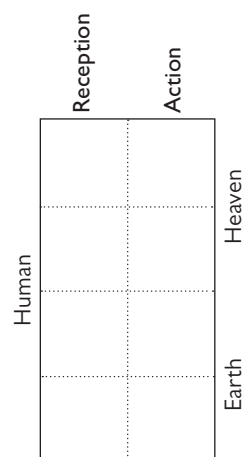
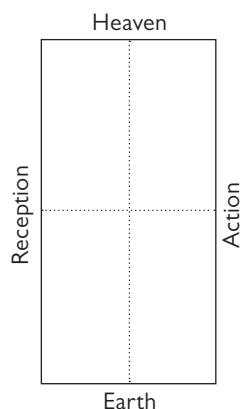
- Let us take a piece of paper whose height is exactly two times its width. This shape, which is that of the Tarot cards, is going to symbolize the unit, Totality. Contrary to certain numerological systems in which 1 is male and 2 female, these figures are seen here as two polarities contained by the Totality, which is an androgynous being.
- Let us make an initial central fold, following the vertical axis. On opening the paper up again, we will see a left/right division, which is to say, using the Tarot symbology, a division between reception and action. Thus within the unit (the rectangle) the part to our left and the part to our right are connected around an androgynous center. We have already seen how pertinent this division is to the Tarot (see pp. 40–42). We could label the receptive “feminine” and





the active “masculine” in reference to the sexual conformation of the man and the woman, but this is an approximate definition at best.

- Now, following the horizontal axis, let us fold the new rectangles our first fold gave us. We now see a new division, a horizon between Heaven and Earth that gives the appearance of two stacked squares. These two authorities are at work in numerous traditions in a variety of shapes: Islam represents the Totality in the form of two squares, one of which is stable with its base placed horizontally, and the other unstable, standing on one of its points. Similarly in the I Ching, the lower trigram of the hexagrams represents Earth and the upper trigram Heaven. What we see here again is the division of the rectangle into four parts that we evoked in the study of Arcanum XXI.



- Now let us fold the new rectangles the first two folds have given us. Open the paper back up: with the subdivision of the two squares this caused, the rectangle is now divided into eight small squares. This subdivision also brings about the appearance of a third primary square, formed by the intersection of the Heaven square with the Earth square. If we accept that the top of Heaven plays, in our culture, the paternal role, and the base of Earth the maternal role (though in the matriarchies of antiquity it was Mother Sky and Father Earth), we could say that they engender, at the center of the Totality, the Human square (see pp. 67–68).



Let us now see how we can organize the numbers inside this diagram.

- As we have seen, the Totality is represented by the rectangle. This rectangle appears to us in two shapes: folded and unfolded.

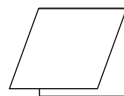
We shall attribute 1 to the folded aspect: like the universe before the Big Bang, like a flower still sealed within its bud, like the fetus at the very beginning of cellular multiplication, the Totality is then in a state of potential, waiting to unfurl. The extreme potentiality indicates its presence by great intensity without experience.

We shall attribute 10 to the unfolded aspect. Here the figure has entirely developed all its potential. This is the ultimate expansion of the universe, the flower that has bloomed; all potential has been entirely fulfilled: great experience but little intensity.

Beginning in potential and the complete cycle are the two aspects of Totality and of the unit, the 1 and the 10.

We shall place the number 1 at the bottom of this diagram and the number 10 at the top.

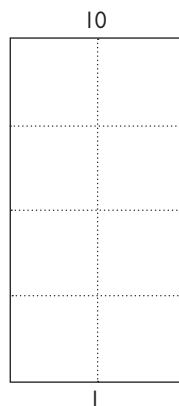
- What remains to be done is to organize the numbers from 1 to 10 inside this structure knowing that:
  - ▶ the even numbers are located on the left side (receptive, stable, divisible by 2);
  - ▶ the odd numbers are located on the right side (active, unstable, not divisible by 2);
  - ▶ and that logically the numbers will arrange themselves from low to high as the 1 is placed on the bottom and the 10 on top.



If we refold the small rectangle we get after the first two folds, the final figure is a small square: the folded appearance of the rectangle.



1  
The Totality in potential





This order follows the notion of organic growth of the vertical dimension natural to living beings: a plant or a human being grows toward the sky as it develops.

This gives us the final diagram as shown here.

The numerology therefore unfurls like a development of 1 to 10, which should be imagined as being in constant transformation, like the cycle of the seasons.

- At degree 1, the Totality is in potential. It is a seed, a beginning, a potential where everything yet remains to be done, in perspective. It can be compared with the first month of gestation.
- At degree 2, we enter into the square of the Earth. This is still a receptive state of gestation. It involves gathering one's strength, desires, ideas, and feelings in preparation for taking action.
- Degree 3 is the first action of the Earth square, a bursting apart and creative explosion without experience or any specific purpose, such as, for example, first love in adolescence.
- At degree 4 this action stabilizes. This figure represents the perfection of the Earth square, domination of material life, clarity of ideas, emotional tranquillity—stable like a table on its four legs.
- Degree 5 is a number of passage, the last of the Earth square. It introduces an ideal that unbalances the stability of 4 in order to go beyond it. It is a bridge. It is the gesture of the sage pointing at the moon with his finger.
- Degree 6 is the first step into the Heaven square. It is the first time that we are doing what we please in every domain. Beyond material necessities, one dares to do what one loves.
- At degree 7, this pleasure becomes a strong action in the world, more seasoned and more intense than that of the 3 because it is founded on the experience of all the preceding degrees and has given itself a purpose.
- Degree 8 represents the perfection of the Heaven square. It is balance and total receptivity, a state that cannot be improved: perfect material abundance, perfect energetic concentration, fullness of heart and emptiness of the mind.



- The 9 therefore brings the sole evolution possible for perfection: entry into crisis to encourage passage toward the unknown represented by the end of the cycle. Like the nine-month-old fetus preparing to be born, the 9 accepts the abandonment of perfection and sets off without knowing where.
- The 10, Totality achieved, symbolizes the end of the cycle and allows the beginning of a new cycle to manifest.

## THE DYNAMIC OF THE TEN DEGREES

If we look at this numerological pattern stage by stage, we could say we find ourselves with four “couples” of numbers at four successive levels of the rectangle. This is what we can say about them schematically:

- 2 and 3 are heavy and energetic, adolescents
- 4 and 5 are still in the material world, but adults
- 6 and 7 are refined and active: one knows where one is going
- 8 and 9 combine to permit evolution

The vocation of each of the degrees of the numerology is to evolve toward the next degree. The couples listed above could therefore represent either an evolution (from less to more), a conflict (receptive-active), or a stagnation (from more to less).

10	
8	9
6	7
4	5
2	3
1	

To shed some light upon the dynamic of the ten degrees and make it more concrete, we shall study it using the Major Arcana of the first series (I to X).



10	
8	9
6	7
4	5
2	3
1	



Degree 1



Degree 2



Degree 3

**Degree 1** is represented by The Magician (I). This Arcanum represents a young man, a beginner, an individual full of potential (symbolized by the elements on his table) but still uncertain what he should choose. If one remains in degree 1, one is an individual in perpetual beginning, incapable of making a decisive choice, preferring nonexistent potential to a determinate realization. Degree 1 needs to commit himself and to take the first step into reality. As the Tao te Ching says: "To travel a mile, one must first take a single step." This first step into the Earth square corresponds to degree 2 of the numerology.

**Degree 2** is represented by the High Priestess (II). Seated and cloistered, the High Priestess is holding a book in her hands, and an egg is placed next to her, the symbol of gestation. 2 is a passive and receptive number that can mean a reservoir, a promise, a virginity. Matter is still inert in this degree. The activity of 3 corresponds to the receptivity of 2. The latter accumulates, the other acts without knowing where she is going in a burst of fanatic and impassioned creation, which runs the risk of being quickly disappointed.

**Degree 3** is represented by The Empress (III). This degree evokes an explosion, an action, a germination. It is all action and movement. Furthermore, The Empress is looking toward the right, toward action and movement, whereas The High Priestess is looking toward the left, toward reception and the past.



If the 2 engenders the 3, this could be a sprouting seed, a hatching egg, a project on which the first step has been taken. The actress learns her role (The High Priestess) before playing it on the stage (The Empress).

If the 2 is in conflict with the 3, it represents the hesitation between doing and not doing, and the fear of taking action. It is an imprisonment that is suffered but not one of one's choosing. The Empress could then be an adolescent whose actions are hindered by the inflexibility of a strict mother.

If the 3 is regressing into the 2, it is an ill-considered or impetuous explosion that tumbles back into inertia. The action engaged fails; wounded and disillusioned, it ends with an imprisonment.

To realize itself the 3 must pass to the next degree, the 4: a purposeless action with no experience establishes itself in security. The creativity of The Empress finds material stability in the energy of The Emperor.

If 4 falls back into 3 it is a failure of the adult age and the worship of the eternal adolescent.



Degree 4



Degree 5

**Degree 4** is represented by The Emperor (III). Stable and anchored in the material world, he rules serenely with a solid base. This can be a good financial situation, a house, a person on whom one can count. The Earth square finds its motionless and stable perfection in this degree.

**Degree 5**, meanwhile, is pointing toward the Heaven square, although he does not belong to it. Degree 5, seen here wearing the features of The Pope (V), establishes a bridge, a passage, a transition between the two worlds. His action consists of serving as intermediary between the Earth square and the Heaven square.

If 4 engenders 5, stability becomes receptive to a new point of view and intentional action with an eye to expanding the horizon. A man of industry (The Emperor) becomes open to new techniques that will preserve the surrounding environment. His attitude then becomes that of The Pope, whose concern extends to the ecological balance and not only his own profits.



10	
8	9
6	7
4	5
2	3
1	

If there is conflict between the 4 and the 5, it is the antagonism between materialism and spirituality, between the concrete and the ideal. For example, it is the short-sighted chief of state (The Emperor) who refuses to listen to his wisest advisor (The Pope).

If the 5 goes back into the 4, he has lost faith in a new world and falls heavily back into the security of the old one. He does not succeed in going beyond his limitations.

To realize himself, the 5 should make his ideal a reality and take the first step into the Heaven square, which corresponds to number 6. After having taught a foreign language for years (The Pope), one takes a journey to meet the culture that one has studied so long (The Lover).

If the 6 falls back into the 5, it is disillusionment; it is hard to come back down to Earth after one has tasted the food of Heaven.



Degree 6



Degree 7

**Degree 6** symbolizes pleasure, beauty, and everything that, remaining receptive, surpasses material considerations. Degree 6, The Lover (VI), evokes the richness of the emotional union between human beings. Where 5 is looking is where 6 makes itself right at home. But 6 runs the risk of indulging in narcissism: folkloric art, self-complacent thought, loss of creativity and the critical spirit. The passage to 7 makes it possible to break free

from this narcissism. The highest of the primary numbers and indivisible, it in fact symbolizes extreme activity on behalf of humanity.

**Degree 7**, here The Chariot (VII), represents all forms of action in the world: humanitarian, artistic, conquering. In any case, it is founded on a union between spirit and matter.



If the 6 engenders the 7, it is an action in the world founded on joy, the pleasure in doing things.

If 6 enters into conflict with 7, one has on one side an egotistical pleasure and on the other a joyless action that thus risks leading to violence. The Chariot could then be an intransigent politician in conflict with a union refusing to dialogue.

If the 7 falls back into the 6, action in the world finds its outlet in narcissism and ceases to be altruistic. The Chariot could then be, for example, an egotistical television show host, and The Lover could resemble the members of his crew whose sole thought is to steal his place.

To achieve the 7, pure action must pass into the next degree, the 8, representing receptive perfection. If the 8 falls back into the 7, this perfection has only been illusory and experienced as a kind of halt, and the need for action makes itself felt anew.



Degree 8



Degree 9

**Degree 8**, divisible by 2 and by 4, exemplifies the state of total receptivity. It symbolizes the perfection of the Heaven square, like the moon reflecting the sun or even like a pregnant woman bearing a new consciousness in her womb. Under the features of Justice (VIII), who is holding a sword and a set of scales, it could be said there is nothing to be taken away and nothing to be added.

**Degree 9** is the sole number of the series that is both active (an odd number) and receptive (divisible by 3). It therefore represents a rift as well as great wisdom. The figure of The Hermit (VIII) therefore evokes the ability to call things back into question, to abandon or renounce a position, one's possessions, and so forth. Active toward the past and receptive to the future, he is walking backward.

If the 8 engenders the 9, perfection has been achieved by the sole means it has of moving beyond itself: the entrance into crisis in order to create a new world. This is the moment of giving birth, the ninth month or even the dawn of the new day that is extinguishing the light of the astral bodies of the night.



If there is a conflict between the 8 and the 9, perfection is experienced as suffocating, and letting-go is viewed as a sign of weakness. This is also the conflict of the parental couple in which the mother becomes castrating and the father absents himself.

If the 9 falls back into the 8, it is fear of death that is making itself felt: here the individual plants himself firmly in his positions, aspires to a rigid perfectionism, and cannot tolerate things being called back into question. Fear can immobilize the 9, which then consumes itself. This degree evokes a crisis between life and death—it is either resolved or one dies. The 9 evolves toward the 10, which pulls it into the cyclical movement—a state of permanent impermanence.

Walking backward, The Hermit encounters the 10, The Wheel of Fortune (X), and accepts the termination of one cycle of life so that a new one can begin later. In the second series of the Major Arcana, the new construction of The Sun (XVIII) culminates in the irresistible appeal of consciousness in Judgment (XX).



Degree 10

**Degree 10** returns to the beginning of the following cycle in order to trigger the start of evolution on a different plane. The Wheel of Fortune, with its crank, manifests this need for assistance: the one that will turn the wheel will be the first degree of the next cycle (here Strength, the Arcanum XI, opens the second decimal series).

If someone falls back into the 9, it indicates an attitude of perpetual crisis that refuses to evolve: we could say that the animal equipped with a sword at the top of the wheel represents an emotional enigma. If this mystery is not resolved, The Wheel of Fortune will persistently return to the crisis state of The Hermit. The individual is then living in the past, trotting out the same old things, nostalgic for what might have been.

If someone is stagnating in the 10, this is a block that has no exit, one in which all aid is refused that would permit a return to dynamic movement. No new strength will arrive to turn the crank.

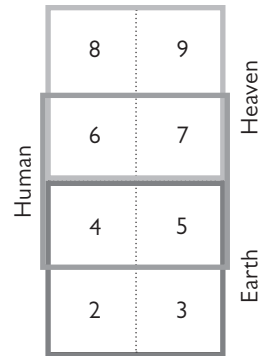


## NUMEROLOGICAL EVOLUTION IN THE SQUARES

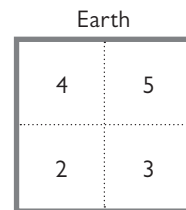
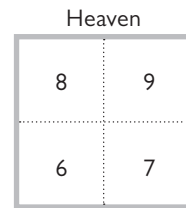
We have seen how the rectangle that gives the Tarot its structure can be subdivided into two squares, Earth and Heaven, at whose intersection a human square is inserted. Using this diagram, we can visualize the three squares as each containing four figures.

We know now that the 1 and the 10 are in correspondence. They represent two aspects of the Totality: in potential, and realized.

Similarly, we can establish a correspondence between the four degrees of the Heaven and Earth squares using a course of progression that goes from bottom to top and from left to right.



- Degrees 2 and 6. These represent the first step into the Earth and Heaven squares respectively. The 2 collects, develops, and feeds itself. In the Minor Arcana, this is the degree in which the symbol is largest (the giant pentacles of the 2 of Pentacles, the huge flower of the 2 of Swords . . . ). In degree 6 in the Heaven square, the quality replaces the quantity: the central element becomes pleasure and love, the source of all spiritual activity.
- Degrees 3 and 7. While 3, like the spring or puberty, represents the blind exploding of matter, 7 combines matter to spirit in a conscious act that is fully aware of the world and itself.
- Degrees 4 and 8. The simple square of 4 represents earthly balance, to which the 8 adds spiritual perfection.
- Degrees 5 and 9. These stages represent a transition. But while the 5, poised to leave the Earth square, can already envision the higher (or deeper) dimension, the 9, in its infinite wisdom and solitude, accepts setting off toward the unknown, as is shown by the VIII





of the Major Arcana, The Hermit, who is walking backward without looking where he is going. Similarly the twins of The Sun (XVIII) are separated by a wall from the past and are advancing toward a new world.

Human	
6	7
4	5

In the Human square, the first step is represented by the fourth degree: the adult human who has achieved stability and is capable of supporting himself. The first action is spiritual: it is the temptation of the 5 that opens the road to a new world. The perfection of the human world is expressed in the 6, the discovery of the principle of Love. With the action of The Chariot, advancing toward perfection (which in a certain way is beyond the human), what we see is the announcement of another dimension, that of continuity and action in the world.

## THE DECIMAL SERIES OF THE MINOR ARCANA

We shall now look at how this numerological diagram is expressed in the 1–10 series of the Minor Arcana.

Take out the cards from 1–10 from each Suit and line them up in the order: Swords, Cups, Wands, and Pentacles.

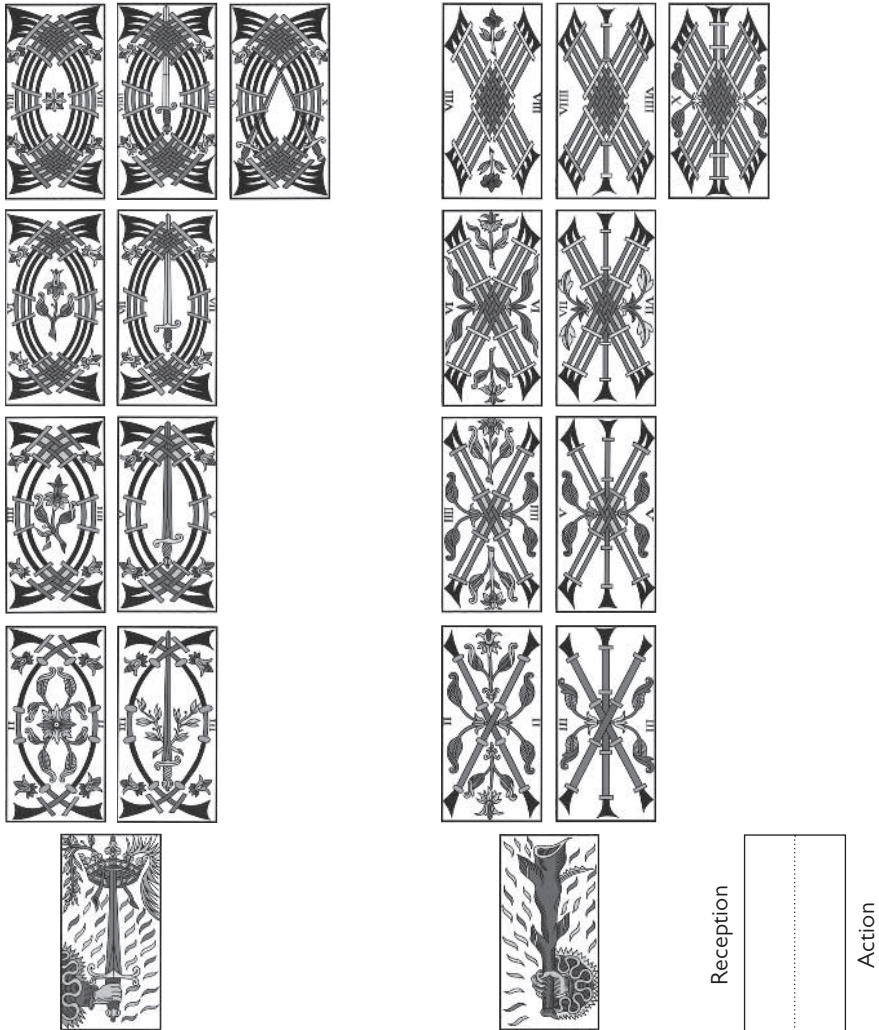
The most flagrant clue permitting us to corroborate the numerology of the Tarot can be found in the Sword series. Here we can observe that the cards form pairs within the larger series, starting with the Two of Swords, forming concentric circles (one, then two, then three, then two circles interlaced with four).

Let us now place the Sword and Wand series from low to high as is shown on the following page. We shall note, by means of the concentric circles, that the three final degrees of the numerology are here combined: 8, 9, and 10 build upon each other, forming a kind of “arm” at the top of the rectangle. We will see later how this union between the three cards is pertinent for comprehending the Minor Arcana.

In observing the series of the Swords and the Wands, we note that the same phenomenon appears: the column on our left in which the even



numbers appear (2, 4, 6, 8) is furnished with flowers, “feminine” receptive symbols, whereas in the right-hand column containing the odd numbers (3, 5, 7, 9), we have in the one a sword in the center of the oval, and in the other a wand forming a central axis; these are both active “masculine” symbols. These observations supply confirmation of the division between a left receptive even number and a right active odd number.

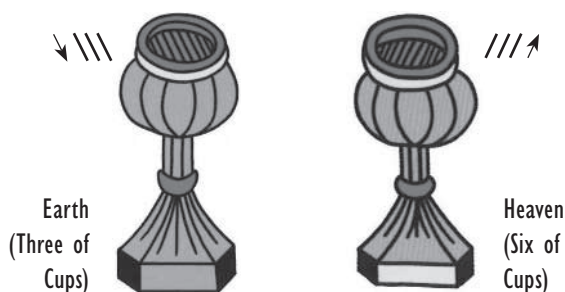


The decimal series of Swords and Wands. The presence of the “female” symbols in the column to our left of the decimal series of the four Suits, and “male” symbols in the one to our right, corroborates the reception/action axis expressed by the numerology (see p. 55).



Let us now place the cards from the Suit of Cups following the same diagram (see p. 71). We will again find the Earth-Heaven subdivision observed in the card of The World (see p. 42).

If we look inside the cups in the Two, the Three, the Four, and the Five, we can see that they are striped by black lines over red that descend in a left-to-right direction. To the contrary, in the cups of the Six, the Seven, the Eight, and the Nine, the crosshatching lines rise from our left to our right. This is how the Earth square is differentiated from the Heaven square.

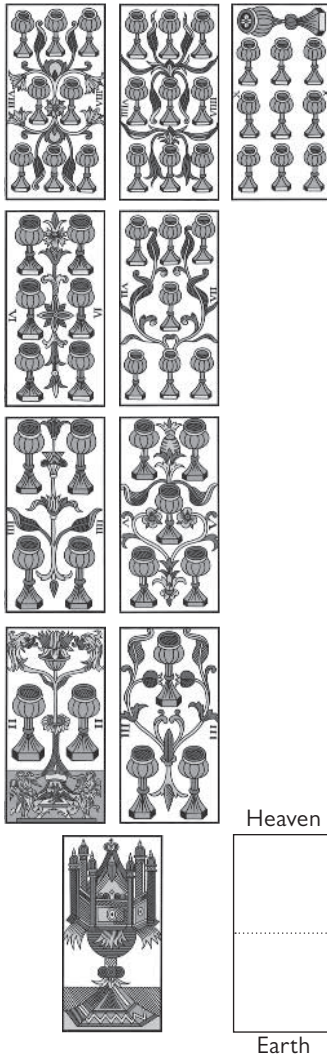


As said in the Chinese adage, the ideal state is when the individual is receptive toward Heaven and active toward the Earth. The degrees of the Earth square thus receive the influences of the cosmos. On the other hand, the cards of the Heaven square are active toward the Earth; they draw upon terrestrial energies, then raise them toward spiritual love.

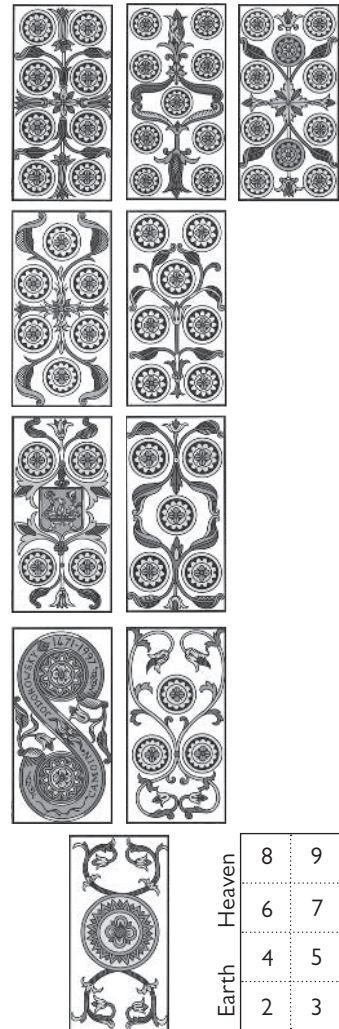
Corroboration for this difference is found in the Sword series: the Three and the Five are the same color (red) and, in a certain way, they resemble a couple. To the contrary, the Seven and the Nine, respectively light blue and yellow, are dissimilar. The flower on the Four of Swords is different from the one on the Six of Swords by virtue of the fact that one is cut from our right to our left and the other from our left to our right.

The flowers and foliage that are growing from the center to the card edges in the Two, the Three, the Four, and the Five in the Wands series are all quite similar. Conversely, we note a large difference between the Six and the Seven, on the one hand, with their exuberant growth, and the Eight and the Nine, on the other, on which flowers and leaves are absent.





Above: The Cups. The Heaven/Earth axis observed in the numerology that reappears in the decimal series of the four Suits



Above: The Pentacles. The cards of this series are unnumbered. We note that until Five, the pentacles are surrounded by branches that separate them from the bottom and top edges of the card. This changes starting with the Heaven square: matter becomes more spiritualized.



We will later see in greater depth, in the study of the Minor Arcana, how the details of the cards act as guides for their numerological meaning. But we can briefly explain the most obvious aspect for each degree of several Arcana:

- **The Ace.** The Ace of each Suit depicts the symbol by itself, occupying the entire card like an immense potential ready to be implemented.
- **The Two.** In the Swords, Cups, and Wands, enormous flowers suggest great accumulation. In that of the Pentacles, two enormous coins are seeking union with an eye to a contract.
- **The Three.** In the Swords, Cups, and Pentacles, the vital explosion is suggested by the exuberant growth of the foliage among other things.
- **The Four.** In both the Cups and the Pentacles, stability is indicated by the four symbols placed at each corner of the card like the cardinal points defining a balanced world.
- **The Five.** The emergence of a new point of view, a new look on things, is manifested by the central element present in the Cups and the Pentacles, and by the “gap” formed by the interlacing of the wands in the Five of Wands. In the Five of Swords, we see the blade of the sword at the top of the oval and also by a gap between the blue curves. This new look at things symbolizes the ideal of the Five.
- **The Six.** The entrance into the Heaven square manifests inside the Cups by the emergence of an axis that, like a mirror, joins the two columns of cups: this is the meeting with the sister soul. In the Wands, the shape of the outer leaves changes; they are as if agitated by waves of pleasure.
- **The Seven.** In the Swords the central sword is a blue color; it is spiritualized and draws the strength of its action from an extreme receptivity. In the Pentacles we distinctly find a triangular shape formed by three pentacles framed by four others; this is the symbol of the spirit acting within matter.
- **The Eight.** They evoke four aspects of perfection: meditative



vacuity in Swords, plenitude in Cups, extreme concentration in Wands, and balanced abundance in the Pentacles.

- **The Nine.** The crisis of transition manifests here by the monastic lack of ornamentation of the Nine of Wands, in which all the flowers have disappeared, or by the faded foliage of the Nine of Cups. In the Pentacles we are witnessing a birth (the central pentacle is like the baby's head emerging from the womb). In the Nine of Swords, the yellow blade of the sword has a crack.
- **The Ten.** Each in its own way, the Tens represent the transformation to a new cycle: in the top closed cup of the Ten of Cups, we see the outline of the pentacle that will become the Ace of Pentacles. In the Pentacles a white axis appears that joins the two last orange pentacles, which makes it kin to the Wands.

### *The Place of the Figures*

There are four different figures. Among them is the Knight, who has disappeared from the regular card game and only survives in the profane Tarot deck, where he is given a value lower than the Queen in accordance with a logic based on the hierarchy of nobility, which makes him a subordinate vassal of the royal couple.

However, if we study the restored Tarot of Marseille, the order of the figures imposes a different arrangement. The figures in this deck symbolize a dynamic of knowledge and going beyond their Suit in which, by detectable clues, we can establish their order as follows: Page, Queen, King, Knight.

- **The Pages.** We know that the posture of the Pages expresses a doubt, a lack of certainty between action and inaction (see p. 52). Thereby we can say that the Page is situated in the dynamic of the first stage of the numerological rectangle in the Earth square, between 2 and 3, between gestation and first action. The Page of Pentacles would therefore symbolize the desire to experience, that of Wands the desire to create, that of Cups the desire to love, and that of Swords the desire to exist.



- **The Queens.** In total union with their Suit, the Queens also form part of the Earth square: their position is between stability and the temptation presented by a new ideal, between the 4 and the 5. The Queen of Pentacles would therefore symbolize the dynamic of economy and investment, the Queen of Wands the dynamic between security and sexual and creative novelty. The Queen of Cups is situated between stable affection and the temptation of a higher love, and the Queen of Swords between rationalism and openness to metaphysical thought.
- **The Kings.** Having now achieved full mastery of their elements, the Kings are open to taking much larger action in the world. They are between the pleasure of 6 and the irresistible action of 7. The King of Pentacles, a well-to-do tradesman, may be undertaking the creation of a multinational corporation; the King of Wands, a powerful creator, is extending his work across the world; the King of Cups may be attracted toward saintliness; and the King of Swords is promulgating decrees that have the potential of changing the world.
- **The Knights.** These figures are situated between the 8 and the 9. Surpassing the achieved perfection (8) of their Suit, they are setting off on a journey to enter a new dimension (9). Their action heralds the transformation of the 10 of one cycle into another. Prophets or emissaries of their Suits, they head toward the following Suit to begin the cycle anew.

10		
8	Knights	9
6	Kings	7
4	Queens	5
2	Pages	3
1		

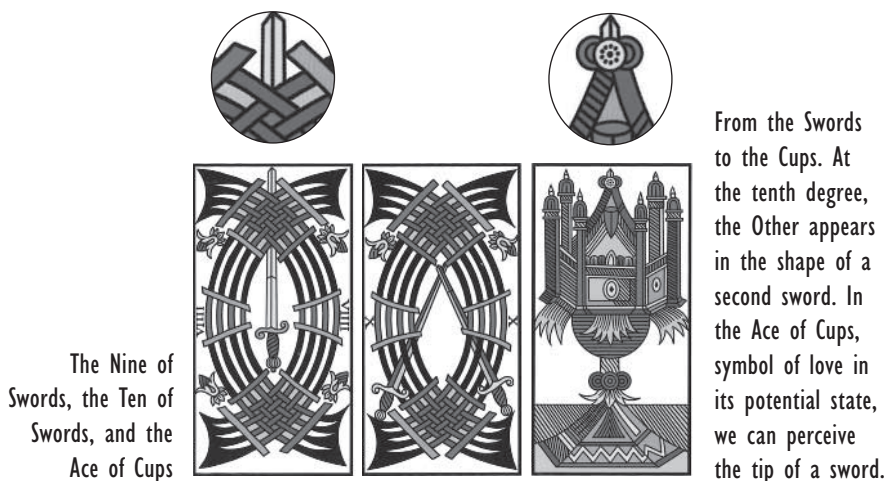


### ***Knight and Cycle's End: How the Ten of One Suit Becomes the Ace of the Next***

Numerology teaches us that the dynamic of the Tarot is that of constant engendering: corresponding to the end of one cycle is the beginning of the one that follows. This is how The Wheel of Fortune marks the end of the first cycle of the Major Arcana, and Strength, which comes immediately after, represents the first level of the next cycle.

In similar fashion, the Tens of each Suit (and the Knights among the figure cards) are already bearing the seeds of the Ace of another Suit. We shall now study how the Suits, using this cyclical process, engender each other.

We can perceive a correspondence between the Ten of Swords and the Ace of Cups: in the Ten of Swords a second sword appears for the first time in this series. We could say it is the appearance of the Other (see illustration), therefore the beginning of the emotional relationship. In response, the Ace of Cups has at the tip of its main spire a yellow point that cannot help but bring to mind the one on the Nine of Swords:

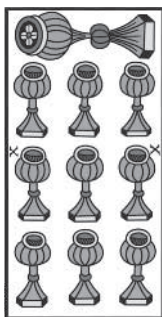


The card that gives us the most obvious clue concerning this situation of the 10 is the Ten of Cups (see p. 76). We see it there above the orderly rows of nine cups in the cup lying on its side, in which a flower design has formed inside a circle reminiscent of the Pentacles.





Ten of Cups and the Ace  
of Pentacles



From the Cups to the Pentacles. The disk imprinted with a flower that closes the tenth cup heralds the transformation of the Ten of Cups into the Ace of Pentacles.

The clues of the two other Suits are delivered by the Knights, who we have just seen correspond to the level of 8 and 9 and herald the action of the end of the cycle of 10. The Knight of Pentacles carries a rod that will become the Ace of the following Suit: Wands.



Knight of Pentacles and  
the Ace of Wands

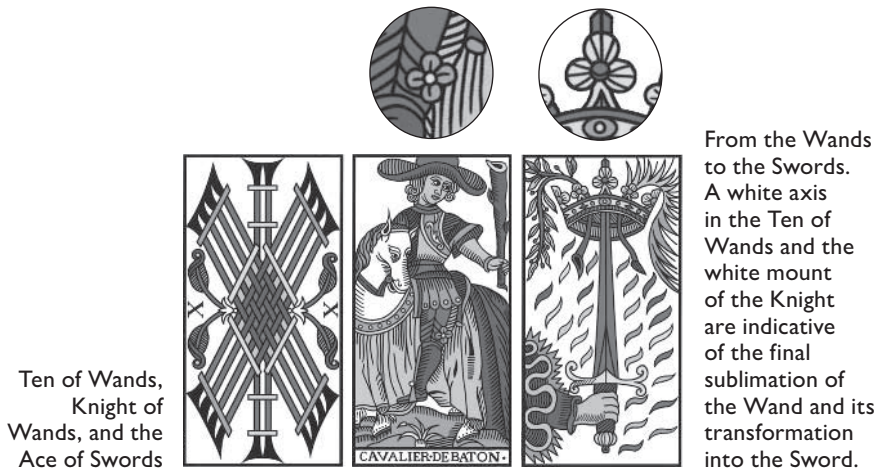


From the Pentacles to the Wands. The Knight here is giving us a very clear clue: his eyes are focused upon a spiritualized pentacle floating like a heavenly body, and he is carrying a wand.

Finally, the transition from Wands to Swords is suggested by the fact that in the Ten of Wands, the central wand splits in half and lets a white axis appear, the synonym of sublimation. Similarly, the Knight of Wands is riding a white horse that he is nudging with his knee to change direction. One will note that the flower adorning this knee is reminiscent of the central ornament of the crown pierced by the sword in the Ace of this Suit.

What we are witnessing, then, is a kind of cycle in which the Suits of the Tarot engender one another: the completed cycle of the Swords is transformed into the first degree of the Cups, which, on reaching its end, engenders the Pentacles, which in turn engender the Wands, which leads into the Swords, and so on.



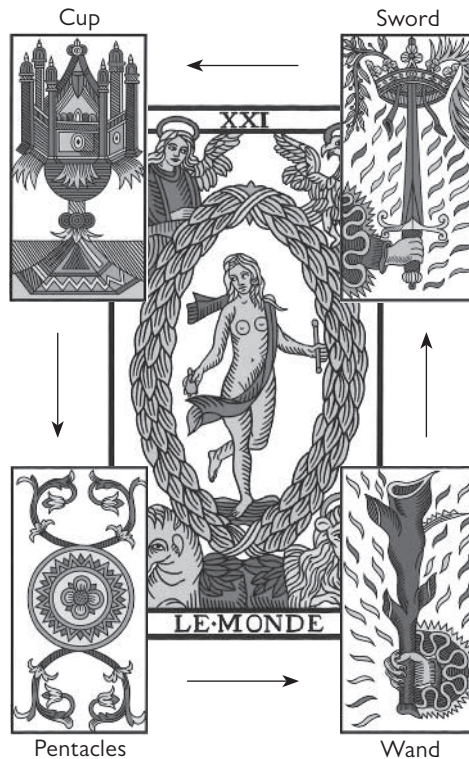


Taking into account the meaning that we have attributed to each Suit, we could say that:

- The Sword—intellect—on arriving at the final degree of its development, will discover the existence of the Other and make an appeal to emotional energy, which is that of the Cup.
- The Cup—emotional energy—upon reaching the final degree of its development, is going to produce a new life or take action on the concrete world, while appealing to the energy of living matter, that of the Pentacles.
- The Pentacles—living matter—upon reaching the final degree of their development, will transform and be confronted by the necessity of reproducing themselves; thus their appeal will be made to the creative energy of Wands.
- The Wand, sexual and creative energy, when it reaches the final stage of its development, will split in half, sublimates itself, and discovers the androgyny that is the essence of thought, therefore directing its appeal to the intellectual energy of the Sword.

We could create a diagram of this kind of circulation borrowing the Arcanum XXI, The World, as the base for orientation (see p. 78). The first element of this circulation, which runs counterclockwise, can be





any one of these centers, inasmuch as in this logic they engender each other endlessly.

*Summary: The Dynamic of the Ten Degrees of the Major and Minor Arcana*

- **The Fool.** Large contribution of initial energy.

**Degree I**

*Totality, much energy without experience*

- **I The Magician.** Everything is in the state of potential. He must learn to choose.
- **XI Strength.** Awakening of Animal Energy.
- **Ace of Swords.** All thoughts are possible. What we think becomes reality.
- **Ace of Cups.** Our entire emotional life is contained therein, with infinite possibilities for loving and hating.



- **Ace of Pentacles.** Material potential: health, money, house, work . . .
- **Ace of Wands.** Creative and sexual energy in the state of potential.  
*The Danger of the 1: remaining virtual, being incapable of taking the initial step into reality.*

## Degree 2

*Accumulation, gestation, inaction, repression of energy*

- **II The High Priestess.** Cloistered, she studies while sitting on an egg. Prepares to make an action but has not (yet) accomplished it.
- **XII The Hanged Man.** Bound with his hands behind his back, he does not choose. Meditation, retiring into oneself, or punishment. Also represents the gift of self: “Come pick me.”
- **Two of Swords.** Accumulation of thought. Reveries without action or mental structure.
- **Two of Cups.** Amorous daydreaming: “I don’t know what love is, but I am getting ready for it.”
- **Two of Pentacles.** A contract in preparation, not yet signed. Promises.
- **Two of Wands.** Puberty, accumulation of sexual energy.  
*Danger of the 2: rotting, inability to move into action.*

## Degree 3

*Explosion of all the energy accumulated, adolescence, purposeless action*

- **III The Empress.** Creative violence of spring, cyclical reawakening of nature. Potent and creative femininity.
- **XIII.** Demolition, revolution, change, violent action to destroy the old. Renewing activity, transformation, mutation.
- **Three of Swords.** Budding, strong mental activity. Intellectual enthusiasm, fanaticism.
- **Three of Cups.** First ideal and romantic love—before the lovers move in together . . .
- **Three of Pentacles.** New job, first clients, first day after an operation or a house renovation, onset of puberty or menstruation.



- **Three of Wands.** The first pleasure, the first creation. First sexual experience. Sometimes premature ejaculation.

*Danger of the 3: disappointment; bursting and doing anything whatsoever.*

## Degree 4

*Stabilization and potency*

- **IIII Emperor.** Power of the laws, rational paternal figure. Authority.
- **XIIII Temperance.** Spiritual protection, harmonious inner circulation.
- **Four of Swords.** Rational ideas. System of thought that makes it possible to understand the world, “square” mind.
- **Four of Cups.** Emotional stability; family, fidelity, solid friendship.
- **Four of Pentacles.** Good health, sufficient salary, stable company.
- **Four of Wands.** Regular sexuality (routine?). A saint who always performs the same miracles, an artist who repeats the same works.

*Danger of the 4: stagnating without evolving.*

## Degree 5

*Appearance of a new ideal, bridge to another dimension*

- **V The Pope.** Instructor, teacher, guide. Communication and union. Serves as link between two worlds, but does not abandon the earthly realm.
- **XV The Devil.** Temptation. Deep unconscious: wealth, passion, creativity.
- **Five of Swords.** A new knowledge appears, a new study presents itself.
- **Five of Cups.** Ideal love, emotional fanaticism. Amorous temptation.
- **Five of Pentacles.** Introduction of new consciousness into matter, new section of a company, yoga classes . . .
- **Five of Wands.** Appearance of a new desire.



*Danger of the 5: lies, betrayal, a swindler's promise. Not walking your talk.*

## Degree 6

*Pleasure, beauty, union, discovery of the Other, doing what one loves*

- **VI The Lover.** Three individuals on the same level: union or conflict? Infinite subtleties of emotional life. Doing what one loves beneath the radiance of universal love.
- **XVI The Tower.** What was imprisoned emerges. Return to earth, illumination, joy, moving house. To dance around the temple.
- **Six of Swords.** Joy of thinking.
- **Six of Cups.** Meeting one's kindred soul, mirror love.
- **Six of Pentacles.** Pleasure of prosperity.
- **Six of Wands.** Total creative and sexual pleasure.

*Danger of the 6: repeating what one loves, establishing systems, becoming narcissistic and no longer progressing, retiring from the world.*

## Degree 7

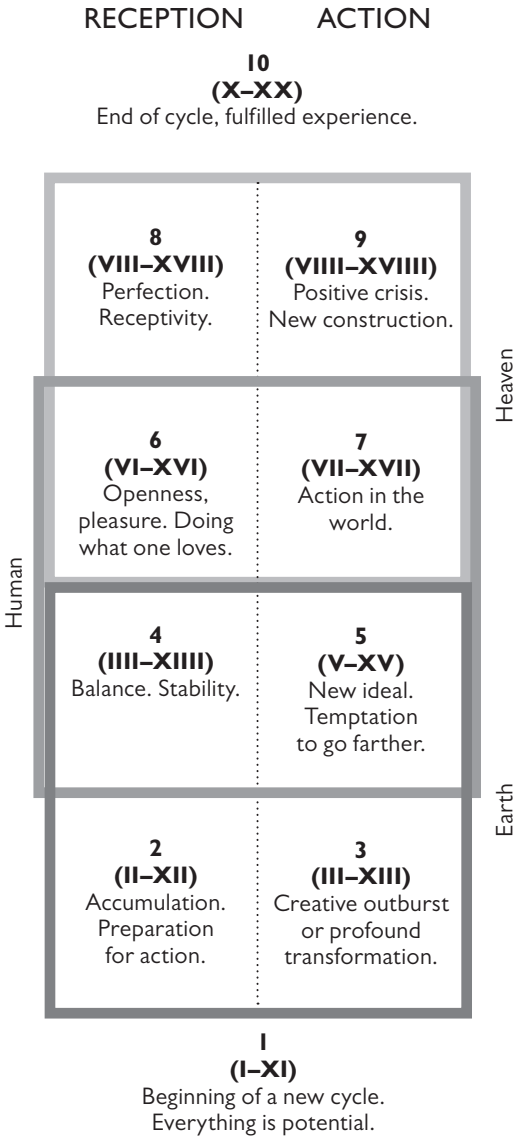
*Action in the World*

- **VII The Chariot.** Conquest, triumph. Voyage, resolute action. Union of mind and matter.
- **XVII The Star.** Finding one's place and undertaking to improve the world from there, giving birth to a work of art, living an experience in its totality.
- **Seven of Swords.** Thought finds its highest attainment in becoming receptive.
- **Seven of Cups.** Love at work in the world: humanitarian activities, for example.
- **Seven of Pentacles.** Materialization of the spirit and spiritualization of matter. Alchemical work.
- **Seven of Wands.** Total sexual and creative action toward the Other.

*Danger of the 7: poorly employed, its immense energy becomes destructive.*



### The Numerological Diagram of the Tarot





## Degree 8

### Receptive Perfection

- **VIII Justice.** Justice weighs the necessary and cuts away the superfluous. It accepts useful values (the true is what is useful) and does justice to herself.
- **XVIII The Moon.** Capable of reflecting all the light of the cosmos, it represents the perfection of intuition and art. Cosmic mother, femininity, mystery.
- **Eight of Swords.** Realization of the empty mind during meditation.
- **Eight of Cups.** Fullness of heart.
- **Eight of Pentacles.** Healthy prosperity, sound health.
- **Eight of Wands.** Concentration of the energy that allows the emergence of magic, desire, and creation.

*Danger of the 8: perfection includes the danger of being incapable of effecting further change and runs the risk of then spilling into either rigidity or madness.*

## Degree 9

### Opportune crisis for a new construction, “between life and death”

- **VIII The Hermit.** Wisdom, essential solitude, trust in the unknown.
- **XVIII The Sun.** New construction, fraternity, success, warmth. True love.
- **Nine of Swords.** Illumination and positive crisis. New mental insight.
- **Nine of Cups.** Leave one emotional world to establish another.
- **Nine of Pentacles.** Birth as part of the end of a world.
- **Nine of Wands.** Fundamental creative choice: to leave one thing to make or do another.

*Danger of the 9: become mired in perpetual crisis, live in solitude and sorrow.*



## Degree 10

### *End of One Cycle and Beginning of a New Cycle*

- **X The Wheel of Fortune.** Everything is frozen, but there is a handle. Complete cycle. Great experience and lack of energy. Need for assistance.
- **XX Judgment.** Birth of a new consciousness with the acceptance of spiritual aid. The manifestation of an irresistible desire that rises toward its realization.
- **Ten of Swords.** The intellect, full of love, learns how to listen.
- **Ten of Cups.** With one's love life fulfilled, it is time to move into action.
- **Ten of Pentacles.** Prosperity engenders creativity.
- **Ten of Wands.** Creativity touches the spirit.

*Danger of the 10: a block, refusal to make the transition to something new in which one becomes a beginner again.*

- **XXI The World.** Great and total realization.

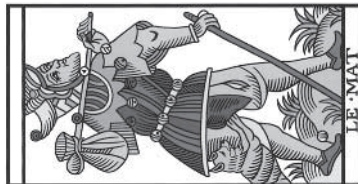


# The Ten Stages for Constructing the Mandala

The exercise of building a mandala out of the Tarot is undoubtedly the best way to familiarize oneself with the entire deck and absorb its overall structure. Plan to have a large flat and uncluttered surface of around five by seven feet on which to do this.

**Note:** The mandala is constructed like a mirror, in the same way that we read the Tarot. If one wishes to put together a mandala similar to an Eastern temple (see the introduction), the left/right polarities will have to be reversed.

1. Let us take the cards of The Fool and The World. In the center of the surface, we lay The Fool down horizontally so that he is looking toward the sky. He represents the primal energy, the inner god, the great architect who upholds the world of manifestation. If the gaze of The Fool were directed downward, he would be turning toward the dark depths and material density. Having him look up pushes the energy toward spirituality.





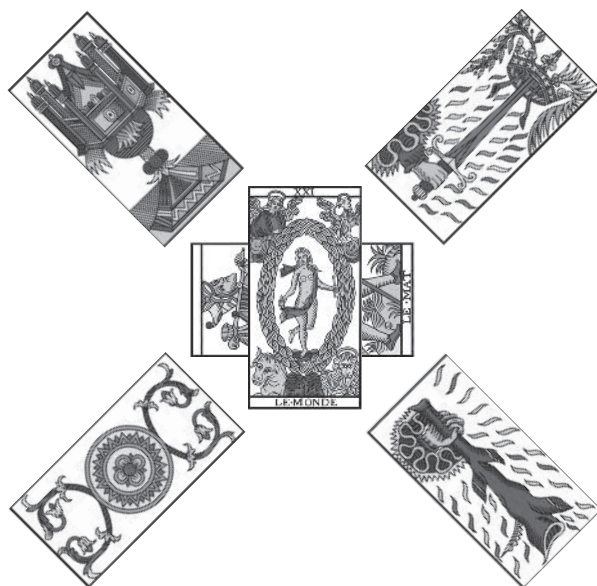
2. We will place Arcanum XXI, The World, on top of The Fool. The World, as we have seen, is the summary of the entire structure of the Tarot. The Fool will therefore not be entirely visible in the final result, but we shall know that it is he who supports The World placed in the center of the pattern, just as the inconceivable energy of the universe supports our visible world. The crossing of the two cards corresponds to the part of the rectangle in which we have located the Human square, containing the 4, 5, 6, and 7 of the decimal numerology. We could say that The Fool meets The World at the height of its human horizon. In this configuration The World and The Fool seem to be looking at each other.



3. Just as the establishment of a temple requires it to be placed in relationship to the four cardinal points, and alchemy requires fire, air, water, and earth to establish the four primordial elements, so does the mandala need to set its four corners. As we saw earlier, the central figure on the card of The World is placed between four symbols corresponding to the four Suits of the Minor Arcana: the flesh-colored animal (Pentacles), the lion (Wands), the eagle (Swords), and the angel (Cups). We are therefore going to place the Ace of each Suit over its corresponding symbol in The World card (initially, for greater legibility, we shall show the center of the mandala “aerated”). For the final correct pattern, see page 94.

4. Then above each Ace, we shall erect a structure with the numbers 2 through 10 of the corresponding Suit, following the arrangement seen



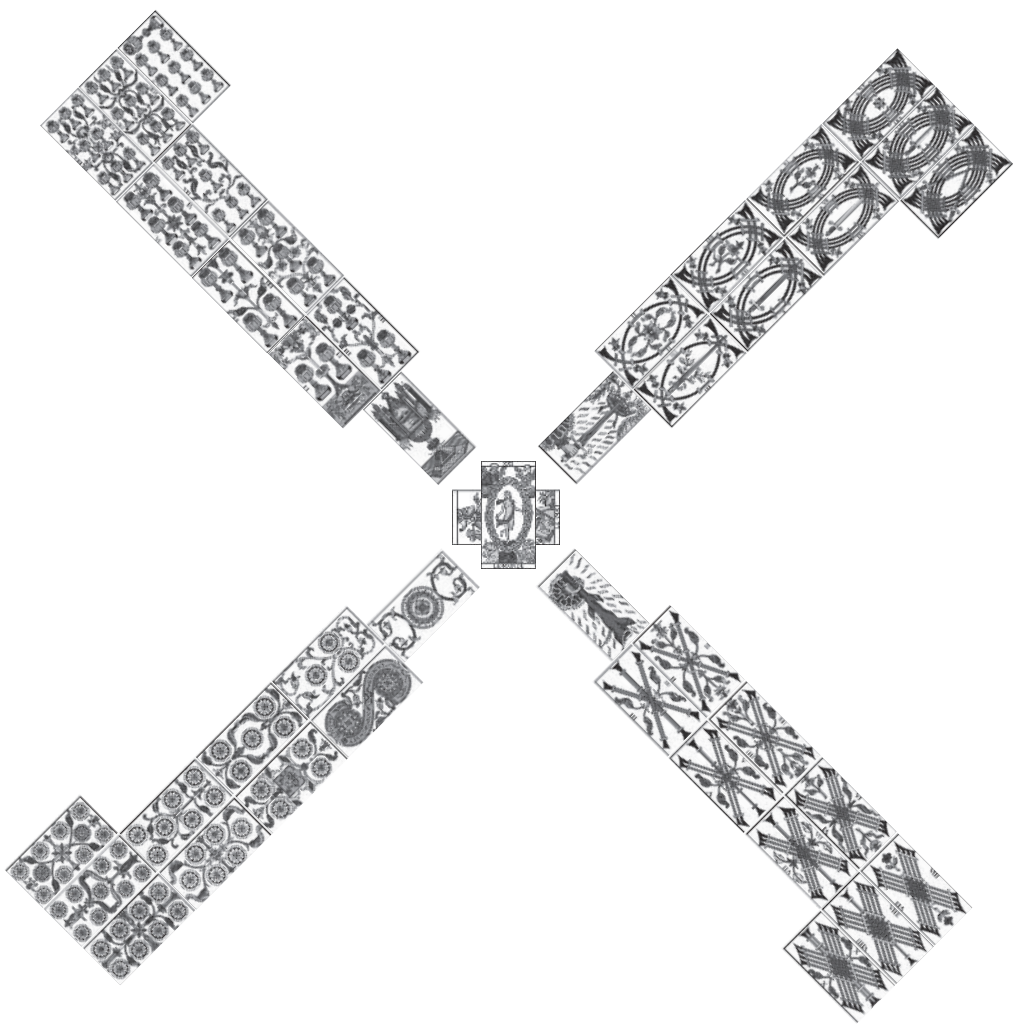


in the numerological rectangle. However, we shall not put the 10 card above cards 8 and 9 but next to them as if in progression, in the way suggested in the previous chapter (see pp. 69 and 71). We have now placed the four 10s corresponding to the four energies. The pattern this gives us is a swastika, the symbol of cosmic movement (see p. 88).

If this cross were forced to turn, it would do so in a counterclockwise direction, from action to reception, from right to left. This movement, which is the same movement as the blood in the human body, corresponds, as we have seen, to the movement of the central figure of Arcanum XXI, who is looking from our right toward our left. It also corresponds to the dynamic of the transformation of one Suit into the next (Swords, Cups, Pentacles, Wands, and so on) that we identified earlier. We could also express it by saying that the active numbers go toward the receptive numbers.

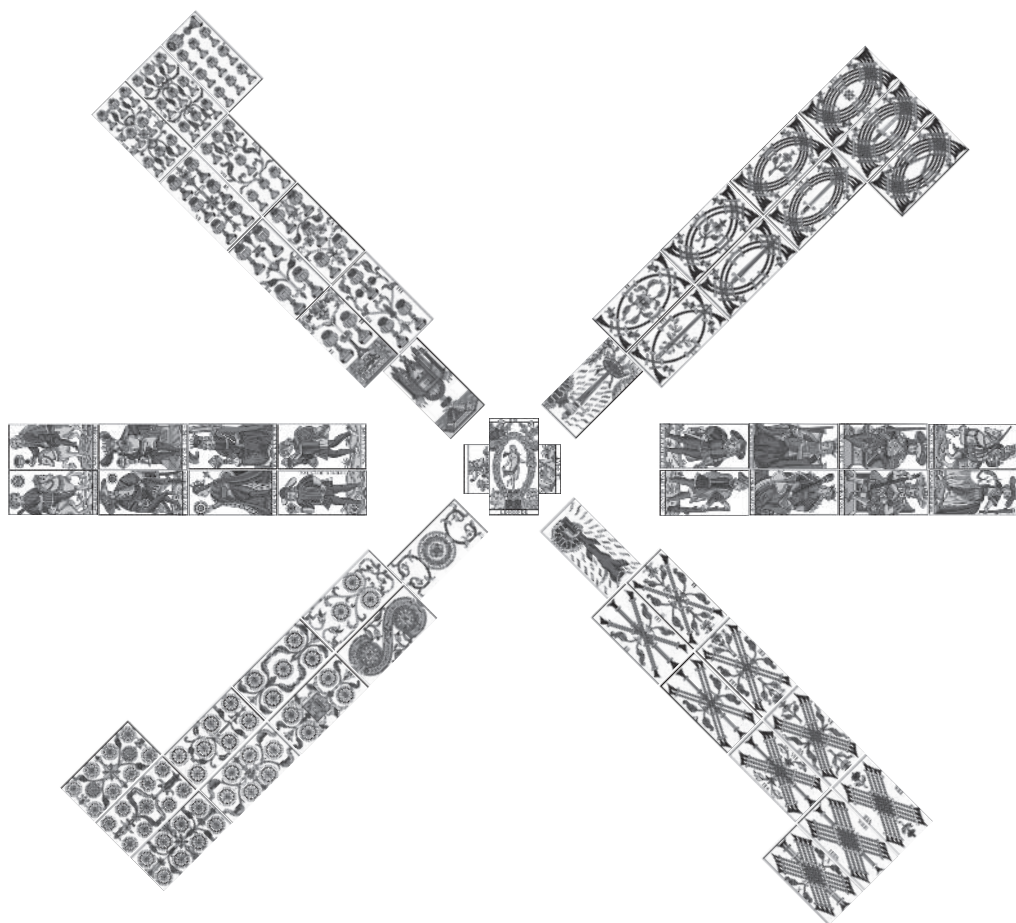
5. We shall now arrange the figure cards on the horizontal axis of the mandala, which corresponds to the human horizon. They are organized horizontally in the order Page, Queen, King, and Knight, from the inside to the outside. The figures of the Cup will therefore find themselves





beneath the Cup arm of the swastika, to our left, connected with the figures from the Pentacles. The series of the figures from the Swords will be found beneath the Sword arm connected to the figures from the Wands. In this way, the Page of each Suit will be in contact, at the corner of his card, with the 2-3 couple of his corresponding Suit. The Queen will be aligned with the 4-5 couple, the King with the 6-7 couple, and the Knight will be in line with the 8-9-10 trio (see p. 89).





6. Finally, we shall organize the twenty remaining Major Arcana into two series of ten cards each, as in the numerological diagram (see p. 90).

We have seen how, in the first of the two series, the Arcana principally perform their action toward the top (see pp. 32–33). The action initiated by The Magician, in which we primarily see human beings, corresponds to a quest for the Divine, light, the heavenly, air and water, and supreme consciousness. This series will therefore be placed vertically above The World, manifesting the work of elevation these Arcana inspire in us.



The Arcana XI to XX, meanwhile, primarily perform their activities toward the bottom. The series initiated by Strength is by and large composed of superhuman and mythical beings, who seem to have escaped from a dream, corresponding to the quest toward the infernal, the obscure, and the underground, the earth and fire, the deep unconscious. It will therefore be placed beneath The World in descending order: Arcanum XI will be closest to the center, while Arcanum XX, Judgment, will be at the other end. The series thereby represents the labor of going deeper that its symbology suggests.

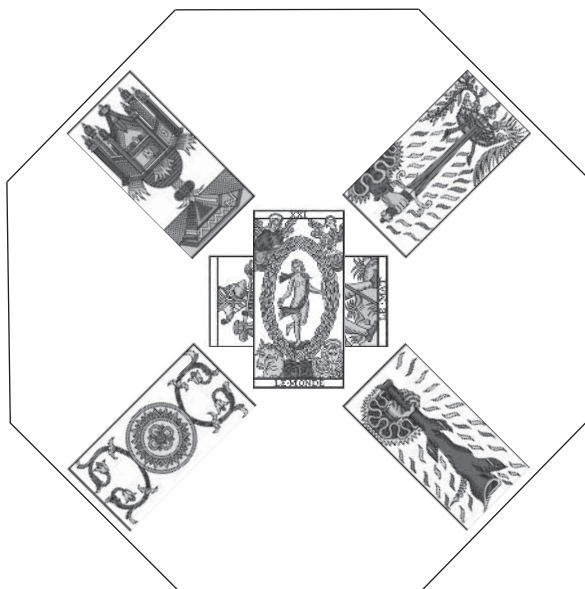
7. The degree corresponding to the 10 (Arcana X and XX) will be placed at the top of the rectangle and not next to the VIII-VIII pair, as was done for the Minor Arcana. Here is yet another occasion on which the Tarot provides us with clue to this organization. Whereas in the Minor Arcana the final degree indicates a transformation into another Suit, we find ourselves with the Major Arcana in the presence of a circular return. On the very top of the mandala we have The Wheel of Fortune prompting, after taking the ascending path (the yellow animal), a return to the depths (the flesh-colored animal). At the very bottom of the mandala we find Arcanum XX, in which the light-blue spiritual androgyne emerges from the depths of the earth, irresistibly summoned by the angelic trumpet (symbol of Cosmic Consciousness) to rise anew. So here we now have the complete mandala (see pp. 92–94).

8. We see that the center of the mandala is an eight-sided geometrical figure (octagon). This figure carries us back to the fundamental geometry of Taoism, in which the trigrams of the I Ching are represented inscribed within a





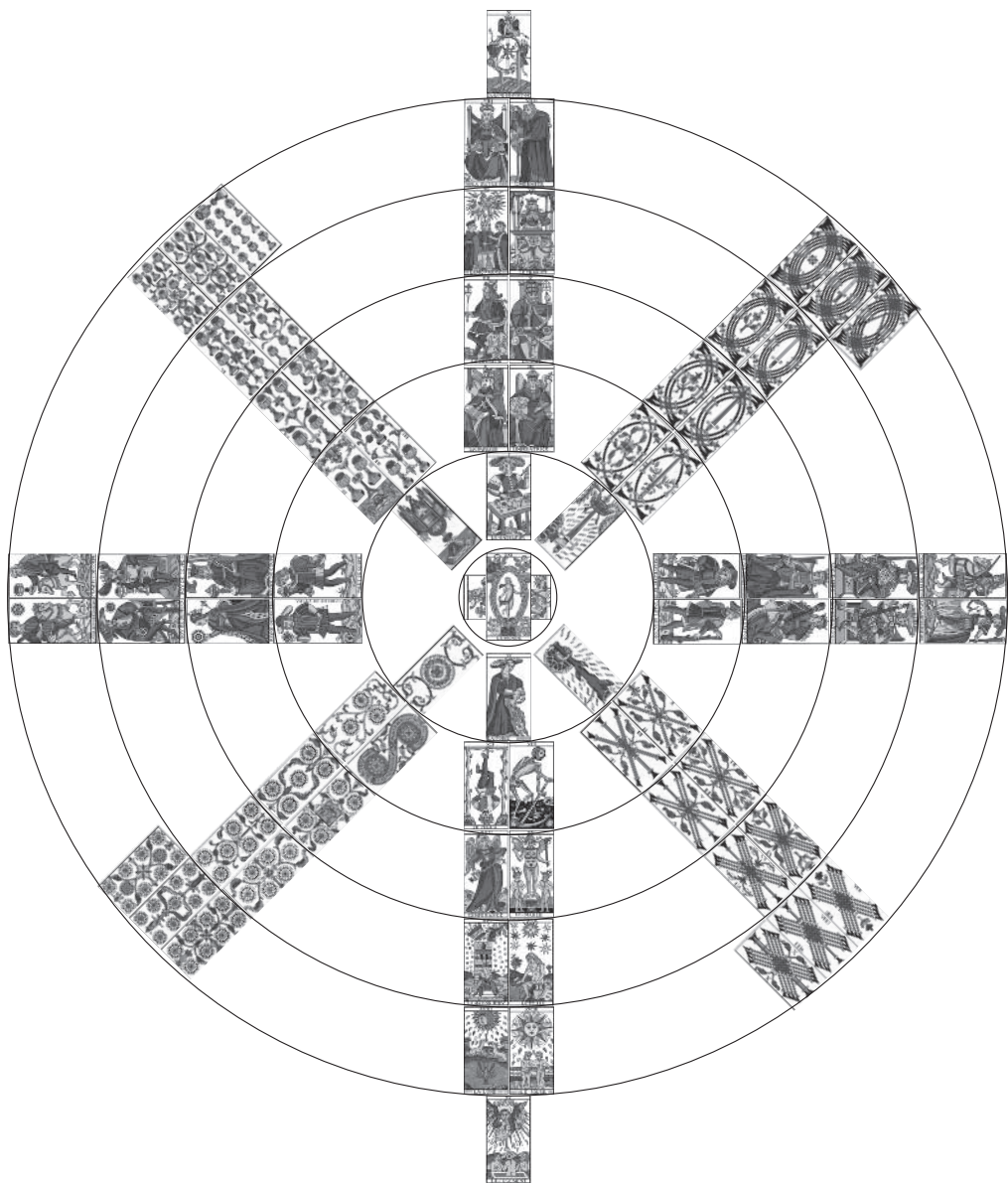
regular octagon, in the center of which is symbolized the binary principle of creation (Yin and Yang). Each side of the figure has a corresponding cardinal direction: north, northeast, east, southeast, south, southwest, west, northwest. Incidentally, baptismal fonts often have an octagonal base, because this shape in Christian symbology refers to eternal life and the resurrection. We find six cards that have been fit inside the center of this octagon, and similarly, the hexagon fit inside the octagon as a symbol of the burial of the individual ego in its tomb before being reborn in the grace of the essential Being:



**9.** If we draw concentric circles using the crossing of The Fool-The World as our center, it can be seen that the cards of the same level are always located within the same circle, except for the 10s of the Minor Arcana pursuing their dynamic of circular engendering, while the 10 levels of the Major Arcana follow this dynamic from their positions at the top and the bottom (see p. 92).

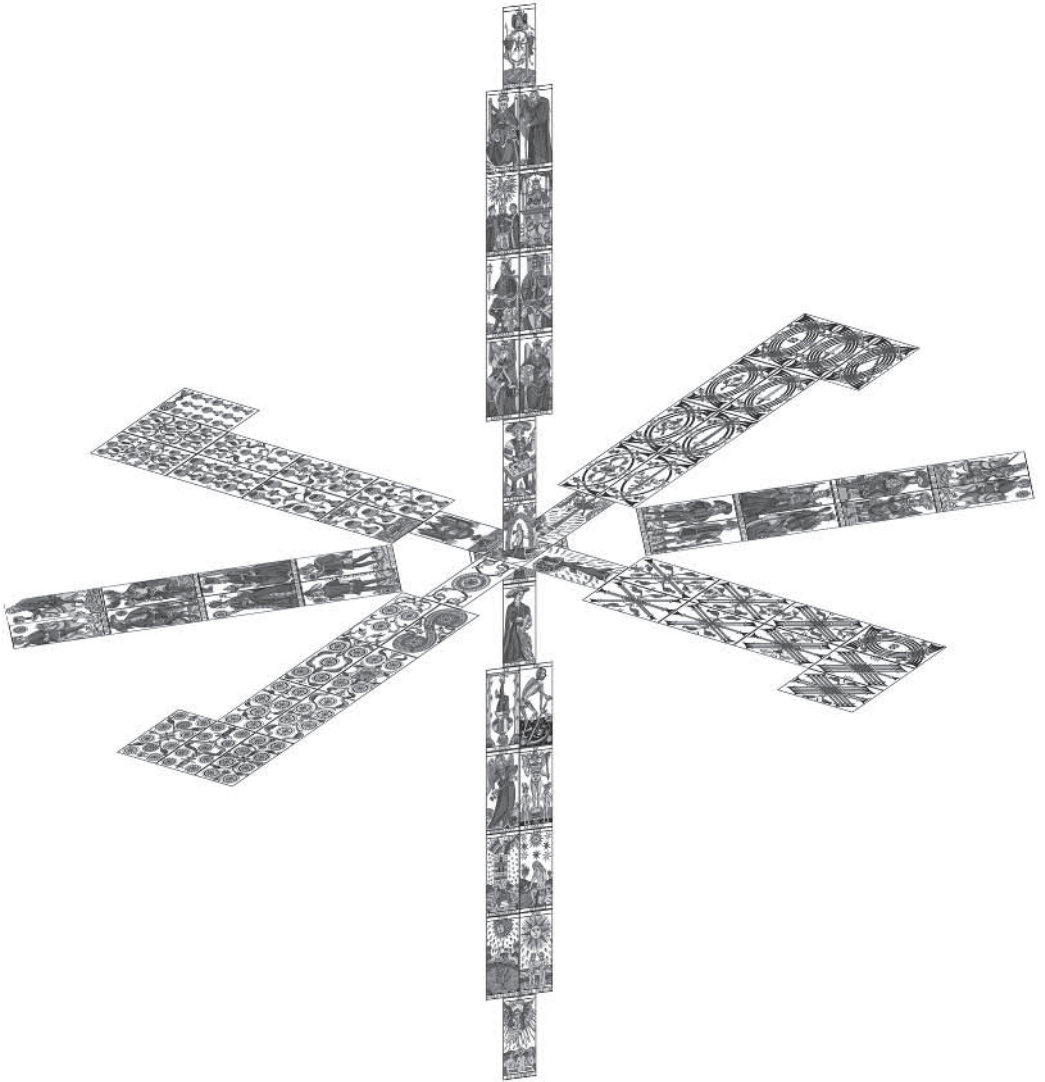
**10.** If we visualize the mandala in three dimensions, we have to see it as a cross with six branches (see p. 93). The axis of the Major Arcana will therefore be the vertical axis, and we can then arrange the Minor Arcana on the four planes of front and back and left and right, in a revolving movement.





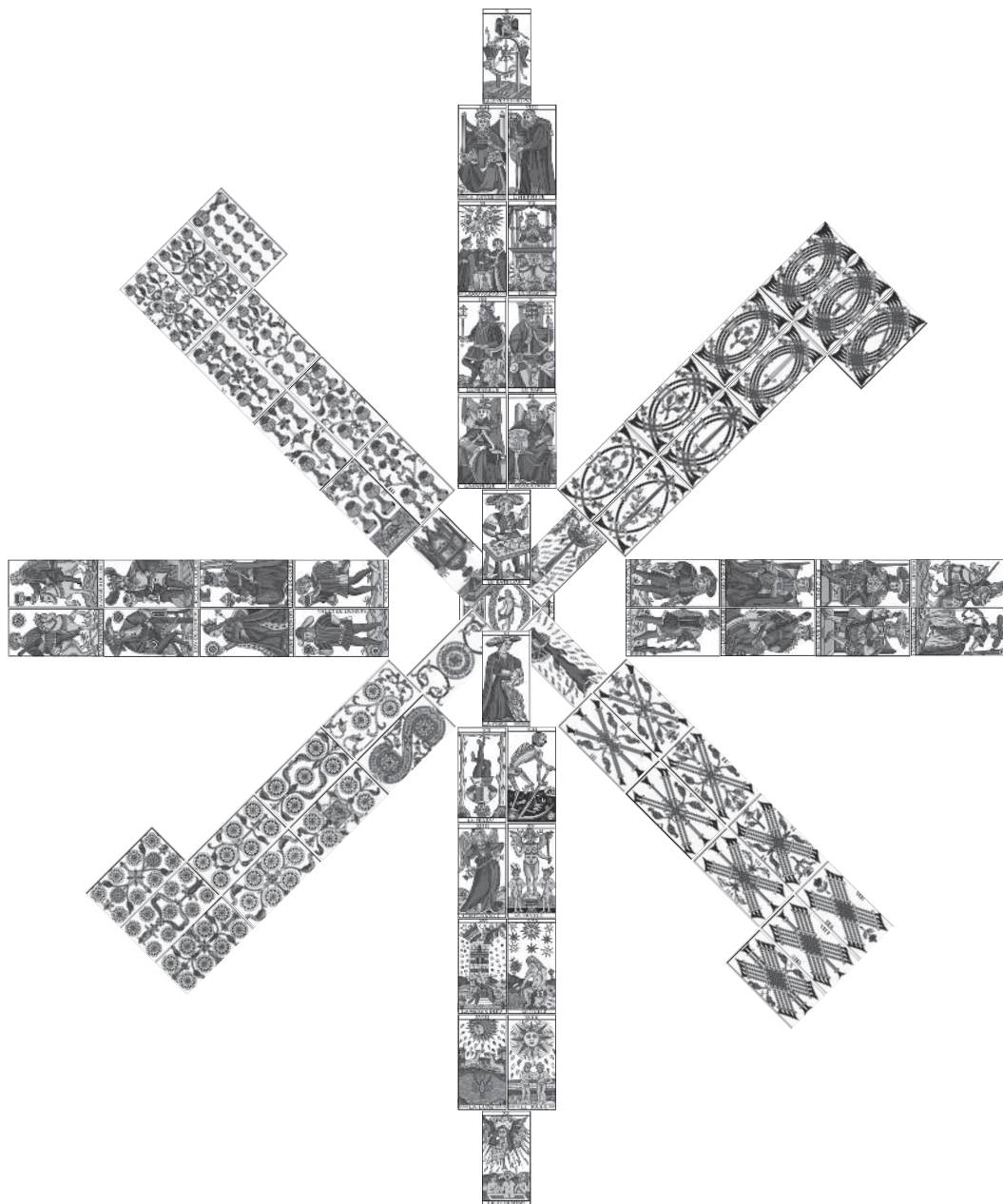
Concentric circles showing that cards of the same level are located within the same circle





The Mandala of the Tarot in three dimensions





The Mandala of the Tarot. The Major Arcana form the vertical, spiritual axis of the mandala. In its final form, in which the Aces of each Suit are placed on top of their corresponding symbols on The World card, the Tarot mandala acquires its maximal force.



# The Eleven-Color Scale

Every culture, religion, and tradition provides its own version of color symbolism. However, they all share a common background: the combat (or dance) between light and darkness gives birth to color. The appearance of the color scale depends on whether light or dark is predominant.

When the time comes to classify the colors, we should remember that the Tarot shows them in all their variety without suggesting any specific order—in contrast to the structure of the cards, which, as we just saw, provides us many clues concerning the numerology and orientation of the Tarot.

Any classification of the Tarot will therefore have to be put into perspective, and we can adopt different structures at will to help us interpret them. Colors are always ambivalent: their meaning cannot be purely positive or negative. With respect to their symbolic meaning, their significance will vary depending on cultures, and there again we are not able to reduce them to a system of strict equivalents. The clues in the trail suggested here are therefore open propositions that make no claim to exhaust the study of colors.

## THE SYMBOLOGY OF COLORS

Here are several useful clues for getting one's bearings in the reading of the Tarot.



**Black.** This color refers to two opposing and complementary notions. On one hand, there is the idea of the void: the total absence of light or any color. Zen monks wear black clothing. Similarly, in *The Dark Night of the Soul*, St. John of the Cross is basically saying that to reach God, it is necessary to go where one is not. One is reduced to emptiness, one disappears, one stops thought and returns into nothingness.

But, on the other hand, black is also the creative magma containing all the seeds of life, the primal matter: the alchemical *nigredo*, an amorphous rotting mass that serves as compost for purity. It is the chaos in which order begins; all life first germinates in darkness.

**White.** Opposite to black, white is the luminous union of all the colors, a realization in which everything arrives at perfect union and purification. It is the antithesis of flesh and black. From the negative point of view, white also refers to the mortal cold of snow and fear. It is the color of God or the color of death.

White and black determine the extremes between which the other colors are deployed. One can place the color of flesh in the middle.

**Flesh.** This is the specific color of human flesh in the Western cultural region where the Tarot is active. The flesh color represented here is the color of living flesh and evokes the present life—just as black can very easily speak of the past and white of the future if one likes. It cannot be said that the flesh color is innately positive or negative: it adopts all the mental forms of the human being, both good and evil. It is the preeminent example of the ambiguous. We contain both Heaven and Hell within, violence and peace. All the opposites are reunited in the color of flesh.

Red and green are found in the domain of material life.

**Green.** The vital color of exuberance, green evokes dominant Nature, eternal birth, and perpetual transformation. The prophet Muhammad adopted it as the color of eternity. Green is the bursting of life in one place; plant life is active only where it has buried its roots. This is the reason why



green can also mean absorption and being engulfed. In the unconscious, green symbolizes attachment to the mother. While Mother Nature gives us life, there is a risk that she will bind us, deprive us of our freedom, and bury us.

**Red.** This color could represent the active part of the Earth: the central fire, blood, and warmth. It is the preeminent color of activity. Negatively, red is evocative of spilled blood, danger, and taboo. If red is on the outside, it signifies death, whereas when it is circulating inside the body, it represents life.

We find blue and yellow among the celestial colors.

**Blue.** The preeminent color of reception, blue is the color of the sky and the ocean, and also evokes attachment to the father. Its negative dimension could be one of immobility and asphyxia: when blood is no longer being purified by oxygen, it becomes blue.

**Yellow.** The light of the intellect and consciousness, yellow has been compared with gold, the symbol for spiritual wealth. The philosopher's stone of alchemy transmutes all metals into gold. Its negative quality could be aridity.

**Violet.** This color is the blend of red, the most active color, with blue, the most receptive. This union of the two extremes represents supreme wisdom. When Christ began to speak to his disciples, he was clad in red, but he was wearing violet when he was crucified, symbolizing his attainment of complete wisdom. However, violet is also the color of sacrifice and is identified with funeral rites. But in reality, this involves the death of the ego. Very little violet is found in the Tarot, as it represents the greatest of secrets: domination of the ego to attain an impersonal life.

With these as our foundations, we are able to draw up the table that appears on the next page.



## SEVERAL “MANDALAS” OF COLORS

There are eleven different colors in the restored Tarot: black, deep green, light green, red, flesh, deep yellow, light yellow, deep blue, azure, white, and several rarely occurring spots of violet. The question is, how to organize them together?

In every human culture, at the commencement of intelligence, there is a concept of the universe. In this concept, humans live between Earth and the stars. Currently, the tradition we now live in tells us that Earth is the mother and the Sky is the father. But the opposite concept existed in much older cultures, such as those in Egypt and Africa. Humankind therefore takes a position between these two authorities that produced it, either to separate them or to help them communicate.

In our tradition, which is that of the Tarot of Marseille, the Heavens are the symbol of spirituality, and the Earth is that of material life. The human being is situated between the two.

### The Colors of the Tarot

Color	Positive Meaning	Negative Meaning
VIOLET	Impersonal, wisdom	Sacrifice, death
WHITE	Purity, ecstasy, immortality	Mortal chill, egotism
AZURE (Light blue)	Receptivity to the celestial powers	Dependence upon the father, immobility
DEEP BLUE	Receptivity to earthly powers	Despotism, tyranny
LIGHT YELLOW	Clairvoyance, awareness, active intelligence	Aridity, cruelty, dry mind without emotion
DEEP YELLOW	Awareness, receptive intelligence	Madness, destruction
FLESH	Humanity, life, carnal pleasure	Materialism, carnal repression
RED	Animal realm, activity	Criminal violence
LIGHT GREEN	Nature connected to the celestial powers, the plant realm	Dependence upon the mother, envy
DEEP GREEN	Nurturing Nature connected to the terrestrial powers	Engulfment, absorption
BLACK	Creative magma, work in the depths	Chaos, regression, death impulse



If we accept describing orange as a deep yellow, we can say that three colors can be divided into light and deep tones: blue, green, and yellow.

Black, white, and violet are hues that have no subtleties. With respect to the colors red and flesh, meanwhile, their kinship is interesting: to a certain extent we can consider the color flesh to be a lighter shade of red. The red of animality, which is purely terrestrial and active, becomes spiritualized in the flesh color that signifies the human being. But we can also consider these two colors to be completely separate entities.

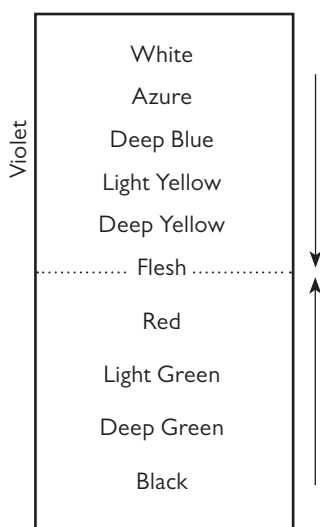
This allows a group of five “bold” colors to stand out that have no light or dark subtleties. These colors are black, white, red (the three most common colors of the alchemical work), flesh (human), and violet (the androgyne).

Organized this way, the flesh color sits at the center just like the human horizon of the Tarot. At the highest part of the Heavens we have the color white, which contains all the colors and represents purity, life, euphoria, immortality, and an almost inhuman degree of perfection. Out of the divine white is born the celestial blue color, azure, then the yellow that is reminiscent of the vibration of the sun.

The color flesh forms the horizon, the line of separation or union between Earth and sky. It symbolizes the human realm, pleasure, and its repression.

At the very bottom of the Earth, at its uttermost foundation, we place black, a vibration containing no color, the creative magma of the depths of the unconscious. Above it the plant world, the color green, takes birth. In light green, Nature is involved with celestial forces, and dark green represents the nurturing nature of the terrestrial forces. Green is then succeeded by red, the violent, vital, and creative power possessing the gift of life or death.

Violet is envisioned as the frame of the rectangle and is like The Fool hidden beneath The World in the Tarot mandala, as it props up the entire structure.





The flesh color can also be interpreted as an orange blended with white. The color of flesh also represents the human being, vitality permeated by consciousness, whereas orange would be the color of vital, active growth without divine awareness.

Yellow would then become the color of celestial light and red that of terrestrial magma—pure activity.

In this hypothesis the “bold” colors are black, red, yellow, and white (the four colors of the alchemical work), and violet, the mysterious union between action and reception.

This provides the organizational arrangement of the colors as depicted in the table below.

<b>WHITE</b>	Purity
Azure	Spiritual receptivity
Deep Blue	Intuitive, terrestrial receptivity
<b>YELLOW</b>	Intelligence
Flesh	Human realm, conscious life
<b>VIOLET</b>	Horizon line of union and border between action/ reception and Heaven/Earth
Orange	Vital domain of pure receptivity
<b>RED</b>	Activity
Light Green	Celestial nature
Deep Green	Terrestrial nature
<b>BLACK</b>	That which is buried, hidden, and unconscious

We can also organize the colors in accordance with two other diagrams corresponding to the numerology of the Tarot. One is based on the double square; the other fits into a circle and is inspired by the symbolic pattern of Arcanum XXI, The World.

## THE CIRCULAR DIAGRAM

This pattern corresponds to a vision of the world that consists of depicting the whole not as a rectangle but as a circle, the universe in constant expansion, born from a single central point. This circle is then crossed by a horizon that, like the one in Genesis, separates the Heavens from the Earth (fig. 1 on p. 101).

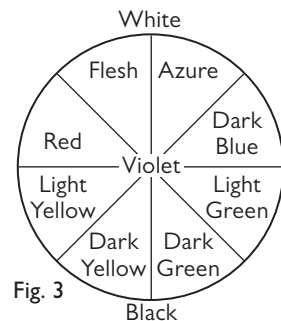
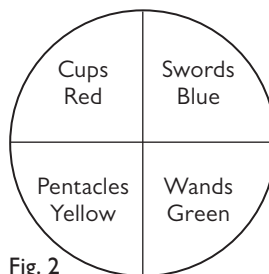
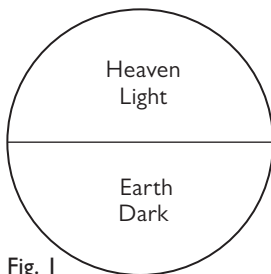


The vertical left/right subdivision then separates the receptive “feminine” from the active “masculine”: this is Eve born from Adam’s rib while he sleeps. This divides the circle into four quarters to which, following the outline proposed by Arcanum XXI (see p. 49), we can attribute the four elements corresponding to the four Suits of the Minor Arcana: Pentacles or corporeal center; Wands or sexual, creative center; Cups or emotional center; and Swords or intellectual center. Each color will find its correct place depending on the symbol one has chosen to attribute to it (fig. 2).

We may choose to associate Pentacles with the yellow of gold, the green of natural activities with Wands, the red of divine love with Cups, and celestial-air blue with Swords. Black remains at the foundation of the Earth and White at the zenith of the Heavens, while Violet, the color of the androgyne (the central figure on Arcanum XXI), is placed at the center of the circle. It then becomes obvious that the lighter shades are closer to the sky and the darker shades are closer to the Earth. In this diagram, the color flesh is associated with light red (fig. 3).

This gives us the following correspondences:

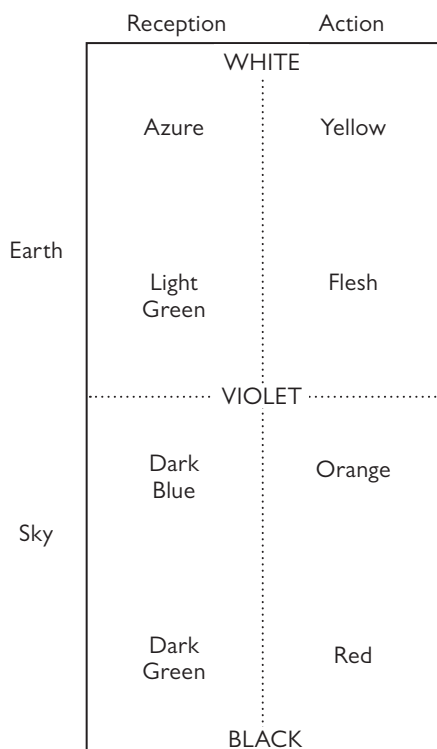
- Earth/active: light green and dark green
- Earth/receptive: yellow and orange
- Heaven/active: sky blue and dark blue
- Heaven/receptive: red and flesh
- Center: violet
- Zenith: white
- Nadir: black.





## THE RECTANGULAR DIAGRAM

The rectangular diagram, with which we are already familiar, includes a receptive left side and an active right side. If we assume that so-called cold colors are receptive and so-called warm colors are active, we can divide them up inside a double square, respecting the Tarot's laws of orientation:



This shows us that there is not a single and exclusive way to organize the colors. According to the reading, these different structures can help us interpret the symbols, but it would be wrong to claim it is possible to organize the colors into a single diagram that restricts their meanings.



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**PART TWO**

*The Major Arcana*

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# Opening

## *An Architecture of the Soul*

Throwing all the “initiates” and their “esoteric” versions overboard, I decided that the true teacher was the Tarot itself. This was a long, methodical labor that required enormous patience on my part. Using a projector, I projected the Arcana on large pieces of cardboard and copied them down to their most infinitesimal details. I identified myself with each figure, speaking in its name, but also in the name of its details: I imagined what the red wand of The Fool was saying, as well as the words of the fetal eagle caressing The Empress, the crown that is either opening or closing at the top of The Tower, or the bone flute lying on the black ground of Arcanum XIII. Examining the left leg of the naked woman of The Star, I saw a child’s posterior there; between the flames (or the feathers or the tail of some entity) and the crown of The Tower I spotted the head of a ghost, and so on. Because the drawings often seemed to extend beyond their rectangular frames, countless questions surged into my mind. Did The Magician’s table have a fourth leg outside of the card? What is The Hanged Man hiding in his hands? What is The Fool carrying in his sack? What is behind The High Priestess’s veil? Is the prince of The Chariot a dwarf standing on a pedestal? Is the red of The Hermit’s lamp blood? and so on. Thousands of questions that I did not try to answer with any exact response—imagination being infinite, there is not one—but I attempted to find one that would



momentarily satisfy me and prove useful to me even if another solution thrust itself upon me later.

I sat down in meditation and looked at the cards—one by one—in my imagination for hours. I gradually perceived that each of them acted like a talisman. These were not simple images but, in a certain way, individual beings, each with a different personality, impossible to define in words. Having engraved these drawings in my memory, when I held the cards in my hands, which existed both in the outside world and in my mind, I became aware of their infinite complexity. When I sought to interpret the optical sentences that the union of two or more of the Arcana gave me, I found myself obliged to translate them into words, which amounted to limiting them. Except for giving them names, just who can say exactly what a color is? Every poet who makes the attempt manages to approach color's essence, but always in a subjective and imprecise fashion.

But another insurmountable difficulty appeared to join this one when I realized that the cards “spoke” not only when they were next to each other, but also when they were on top of each other. Mentally mixing the drawings together, I was able to imagine them as if they were transparent. When I superimposed them, they indicated that they corresponded to one another in obedience to complex units of measurement. I was given confirmation that the Tarot had been created based on transparency in the book *The Temple of Man*,<sup>1</sup> by Egyptologist René Adolphe Schwaller de Lubicz, in which he asserts the same thing concerning the Temple of Luxor: “In the transparency, if the wall were of glass, we would be able to see for example, a sign or a figure drawn on the back side that would fill in a blank space left on the front side.” Here are several examples: The Emperor's scepter could be the axis of the sun in Arcanum XVIII; The Empress's scepter has the same length as The Pope's staff; the Ace of Pentacles completes the half circle of the Ace of Cups . . . The combinations are infinite. But how can these messages be translated into words? Everything that has been said, is said, and will be said about the meaning of the Arcana can only be a subjective explanation, never an exact definition. Those who declared, “This is the traditional meaning of the Arcanum,” were either naive sorcerer's apprentices or charlatans.



For a long time, though I found it quite difficult to do so, I kept my Tarot in a box, feeling it was impossible to use it objectively with any success. One night I had a dream that showed me the road to take.

I saw myself walking naked through a desert of white sand. A blue rabbit with clipped ears rolled down from the top of a dune and bumped into my feet. When it touched me, the shape of its head changed to look like mine. Our bodies blended to form one. I was both a human witness and an animal guide. I/we reached the horizon, which was the color purple. The Fool, gigantic in size, appeared on this line performing acrobatics. He gave me a glance of complicity while opening his sack toward the heavens. The stars came loose from the sky and transformed into fireflies, which flew down into the sack. The Fool turned it upside down toward the ground, onto which these luminous insects fell and changed into seeds. Creating sounds of angelic delicacy with his tiny bells, he opened his jacket and, pointing to his green chest, invited me to enter him. Like a frog jumping into a lake thousands of years old, I dove into the giant. I had the impression of exploding into a cloud of energy. I was engulfed in a ceaseless whirlwind of thousands of images, I became countless beings simultaneously, which all boiled down to a roar of cataclysmic laughter uttered by an immaterial mouth. I remember that having become this chaos called The Fool, I then launched off toward the firmament, crossing the cosmos at incredible speeds. I suddenly found myself in a starless sky, shining at the center of which were two pyramids, one black and the other white, assembled in such a way as to form a six-pointed volume. This body, which I sensed was endowed with a limitless consciousness, drew me like a magnet attracts a piece of metal. I allowed it to absorb me. I exploded, transformed into light. I woke up full of energy, with the sensation of having experienced pure happiness.

This oneiric experience—which inspired me to create the graphic novel *L'Incal* with Moebius—showed me how to study the Tarot. I understood how each Arcanum, having different characteristics from the others, acts in consciousness like an archetype. As Carl Gustav Jung put it:



The archetype is a force. It has an autonomy and it can suddenly seize you. . . . It is the biological organization of our mental functioning in the same way that our biological and psychological functions follow a model. . . . Man has a model, a form that specifically makes him a man and no man is born without this. We are profoundly unaware of these things because through our senses we live outside ourselves. If man could look inside himself he would discover it. . . . This aspect of human personality, repressed in the majority of cases by virtue of its incompatibility with the image the individual has of himself, is not composed solely of negative character features but also represents the whole of the unconscious. It is, almost as a general rule, the first face by which the unconscious introduces itself to the conscious mind. . . . We do not know what an archetype is (meaning what it is made of) because the nature of the psyche is not accessible to us, but know archetypes exist and that they cause effects. . . . The better we understand the archetype, the greater a role we play in its life and the stronger our grasp on its eternal and timeless qualities.<sup>2</sup>

To comprehend the Arcana, we have to enter inside them stripped of words. Better, we should allow ourselves to be possessed by them.

During this time I was lucky enough to be in contact with a group of Vodou adepts. The deities they worked with reminded me of the Major Arcana. Each of these deities had a musical rhythm, a costume, personal objects, and a personal way of moving and doing things. There was Legba, a lame old man walking with the aid of a crutch, who dressed in rags and appeared quite fragile but possessed a truly terrible strength; Agwe, dressed as a naval officer with white gloves, who blows with all his strength to imitate the booming roar of a storm at sea; Zaka, a simple country dweller wearing a blue shirt and a straw hat who is distrustful and anxious, constantly scared he will be swindled by city slickers; Ogoun, the angry warrior, who wears a French-style kepi and a red dolman and brandishes a sword or a machete; the seductive Erzulie, who wears lots of jewels and pink and light-blue dresses, and is constantly applying makeup to her face; Baron Samedi, death's emissary, who wears a top hat and several pairs of sunglasses, all the pockets in his



tailcoat torn so everything he puts into them falls onto the ground; and so forth. By means of ritual acts, the adepts go into trances, becoming “mounts” that are “ridden” by these gods. I said to myself, “I should work with the Tarot in the same way as Vodou adepts. I should feel each card, allow it to absorb me, and put myself at the service of its expression.”

This is exactly what I did. When I “was” The Magician, I felt the energy of the yellow cord that encircled my hat uniting me to the remotest reaches of the universe in order to gain a Cosmic Consciousness that burst into the eight powerful suns nesting in my hair. In one hand I held the sorcerer’s wand capable of capturing divine energies and injecting them into matter to perform miracles. In the other hand, I held the golden orb capable of healing all the ills of humanity . . . I felt the agile movements of this figure, his intelligence, his shrewdness, his capacity for attention, and his speed. Thanks to my immense dexterity, I was a metaphysical thief capable of stealing from the gods the secret of immortality.

Patiently, day by day, I performed this same exercise by allowing each of the other seventy-seven Arcana to possess me. When they entered my subconscious, imprinting themselves upon it as if they had always formed part of my dreams, I tried to make them speak. What would The Tower, Arcanum XIII, the Page of Cups, or the Nine of Wands really have to say? I ran into another difficulty. If, when I entered a trance and all the Arcana spoke, sometimes in the form of poetry, nothing could prove that their words were objective and came from a world outside of me. In all probability, their discourses were manifestations of my subjectivity: simple self-portraits. I once again visualized the twenty-two Major Arcana to see how I projected myself into them. Of course The Sun, Arcanum XVIII, reminded me of the village of my birth, Tocopilla, built on the edges of the Tarapaca Desert, the driest region of the planet, where it had not rained in centuries. For me, this Sun held mortal threats of aridity. On the other hand, by combining its flaming disk with The Emperor’s scepter, I could not help but see Jaime, my very strict father, who was so stingy with his affection and so “dried out” on the emotional plane. I observed that three cards terrified me: Justice, The Hanged Man, and Arcanum XIII. At first glance, the three



figures gave me the sensation of a punishment imposed by the law. The implacable judge condemns to torture someone who has committed an illegal act. Death eliminates not only him but also the whole of humanity, the planet, the stars, the universe. This terror seemed childish to me, but feeling it embedded in the very marrow of my bones I realized that Justice was my pregnant mother, that The Hanged Man was me in the fetal state, and that Arcanum XIII was the desire to eliminate me she poured freely over my body. At the time when I was conceived, I was not wanted, and my parents detested each other. My arrival caused their relationship to become suffocating. The nine months of gestation changed for me into a fight for survival. The result was that I was born permeated by a visceral terror. Every moment I felt this command: "It is forbidden for you to live. You are guilty of having invaded our world. You should not resist against the umbilical cord that was strangling you. To us, you are a poison." I realized that this was the reason that years later, although relatively happy, around every nine months I felt a desire to die. I was subjugated by the coldness of my mother, who brandished an imaginary sword like Justice while decreeing: "You had no right to be born; obey my order, disappear." What could I do?

The study of Tarot became therapy for me. I began working on my projections. An infinite number of interpretations can be given to a dream—superstitious, psychoanalytical, mystical, and so forth. I told myself: "If the images that emerge from the unconscious have countless meanings, and if all of them are mine, I should reject those that are the product of anguish and choose those that bring me closer to divine consciousness." Although I was raised by an atheist father who mocked all the sacred books, I permitted myself to speak of "God" because the word *God* appears in Arcanum XVI,\* and at least half of the Major Arcana have a connection with religious thought. The Fool, who moves forward while looking at the sky, could easily be a visionary monk; Arcanum XIII bears the four sacred letters—*Yod-Hay-Vav-Hay*—carved on its skull that form the name of the Hebrew God (see pp. 201–2); The High Priestess and The Pope are studying and passing

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\*[The Tower is known as La Maison Dieu, "The God House." —*Trans.*]



on a sacred text; there are angels in The Lover, Temperance, Judgment, and The World; and The Devil, the fallen angel, appears in Arcanum XV. The Hanged Man could easily be depicting Jesus Christ sacrificing himself. He is suspended between two trees on which twelve red drops that could represent the Apostles can be seen. And even though some may find this interpretation fallacious, they cannot deny that this figure is wearing the ten Sephirot of the kabbalistic Tree of Life on his chest. Not being able to refute the mystical appeal produced by the Tarot, yet loyal to the atheist teachings of my father, I tried to elucidate the “God” theme by interpreting The Fool as vital energy, The High Priestess and The Pope as the Jungian *anima* and *animus*, the angel of The Lover as the power of the libido, The Hanged Man as the ego that surrenders to the Essence, the nameless Arcanum (XIII) as the will to transformation through elimination of the superfluous, Temperance as inner communication, The Devil as the impulses of the collective unconscious, the angel of Judgment as a higher dimension of consciousness, and The World as the universal soul. But these efforts were futile; I was unable to erase the word “God” from Arcanum XVI. Despite my deeply rooted atheistic consciousness, I found myself obliged to face this demanding question from the Tarot: “What does God mean to you?”

For me, the “dignitary” God, the primary actor of all sacred works, can have neither name nor human shape, nor sex nor age. He cannot be the exclusive property of any one religion. Whatever denomination or quality is attributed to him, it can never be anything but a superstitious approximation. He is impossible to define with concepts or images and inaccessible when pursued. Because he is all, it is absurd to try to give him something. The only possible solution: welcome him into yourself. But how can you do this if he is intangible and inconceivable? He is only received through the changes and transformations he brings to our lives in the form of mental clarity, amorous bliss, creative ability, health, and prosperity. If we imagine him as eternal, infinite, and all-powerful, it is only through comparison to what we think we are: finite, ephemeral, and impotent in the face of this transformation we have dubbed “death.” If everything is God and God does not die, then nothing dies. If everything is God and God is infinite, then nothing has limits. If



everything is God and God is eternal, nothing has a beginning or an ending. If everything is God and God is omnipotent, nothing is impossible. Being incapable of naming or believing in Him—in That—I could still sense Him intuitively in my deepest depths; I could accept His will, the will that created the universe and its laws, and to imagine Him as an ally, no matter what happens. “I support you . . . I trust you . . .” That is all. I don’t need to say more; words are not the direct route. They can point out the way but cannot take you there. I accept being part of this incomprehensible mystery, this entity who is and is not, and who lacks all dimension and time. I accept surrendering to His designs and hoping that my existence is not a whim, a joke, an illusion, or a game, but an inexplicable necessity of His Work: to know that this impermanent impermanence forms part of what my mind imagines as the cosmic plan, to believe that by being an infinitesimal cog in an immeasurable machine I am taking part in His eternity, that this change my body calls “death” is the door I must go through to submerge myself in what my heart feels as total love, what my sexual center imagines as an endless orgasm, and what my intellect names “illuminated vacuity.”

How does the Tarot present God to us? It presents Him as The Tower, the mysterious presence in which the universe dwells, and which, because we are united to it, is our body. We are the renters of a Master who feeds us, supports us, and keeps us alive for the span of time determined by His Will. We can make this safe refuge of a house into a garden or a garbage dump, a place where our creativity flourishes or a dark nook ruled by bad taste and stench; between these passive walls we can either procreate or commit suicide. The house does not have its own behavior, it is simply there, and its quality depends on how we use it. We can make it into a temple or a prison. The Tower shown us by the Tarot carries the treasure of immortality, but not as a gift. Humanity can only win it at this price. If it cannot succeed here, because of poor use of this gift, it is condemned to vanish.

In Arcanum XVI we see The Tower giving birth to human beings (see p. 220). An indefinable shape—lightning bolt, feather, comet, energy—



subtracts some power from the crown, rational human will, so that enlightened individuals, beneath the joyful dance of the stars, can realize that God is not in the beyond but in matter itself. The two acrobats, perhaps a man and a woman, are caressing plants; one of them is connected, through a blue extension emerging from his chest, to the mountains, which are also bathed in light blue. The indefinable shape as well as the crown, the stars, the tower, the plants, and the mountains form part of the awareness of these two beings.

This way of understanding the divine unit, the unit that is the origin of all creation, confronts us with the impotence of rational language that, with its conceptual system perpetually pursuing differences and limits, seeks to understand, define, and explain a reality in which absolutely everything is united and forms a single body. If we can accept that each concept does not constitute reality but is a reduced portrait of it, we will be able to learn how to use words not as definitions of the world but as symbols depicting it.

A symbol permits an infinite variety of meanings, one for every individual who perceives it. This is how a cross can have extremely diverse levels of interpretation, going from an instrument of torture to the sacred central point that generates the four elements of which the universe consists, or the Christ shaped by the four Gospels in passing through the cross of time and space. Each Arcanum of the Tarot, with the indefinable presence of The Fool as its foundation, does not offer only one single definition established in the centuries that came before. They are Towers open to an infinite number of interpretations. This is, of course, unacceptable to those individuals whose minds operate exclusively on Aristotelian logic. These kind of people demand to be given precise meanings and "arrested symbols." "An Arcanum is this and only this! It cannot be both light and darkness at the same time! There cannot be an infinite number of interpretations; the subjectivity of the tarologist must be excluded!" Opposing these "arrested symbols," if we heed the Tarot, are "fluid symbols." Dreams consist of ambiguous imagery. The objects of the unconscious have infinite aspects. Magicians and psychoanalysts choose their meanings by forcing them to conform to the superstitions or theories of their teachers. The patients of Freudian



therapists do not dream the same dreams as patients of Jungian or Lacanian therapists. The first see phalluses and vaginas, the second see cosmic signs, and the third see plays on words. So how can we think with fluid symbols?

If we look at them naively, the Arcana of the Tarot contain a simple message. The Fool is a poor vagabond, The Magician is a vendor looking for customers, The High Priestess and The Pope are representations of religious authority, and The Empress and The Emperor are representatives of state power. The Lover is descriptive of emotional relationships; The Chariot, martial prowess; and Justice, the power of the Law. The Hermit is a solitary sage looking for disciples, The Wheel of Fortune represents the vicissitudes of fate; Strength is a dominant woman; The Hanged Man, a punished criminal; The Nameless Arcanum, death; Temperance, our guardian angel; The Devil is the evil spirit offering temptation; The Tower, the punishment of pride; The Star, our good fortune; The Moon indicates madness; The Sun, great success; Judgment, resurrection of the dead; and The World, the ecstasy of realization.

It is possible that the individual or individuals who created the Tarot sought to give it a content easily understood by the simple folk who used it like a game. But this naive reading is useless for us today. If we wish to use it as a therapeutic tool, we need to invest our deepest subjectivity in it. To do this, we should employ it the same way we use a cell phone. When it is uncharged it serves no purpose; we need to recharge it with electricity for it to function. The same is true for the cards of the Tarot. They are symbols that do not say anything specific, which we need to enrich with all kinds of meanings by giving their containers contents that overflow their borders. A seed holds a forest just like the belly of a woman carries all humanity. The individual unconscious, inside the collective unconscious, contains the past of the human race, the planet, and the cosmos. From the initiatory point of view the container is always smaller than its content, insofar as every atom contains God. If the reading does not fill the cards of the Tarot with countless numbers of different contents, it cannot have any result. The Tarot has the value that we give it. If we are mediocre, we will charge it with superficial meanings; we will talk only of love affairs,



economic problems, atmospheric conditions, health, accidents, deaths, and social successes and setbacks, thereby weakening the reading. To really “charge” the Arcana, we must learn to see them in their holistic entirety at the same time as we see their most infinitesimal details. Each symbol does not have one fixed meaning. It is not a question of finding its “secret definition.” It involves giving it the most sublime definition possible.

For example, almost all the authors state that the figure of The Hermit is lifting a lantern. But others, conferring upon him the identity of Chronos, think that he is displaying an hourglass. Those who attribute the identity of Saturn to him declare that the red spot of the lantern is the blood of the children he has eaten. An alcoholic claimed to me that he saw a pitcher filled with wine in this figure’s hand. Meanwhile, a poet saw it as an enormous glowworm. A Catholic priest maintained that this lantern symbolized the heart of a saint in which burned the blood of Jesus Christ casting its light over humanity. Someone else saw it as a miserly priest hiding his full wallet. No version should be scorned as long as one respects the forms, the number, the color, and the name of the symbol. (If we accept the hypothesis that the Tarot is French in origin, we can find hidden messages in the names of the cards. *Le Bateleur* [The Magician] would say: “*Le bas te leurre*” [What is below (the table) deludes you]; *La Papesse* [The High Priestess]: “*L’appât pèse*” [the bait is heavy]; *L’Empereur* [The Emperor]: “*Lampe erreur*” [lamp error]; *Le Pendu* [The Hanged Man]: “*Le pain dû*” [the bread owed]; *Tempérance* [Temperance]: “*Temps-errance*” [wandering time]; *Le Jugement* [Judgment]: “*Le juge ment*” [the judge lies]; *La Maison Dieu* [The Tower]: “*L’âme et son Dieu*” [The soul and its God].) This use of fluid symbols allows us to adopt a new attitude toward life. Living beings, things, and events can also be considered as Arcana that are fluid and not fixed. Everything, absolutely everything, changes continuously; a person is not a static thing, he or she is a becoming.

A great many of the relations we maintain with reality depend on the content we have given it. We judge the actions of the people around us by the content with which we have charged them. They are continuously either surprising or disappointing us. As spectators of our own



behavior, we charge ourselves with a limited content. And others see us as we see ourselves. Only a spiritual master, when we depreciate our worth in obedience to the negative view of the family or society, can reveal our inner treasure to us, which is to say charge us with sublime values. Some say the modern world is violent and live in terror; others think that the world is a paradise full of violence but that this violence is only an accident, not an essential characteristic.

This is how the Tarot can become a harmful element in the hands of a perverse reader, or the opposite in those of a sublime teacher. It is a mirror of our subjective truth, not absolute truth. We are joined to the Divine by an infinite, eternal, impersonal Consciousness that is always expanding, like the universe. With the pure witness of this inner eye we are able to see ourselves live. But incarnation forces this Consciousness to take on the appearance of our shape/container, which remains fixed because of different traumas. It is from having had adult experiences in childhood or not having had some necessary experience, or from having been subjected by toxic parents to intellectual, emotional, sexual, and physical abuse. The perspective from which we look at life is from that age when we underwent these negative experiences. When we look at the world, it is a world we form from our stunted thoughts, feelings, and desires—from restricted actions, we obtain restricted responses. A magic law says: “The world is what we believe it is.” Initiatory work allows us to change the way we look at things and to observe inner and outer events from a cosmic point of view that is infinite and eternal.

When I see a person who comes for a consultation, the first question I ask myself is, “How old is he? What is the point of view from which he looks at things? And I, as tarologist, how old am I, what is the point of view from which I look at myself?” A Tarot reading by an adult with the mind of a perverse child is dangerous for the life of the person for whom the reading was given. The reader, just like the Arcana, must charge himself or herself before starting to work as if he or she were a shaman or a Vodou adept. Healers and therapists never work in their own names. Both solicit the aid of various deities. If The Magician takes possession of me, I will perform one certain kind of reading; if The Star possesses me, I will do another kind.



Developing this further, after many years, I thought to let myself be possessed not by one Arcanum but by the entire mandala, and imitate holiness. Before this time I had read as an artist, which gave me a very pleasant narcissistic satisfaction. When I decided to become a therapist, I could do nothing less than imagine my reading to be an act of complete and impersonal surrender for the patient's benefit, one in which I developed a boundless kindness that was totally tuned in to the patient's needs. "Moral beauty is goodness. To be intelligently good one must be just. To be just, one must act reasonably. To act with reason, one must have the knowledge of reality. To have the knowledge of reality, one must have consciousness of truth. To have consciousness of truth, one must have an exact notion of being."<sup>3</sup>

Working as an initiate with the Tarot consists of changing our point of view, releasing it from the prison of age to begin observing ourselves with an infinite, eternal, and cosmic regard. Depending on what blows life has dealt us, we will be different ages in our four centers: a person can mentally be an adult of forty, be eight years old emotionally, fifteen sexually, and sixty physically. But the witnessing eye—the inner God, the quintessence, the essential Being—is as old as the universe. We can constantly expand these four points of view. Illness, suffering, and depression are narrow points of view and a lack of awareness. The more Consciousness is forced to work with fixed concepts, feelings, desires, and needs, the greater its ills. But if we can see ourselves from a cosmic perspective, the problems cease.



# To Begin

The purpose of the following presentation of the Major Arcana is not to exhaust the meanings and energies of each of the cards or each of their symbols but rather to guide the gaze of the reader through the immense range of possible interpretations. This is the reason why we opted to present four different approaches to each card. At a glance, the reader can embrace in the form of keywords some of the meanings traditionally attributed to this Arcanum in particular. A more discursive text studies the symbolic meanings of several details of the cards. A summary of a series of traditional interpretations is provided for a rapid consultation of the Tarot. Finally, we decided to let each Arcanum speak for itself, again knowing that the text we offer is but one voice among an infinite number of voices that study of the Tarot allows to emerge in the unconscious over the course of the years.

This multiform presentation responds to one of our dearest concerns: in fact, in most of the works on the Tarot, the Major Arcana are studied like a series of paintings with meanings that have been given once and for all. The reader, after having chosen a certain number of cards, will refer to the text concerning the Arcana he has selected to explain those he drew, and add up the meanings that are offered him according to an established reading strategy. This mechanical concept of the Tarot, which can be useful at a certain point in the learning period as a reference point in the maelstrom of meanings and interrelationships presented to us by the cards, is reductive and contrary to the profound nature of the Tarot.



We have presented some very different approaches side by side—some of which are complementary and some contradictory—to help grasp the Major Arcana. We hope in this way to allow the reader to abandon the illusion of a premade meaning and enter into the contemplative, projective, dynamic, and boundless study of the Tarot without making it impossible to use this book for an immediate consultation of the Arcana.

One more word on the way we've chosen to spell the names of the Major Arcana: the written form of these Arcana seems intentionally ambiguous, which can lend itself to various interpretations.

The words are sometimes separated by a bullet point:

LE•MAT  
 LE•BATELEUR (I)  
 LA•PRIESTESSE (II)  
 LE•PAPE (V)  
 L'A•ROVE•DE•FORTUNE (X)  
 LA•FORCE (XI)  
 LE•PENDU (XII)  
 LE•DIABLE (XV)  
 LA•MAISON•DIEU (XVI)  
 LA•LUNE (XVIII)  
 LE•JUGEMENT (XX)  
 LE•MONDE (XXI)

Sometimes by a simple space:

LE CHARIOT• (VII), which also has a bullet point at the end  
 LA JUSTICE (VIII)  
 LE TOILLE (XVII)  
 LE SOLEIL (XVIII)

The same holds true for the use of apostrophes:

While L'EMPEREUR (III) and L'HERMITE (VIII) each bear one, LIMPERATRICE (II) and LAMOVREUX (VI) seem to be



missing an apostrophe; whereas in L'A•ROVE•DE•FORTUNE its placement forces us to ask: is it an article, or is it the third person singular of the verb “avoir” [to have]? And if the latter interpretation is correct, what is the subject of this verb?

Similarly, the merger of two letters in some cards or the addition of a vertical line lends itself to several readings: should we read LETOILLE or LETOULE? LE SOLEIL or LE SOLEU?

Why is LA JUSTICE spelled with a “J” and LE JUGEMENT with an “I”? Why is the U sometimes replaced by a V (in Arcana VI, X, and XVI)? Why is L'HERMITE spelled the way it is?\*

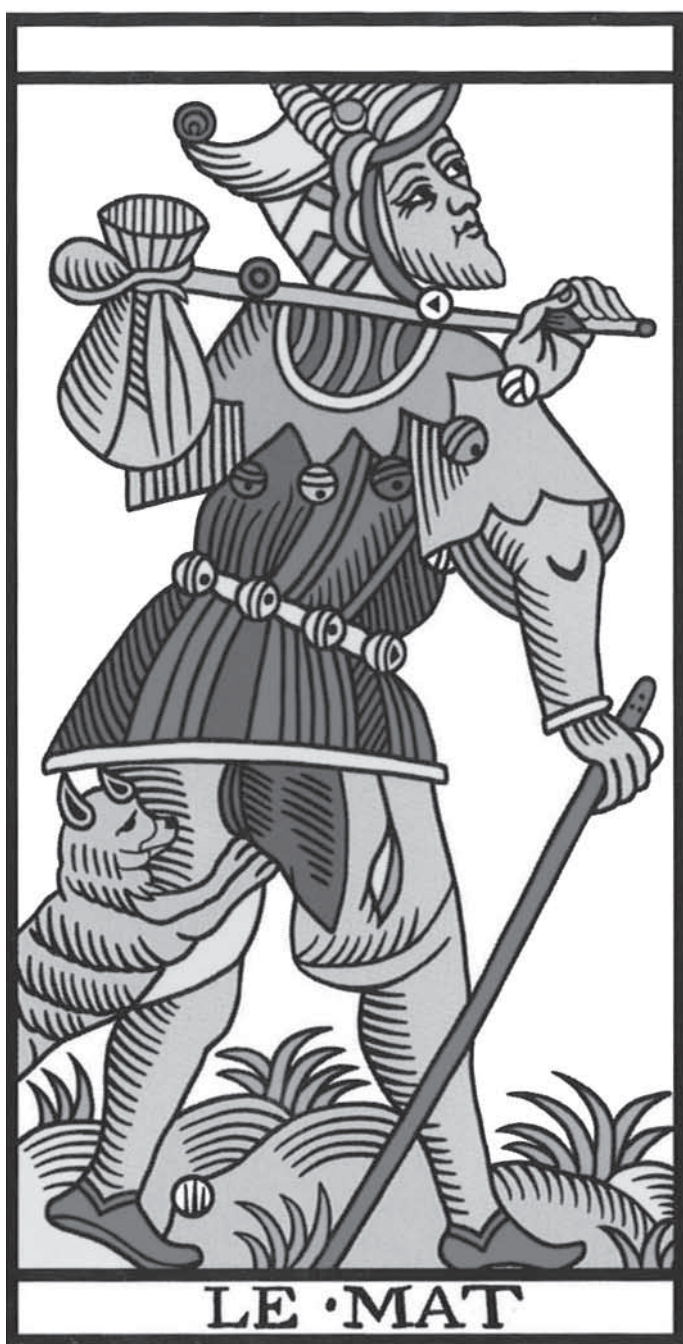
We are not here trying to find answers to these questions, which could open several possibilities of interpretation during the time the cards are being read. But for more simplicity, we have adopted the following convention throughout the book: the Arcana will be referred to as Le Mat, Le Bateleur, La Papesse, L'Impératrice, L'Empereur, Le Pape, L'Amoureux, Le Chariot, La Justice, L'Hermite, La Roué de Fortune, La Force, Le Pendu, the nameless Arcanum of Arcanum XIII, Tempérance, Le Diable, La Maison Dieu, L'Étoile, La Lune, Le Soleil, Le Jugement, and Le Monde.†

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\*[Conventional French spelling would be *ermite*. —*Trans.*]

†[These cards will generally be referred to by their English-language equivalents in the body of the text, save when questions of orthography and similar symbols connected to the original French names of the cards are involved. —*Trans.*]





LE · MAT



# Le Mat/The Fool

## *Freedom, Great Supply of Energy*

The fool has a name, but he does not have a number. It is the sole Major Arcana card not to be defined numerically. He represents the original boundless energy, total freedom, madness, disorder, chaos, or even the fundamental creative urge. In traditional card games, he gave birth to figures like the Joker or the wild-card that can represent any of the other cards at any time without ever being identical to any one of them. The key phrase of The Fool could be “All paths are my path.”

This card gives an impression of energy; on it we see a figure striding resolutely, wearing red shoes, while digging a red staff into the ground with every step. Where is he going? Straight ahead? It is possible, but it is also imaginable that he is turning endless circles around his staff. The Fool depicts the eternal traveler wandering through the world with no ties or nationality. He could also be a pilgrim making his way to a sacred site. Or, in the reductive sense that many Tarot analysts have given him, he could even be a madman wandering aimlessly toward his destruction. If we choose the most elevated interpretation, we shall see The Fool as an individual detached from all needs and complexes and judgments, unbound by any taboos because he has abandoned all demand. He is an illuminatus, a god, a giant drawing an immeasurable liberating strength from the energy flow.



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### Key Words

Freedom • Energy • Travel • Seeking • Origin • Wandering • Essence •  
 Liberating Force • The Irrational • Chaos • Flight • Madness

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His flesh-colored beggar's pouch is lit from within by a yellow light. The bindlestaff he is carrying is light blue and ends in a kind of spoon. It is a receptive axis that carries the light of Consciousness, the essential, the useful substratum of experience. A tiny green leaf, the symbol of eternity, is concealed in his hand holding this staff.

The Fool is also a musical figure, as his costume is decorated with tiny jester's bells. It is easy to imagine that the music he plays is the music of the spheres—cosmic harmony. Symbols of the creative trinity can be seen in several elements of his costume: his staff bears a small triangle composed of three dots; on one of the jester's bells is a white circle divided by three lines. This is easy to see as the Christian trinity or the first three Sephirot of the Kabbalah's Tree of Life, or even the three fundamental processes of life: creation, conservation, and dissolution. The Fool's movement is therefore guided by the divine or creative principle. The path becomes light blue as he sets foot upon it; he advances over a pure and receptive ground that he makes sacred as he wanders across it.

On The Fool's belt we see four small yellow bells that could correspond to the four centers of the human being symbolized by the Suits of the Tarot's Minor Arcana (see p. 50): Swords (intellectual center), Cups (emotional center), Wands (sexual and creative center), and Pentacles (corporeal center). The Fool produces an input of luminous energy to these four centers, which are also symbolized by the four worlds of the Kabbalah: Atziluth, the divine world; Briah, the world of creation; Yetzirah, the world of formation; and Asiah, the world of matter and action.

The animal following The Fool, perhaps a dog or an ape (two animals that imitate man), is resting his paws on the bottom of his spinal column at the level of the perineum, the spot where Hindu tradition places the nervous system that concentrates the influences of the earth (the *muladhara chakra*). If The Fool were a blind man, his animal would be guiding him, but here it is he who is marching in front like the Visionary Id guid-



ing the Ego. The infantile ego has been tamed, and there is no longer any need to seduce it in order to dominate its aggressive nature; it has attained a sufficient degree of maturity to realize that it must follow the essential Being and not impose its whims on it. This is the reason why the animal, which has become receptive, is light blue in color. Because he is now The Fool's friend, the animal collaborates with him and pushes him forward. Half of its body is outside the frame of the card; the fact that it is walking behind The Fool allows us to think that this animal also represents the past. It is a past that does not hinder the advance of the energy to the future.

The Fool's costume is red and green. He is essentially bearing animal life and plant life within. But his light-blue sleeves indicate that his activity, symbolized by his arms, is spiritualized, and his yellow cap bears the light of intelligence. Two half-moons can be seen on his cap. One of them, light yellow framed by an orange circle, is pointed toward the sky. The other, located on the red ball at the end of the back portion of his cap, is pointing toward the ground. The red moon represents the total gift of action, and the yellow moon represents the total reception of Consciousness.

## IN A READING

The Fool evokes an enormous burst of energy. Wherever he goes, he brings this vital impulse with him. If he is looking toward a card, he charges that card with his creative energy. If



The green leaf in the hollow of his hand



The three dots on the staff



The little white bell divided into four by three lines



The receptive crescent moon pointing toward heaven



The active half-moon on the tip of the cap pointing toward the ground





he is moving away from a card preceding him, it means he is leaving one situation to place his forces into a new project, new place, or new relationship. He therefore represents liberation, a flight (material, emotional, intellectual, or sexual). In other words, this card poses the question of knowing how the energy of the subject of the reading is going, and toward what end the subject is applying his or her strength.

The Fool sometimes represents madness or inconsistency when he is identified with a particular person—and, of course, a pilgrimage, a journey, a force that is moving forward. The question is knowing where: The Fool has no personal preference in the matter.

This card, an inseminator of energy, will exacerbate, nourish, or despoil the surrounding cards. The Fool is a mirror of The Nameless Arcanum, which could well be his skeleton. The Fool shows us that the capacity to act is also acquired through the initiatory crossing through madness and death.

## AND IF THE FOOL SPOKE

“Did you know that transformation of consciousness is possible at any moment, that you can suddenly change the perception you have of yourself? People sometimes imagine that taking action means triumphing over the Other. What a mistake! If you wish to act in the world, you must explode that perception of the ego that has been imposed and embedded since childhood, and which refuses to change. Expand your boundaries endlessly and without cease.

“Go into a trance. Let yourself be possessed by a more powerful mind than your own, an impersonal energy. It is not a question of losing consciousness but of allowing the original sacred madness, already within you, to speak.

“Stop being your own witness, stop observing yourself, be an actor in the pure state, an entity in action. Your memory will cease to record facts, actions, uttered words. You will lose all notion of time. Until now you have been living on the isle of reason, neglecting the other living forces and other energies. The landscape is expanding. Become one with the ocean of the unconscious.



“You will then know a state of superconsciousness in which there will be no missed action or accident. Space will no longer be a concept; you will become space. You will have no concept of time; you will become the phenomenon as it happens. In this state of extreme presence, every gesture and every action are perfect. You cannot fool yourself; there is no plan or intention. There is only pure action in the eternal present.

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**Among the Traditional Interpretations**

Long Journey • Long Hike • Madness • Wandering • Instability • Overflowing Imagination • Joie de Vivre • Liberation • Pilgrimage • No Fixed Dwelling • Holy Beggar • Buffoon, Acrobat • Nomad, Emigrant • Delirium • Need to Take Action • Vitality • Freedom • Idealism • Prophet • March Toward Evolution • Visionary • Divine Energy • Input of Energy (if The Fool is looking toward a card) • Liberation or Flight (if he is moving away from a card)

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“Do not be afraid of freeing the instinct, no matter how primitive. Going beyond the rational does not mean denying the mental force: be open to the poetry of intuition, to flashes of telepathy, to voices that do not belong to you, to words that come to you from another dimension. Watch them join to the infinite extent of your feelings and to the inexhaustible creative force conferred upon you by sexual energy. No longer look at your body as a past concept but as the vibrating subjective reality of the present. You will see that your body stops heeding the commands of rational concepts and allows itself to be moved by forces belonging to other dimensions, by the Totality of reality. A caged animal moves like rational perception. The free movement of an animal in the forest is comparable to the trance. The animal in a cage must eat at assigned hours. For action to occur, the rational must be given words. The wild animal feeds itself and never has any illusions about its food. The actions of an individual in a trance are not motivated by what he has learned, but by what is.”



I



LE · BATELEUR



# I

## Le Bateleur/ The Magician

### *Beginning and Choosing*

The Magician bears the number one. This figure contains the whole in potential; it is like the original point from which a universe emerges (see p. 59). For The Magician all is possible. He has a series of elements on the table in front of him that he can use as he pleases, and a pouch that is easily imagined to be inexhaustible, like a horn of plenty. From his table this figure acts toward the cosmos and toward spiritual life.

Although represented by a male figure, The Magician is an androgynous individual working with light and shadow, juggling from the unconscious to the superconscious. He is holding an active wand in his left hand, while in his right he holds a receptive pentacle. This yellow coin, a miniature sun, symbolizes perfection and truth, but it also tells us that The Magician does not overlook the daily necessities. The blue wand in his other hand is seeking to capture the cosmic force. We can also see an extra flesh-colored object there, like a sixth finger, that will find an echo in the second decimal series, in the sixth toe of Strength (see pp. 188–89). This sixth finger is perhaps an indication of his dexterity and skill at organizing reality in conformance with his intelligence,



but it remains a mystery. The Magician could be a prestidigitator who is hiding something under the table or, to the contrary, an initiate.

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### Key Words

Shrewdness • Initiation • Beginning • Need for Aid • Dexterity • Youth  
 • Potentiality • Gives Something Concrete Expression • Disciple •  
 Malice • Verve • Talent • Trickster (sacred)

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His table has three legs. It is conceivable that the fourth leg is located outside the card. It is by going beyond the stage of possibilities and moving into the reality of action and choice that The Magician gives concrete expression to his situation. But we can also see that the 3 is the figure of the mind, and light blue is the color of spiritual receptivity (for more on the colors, see p. 95). Similarly, the yellow shoes of The Magician indicates he touches the Earth intelligently—an earth saturated with the red blood, humanity—while receiving the summons of divine strength. This is a spirit that seeks to situate itself within the human world and find solutions for material life. This card is therefore one that will evoke all the questions concerning employment, work, and profession.

The small yellow tree between The Magician's feet could be the sex organ of Mother Nature, which gave him birth: he comes down from another dimension in search of his world, his public, his field of activity, his art, his ideas, his loves, his desires. He is going to satisfy his needs, cheat, become initiated, begin to live.

We can see three dice on the table, each of which shows three sides: 1, 2, and 4. Each die therefore gives us a value of 7, and if we add all three dice together we get 21, which is the numerical value of the highest of the Major Arcana (XXI The World). We can therefore say that The Magician has the entire Tarot at his disposal up to the total realization of The World. Similarly, he has in his hands and on his table the four Suits of the Minor Arcana (a pentacle, a wand, a knife symbolizing Swords, and a cup) concealed among the objects of conjuring. This indicates to us that we attain the truth by cross-



ing through illusion. An orange shape reminiscent of a snake is at the level of his groin, in between the dice. He has placed the sexual force (or kundalini) in front of him, and he is capable of controlling it.

The hat of The Magician describes the beginning of a spiral. He comes from the invisible insofar as he represents the first point; he emerges from the void to take his first steps in the world. On his hat a spiritual umbilical cord (yellow) is emerging from his hair, the mental realm, and opening to merge anew with the sky in union with the universe. The intense desire to achieve this union is symbolized by the red hump of his hat. His purpose, perhaps, is to manage to immortalize individual consciousness. There are small orange balls (eight) in his yellow locks, symbols of his enlightened intelligence, indicating that he is aware of perfection and has fixed it as his objective. On the psychological plane he could also be seen as a young man who still has his head full of his mother's ideas (the 8 represents Justice, a maternal figure).

The Magician's belt is double. If we consider it as a symbol of the will, we can deduce from it that he is capable of exerting his will over his intellect (the upper part) but also over his animal nature, his flesh. From another perspective, this duality indicates that he has not yet fulfilled the realization of his Being; as long as one is subjugated by one's inner dialogue, illumination and truth will not be there.



The "sixth finger"



The plant shape:  
small tree or female  
sex organ?



The three dice and  
the "serpent's tail"



Four of the eight  
orange balls in the hair



The double belt





## IN A READING

The Magician indicates a beginning. Reasoning is quick. There is no lack of astuteness and talent; all that remains is to take action. This card also indicates the necessity of choosing, deciding, to go into mourning for the “everything is possible” that is the mark of youth.

In the family or the psychological world, this is the boy, the boy one still is even after forty years have passed, the boy one should have been if not born a woman, the boy that one has raised and the boy that one has trouble letting fly on his own wings, the boy one meets and with whom one is preparing to form a couple in which everything is to be invented.

The Magician shows that something is possible, that a new beginning can be made and that nothing is opposed to initiating a new action. His wand could represent a request for help or an inspiration waiting to be charged by a more mature force, or perhaps by the progress of maturity itself.

Even though he is the first of the Major Arcana and an initiate in his own right, The Magician still has a road to travel ahead of him. This is the card of the unity that must choose a way to take action.

## AND IF THE MAGICIAN SPOKE

“I am in the present. Whatever action I wish to undertake, it is now time to commit. My entire future is seeded in the decisions I make at this moment. Do as I do: see all the moments when you are not yourself, where you are not living in the here and now that is the moment of eternity and the site of the infinite. What are you waiting for? Drop those useless burdens that are the remainders of the past and fear of the future. I embody the energy called Consciousness. I am absolutely present here in this body, among other bodies, within a given space and time.

“I am not separate from my surroundings. I am aware of the breathtaking multiplicity of everything that is. I invite you to experience this inventory with me. Be aware of all the spaces, of all matter: trees, plan-



ets, galaxies, atoms, cells. If I am aware I am not merely a limited mind inside a given form, I become the Totality of the divine work.

“How does one become conscious? It is simple: you do not have any past within nor any future, nothing but one moment, the cosmic moment. You should break once and for all with the deviations of the ego, the old wounds. You must detach yourself from all plans, all suffering, all programming. Only then will the light of Consciousness arrive. If you are living for yourself in the moment, death does not exist. You have suffered losses in the past and you may suffer more in the future, but here and now nothing is lost. Perhaps you aspire to perfect yourself, to improve your life, but in the moment there are no aspirations. You are there with all your potential.

---

### **Among the Traditional Interpretations**

Beginning • Prestidigitator • Con Man • Player • Something Is Hidden Beneath the Table • New Enterprise • New Studies • Professional Renewal • Beginning of a Relationship • Young Boy or Mannish Young Girl • Debutant(e) • Shrewdness • Dexterity • Art of Persuasion • Multiple Talents • You Have Everything You Need to Take Action • Need for Help, Guidance • “To Wish, to Dare, to Be Able, to Obey” • A Choice to Make • Hesitation • Multiple Potentials • Animus of the Subject of the Reading, Man or Woman • Beginning of the Quest for Wisdom • Initiate • Magician • Spiritualization of Matter

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“I, The Magician, take a position in the crossroads of eternity and infinity that we call the present. I am loyal to everything that I am: my body, my intelligence, my heart, my creative force. My table of flesh has its three feet rooted in the ground; I anchor myself somewhere in the diversity, and it is from this point that I take action. Out of the infinite number of possibilities, I have chosen one, my golden pentacle, the traction point that will lead me to Totality.”



II



LA·PAPESSSE



## II

### La Papesse/ The High Priestess

#### *Gestation, Accumulation*

The High Priestess bears the number 2, which, in the most common numerology systems, is associated with duality. But in the Tarot 2 is not  $[1 + 1]$ ; it is a pure value in itself that means accumulation (see p. 60). The High Priestess sits on an egg. The first woman of the Major Arcana, she appears to us as a cloistered woman sitting next to an egg that is as white as her oval face. She is doubly in gestation, both herself and this egg.

Symbol of total purity, The High Priestess reveals the intact part inside us that has never been wounded or touched, the virginal witness we carry, sometimes unknowingly, who represents for each of us a well of purification and trust, an unexploited virgin forest that is the source of much potential.

Her imprisonment within the convent, temple, or cloister is symbolized by the curtain hanging from the sky, which is also curling inward. The High Priestess has often been seen as an initiator or a sorceress. She has frequently been incorporated into two great mythical figures: the Virgin Mary of the immaculate conception, destined to bear God



in her womb, and the goddess Isis, magical source of all fertility and transformation.

Four points on her headdress indicate the north, south, east, and west: situated at the center of the cardinal points, her knowledge is linked to matter, the realization achieved through the body. Her tiara sticks out slightly above the frame, where it terminates in an orange point. The High Priestess comes toward us to speak of both our material life and pure mind.

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### Key Words

Faith • Knowledge • Patience • Sanctuary • Fidelity • Purity • Solitude  
 • Silence • Severity • Matriarchy • Rigor • Gestation • Virginity • Cold  
 • Resignation

---

From a negative point of view, her pallor can be read as frigidity, a prescriptive rigidity, an obsession with virginity leading to castration, a ban on living. As a woman, she could be the hurtful mother who never lets the egg hatch and sits over it with glacial authority.

The book she holds destines her to study and knowledge. Flesh-colored, it tells us that she is studying the laws of human incarnation. Because she is not reading it, it gives us reason to think that this open volume is nothing other than herself, waiting for someone to come to decipher it, to awaken her. It also refers to the Holy Scriptures: The High Priestess collects the language of God the Father, the living language. Finally, the seventeen lines signal her kinship with The Star: the horizon for the accumulation of The High Priestess is the action of Arcanum XVII. In the positive and initiatory sense, The High Priestess is preparing a hatching. She is waiting for God to arrive and inseminate her egg.

The three small crosses that decorate her chest signify that, although cloistered in matter, she belongs to the spiritual world. She represents the pure spirit that dwells within each of us and summons us to communicate with this incorruptible divine force. Outside any action and fully receptive, she intransigently purifies everything that could form a barrier to the vibration of divine energy.



## IN A READING

The High Priestess will often refer to a female individual, the mother or grandmother who has handed down either an ideal of purity or an authoritarian coldness. She will also incarnate the cold mother, the sexless woman, who finds justification in a religious ideal or morality, and who does not know how to be tender. But her demand for purity can put us on the trail of a woman of high spiritual stature, a priestess, a therapist, a female guide, who could be of any age. In love, The High Priestess is ready to form a couple based on the union of souls.

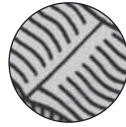
The book she is holding can also direct us to the concerns connected to study or writing of the subject of the reading. The High Priestess then becomes a writer, the plan for a book or any other kind of work, the gestation necessary for an action, even an actress who has received a role to study, or an accountant, or a meticulous reader. Or even the Virgin Mary in person.

Cloistered, The High Priestess evokes isolation, waiting, or solitude—of her own choice or imposed upon her. Her white color can suggest a desire to be reheated by amorous, spiritual, or creative passion. Sexually, she at best represents sublimation and at worst frustration.

The answer to the mystery of The High Priestess may perhaps be found in her attitude toward the egg accompanying her. If she incubates it in lofty solitude and is guided by high standards, a living god may be born from it. Isn't the ostrich egg in Catholicism regarded as one of the symbols of the birth of Christ?



The orange point at the top of her tiara touches the card edge.



The seventeen lines of the book of flesh



The crosses on her chest



Oval and white, symbol of gestation, the egg in the course of incubating





## AND IF THE HIGH PRIESTESS SPOKE

"I have formed an alliance with this mystery I call God. Since that time I see nothing in this material world that is not His manifestation. When I contemplate my own flesh, wood, stone, I detect within them the energy and the presence of the Creator. Every nuance, every tissue, each variation of reality is one of His appearances that manifests in His infinite variety. I live in the world of divine energy. I shiver with all of matter; beneath my feet the entire planet shudders: it is yet another, vaster manifestation of Him. I vibrate in tune with the universe, with fire, oceans, tempests, and stars . . . The energy of all creation comes to me.

"And yet I am a virgin being. Nothing has entered me except for unthinkable God. I do not know impurity.

"I can make contact with you only in that sacred and untouched dimension of your being, your virginal essence. If you come to me talking about passion, sexuality, emotion, I will not understand you. I am far beyond all that, beyond all anguish, and even beyond death. Because if God is in matter, it is immortal, and I no longer have any fears or desires.

"I therefore invite you to join me with what is divine within you. If you become like me, you will be able to enter in to me. Your suffering is impure, your past is impure; do not come to me polluted. Free yourself from that state, because impurity is an illusion, just like guilt. Accept the virginal splendor of your Being! Within all of you human beings, there is a state that never gives anything but God, which can only be possessed by Him, and which is constantly connected to Him. The same is true for the entire living world. In every plant there is an intact center. In every language there is an ineffable content in the words you speak.

"Know that nothing is yours, that you do not own this body, these desires, these emotions, these thoughts. All this is His, it belongs to the eternal and infinite unknown in which you dwell. Give yourself to Him. Receive Him.

"I am pitiless; I demand that you perform this task and that you



abandon, in order to unite with me, everything not worthy of becoming the chalice in which the deity will be able to house itself. I am like those temples where exorcism is practiced, where you must take off your shoes before entering, where the air is purified with incense, where the believers are washed with holy water.

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### **Among the Traditional Interpretations**

Accumulation • Preparation • Study • Virginity • The Writing of a Book  
 • Compatibility • Expectation • Constancy • Retreat • Cold Woman  
 • Forgiveness • Actress Learning Her Role • Nun • Harsh Mother •  
 Obstinacy • Weight of Religion • Isolation • Frigidity • Person of High  
 Moral Quality • Strict Education • Gestation • Need for Warmth •  
 Ideal of Purity • Solitude • Silence • Meditation • Feminine Wisdom •  
 Charismatic Female Figure • The Virgin Mary • The Reading of Sacred  
 Texts

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“In union with the power that I perceive in everything, my weaknesses and doubts evaporate. I inhabit my body like a sacred place; I can give myself the position I deserve at any time. I am buried in my work, and no one can cause me to detour from my course. No one can catch me or bind me with his desires, his feelings, his mental projections. No one distracts me. No one can make me deviate from what I want. Personally I do not want anything; I obey the divine will.

“I am not indulgent, I am inflexible. I am not the keeper of any secret because I am empty. I give myself to God, who is the only secret.”



III



LIMPERATRICE



# III

## L'Impératrice/ The Empress

### *Creative Outburst, Expression*

The Empress, like all the cards of the third level, signifies a bursting without experience (for more, see mainly pp. 60, 62, 67, and 79–80).

Everything that accumulated in the second level explodes in thunderous fashion, not knowing where to go. It is the transition from virginity to creativity; it is the egg that opens to life and allows the nestling to emerge. In this sense The Empress comes back to the energy of the adolescent with its extreme vital strength, its seduction, its lack of experience. This is also a period of life when full growth is taking place, when the body has the potential for exceptional regeneration. This is also the age of puberty, the discovery of desire and sexual power.

The Empress is holding her scepter, an element of power, propped upon the area of her genitals. Beneath her hand a tiny green leaf can be seen sprouting: it could represent the nurturing power of nature and perpetual spring. The small yellow band at the end of the scepter staff indicates that her creative power is exercised with great intelligence. Her legs are open and she is quite comfortable with who she is. She could be viewed as being in the position of giving birth, as if, after a



period of gestation, she were giving birth to herself. At her side, on the right-hand side of the card, a baptismal font is visible. She is ready to baptize or to be baptized, perpetually celebrated in life like a ceaselessly renewed birth. The crescent moon that appears in her red robe refers to the receptivity of The High Priestess. It reminds us that we are not the original source of our sexual and creative power but that it is a divine or cosmic energy that travels through us. Her receptivity to this power is symbolized by her light-blue throne that extends above her shoulders like a pair of heavenly wings. It is from this receptivity that The Empress draws all her strength, seduction, and beauty.

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### Key Words

Fertility • Creativity • Seduction • Desire • Power • Feelings •  
 Enthusiasm • Nature • Elegance • Abundance • Harvest • Beauty •  
 Hatching • Adolescence

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Her green eyes are the eyes of eternal Nature in relation with the celestial forces. She owns a coat of arms on which an eagle, still not fully formed (one of its wings is not yet complete), can be recognized. We shall see when studying Arcanum IIII that The Empress's eagle is male, whereas that of The Emperor is female (see p. 145). The Empress carries an element of masculinity within. For example, a very masculine Adam's Apple can be seen in her throat: this indicates that at the heart of the greatest femininity is a male core. This is the Yang point inside the Tao Yin, just like a female core can be found at the center of the strongest masculinity.

A yellow pyramid with a kind of door is gleaming over her chest. She is offering us an entry: if we can penetrate the intelligent light of The Empress's heart, we will be able to exercise our creative power. In her crown, a veritable jewel box symbolizing the beauty of mental creativity, we can see great intelligent activity (the red band) that flows toward the yellow of her hair.

We see a white serpent at the feet of The Empress: this snake signi-



fies sexual energy that has been dominated and channeled and is ready to rise toward realization. The tiled floor brings to mind a palace, but a luxurious plant is growing on it: this is not a fixed, unchanging environment; it is constantly enriched by new input, and nature has a choice place here.

The Empress wears a red costume, active toward the center but blue at its extremities. This is exactly the opposite of The High Priestess, with her cold and blue dress at the center and red at the extremities. The High Priestess calls us, but when you enter her, you can be frozen and broken if you do not know how to treat her. The Empress, meanwhile, is burning on the inside and dresses in coldness on the outside. To enter her, it is necessary to seduce her, which is not easy. But once you are past her defenses, you are welcomed into her creative fire.

### IN A READING

The Empress will inspire thoughts of creativity, the female part of the individual, or even a woman full of fire and energy, animated by a boiling enthusiasm. She is prepared to go beyond boundaries, to “burst out,” no matter how old she is. She is the soul of adolescence with its joyous fanaticism, its inability to recognize the consequences of its actions, its faith in action for the sake of action. This card is also, when drawn in a reading for an elderly person, the rebirth of an energy thought long vanished. The Empress recalls the dreams of youth and



The small green leaf that sprouts at the bottom of the scepter



The Adam's apple



The “pyramid” on her chest



The still not-fully-formed eagle's wing





urges us to fantasize from them, a thirst for the absolute that may well have been forgotten.

This card will also evoke all the same associations for a man, or simply a seductive woman who has appeared in his life.

In her splendor, The Empress is also a woman of power, warm-hearted but capable of dominating impulses. She loves to conceive and to rule.

Seen under a more injurious aspect, The Empress can also indicate an opportunity to act that was missed or, in contrast, a thoughtless action. She can also refer to sterility, a negative image of woman, a female energy (sexual, creative, intellectual, emotional) that was blocked during adolescence. The hand resting on the shield is ambiguous: it can be seen as an outside element that has taken possession of this woman, one that has sought to imprison or reduce her. When expression is frustrated, abused, or limited, The Empress becomes capable of resentment, maliciousness, and venality.

But when she is enthroned at the peak of her nurturing power, we learn that everything living can be seen in her beauty.

## AND IF THE EMPRESS SPOKE

"I am creativity without any determined end. I burst into an infinite variety of forms. It is I who colors the entire Earth green after winter. It is I who fill the sky with birds and the oceans with fish. When I say 'create,' I mean transformation. It is I who cause the seed to burst and the sprout to emerge. If I began giving birth to children, I could breed an entire humanity. If we are talking about fruit, I produce all the fruits known to nature. My mind never rests: a word, a shout, and I engender a world. I am the creative spirit. Listen to me and allow me to act within you, for I bring healing: Every problem and all suffering comes from an ego that has become fixed by the inability to create.

"I am activity, seduction, pleasure. There is nothing in me that is not beautiful. No depreciation: I am what I am, ever full and living. From the moment I incarnate within a body, it becomes sublime. Nothing nor no one can resist me; I am carnal, spiritual, total seduction. In me there is nothing that is repulsive, ridiculous, or ugly.



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### Among the Traditional Interpretations

Beautiful Woman • Fertility • Mistress • Warmhearted Mother •  
 Seductress • Creativity • Adolescence • Charm • Flirtatiousness •  
 Business Woman • Prostitute • Lover • Artist • Production • Beauty •  
 Abundance • Attachment to Adolescence • Irrational Creative Activity  
 (that does not know where it is going) • Enthusiasm • Fertile Nature •  
 Ferment • The Vital Impulse as Engine of Growth

---

“Let me exult in you: I am the pleasure of being who you are, without prejudice or morals. You are handsome! You are beautiful! Ugliness is an illusion, a limitation imposed by a sick way of looking at things. All that lives is adorable. I teach you that all your ideas are beautiful. You may consider even your most atrocious, most criminal, and vilest thoughts in all their splendor. Abundance of thought is permitted. Let your thoughts shine like the ephemeral stars in the firmament of your mind. Nothing obliges you to put them to practice. Let them pass by as so many fantastic shapes.

“Your feelings are also marvelous. All, without exception. What a beautiful jealousy! What a powerful rage! What wonderful sorrow! Do not remain caged up in your fortified castle! Make it a temple with all its doors and windows open: all emotions are at your disposal, like a rainbow of subtleties.

“All your desires are respectable. Allow yourself to be permeated by desire; everything in your body is in harmony. The smallest cell is a world. Life is a constant miracle.

“If you adopt my ideas, you will become a luminous being. If you believe in my feelings, you will attain grace. Every sensation you have of yourself is a path to beauty. Trust your power of seduction. When the Virgin seduced her Creator, I was there. If she had not known me, she never would have been able to attract him. Seduction is a mystical state: it is the amorous dialogue between the creature and its Creator.”



IIII



L'EMPEREUR



# III

## L'Empereur/ The Emperor

### *Stability and Mastery of the Material World*

The Emperor bears the number 4, associated with stability like the design of the square, the very symbol of material security. The four legs of the table and the altar of the church have a connection to the number 4. A 4 is incapable of falling unless there is a large revolution. The 4 is also the tetragrammaton, the four letters that make up the sacred divine name for the Hebrews: *Yod-Hay-Vav-Hay*. A cross with four branches can be seen on The Emperor's chest. With it, the laws of the universe are soundly established.

The restoration of the Tarot has made possible the rediscovery that the Emperor's eagle is sitting over an egg. This detail, which had been erased for centuries, is of fundamental importance for understanding Arcanum III. Just as the feminine Empress has a male core (see p. 140), The Emperor is accompanied by a receptive eagle, in full incubation like The High Priestess. Is he absorbing her power, or is he supporting himself on her? The interpretation will vary depending upon the reader.



The figure can be seen seated and stable or, to the contrary, already standing propped against his throne, ready to act if he so desires. He is strength at rest. He feels no need to get agitated, established as he is in the consolidation of his authority. No more effort is necessary for him. His crossed legs create a white square that confirms his rooted state in matter.

---

### Key Words

Stability • Domination • Power • Responsibility • Rationalism • Support  
 • Government • Matter • Solidity • Leader • Balance • Order • Power  
 • Father

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It can also be seen that his left hand is smaller than his right. Passive and receptive, it is attached to a double belt like the one worn by The Magician. But The Emperor is already in the process of achieving the union of the opposites by willful action. His reality obeys him; he is master of his territory, his body, his intellect, and his passions. In his right hand, which is large and active, he is firmly grasping a scepter whose shape is reminiscent of the one held by The Empress. But The Empress, with her orange-handled scepter, works in the shadows, while The Emperor operates in full daylight. He does not exercise power out of his belly but bases it on the cosmic laws, for which he compels respect. He has no need for any support for his scepter; it draws its strength from the universal axis. Like the Queens in the Court Cards (or figures) of the Minor Arcana (see pp. 53 and 329), he is staring directly at the object of his power.

His feet, with their red shoes, bring to mind those of The Fool. They are now still, but they too only walk a spiritual path (the light-blue ground). His finely worked throne indicates the refinement of his mind. Above his left shoulder we can see the symbol of gold, of knowledge. His head is crowned by intelligence (the yellow of his helmet, on which an orange compass can be seen) and radiates like a sun in its red tips. His light-blue beard and hair display his spiritual experience:



the power that he exercises is not only material. Furthermore, we can detect in the arrangement of the arms and hat a triangular diagram, symbol of the mind, above the square sketched out by the legs.

The wrinkles of his neck draw the letter *E*, which can also be read as a horizontal *M*. The white circle nested between his throat and beard could be an *O*. Based on this interpretation, if we really wanted to push it, The Emperor's throat would be filled with the sacred Sanskrit syllable OM.

The Emperor is wearing around his neck a yellow chain shaped like blades of wheat, sign of his purified intentions, from which hangs a medallion decorated with a green cross that creates the union between horizontal space and vertical time. He is completely centered here, in the present. This is how he is active.

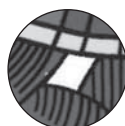
## IN A READING

The Emperor will easily represent the father figure as the central constituent element of the personality. The direction he is looking can orient us upon the centers of interest to a father: is it toward the family, or toward the outside? Toward his daughter, his wife, his son? Toward his own parents? Well placed, The Emperor evokes a stable companion and protector and a balanced home. For a young man, it could also pose the question of masculinity: how has it been passed down by the father, what are the means of fulfilling oneself as a man in reality?

Questions concerning money and economic



The female eagle sitting on an egg



The legs forming a square



The alchemical gold adorns the throne ...



... and we can find a compass in his helmet.



On his throat: the letter *E* or the syllable OM.





security are also connected to this card. They refer to the possibility of becoming the master (or mistress) of one's material life, of taking in hand the means through which one can guarantee one's security.

When he appears in a draw oriented toward spiritual questions, The Emperor can refer to the patriarchal figure of God imagined as a father, but also with the relations maintained by the "square" rational mind with dimensions that are beyond it.

A figure of earthly power, The Emperor is seen in profile. Perhaps his gaze is so intense it could disintegrate us . . .

## AND IF THE EMPEROR SPOKE

"I am security. I am the very personification of force. When I am speaking inside you, you understand that weakness does not exist. As long as you have not seen me, you will know only insecurity. You will not have the power to make or do anything, to express or resist yourself: you are a victim. But in my presence your fears are over. You will cease to doubt and devalue yourself. No one can force you to do what you do not wish to do.

"My laws are the laws of the universe in action. When we do not oppose them, they are infinitely peaceful. But when we disobey them, they are terrible. I am capable of unleashing illness, heart attacks, tumors, or cirrhosis inside you. If you do not obey the laws I have organized, I can destroy. I have the right to kill. But if you are sick and I am inhabiting you, I will bring you through your pain and suffering, dissolving all obstacles. I am the health concealed within an ailing body.

"I am invincible. I do not hesitate when it comes to conflict: I wage war. I shall never admit defeat. No one can dethrone me.

"I am an axis. I organize everything around my laws. I make it possible for all kinds of order to reign, from the most tender to the most ferocious. When I dwell within you and you meet another Emperor, we combine our forces. There is no competition possible, no combats between kings. I am a unique archetype who resides in each of you.

"When I manifest inside your body, you enjoy complete balance, and you are incapable of stumbling. With me, the body is the center of



the universe. It is supported by an immense force and is capable of facing anything. I am terribly calm. When I place myself in your mouth and muscles, your words are precise, and you do not tremble. Everything in you is pacified: organic processes, thoughts, desires, heart, memory, time, and space.

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**Among the Traditional Interpretations**

Man of Power • Ability to Pacify, Rule, Protect • Stability • Economic Equilibrium • Money • Administration • Business Success • Financial Ally • Authority • Exercise of the Law • Peace • Husband • Candid Man • Security • Uprightness • Rational Mind • Power • Stable Home • House • Powerful or Dominating Father • Protector • Questions Concerning Sexual Potency • Masculinity • Patriarchy • Tyranny • Dictator • Power Abuse • Rooted in Matter • Respect for the Laws of the Universe • Balanced Energies • God the Father

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“Place me at your center like an inexhaustible spring, as the root of your future soaring flight. Anguish will no longer forbid you from living or realizing yourself; impotence and laziness will no longer have any grip on your activity. Fear of poverty will no longer oppose your true work; you will be capable of building your prosperity. Emotional storms will not distract you from your work; pain and illness will not prevent you from feeling your power, nothing will be able to break your concentration.

“Neither your intellectual reservations, nor your timidity, nor your identification with the victim role, nor past sufferings, nor the poor self-image you have will prevent you from finding me, your Emperor. If a toxic education or a system of destructive values have imprinted false laws inside you, sweep them away! Establish your rules, your work system, your actions, out of the laws I reveal to you. I am there, I appear, and behind me there is an entire army—the sun, the stars, the galaxies. I protect you and urge you to exhort your strength.

“I am your inner warrior, the one who sees your weaknesses and does not weaken.”







# V

## Le Pape/The Pope

### *Mediator, Bridge, Ideal*

The Pope bears the number 5. This number has evolved from a complete foundation in reality (the number 4) to acquire an objective beyond its position. The Pope takes one more step than The Emperor; he establishes a bridge that makes it possible to proceed toward this ideal. In his activity as teacher or pontiff, he is receptive to the upper realm, Heaven, and active in the lower realm, Earth. What he receives from on high, he transmits beneath him to his disciples. Similarly, he transmits the prayers of his students to the deity, thereby joining Heaven and Earth. We could say that he represents the point where opposites meet, the center of the cross between high and low, left and right. He is therefore a site of circulation among these different poles, which are able to communicate through him.

Seen positively, The Pope is a teacher, an initiator, a guide who indicates to us a purpose in life. The back of his throne has rungs like a ladder; we could say that he unites, degree by degree, the body with the spirit. His three-level cross indicates that he has dominated the world of matter—that of sex, emotions, and his intellect—to create a unity. Similarly, his four-stage tiara represents the four authorities of the individual (body, sex, heart, and brain) that culminate into a single point at the top, a tiny orange circle that touches the card frame: inner unity.



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**Key Words**

Wisdom • Ideal • Communication • Teaching • Verticality • Plan • Mediator  
• Faith • Guide • Example • To Marry • Spiritual Power • Saintliness

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Like The High Priestess, The Pope's vocation is to incarnate divine unity and to teach it to the best of his ability. The green clasp of his cape at his throat represents a point within a circle, symbolic of the individual being containing an essential Being in his living core. It is from this impersonal principle that he receives and passes on his teaching. It can also be seen as representing the immense labor of concentration that The Pope had to achieve to become what he is.

Each of his hands is marked by a cross, sign of the fact that he acts in a sacred and impartial manner. His left hand, which is holding the large cross, is light blue in color like that of The Hermit. This can be seen as a sign of extreme spiritual receptivity in action, and, if we interpret this color as a glove, a reference to the Christian religious tradition which maintains that the gloved hand of The Cardinal is no longer his property but has become a pure instrument of the divine will. His right hand is flesh-colored; it is reminiscent of the role of union played by The Pope, mediator of opposites. By uniting his index and middle fingers (the intellect and the heart), he is blessing the world of incarnation.

His white hair is imbued with purity, but the two red clips tell us that this is an active purity. Part of his beard is also white, but the area around his mouth takes on a light-blue color as if to indicate that the word of The Pope is received (blue is a receptive color; see p. 95). We can also see it as a sign of what is inexorably left unsaid: master or teacher, priest or prophet, The Pope cannot transmit everything; he keeps part of what he teaches secret and inexpressible.

Two disciples or acolytes accompany him. We should note that this is the first card of the decimal series in which we find more than one human being. Until this card, the figures were alone or accompanied by animals, symbols of their instinctive or spiritual forces. But The Pope would not exist without the disciples that add faith to his teaching. These two acolytes represent two distinct positions. We can see that the spinning motions of their



tonsures are the opposite of each other. The tonsure of the disciple on the left, who has his hand raised as if to ask something and his other hand lowered, is spinning clockwise. The Pope is not looking in his direction. Perhaps it is because this disciple is in error: the movement of his tonsure would then indicate an involution, a going backward, by comparison to the evolution of the disciple on the right. Perhaps it is also because it represents what in alchemy is called the Dry Way, that of study and effort. The disciple on the right, to the contrary, is receiving direct instruction from The Pope through the cross that is touching the top of his skull. He embodies the Wet Way, that of immediate reception, illumination, and revelation. His tonsure is spinning counterclockwise, and he is holding an odd object in his hand, a dagger or a bilboquet [cup-and-ball toy], whose interpretations can be spun out infinitely. Does he represent a playful attitude? Is he preparing to murder his teacher? Is this a son, urged on by the Oedipus complex, preparing to punish his father? (His nudity is suggested by the flesh-colored patch facing him.)

These interpretations impel us to study the negative aspects of The Pope: the hypocrisy of the guru greedy for riches, the abusive father, the unjust teacher, the hypocrite, the pervert. The Pope, like all the Arcana, has his dark side. There are good grounds for wondering about the vague and mysterious shapes that are displayed beneath his belt, inviting his sexuality and his taste for power to be challenged.

But it can also be said that he is passing on the faith that he has received to humanity. In contrast to The High Priestess, The Pope acts in the world. We could say that he finds support from the temple, whose door is closed, to go out in public and communicate his experience of God to the crowd.



His tiara touches the card border.



The symbolic clasp of his cape



The gesture of benediction



The red hair clips



The two-color ball: a child's game or pontiff's secret?





## IN A READING

The Pope could represent a master, a teacher, or a guide, but also an idealized paternal figure (the acolytes would then symbolize his children), a married man, a saint. He also symbolizes an act of communication, a union, a marriage, and all the means used for communication. As a bridge or pontiff, The Pope evokes a guided communication that knows where it is heading.

After the accumulation of The High Priestess preparing for birth, the aimless bursting forth of The Empress, and the stability of The Emperor, The Pope brings an ideal. While remaining part of the material world, he points the way to an ideal dimension with certainty.

## AND IF THE POPE SPOKE

“I am first and foremost mediator of myself. Between my sublime spiritual nature and my most instinctive humanity, I have chosen to be the place where they interact. I am at the service of this communication between the high and the low; my mission is to unite apparent opposites. A bridge is not a country, it is merely a place of passage. It permits the circulation of the creative energies of this magnificently illusory phenomenon we call life. It is not by isolating myself but by taking all paths that I am able to announce the good news.

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### **Among the Traditional Interpretations**

Master • Teacher • Married Man • Spiritual Man • Marriage, Union • Priest • Spiritual Guide (sincere or false) • Hypocrite • Religious Dogma • Union of Heaven and Earth • Showing the Way • Connection • Self-mastery • Expansive Vision • Emergence of a New Ideal • All Means of Communication • Intermediary • Desire to Communicate • New Communication • Revelation of Secrets • The Father Facing His Children • Benediction • Questioning Faith and Dogma

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“I incarnate benediction. When facing me, you are in the presence of a mystery. Inhabited by the deity, the most minor gesture I make takes on sacred dignity. To become the site passed over by divine will, I learned



to clear all obstacles from my communication paths, even traces of my own presence. I betook myself to nothingness so that the Supreme Being could occupy all space within me. I adopted muteness so that he and he alone could speak. I banished from my mouth all words belonging to me; I buried my heart in peace and the absence of desires to make way solely for his love, and I eliminated everything from my will—even the will to eliminate my will.”

“Within me is the same order found in the universe. I am an empty, shapeless vessel that transports the light wherever the wind wills. I place myself between Heaven and Earth, I urge its inhabitants with the hope of raising themselves to where there are no longer any limits. To everything that is rooted in matter or mind, I communicate the higher power that gives life to what is inanimate. It is through me that the flesh ascends to mind in sublime fireworks. It is through me that the flock of angelic energies descends toward the coldness of matter to dissolve it into waves of magnetic heat.

“I repulse all curses. I bless everything I hear, everything I see, everything I sense. I summon love like a bird to a dimension beyond measure, so that it may perch upon the smallness of a heart. What can I do about your family squabbles, your hardships, your wounds? I make them kneel down before me and pray. Let me come into you: I will bless your entire world, including your problems.

“Invest your actions with my mission, awaken to the strength of the sacred. The least of your gestures, the least of your actions will then become sacred in turn. You will know the experience of one who does not speak in his own name.

“The cross in my hand is not an instrument for giving orders. It is the symbol of my joyful annihilation. I have pacified my desires, transformed this pack of ravenous wolves into a flock of swallows celebrating dawn with their song. I have turned the tumultuous ocean that agitated my heart into a lake of milk, as calm and sweet as that which flows from the breast of the Virgin. Whoever has thirst may come drink from my spirit. I refuse nobody anything. I am the door that all keys may open.

“He who has entered my soul can advance to the uttermost limit of the universe and to the end of time: I am the final frontier between words and the unthinkable.”



VI



||||| LAMOVREX |||||



# VI

## L'Amoureux/ The Lover

### *Union, Emotional Life*

The name of this card is not, as often thought, The Lovers, plural, but The Lover, singular. However, on it we see four human-shaped figures (the three individuals and the angel), and, taking it further, two more entities that are the Earth and the Sun. Among them, who is The Lover? The central figure that is often interpreted to be a young man? The figure on the left, whom some view as a transvestite? Or even the angel, the little cupid aiming his arrow from the sky? These questions arise because Arcanum VI is, along with The Tower, one of the most ambiguous cards of the Tarot, and one of those that is most poorly understood. VI represents in Tarot numerology the first step into the square of Heaven (see pp. 60, 64, and 65). It is the time when we stop imagining what would please us to begin doing what we like.

The major tone of this card concerns pleasure and emotional life. This is the very reason why it is so complex and so rich in conflicting meanings. It opens the field to countless projections, and a thousand meanings can be attributed to it, each of which can be right at a given moment. What is taking place with this trio? Is it a quarrel, haggling, a choice, a union? The two figures on the left are looking at each other, while the one on the right is looking off into space. The whole of humanity can



be comprehended through this card. The relations of its protagonists are extremely ambivalent.

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### Key Words

Eros • Heart • Choice • Emotional Domain • Conflict • Ambiguity •  
Trio • Social Life • Community • Siblings • Doing What You Love

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The position of these figures' hands is extremely interesting to observe. Five hands in various positions symbolize the complexity of the relationships in play. The first figure, on the left, has placed her hand on the second one's shoulder in a gesture of protection or domination, either pushing him forward or holding him back. Her right hand is touching the hem of the boy's tunic. The movement of her extended index finger can be interpreted as a desire to slide over to his penis or, to the contrary, a prohibition on doing so. The boy has his right hand pressed against his belt. In passing, we should note that this yellow belt has three bands and is the same as that worn by the woman on the left. But who is the owner of the arm touching the belly of the young woman? She and the boy are both wearing clothes with deep-blue sleeves that are so closely matched it makes the movement of this arm ambiguous. In some way they make this a "commonly shared arm." While the young man is touching the young woman's belly close to her genitals, his gaze is directed away from her toward his right. The card will have an entirely different meaning if we consider this arm to be her own arm protecting or pointing toward her belly while the boy is holding his arm behind his back.

The woman on the right is wearing a headdress consisting of four five-petal flowers. It could represent a splendid awareness, poetic yet nevertheless solid. The violet heart of the flowers concentrates the wisdom of love, truly the ability to sacrifice oneself. The woman on the left is wearing a crown of green leaves; it is active (the red band), and if we agree that these are laurel leaves, we could say that she has the mentality of a victor or a dominatrix.

We can speculate infinitely on the relationship of the three figures: a boy presenting his fiancée to his mother; a woman discovering



her husband with his mistress; a man attempting to choose between two different women, or, as the traditional interpretation views it, between vice and virtue; a pimp offering a prostitute to a passerby; a young girl asking her mother for permission to wed the boy she has chosen; a mother in love with her daughter's lover; a mother preferring one of her two children over the other; and so forth.

The interpretations are inexhaustible. All of them lead us to the conclusion that *The Lover* is a relational card that depicts the beginning of social life. It is the first Arcanum on which several individuals are presented at the same level (The Pope's disciples are smaller than he is and seen from the back). This is a card of union and disunion, of social and emotional choices. Several clues present in the card direct us toward the notion of union. On the one hand, the number 6 is associated with the letter in the Hebrew alphabet *Vav*, "nail," which represents union. On the other hand, we can see patches of color (light blue, then red) between these individuals' legs that also represent a continuity, a union between them. On the symbolic plane, we could say that the three figures represent the governing centers of the human being: the intellect, the emotional center, and the sexual center joining together to become one.

The ground beneath these individuals' feet has been plowed. This means that in order to reach the VI, it is necessary to have performed some preliminary psychological, cultural, and spiritual work. This is how we manage to realize what we love and what we want. The red shoes of the central figure are the same as those worn by *The Fool* and *The Emperor*; they can be considered as three stages of the same being. It can also be noted that the ground ends between this figure and his neighbor on the right; there is only the red patch. We



The little Cupid and the large white sun



The hand on the boy's shoulder: protection, provocation, or prohibition?



The emergence of a "shared arm" touching the lower belly of the young woman



The red, active shoes of the central figure are resting on plowed ground, the result of psychological, cultural, and spiritual labor.





can then see them as representations of the *animus* and the *anima*, two masculine and feminine aspects of one single person.

The spelling “AMOVREUX” with the “V” instead of the “U” creates a visual and sonorous link to the word “Dieu” in “LA MAISON DIEV” [The God House—The Tower]. We could say that the sun spilling its rays upon this scene represents the great cosmic Lover, the deity as the source of the universal love that guides us to conscious and unconditional love. The small Eros serves him as a messenger and suggests to us, because of his depiction as a child, that this love is perpetually renewing itself.

### IN A READING

This ambiguous card prompts us to question our own emotional state: how is our emotional life going? Are we enjoying peace or experiencing conflict? Are we doing what we love? What place does love hold in our lives? Does the situation that is our chief concern have roots in our past, and if so, what are they? This card can refer to questions concerning the place we’ve been assigned within our family unit, and to work identifying the projections we cast on those now around us. The Lover will be one of the figures on the card, chosen by the subject of the reading, whose relations he or she can analyze. Whatever the question may be, it will be helpful to remember that the central Lover remains the large white glowing sun, which sheds its light on all living things without discrimination.

### AND IF THE LOVER SPOKE

“I am the sun of the Arcanum, the white sun: almost invisible but casting my light upon all the figures. I am this star: the joy of existing and the joy that the Other exists. I live in ecstasy. Everything fills me with happiness: nature, the entire universe, the existence of the Other in all its forms—this Other who is none other than me.”

“I am the awareness that shines like a bright living star in the center of your heart. I renew myself at every moment; at each instant I am being born. At your every heartbeat I am uniting you with the entire universe. It is from me that come the infinite connections joining you to all creation. Ah, the pleasure of living! Ah, the pleasure of becoming



one! Ah, the pleasure of doing what I love! Messenger of the permanent impermanence, I am reborn every second. I am like a newborn archer launching arrows at everything his senses can capture.

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### **Among the Traditional Interpretations**

Social Life • Joy • Loving What One Does • Doing What One Loves • New Union • Choice to be Made • Pleasure • Beauty • Friendship • Ménage à Trois • To Fall in Love • Emotional Conflict • Separation • Dispute • Incestuous Area • Siblings • Ideal and Reality • First Steps in Learning the Joy of Living • Aware Love • Unconditional Love • The Beauty Way

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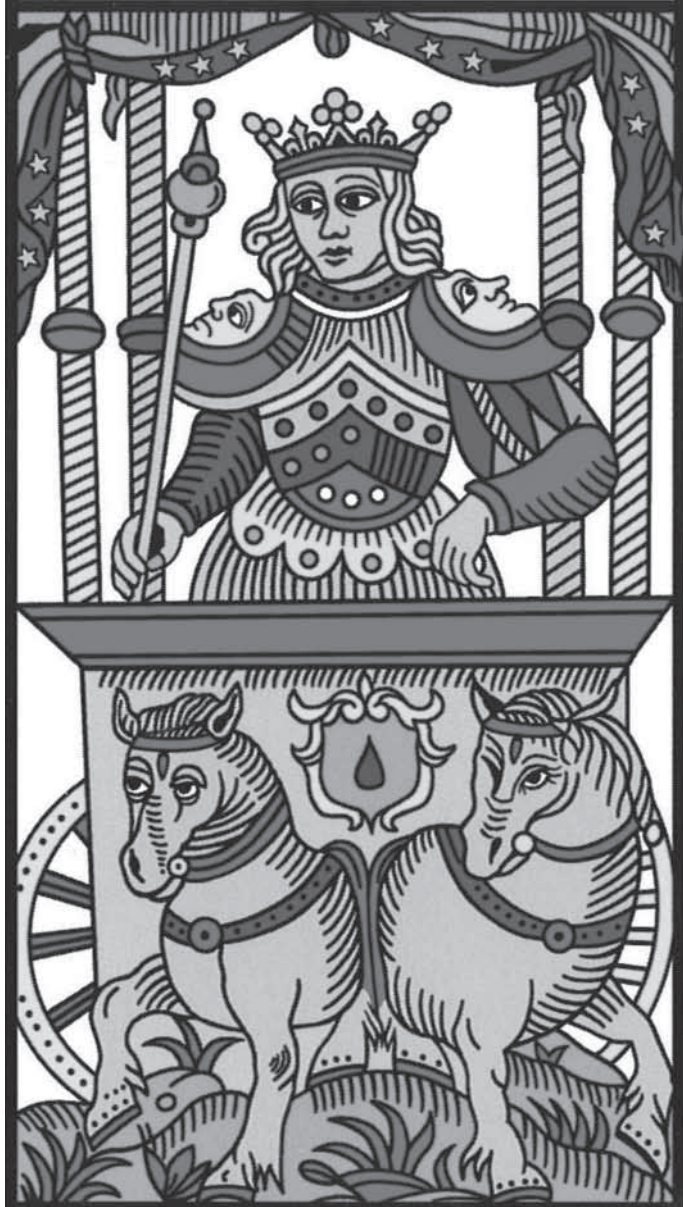
“I am not kindness; I am not ambition for well-being or triumph. I am unconditional love. I will teach you how to live in wonder, recognition, and joy.

“When I enter you like I enter the figures of the Arcanum, I communicate divine love to the smallest of your cells. I blow across your mind like a hot hurricane that eliminates from your language all criticism, aggression, comparison, spite, and the entire scale of pride that separates the spectator from the actor. I insinuate myself into your sexual energy to soften all brutality, and all traces of conquest and possession. I confer to pleasure the sublime delicacy of an exploding angel. When I dissolve in your body, it is to detach you from the dictatorship of mirrors and models, the gaze of others, the pain of comparisons. I permit you to live your own life and assume your own light and beauty. In the heart where I dwell, I drive out the illusions of the unloved child. Like the bell tower of the cathedral, I spread the penetrating vibrations of love in your blood, stripped of all resentment, all emotional demands that have become a travesty of hatred, and all jealousy, which is only the shadow cast by abandonment. I initiate you into the desire of obtaining nothing that is not also for others. The island of the ego is transformed into an archipelago.

“Everything works in concert to increase my joy, even what you interpret as negative circumstances: mourning, difficulty, pettiness, obstacles . . . I love things and beings as they are with their infinite possibilities of development. At every instant I see them, and I am ready to take part in their blossoming, but also to accept that they remain as they are.”



VII



LE CHARIOT.



# VII

## Le Chariot/ The Chariot

### *Action in the World*

The Chariot is number 7 in the first series of the Major Arcana. This is a primary number, divisible only by itself, and it is also the most active of the odd numbers. The Chariot is therefore the preeminent representation of action in every domain, in the self and in the world (see pp. 60, 61, and 64–65). In contrast to The Empress, who occupies the corresponding position in the earth square and indicates a bursting forth without any preconceived purpose, The Chariot knows full well where it is heading. The card consists of three principal planes: two horses, a vehicle, and its driver, who can be identified as a prince because he is wearing a crown. Only half of this prince is visible, the half above the waist. Some readers, swayed by their projections, see him as a dwarf with atrophied legs or a girl in disguise. But the face he presents us from the onset is virile and noble. The vehicle, a flesh-colored square, is buried in the earth, allowing us to say that he is not moving forward. In reality he is moving with the movement of the planet, the preeminent kind of movement. Because it is one with the Earth, The Chariot has no need to advance. It is a mirror of the planet's rotation. The prince's chariot



could be the Big Dipper, Apollo's solar chariot, or that of a knight on a quest for the Grail.

The two horses pulling his vehicle are depicted like the dog of The Fool, with light-blue hides. Once again animal nature has been spiritualized. Furthermore, we can identify the horse on our right, with its long eyelashes and closed eyes, as a female element, and the other horse as a male element. The two complementary male and female energies are realizing unity here. While their front feet give the appearance of pointing in opposite directions, the heads and gaze are the same: this is because they represent the union of opposites on the energetic plane. The horses are marked on their chests with the alchemical symbol for gold: the instinctive animal force is acting here in complete awareness.

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### Key Words

Action • Lover • Prince • Triumph • Ease • To Fertilize • To Colonize •  
To Travel • To Dominate • Noninterventionism • Warrior • Eternity

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We can see a green drop at the center of the yellow-and-orange coat of arms on the flesh-colored chariot. In the center of perishable flesh, a drop of eternity, set in the mind, asserts its permanence. Some legends claim that among all the cells of the human body, which are mortal, there is only one capable of surviving our physical death. The Chariot carries our great hope for immortality in this green drop, the impersonal Consciousness that is embedded in the heart of matter.

If we examine the position of the figure, we shall discover that his head, arms, and body form a triangular shape that fits into the square of the vehicle. A triangle inside a square: spirit in matter. We shall see this symbolic geometry again in the Seven of Pentacles. The Chariot therefore evokes the alchemical quest: the materialization of the spirit and the spiritualization of matter. From this perspective, we can say that the vehicle represents the body; the horses, energy; and the figure, the mind and spirit. The flesh-colored scepter in the prince's left hand could mean that he dominates material life, or that he draws his power



from its incarnation. In any case, he performs his action without effort. Similarly, he has no need of reins to guide his horses. The twelve stars hanging above him indicate he works with the cosmic force. A crown sits atop his head, which seems severed, as if to indicate its openness to galactic influences. But a veil remains above him, sealing off the horizon from the sky. The Star (Arcanum XVII) will be the one to lift this veil.

Two masks on his shoulders represent, if you like, the past and future, or the positive and the negative, or time and space, for which he is the meeting point and unity. Acting fully within the present, he is open to past and future, joy and sorrow, light and shadow. He is a complete individual who acts on three planes simultaneously. We can distinguish in his right hand the rounded edge of the white egg or ball we already spied beneath The Fool's armpit. It is a secret he is keeping, a sphere of secret perfection.

## IN A READING

The Chariot is often seen as a conqueror performing powerful actions, or a lover with a triumphant sexuality. Sometimes he heralds a voyage. Some even see him as an announcement of success in television or the movies, because the figure appears in a frame like a marionette in a theater. In all cases this is a card that is moving forward toward success. His sole dangers are the lack of caution and inflexibility of the conqueror who harbors no doubts about the validity of his conquest. A virile and extremely



The alchemical symbol for gold appears on the chests of the horses.



The green drop



The prince's hand is concealing a small white ball.



Red plants are growing out of the orange ground.





active card, it is sometimes seen as suggesting to a woman that her parents wanted a boy. The Chariot also prompts questions about the methods one implements for acting in the world and the way one is guiding one's life.

Red plants full of energy are growing at the base of The Chariot, also adding to the energetic tone of this card.

## AND IF THE CHARIOT SPOKE

"I am full, absolutely full, of strength. Nothing is wasted; I am rooted in the planet and a lover of all its energies. They propel my movement. Like a knight of fire, I do not budge from my place. I do not crawl upon the ground. I see on high. I travel with time without ever leaving the moment. Without past, without future, the sole time possible: the present, like a jewel beyond measure. Everything here is nowhere else.

"I am the source of all the warriors, all the champions, all the heroes, of all endurance, and of all courage. Nothing frightens me, not a single task. I can leave for war or feed all the Earth's inhabitants. I am completely centered in the very center of the universe, traversed by all the energies of mind and matter. If I am an arrow, I cleave my heart, and this deep wound, this awareness, transforms me. For he who is awakened, suffering becomes a blessing. I dissolve the sufferings hidden in my bones; I unite the state of waking to that of sleep.

"I traverse the night of doubt over the abyss of myself. I sever the knot of enigmas, I go beyond the agony of being, I scorn appearances, I free feelings from reason, I destroy all that opposes me, I am what I am. I wish to live as long as the universe.

"Center of a growing sphere, I invade the dimension where thought has yet to manifest, where the gestation of pure action takes place in darkness. I reduce swarms of words to dust. No mirror scares me, not even the soul that detaches itself from the dead like a dried fruit.

"I have made a diamond out of my misfortune and turned each abyss into a source of energy. All the suns may die; I shall still continue to shine. The inconceivable force supporting the universe supports me



as well. I am the triumph of existence within emptiness. All deaths and persecutions can do nothing to strike me down, nor the cycles of history nor the successive declines of civilizations: I am the conscience and vital force of humanity.

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### **Among the Traditional Interpretations**

Victory • Action in the World • Successful Undertaking • Journey • Dynamism • Lover • Warrior • Messenger • Conqueror • Prince • Dwarf • Plunderer • Intense Activity • Media Success • Screen for a Television Set, Computer, or Cinema • Synthesis • Taking the Pros and Cons into Account • Harmony of the *Animus/Anima* • Steering Your Energies • Mind in Matter • Triumph • Immortal Consciousness

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“When I incarnate in you, all setbacks become new starting lines, and ten thousand reasons for abandoning something are not equal to a single reason for continuing. I know fear, I know death; they do not stop me. I am the force of action present in every living being, the triumph of nature. I know how to create, I know how to destroy, and I know how to conserve, and to do all this with the same irresistible energy. I am the very activity of the universe.

“I advance toward all the dimensions of space, breaking the horizons until I reach my goal, which is the mask of the beginning. I also go backward, from void to void, from right to left, toward high and low, thrusting galaxies aside on my way until I dissolve in the appalling Absence, which is the Mother of the first cry that supports everything.

“I am the triumph of unity within the crumbling of the words, I am the triumph of infinity within the cremation of the ultimate boundaries. I am the triumph of eternity; in my heart the gods vanish.”



VIII



LA JUSTICE



# VIII

## La Justice/Justice

### *Balance, Perfection*

Justice, number 8, symbolizes perfection. This is the peak of the even numbers. Following the accumulation of the 2, the establishment of the 4, and the discovery of pleasure of the 6, the 8 has attained the stage where there is nothing left to add or take away. The 8, an Arabic numeral, is formed by two superposed circles: perfection in Heaven and on Earth. In the Tarot numerology, it is also the double of the 4, therefore a double square: stability in both the material and spiritual worlds (see pp. 60, 61, 65, and 83).

The symbol of fulfillment, Justice balances our lives with her scales. But balance and perfection are not synonymous with symmetry. Just as the sacred art of the cathedral builders rejected the symmetrical as being diabolical, the card Justice is structured asymmetrically. The pillar to the right of her throne is higher than the other one and ends in a small, dark-yellow sphere absent from the pillar on the left; her necklace goes higher on the left; the plates of her scales are not on the same horizontal plane; and her sword is not parallel to the column of her throne.

If we study the movement of the scales, we can see that Justice is influencing it with her right elbow and her left knee. This “trickery” can be interpreted on several levels. Of course, it can be given the



negative sense of injustice, of false perfection, and of ruse that will be justified in certain readings. It is also conceivable that by this gesture, Justice is inviting us to avoid perfectionism: the requirement for perfection is inhuman inasmuch as what is perfect is set and unsurpassable, therefore dead. She would be inviting us then to substitute for it the sacred ruse, the notion of excellence that permits action to be dynamic and perfectible.

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### Key Words

Woman • Maternity • Sovereign • Balance • Court • Completion •  
 Taking a Stand • Valor • Judging • Perfection • Presence • Conning •  
 Authorizing • Forbidding • Balancing

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Finally, it is plausible that the uneven nature of the plates of this scale displays the instability that is proper to Nature, and that she is giving it support inspired by divine mercy. In this sense Justice is profoundly human. Her flesh-colored hair and her robe burying itself in the ground connect her to the terrestrial plane. But she is also a point at which the human and the Divine meet. The white band above her forehead represents her contact with divine purity, and the yellow red-rimmed circle (see p. 95 for more on the colors) placed on her crown like a third eye indicates that her actions are guided by a superior way of looking at things, an intelligence received from the universe.

Firmly seated on her throne, Justice, with her active attributes (the sword) and receptive attributes (the scales), is the first figure to face us directly, just as later The Sun and the angel on the card Judgment will also look at the subject of the reading. This is how Justice invites us to undivided introspection and to dive into the present. This Arcanum therefore removes the traditional representations of Justice with closed eyes; her gaze meets our own like a mirror and like a call to realization. This card first and foremost involves dealing justice to ourselves, to give ourselves what we deserve.

Beneath her right elbow we see a patch of violet, the largest one



to be found in the entire Tarot. This extremely rare and secret color is a symbol of wisdom. Justice is moved by wisdom. The light blue emanating from the platters of her scales indicates that she is weighing our spirituality. Her sword is similarly bathed in this essential blue because it is used to cut away the superfluous and separate us from the useless. With the hand holding the scales, Justice is making a sacred gesture, a *mudra* in which the four fingers of the hand, representing the governing centers of the human being (thoughts, emotions, desires, physical needs) meet together at the thumb. Arcanum VIII is delivering a message of unity here.

The nine climbing triangles that look like birds' feet on her robe are reminiscent of ermine, the sign of royalty. The nobility referred to here is that of the sublime mind and flawless action. In this sense, Justice can be seen as the witness of our inner god, who urges us to evaluate ourselves without any makeup: Shall we be just in dealing with ourselves? Are we merciful toward ourselves and toward others?

## IN A READING

Justice, the most accessible incarnation of the great female archetype of The Moon (XVIII), will often represent the mother or a pregnant woman. This card also opens the field for strong projective interpretations: it can refer to a dictatorial, castrating maternal figure, and to all destructive verdicts. It will also stand then for a demand for perfection that is so strong that it



The orangish sphere on the right-hand pillar



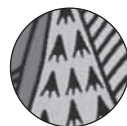
The sword is not parallel to the axis of the throne.



The headdress and its "third eye"



The gesture of the hand holding the scales



The nine triangles of ermine





hampers the reading subject in his or her realization, prohibiting the subject in advance from making any mistakes. Similarly, Justice often refers to state institutions (courts, police, administrative offices) whose decisions cannot be appealed and who awaken in the reading subject the threat of punishment and guilt.

Seen positively, her qualities of balance, her spirituality (she occupies a double square that is material and spiritual), and her clear ideas when facing reality can be valuable allies. The lesson of Justice with her sword and scales is to give oneself exactly what one deserves while implacably removing oneself from what one does not want. She teaches how to say yes and no, to distinguish subjective from objective judgments. To achieve this, she knows how to put herself in the shoes of the Other.

## AND IF JUSTICE SPOKE

“There where spirit has the same dimension as matter, there where you do not know whether density is the root of ether, or whether ether is the midwife of density, there, in this infinite and eternal balance, is where I dwell. The fulfillment of the universe is my justice, that it may give to each galaxy, each sun, each planet, and each atom the place it deserves. Thanks to me the cosmos is a dance. Every birth, every spiral, every dying star has its place in the universe. I permit every being to be what it is; every piece of dust, every comet, every human being deserves to achieve the task given it by the Supreme Law. The slightest deviation from this decree will compel me to pronounce the supreme punishment: He who deviates shall be expelled from the present.

“The good you do to others I shall return to you. What you do not give I shall take away from you. When you destroy, I eliminate you. Not only shall I materially dissolve you, but I shall expunge all trace of you in the memory of the world.

“When I appear in the body of a woman, she becomes a true mother. Giving birth is to provide a place in the here and now to infinite Consciousness. I, the universal mother, take my place at the explosive and monumental crossroads where the ocean of matter makes



contact with the intangible soul, which disintegrates like rain to give life to every dense fragment.

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**Among the Traditional Interpretations**

Balance • Stability • Confronting Reality • Fullness • Feminine Perfection  
 • To Collect, to Welcome • Pregnant Woman • Maternity • Inflexibility  
 • Implacability • To Judge • Clarity • To Forbid • To Authorize • To  
 Give Oneself What One Deserves • Limpid Thought • Trial • Legal  
 Action • The Law • Desire for Perfection • Perfectionism • Critical  
 Mind • Prescriptive or Castrating Mother • Deceit • Exactitude •  
 Cosmic Laws • Perfection • Harmony • Present Moment

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“I am that perfection which requires no addition and tolerates no subtraction: all that I’m given, I already had. Everything you take from me did not exist within me in the first place. Each instant is just, perfect. I remove all subjective intentions from action. I allow things to be exclusively what they are. I give each thing just what it deserves: to intellect, the void; to the heart, the fullness of love; to sex, the pleasure of creation; to the body, prosperity, which is nothing other than health; to the fifth essence, Consciousness, I give its center that is the inner god.”



VIII



L'HERMITE



# VIII

## L'Hermite/ The Hermit

### *Crisis, Passage, Wisdom*

The number 9 distinguishes itself among the first series of odd numbers because it is the first that is divisible by another number than itself. The 9 ( $3 \times 3$ ) is therefore ambivalent, both active (odd) and receptive (even). (For more, see pp. 61, 65–67, and 83.) To gain a better understanding of it, we need only visualize its movement between the card of Justice, the VIII, and Arcanum X, which follows. The Hermit abandons Arcanum VIII by retreating in order to go forward, offering his back to the end of the first decimal cycle and the beginning of a new cycle. By drawing away from the VIII, he is leaving a state of unsurpassable perfection which, if he lingered there, would lead only to death. He does not go beyond it but abandons it, therefore entering into crisis. He can be compared to the fetus that in the eighth month has attained its full development in utero. All his organs are already formed, and he is lacking for nothing. During the ninth month, the fetus prepares to abandon the womb, the sole environment it knows, in order to enter a new world.

Along a similar line of thinking, the Gospels teach us that Jesus was crucified at the third hour, began his agony at the sixth hour, and



expired at the ninth hour. The number 9 announces both an end and a beginning. The Hermit actively terminates his relationship with the old world and becomes receptive toward an unknown future over which he exercises no mastery. In distinction to The Pope, who cast a bridge toward an ideal and knew where it went, The Hermit represents passage into the unknown. In this sense, he represents the highest form of wisdom as well as a state of profound crisis.

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### Key Words

Solitude • Wisdom • Letting Go • Therapy • Crisis • Experience •  
 Poverty • Shedding Light • Ascetic • Very Old Age • Walking Backward  
 • Cold • Receptive • Ancient • Silence

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The lantern he carries may be considered as a symbol of Knowledge. He holds it up, shedding light over the past, as would a man of experience, a scholar, or a therapist. This light could be a secret knowledge reserved for initiates or, to the contrary, a source of knowledge offered to any disciples looking for it. The Hermit illuminates the path, or perhaps he is using this lantern to humbly catch the attention of the deity: “My labor is done. I am there, look at me.” Just as the card bears an ambivalence between action and reception, this light can be active, like an appeal for awakening the consciousness of the Other, or receptive, like the beacon of a lighthouse.

Just like The High Priestess, The Hermit is a very undercover figure. His layers of clothing suggest cold and winter—Saturn-like characteristics that are often attributed to him and which also reflect a certain chilliness of wisdom and the inner solitude of the initiate. We can also see them as “layers” of life experience; and, similarly, the copious hatching that shadows his garb can be interpreted as the mark of his great experience. His humpback contains, in concentrated form, all his past memory. Two orange crescent moons, one behind his neck and the other on the lining of his robe, indicate that he is an individual who has developed his receptive qualities. In the fold of his hand holding the lantern we can also detect



the hips and pubis of a woman in miniature: a sign of femininity or, if you prefer, the sign that some carnal desires still remain in him.

In his forehead, on the other hand, three wrinkles renew the message of mental activity. His gaze loses itself in the distance. His blue hair and beard make him kin to The Emperor, who here would have lost or given up his throne, which is to say his attachment to matter. His blue glove, similar to that of The Pope, gives profound spirituality to his choices, actions, and itinerary. His red staff and hood, on which the reverse of The Fool's yellow-and-red hood can be seen, also connects him to this numberless Arcanum. But here, The Fool's staff has acquired a curved shape; it has taken life, the path has been traveled and the work accomplished, as testified by the plowed earth. His dark-blue robe is the sign of his humility and of his receptive, lunar consciousness. The inner panel, which is the color of flesh, evokes all the organic, not theoretical, life experience of an individual who has drawn lessons from his own path. But inside, at the center, it is the color green that envelops him. We have already seen that in Sufi and kabbalistic tradition, green is the color of eternity (see pp. 96–97). The Hermit, with this initial *H* that belongs to the alchemist Hermes, may well have discovered the elixir of long life, and like the wandering Jew, may have touched eternity. Both poor and rich, having known death and rebirth, he appeals to that part of us that may be eternal and inspires us to go through the crisis courageously, to go who knows where.



Two receptive moons behind the neck and in the fold of the garment



The hand holding the lantern is evocative of female hips.



His wrinkled brow is a sign of wisdom and experience.



The blue hand of The Hermit





## IN A READING

This card often symbolizes a crisis that cannot be avoided, a profound change that needs to be confronted and accepted. It evokes the idea of a teacher, a therapist, or a guide. But in a crisis, there is an equal possibility that The Hermit will renew himself or die. He therefore also refers to poverty, solitude, and even decay and degeneration. He can be seen as a “vagrant” or even an alcoholic who is hiding a quart of red wine in his lantern.

Arcanum VIII is the most human and coldest counterpart of the great paternal archetype of Arcanum XVIII. In this way he can depict an absent father, or one who is taciturn, remote, or has vanished. He also refers, for the subject of the reading, to an inner solitude, to the secret and dark space where a spiritual transformation is prepared.

## AND IF THE HERMIT SPOKE

“I have arrived at the end of my path, there where the unthinkable presents itself like an abyss. Faced by this nothingness, I can no longer move forward. All I can do is retreat, while contemplating the road I have already traveled. With every step I take backward, I form a reality before me.

“Between life and death, in a continual crisis, I hold up my lit lamp—my consciousness. It serves me well, of course, to guide the steps of those following me upon the path I have opened. But it also shines to draw attention to myself. I have performed the spiritual labor I had to do. Now, O infinite mystery, come to my aid.

“Little by little I have freed myself of all bonds. I no longer belong to my thoughts. My words do not define me. I have vanquished my passions. Detached from desire, I dwell within my heart as if inside a hollow tree. My body is a vehicle that I witness as it ages, passes, and vanishes like the irresistible course of a river. I no longer know who I am; I live in total ignorance of myself. To reach the light, I bury myself in darkness. To attain ecstasy, I cultivate indifference. To achieve the love of all things and all beings, I have retired into solitude. It is there,



in the remotest nook of the universe, that I open my soul like a flower of pure light. Gratitude without demand: the essence of my knowledge is the knowledge of essence.

“Taking the path of the will, I have reached the highest peak. I was a flame, then heat, then cold light. Here I am the one who shines, who summons, and who hopes. I have known complete solitude. This prayer goes directly from me to my inner god; I have eternity facing my back. I have waited and continue to wait between two abysses. I can no longer move forward or backward by myself; I need for You to come. My patience is as infinite as Your eternity. If You do not come, I will continue to wait at this very spot, because waiting for You has become my sole reason to live. I no longer budge! I continue to shine until I have consumed myself. I am the oil of my own lantern; this oil is my blood, my blood is a cry calling for You. I am the flame and the call.

---

### **Among the Traditional Interpretations**

Positive Crisis • Guide • Hermit • Solitude • Elderly Man • Old Age  
 • Prudence • Retirement • Therapist • Male Teacher • Pilgrimage •  
 Chastity • Alcoholism • Winter • Doubt and Surpassing • Shedding  
 Light upon the Past • Going Toward the Future Without Knowing  
 Where You Are Heading • Walking Backward • Therapy • Absent or  
 Cold Father • Grandfather • Humility • Saturn • Enlightened View over  
 the World • Wisdom • Impartial Love • Devotions • Altruism • Secret  
 Teacher

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“I have completed my task. You are now the only One who can continue it. I am the spiritual female, the infinite activity of passivity. Like a cup I offer my emptiness so that it may be filled. Because I have helped myself, now You help me.”



X



L'A·ROVE·DE·FORTVNE



# X

## La Roue de Fortune/ The Wheel of Fortune

### *The Beginning or End of a Cycle*

The Wheel of Fortune, number 10, terminates the first decimal cycle of the Major Arcana. Its circular shape and the handle attached to it indicate its primary meaning: the end of one cycle and the pause to wait for the strength that will set the following cycle in motion. In the continuity of the Tarot, it is Arcanum XI, rightfully titled Strength, that succeeds The Wheel of Fortune and sets off the next decimal cycle. More than any other Arcanum, The Wheel of Fortune is clearly oriented toward closure with the past and expectation of the future. For this reason, the position held by this card in a reading will allow us to say if a plan for life needs to be finished to make a place for the new plan, or if a new era is already underway. If we decide to analyze this card as a setback, it is for revealing that failure is not the end of everything but a chance for redeploying our efforts: a change of path.

At first glance, this Arcanum gives an impression of inertia in which the movement of waves is carved into the light-blue ground. The message could be that reality, under the appearance of solidity, is perpetually changing like waves of the sea. Everything is condemned to vanish;



the real is an ephemeral dream and the Earth an illusion of the cosmic ocean. Here, one single element can aspire to eternity: the center of the wheel, the anchoring point of the handle, which will be noted to occupy the exact center of the rectangle formed by the card. Everything revolves around this heart, which can be seen as a symbol of the divine mystery. Whereas the outside elements in play on the wheel (the three animals) find their maneuvers culminating in inertia, the center is the departure point from which change can take place. The message of this card is clear: the principal factor of change, of life, is this cosmic action, also called divine providence. We can see that the wheel is double: a red circle and a yellow circle representing the double animal and spiritual nature of the human being. The human spirit will always be both actor and witness of all its actions. However, once united in the godhead, the actor and the witness are one and the same thing. Humankind's purpose, as suggested by The Wheel of Fortune, is to attain this unity through duality.

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### Key Words

Fortune • Block • Renewal • Enigma • Solution • Cycle • Impermanence  
 • Change • Eternal Return • Beginning and End • Body-Heart-Mind •  
 Fate • To Revolve

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If we look at the three animals, we can see that one is descending, one is ascending, and the third remains motionless.

The flesh-colored animal, the bottom half alone of whose body is clothed, is descending toward incarnation. We see in the color of this element, and the fact that its sexual parts are hidden, a symbol that tends to be oriented toward matter. The yellow animal, meanwhile, is clad from the waist upward, and a band placed around his ears seems to obstruct or emphasize them. We may read this as a vision of the intellect that aspires to climb, with its tendency to spin in circles around itself and its difficulty in listening. Finally, the blue animal that looks like the sphinx, wearing a red cape whose shape is reminiscent of a heart, is clasping to its own heart a sword that has the exact measurement



of The Magician's wand, a figure of emotional life that presents itself both as an enigma and the path to wisdom. It will be noted, moreover, that this animal has two violet patches on it, a color that, as we have seen, symbolizes wisdom (see p. 97).

The heart is therefore presented as the element that can either unite or immobilize the other governing authorities, spiritual life and animal life. It is often an emotional enigma, an irresolute emotional core that is blocking the vital action of a reading subject. The five points of the sphinx's crown refer to the quintessence of the essential Being, the consciousness capable of uniting the disparate authorities of the human being like the thumb unites the fingers of the hand. The moving blue ground seems, furthermore, to be calling the animals toward the depths, toward a quest for self in the waters of the womb. By going down into our deepest depths, in acceptance of our unconscious, we can bring about the meeting with the god within and emerge as enlightened beings. In this sense, the center of the wheel simultaneously represents the stopping place, the core of the problem, and that of possible movement, the call to awaken the inner treasure. Once again, the blue animal seems, as a representative of the heart, to be the means by which awareness can arrive. An indigo oval can be noted on its forehead that is akin to the chakra of the third eye, *Ajña*, that of clairvoyance. This clairvoyance has the power to unite descending material effort and ascending intellectual effort.

The paws of the animals, entwined in the spokes of the wheel, seem to be holding it back and preventing its movement; but we can also think that the three of them may be holding it up and preventing it from collapsing. Material, emotional, and intellectual



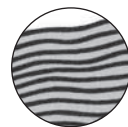
The center of the wheel



The sphinx and its "third eye"



The yellow animal is one of the rare beings of the Tarot that possesses ears.



The moving ground is similar to an ocean.





activity support the vital cycle. And this, in order to give birth to a new cycle, needs the intervention of a fourth energy, one that will be represented by Strength (XI) moving the handle: creative sexual energy.

## IN A READING

The Wheel of Fortune is a card with a multitude of interpretations whose reading depends much upon the circumstances alluded to by the subject of the reading. It indicates the point the subject has currently reached in his or her life. If it is present at the beginning of the drawing, it evokes the closing of a past cycle and the beginning of a new one. In a reading it can herald a work that has squarely come to completion and thus represent the turning of a page, a complete cycle. But often, coming at the middle or at the end of the draw, it indicates a block that needs to be overcome. It is then helpful to draw an additional card to see what will turn the handle or to elucidate the emotional mystery (represented by the blue animal) that it suggests.

Because the word *fortune* appears in this card, it represents financial profit in folk notions. It sometimes refers to a center of interest or system that is structured upon a circular shape: the wheel of karma, astrology, and even the big wheel of the lottery. The cycle of death and rebirth, in the large sense, can be seen in it as well as the circulation of life.

The Wheel of Fortune invites reflection upon inevitable alternations of ascents and falls, of prosperity and austerity, of joy and sorrow. It orients us toward change, whether positive or negative, and acceptance of the constant transformation of reality.

## AND IF THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE SPOKE

"I have known all experiences. In the beginning I had an ocean of possibilities before me. Guided in turn by will, by providence, or by chance, I have chosen my actions and accumulated knowledge so that I could then burst forth without any preconceived purpose. I have attained stability countless times. I have tried to keep its fruits on my table only to see them rot. I have grasped that I must open up to others and share. I have



realized that I must seek within for the great Other, the divine source and the center of my countless revolutions around this axis. I became lost seeking everything that resembled me. I have enjoyed the pleasure of seeing my reflection in the eyes of the Other as if in infinite mirrors until that day when, with an irrepressible force, I took action in the world and tried to change it—only to realize all I could do was begin to transform it. My spiritual quest expanded to the point of imbibing the whole of matter, and I attained a terrifying perfection, that state where nothing can be added to me or taken away. I did not wish to remain petrified this way. So I then abandoned everything, with only my wisdom left for company. I reached the extreme limit of myself, full but arrested, waiting for divine whim, universal energy, the mysterious wind that blows in what is inconceivable, which would cause me to revolve so that the first burst of a new cycle would blossom in my center.

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### **Among the Traditional Interpretations**

End of a Cycle • Beginning of a Cycle • Need for Outside Help • New Departure • Change of Fortune • External Circumstances at the Will of the Reading Subject • Opportunity to Seize • Hormonal Cycle • Emotional Enigma to Resolve • Blockage • Halt • Impasse • Wheel of Karma, Successive Reincarnations • Laws of Nature • Providence • Complete Cycle • Fulfillment • Shooting of a Film • Financial Gain

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“I have learned full well that everything that begins will end, and all that ends, begins. I have learned well that everything that goes up must come down and that everything that comes down must go up. I have learned full well that everything in circulation will stagnate and all that stagnates will begin circulating. Poverty becomes wealth, and wealth, poverty. From one change to another I invite you to unite with the wheel of life, accepting changes with patience, docility, and humility until the moment Consciousness is born. Then all that is human, like a chrysalis, will attain the angelic stage where reality ceases revolving around itself, where it soars off into the mind of the Creator.”



XI



LA·FORCE





# XI

## La Force/Strength

### *Creative Beginning, New Energy*

Strength, number 11, is the first card of the second decimal series (see pp. 32–33). It is she who opens the path for unconscious energies. It will be noted (the sole card among the Major Arcana to show this peculiarity) that her name is written on the far left of the cartouche, whereas on the right twenty lines are collected together like a trigger that will enable a new energy to gather its strength. Twenty is the number of Judgment, the card that ends this decimal cycle. Here again we see an intimate connection between the first and last cards of the cycle. Strength holds in potential everything that Judgment will realize, which is to say the emergence of the new consciousness.

Strength's message is quite clear: this work of consciousness first passes through a relationship with the instinctive forces. Whereas The Magician, her counterpart of the first series, works from the waist upward and exercises his intelligence, Strength works from the waist to the bottom, allowing the teachings of the depths to communicate with the spiritual authorities of her being. Several details connect her with Arcanum I: her hat in the shape of an eight or infinity is receptive, like that of The Magician, but hers is open at the top and seems to be winged, a motif that brings to mind the eagles present in Arcana



III, IIII, and XXI. The intelligence of Strength is ready to soar into the cosmos. She takes support from her single visible foot, whose six toes correspond to the six red points on her hat, the six black teeth of the animal, and the six fingers on the hand of The Magician (see p. 127). We can see this as the mark of an exceptional strength that allows her to be firmly anchored to the earth. We can also deduce from this that her source is beauty, the most sublime of pleasures (see pp. 64, 67, 81). The nail on her big toe, like the nail of her thumb, is painted red. Remember that the nails of the human body symbolize eternity because they continue growing after death. Strength's exceptional vitality is displayed by the red color of her nails.

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### Key Words

Animal Nature • Wild Beast • Creativity • Depth • Voice • Puberty  
 • To Speak • To Stop Speaking • Rebirth • Force • Beginning • To  
 Communicate • To Feel

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Strength is conscious from the tips of her toes to the top of her head. We could say that she is the very potential of Consciousness, in its aspect as the turning point between high and low, spiritual energy and instinctive energy. No defined landscape is sketched out around her; the sole support she has is a yellow plowed ground, thus a terrain upon which a work of realization has been performed. She is not situated in either time or space but is anchored in the present as the expression of a pure energy.

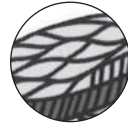
All her activity is concentrated in the relationship with the animal, in the hide of which the yellow or golden force of intelligence incarnates in the flesh-colored part. The spirit incarnates in the animal nature, which, in turn, makes itself available to communication with the spirit. Strength works with bare hands, grasping animal nature, the manifestations of the unconscious, and her own bodily sexuality: the animal's head is located at pelvis level. Her relationship with the forces at play in the movement of her hands in connection with the animal's jaw opens



the field to multiple interpretations. Her hand on our left is pressed against the beast's muzzle but seemingly without holding or forcing it. The eight spots drawn on this muzzle indicate that there are no grounds for altering this animal energy; it is perfect as it is.

But depending on the understanding or misunderstanding that is reached with the mind, either creativity and illumination will emerge, or blocks and repression. Strength teaches us that essential stakes are involved in this relationship with our animal nature and that we should not neglect this part of ourselves. This is also why the six black, pointed teeth of the animal can be seen again in the six points on the top of her hat. Intellectual nature listens to the voice of the animal, and the animal hears the influence of the mind. This is the ideal of Strength, a dynamic in which the hands dance with the muzzle in a communication that takes the perfectly balanced form of 8, infinity.

If we interpret the movement of the hands and the muzzle as a conflict, a power struggle, all manner of difficulties can be read there. The red of the thumb and the tongue become blood spilled in combat, sexual energy is repressed, and in its turn the animal nature mutilates the psyche (we can then see that the woman's throat bears a line like that left by a decapitation). The lacing of the corset over her chest becomes a closing of the heart prompted by the repression. The body is then perceived as being split into pieces; the individual is subject to the aftermath of an incident of sexual abuse, a trauma, or a toxic, mutilating, and rigid education.



Strength's hat is adorned with eagle feathers.



The thumbnail and the nail of the big toe are both red, an active color.



The six teeth of the animal are an echo of the six points on the top of her hat.





However, the details we just examined can also be interpreted positively. The crossbars over the woman's chest are formed by four "material" lines, running from left to right, that represent animal nature, which intersect with five "spiritual" lines, descending from right to left, representing the labor of Consciousness. These nine lines and the color yellow refer to the ninth degree of this decimal series, The Sun (XVIII), in which we see two twins (one spiritual and the other animal) completing a new construction together in perfect love. The line across the woman's throat could be a necklace, as the throat is the site of expression and true speech that does not arise solely from the intellect but also from the depths of the being: speech in which the conscious and the unconscious find harmony.

## IN A READING

Strength refers to the beginning of an activity or a period of life placed beneath the sign of instinct, of creativity. It can also indicate problems of a sexual nature, or the emergence of one of the individual's governing centers that was hitherto hidden and is now seeking expression for the first time. We shall need to ask ourselves if the young woman of Strength is allowing the animal to express itself or if she is attempting to rein it in. After an illness or the end of a cycle, Strength represents the return of vital energy.

Of all the animals present in the Tarot, the lion, which we find in the card of Strength and in that of The World (XXI), is the only one capable of eating the human being. The woman that finds harmony with it represents the most sublime dimension of the soul, the one through which the forces of miracle pass.

## AND IF STRENGTH SPOKE

"I was waiting for you. I am the beginning of a new cycle, and after all you have accomplished, you will not be able to live if you do not meet me. I shall teach you to defeat fear; with me you will be ready to see all, hear all, taste all, touch all. The senses have no limits, but morality



is made of fears. I shall enable you to see the immense swamp of your impulses, both the sublime and the murky. I am the dark force that ascends inside you toward the light.

“From the center of the depths, from the underground chambers of my being, springs forth my creative energy. I take root in the mire, in what is the densest, the most terrifying, and the most demented. Like a burning oven, my sex exhales desires that at first glance seem bestial but are only the song buried in matter since the beginning of the universe.

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### **Among the Traditional Interpretations**

Creative Potential • Courage • Nobility of Heart • New Departure •  
 Beginning of an Activity • Supply of New Energy • Instinctive Energy  
 • Animal Nature • Strength • Anger • Heroism • Self-Discipline •  
 Relations Between Mind and Instinct • Openness or Repression •  
 Appeal to Sexuality • Sexual Inhibition • Psychological Repression •  
 Difficulty Expressing Yourself • Opening • Orgasm • Tantra

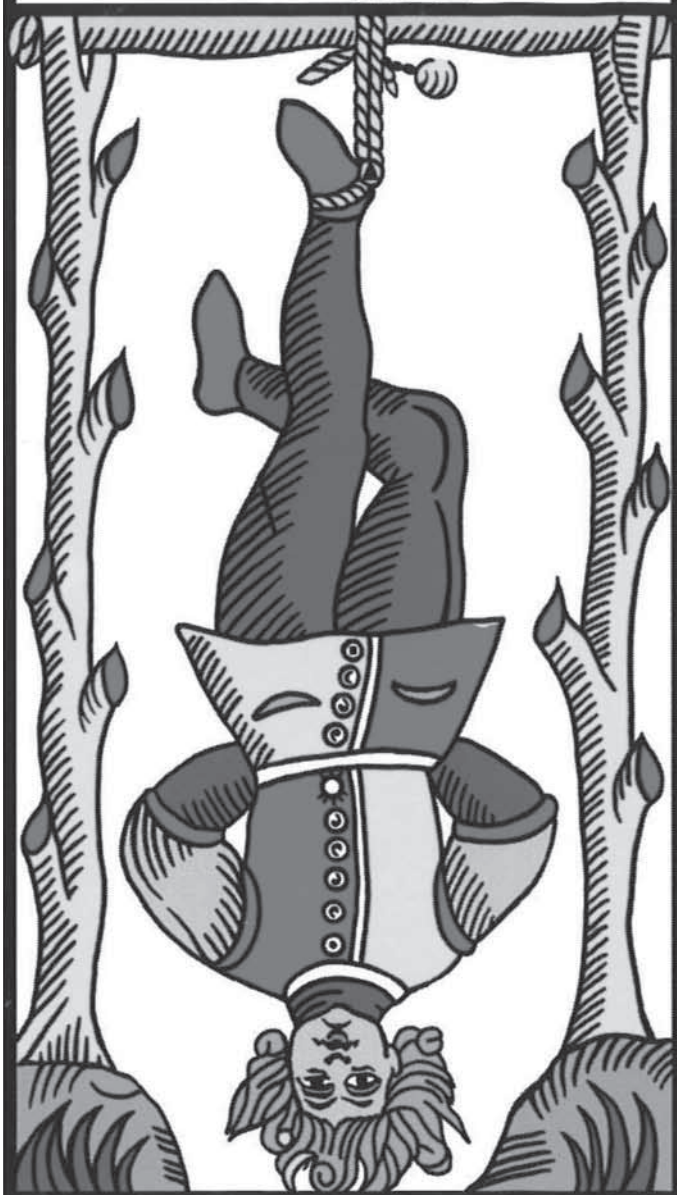
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“My intellect, light originating from the stars, cold as infinity, acts upon the eternal heat of magma to produce the creative roar. Heaven and Earth unite in this howl, awakening the world. I can make every humble stone become an artwork. I can cause spindly trees to sprout with sap-swollen fruits. I can transform the horizon line into a living purple slash, like a long and endless ruby. Each print my powerful feet leave in the mud behind me is a hive that fills with honey.

“I let the sublime and ferocious urge the world needs circulate in my body from top to bottom, like the waves of an unleashed ocean. Call it whatever you like: sexual potential, energy of matter, dragon, kundalini . . . It is an immeasurable chaos that takes shape within me. In my belly a devil and an angel join together as one, forming a whirlwind. Like a tree, I splay my branches toward the sky while burying my roots in the earth. I am a ladder with which energy simultaneously climbs and descends. Nothing scares me. I am the beginning of creation.”



XII



LE • PENDU



# XII

## Le Pendu/ The Hanged Man

### *Halt, Meditation, Gift of the Self*

The Hanged Man, Arcanum XII, corresponds to the second degree of the second decimal series, the equivalent of The High Priestess in the first series. Like her, he indicates a state of accumulation, arrest, and reclusion. Like The High Priestess, he has exiled himself from the human world, to which his only bond is the rope that attaches him to a flesh-colored lintel between the two trees holding him up. We have seen that starting with Arcanum XI, all the numbers are going to complete a descent toward the source of the original force in the abysses of the unconscious. The Hanged Man obeys this attraction toward the bottom and, through his accumulative nature (the 2), he expresses it by a complete halt, suspended upside down with his hair diving toward the depths as if to root itself there.

If The High Priestess was incubating, The Hanged Man is incubated: he has entered gestation to create the new being. We find here again the symbolism of the egg present in Arcanum II. If The High Priestess is the mother, The Hanged Man is the son. We can imagine The Hanged Man in gestation in the egg of Arcanum II. Suspended between Heaven and Earth, he is waiting to be born. The position of his legs is slightly



reminiscent of that of The Emperor: one is stretched out fully, while the other is bent. But the Emperor's crossing of the legs is dynamic, with one foot thrust forward ready to move into action. The Hanged Man, to the contrary, is folding one leg behind the other to better immobilize himself. Even his hands, the symbols of his ability to act, are crossed behind his back. He is doing nothing, nor is he making any choices.

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### Key Words

Sacrifice • Halt • Not Choosing • Gestation • Fetus • Meditation • Gift of the Self • Depth • Upside Down • To Wait • Delay • Suspension • Rest

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On both sides of this figure, we see branches that have been cut, sacrificed. For this spiritual or material birth in preparation, a pause is necessary. This can be the pause prompted by an illness just as much as it could be the pause one freely consents to make in meditation. On a spiritual plane, The Hanged Man has stopped identifying with the comedy of the world and his own neurotic theater; he offers the worries of his ego as a sacrifice to his inner work. In this sense, his fall is an ascent.

We can also see, in a reversal of vision and perspectives, the upside-down status of his physical body: the intellect has been thrown down and the rational has ceased dominating behavior, while the mind makes itself receptive to profound inner wisdom, as shown by his dark-yellow hair. Our point of view on life changes. We disconnect from a view of the world inherited from childhood, with its retinue of illusions and projections, to enter into its singular essential truth. Seen from this angle, The Hanged Man will often send us back, in the reading, to an understanding of the subject's ties with his or her family tree. The position of this figure, with his head at the bottom, brings to mind that of the fetus in the maternal womb, and it can prompt the Tarot reader to question the person for whom the cards are being read about the circumstances of his or her gestation and birth, or about any traumatic pregnancies the person may have had in the past. The two trees with their lopped branches can be interpreted as two "trees" or as the maternal and paternal lines,



whose neurotic situation and abusive behavior leave us hanging as impotent sacrifices, hiding behind our back—like this hanged man with his invisible hands—shameful secrets. This card will sometimes express guilt, imaginary crimes symbolized by the twelve bleeding wounds on the trees and the punishment that is being imposed, or else the sacrifice one may be condemned to make. The traditional folk reading imagines that money is falling out of The Hanged Man's pockets, that he is losing his wealth. A more symbolic reading will view this as the sacrifice of the illusory "riches" of the ego.

The Hanged Man can also evoke the figure of Christ, and through that the theme of the gift of oneself. The twelve lopped branches then would symbolize the twelve apostles, who are sometimes identified as the twelve deviations of the ego around Christ representing the universal androgyne. The marks of androgyny abound: The Hanged Man's pockets are shaped like crescent moons, but one is receiving while the other gives, one is active and the other receptive. The rope attached to him that is holding him up is doubled: one of its ends terminates in a phallic symbol while the other, to our right, ends in a shape that is reminiscent of the female symbol. Furthermore, this same rope at the point where it is attached to The Hanged Man's heel has a triangle inserted within a circle to signify that he is connected to spirit, to spiritual androgyny. And this refers to him from toe to head, as we can find among his dark-yellow locks a round light-yellow solar symbol and a small moon of the same color.

However, knowing that the Tarot is imbued with the influence of the three great monotheist



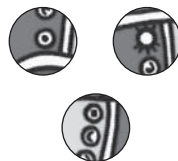
The cut branches around the figure refer to sacrifice and to the quest for the essential.



At the point where the rope is attached to the heel, a triangle symbolizes the mind, spirit.



There is a sun and moon in his hair.



The buttons of his clothing could symbolize the Sephirot of kabbalistic tradition.





religions, we can also see an allusion to the kabbalistic tradition and the ten Sephirot of the Tree of Life in the ten buttons on The Hanged Man's tunic. The first button, starting from the throat, bears a dot, the origin of all creation. The next four alternate between an active element and a receptive element. The sixth button, which corresponds to the Sephirah Tipheret, takes the form of an eight-rayed sun, perfection of the beauty uniting all the other elements. This is again followed by a receptive element and an active element, followed by a ninth button bearing a moon and a tenth on which a square, the symbol of the Earth, has been inscribed. The Hanged Man's meditation gives him access to the universal wisdom that rests within him.

## IN A READING

This card indicates a moment of suspension that we can turn to our advantage for refining our plans in greater detail, self-knowledge, and inner work. It can also refer to a block or an inability to take action. Often this card will let us know that the time is not right for making a decision, that the situation or own view needs to ripen further. The Hanged Man can be literally seen as the mirror or reflection of Arcanum XXI, The World, in which the position of the legs is similar. But the woman at the heart of the mandorla of The World is dancing, whereas The Hanged Man is at a complete standstill. He represents the immobility that is complimentary to movement, the fetus in the maternal womb, or even the profound contact with the self that gives birth to all realization in the world.

## AND IF THE HANGED MAN SPOKE

"I am in this position because I wish to be. It is I who cut off the branches. I have freed my hands of the desire to seize, to own, to cling. Without abandoning the world, I have retired from it. With me you can find the will to enter the state where the will no longer exists, where words, emotions, relations, desires, needs no longer bind you. To detach myself, I have cut all bonds save the one joining me to Consciousness.

"I have the sensation of eternally falling toward myself. I am look-



ing for myself through the labyrinth of words. I am he who thinks and who is thought. I am not my feelings; I observe them from an intangible sphere where peace alone reigns. At an infinite distance from the river of desires, I know only indifference. I am not my body but the one who dwells inside it. To reach myself, I am a hunter who sacrifices his prey. I find burning action in infinite nonaction.

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### **Among the Traditional Interpretations**

Halt • Waiting • Immobility • The Moment to Act Has Not Come • To Conceal Something • Self-Punishment • Fetus in Gestation • Secret • Perspectives Turned Upside Down • To See Another Point of View • To Not Choose • Rest • Illness • Pregnancy • Gestation Conditions of the Reading Subject • Tie to the Family Tree • Prayer • Sacrifice • Gift of Oneself • Deep Meditation • Nondoing • Inner Forces Received through Prayer

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“I cross through pain to discover the strength of sacrifice. Little by little I undo everything in me that could be called ‘me.’ I reenter myself incessantly as if into an enchanted forest. I own nothing, I grasp nothing, I know nothing, I want nothing, I can do nothing.

“However, the entire universe crosses through me, arriving to fill me with its whirlwinds before leaving again. I am the infinite sky that lets the clouds pass by. What remains of me? A single gaze staring at nothing, aware of itself, which makes itself the last and ultimate reality. Then I explode into pure light. The ‘I’ becomes the axis of a total dance, the holy water where the thirsty come to drink.

“It is at this moment that I am the pure air that drives away the poisoned atmosphere. It is at this moment that my bound body becomes the cataclysmic source of eternal life.

“I am nothing more than the beat of the heart that propels beauty toward the borders of creation. I become the peaceful gentleness in all pain, ceaseless gratitude, the door that leads victims to ecstasy, the sloping path on which we slide toward the heights, the living light that circulates in the darkness of the blood.”



XIII





# XIII

## L'Arcane sans Nom/ The Nameless Arcanum

### *Profound Transformation, Revolution*

The most widespread error concerning this Arcanum is the one made by the superficial tradition that has given it the meaning, and sometimes the name, of “Death.” The weight of this inaccuracy has weighed heavily upon the interpretation of Arcanum XIII. Of course the central figure we see here is the scythe-wielding skeleton that represents death in popular tradition. However, there are numerous elements that allow us to move away from this simplistic interpretation. On one hand, Arcanum XIII does not have a name. After the emptying and deepening work achieved by The Hanged Man, this card invites a radical purification of the past, a revolution that takes place in the nonverbal or preverbal depths of the individual, in the shadow of that black terrain, that unknown region of ourselves, from which emerges, like a matrix, our humanity.

On the other hand, we can note that 13 is not the last number of the Major Arcana series but is located slightly past the middle. If this card represents an ending, it would probably have the number 22. Its position at the heart of the Tarot prompts us to see it as a work of cleansing, a



revolution necessary for the renewal and the ascent that follows after it, one degree at a time, toward the total realization of The World. Furthermore, this numbered but untitled card echoes The Fool, who has a name but no number. The similarity of the postures of the two figures is obvious: the skeleton of Arcanum XIII could be that of The Fool seen on an X-ray. We can deduce from this that these two Arcana represent two aspects of the same fundamental energy. But if The Fool is first and foremost an advance, a contribution, a liberation, Arcanum XIII evokes work similar to plowing or a harvest, preparing the terrain for a new life. Here again an obvious clue takes us away from the simplistic interpretation: this skeleton is flesh-colored, the preminent color of organic life. This is the skeleton we carry inside of us, the bone, living essence, and structure of all movement, and not the skeleton we leave behind us when we depart this life.

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### Key Words

Change • Mutation • Revolution • Anger • Transformation • Cleansing  
 • Harvest • Skeleton • To Cut • Advance • To Eliminate • To Destroy  
 • Rapidity

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A white bone on the ground evokes the dried skeletal structure (the origin of the word *skeleton* is a Greek word that means “dried”), but even this bone is moving toward new life. Because it is pierced with seven holes, it appears like a flute, an instrument that waits only for a breath to produce its music; this breath could well be divine. Therefore it is unthinkable to reduce Arcanum XIII to the meaning of “Death.” But we can see a major transformation, a revolution, or a radical change in this card.

The figure, with his vital (red) and spiritual (blue) scythe, is in the process of working his nature, his deep nature. He is holding the scythe by a yellow handle, the color of intelligence: the labor has been carried through the wish and thought stage and is now achieved. Aggressiveness or anger, either suffered or expressed, is often visible in the process of Arcanum XIII. But it is possible that this work takes place like an outburst of energy, a quick and liberating explosion. It is a process of elimi-



nation that works the ego like a field and tames it. No useless element is tolerated anymore; the reductive concepts and value systems imprisoning us are swept away, and with them the complicity that held us to this point within our unrealized state or neurosis. All bonds of dependency are cut to permit us to recover our lost liberty, the very freedom of which The Fool is the primordial symbol.

The black ground on which Arcanum XIII is working is reminiscent of the *nigredo* of alchemy, or the mire from which the lotus emerges in Buddhist tradition. It is the color of the unconscious, emptiness, deep mystery. On it we see two heads. We do not know if they have been cut off or if they are emerging from the dark soil—in any case, the skeleton is supporting itself on them in order to keep moving forward. Father and mother have been dethroned at an earlier time, so that the profound nobility of the male and female appear in the form of two purified archetypes. Two human beings of royal tradition are therefore being born here, just as two different forms of grass are sprouting: one that is deep blue, the color of intuitive spiritual reception, and the other yellow, the color of active and solar intelligence.

We can also see unattached feet and hands on the black ground, some of which are well formed and others imperfect. Have they been cut off? Are they sprouting? In this latter case, we could say that the new being is rising to the surface. If we study the skeletal figure more closely, we can see more than one face. There is the shadow of a profile, as if the darkness of the ground had risen as high as the head, and as the mind was emptied. The eye of the skeleton looks like a dragon biting its tail, symbol of the infinite nature of the universe. The skeleton's



The bone flute, which also brings to mind a musical instrument from Tibetan tradition



The two severed heads on the ground could be concepts inherited from one's parents.



The four letters of the divine name on the back of the skull



On the top of the receptive spinal column there is a red, active, flower or knot.



The hidden heart





head bears a lunar shape, sign of its receptivity, and on the back of its head, if we turn the card sideways, we can see among the hatch marks the Hebrew letters *Yod-Hay-Vav-Hay*, which spell the divine name. The sum of these four letters in the Hebrew alphabet equals 26, the figure of divinity, of which 13 is exactly half.

This figure carries divinity within, but it is not entirely divine; it is working in the plane of incarnation. The pelvis of the skeleton and its spinal column borrow the colors of its scythe: azure and red, as if these two colors (vital action and spiritual receptivity; see p. 100) formed the base of the growth along the column, like a blade of wheat, up to the red four-petal flower supporting the head. Hidden in the figure's pelvis, a blue heart tells us it works with love. One of its knees and one of its elbows bear a flower with three petals or a red clover, which again designates activity at strategic points in the body. The knee and the elbow are the site of charisma, of communication with the crowd. One leg and arm of the flesh-colored part of its body are a saturated light-blue color. This is an active and communicative being that is both incarnated and spiritual, human and divine, mortal and immortal. Its mask is terrifying. Even if we have seen that the skeleton conceals divine activity, we can still allow ourselves to be frightened by its appearance and see this figure as an empty-headed, lame individual randomly scything with no respect for life or beauty. It appears as a terrifying threat that cannot be appealed, like an unjust and merciless death. But its action points the way to the path of transformation and carries us from mortality to the immortality of individual consciousness.

## IN A READING

This card requires great delicacy of interpretation. Negative predictions are toxic and useless: it is not necessary to read death, mutilation, or illness in this card. Some reading subjects become terrified from simply seeing this card in a spread. What's called for here is to discover with them what major transformation it evokes, what changes are desired or already at work, and perhaps what threats it may permit them to avoid. It can sometimes involve a mourning to be performed, also sometimes great internalized anger that needs to be expressed. Then again, Arcanum XIII



sometimes evokes an unconscious aggressiveness or the need to manifest an energy that the consultant does not know how to express positively. It is good in this case to see if the energy of The Fool (same direction, same movement, but less-negative connotations) would not be more appropriate. However, when a revolution is what's called for, Arcanum XIII brings it with radical rapidity, which can inspire a great relief.

### AND IF ARCANUM XIII SPOKE

"If you push yourself to go faster, you will catch me. If you slow down, I shall catch you. If you walk peacefully, I shall accompany you. If you start to turn around, I shall dance with you. Since our meeting is inevitable, face me at once! I am your inner shadow, the one laughing behind the illusion you call reality. Patient as a spider, set like a jewel in each of your moments, I am the one with whom you share your life—or if you refuse this, you will not be living in the truth. You can flee to the other side of the world; I shall always be by your side. Since the time you were born, I am the mother that never stops bringing you into the world. So rejoice! It is only when you grasp me that life becomes meaningful. The demented who do not recognize me cling to things without seeing I own them all. There is nothing that does not bear my seal. Permanent impermanence, I am the secret of the sages: they know they can only advance on my path.

"Those who incorporate me become powerful minds. Those who deny me, seeking vainly to escape, lose the delights of the ephemeral. Although they are in Being, they do not know how to be. While trapped in anguish, they do not know how to live.

"Children cannot imagine me. If they did, they would stop being children, for I am the end of childhood. Those who recognize me on their path become adults. They know that they belong to me. I devour their difficulties, their triumphs, their failures, their loves, their disappointments, their pleasures, their pains, their parents, their children, their pride, their illusions, their wealth. I devour everything. My voraciousness is boundless; I even devour the gods. But when I reach the last of them, the authentic one, once the masks dissolve in my entrails, I break my teeth on him. In his indescribable mystery, in his absent presence, in his present



absence, I kill myself . . . I only swallow egos. Each has a different taste, each one more bitter and fetid than the last.

“Thanks to me, everything turns into dust and collapses. But do not think this is a tragedy. I make destruction a process of extreme splendor. I wait for life to display its most supreme beauty; that is when I appear to eliminate it with the same beauty. When it reaches the limits of its growth, I begin to destroy it with the same love that was used to build it. What joy! What immeasurable joy! My permanent destruction opens the way to constant creation. If there is no end, there can be no beginning. I am at the service of eternity, your eternity. If you devote yourself to transformation, you will become the master of the ephemeral moment, because you will live it in its infinite intensity. It is because of me that desire is born in the belly, in the genitals. Coitus serves to conquer eternity.

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### **Among the Traditional Interpretations**

Profound Transformation • Revolution • Cut • To Eliminate What Prevents Us from Moving Forward • End of an Illusion • Salutary Rupture • Anger • Revolutionary • Aggressiveness • Harvest • Work of Mourning Concerning a Person or a Situation • Hatred • Violence • Cleansing • Radical Purification • Essence of Change • The Work of the Subconscious • The Deity's Destructive Face • Death as God's Cosmic Mask • Transmutation • Eradication of the Old to Make Way for the New • Work on the Human Skeleton • Essential Movement • X-Rays • Psychoanalyst or Person Who Accompanies the Change

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“If you did not have a material body, I would not exist. When you become pure mind, pure spirit, I disappear. Without matter, I no longer exist. So dare to dispose of your flesh and bones in my mouth! To win, you must give me everything you have, which has truly always belonged to me. Your ideas, your feelings, your desires, and your needs, all belong to me. If you want to keep something, tiny as it may be, you who are nothing and possess nothing will lose it. You will lose eternity.

“Understand this: in my extreme darkness, I am the eye of the unthinkable that you might call God. I am also God's will. Thanks to me, you return to God. I am the divine door: he who enters my ter-



ritory is a sage, and he who cannot consciously cross my threshold is a fearful child caparisoned in his detritus. You must enter me pure. Get rid of everything, even detachment; annihilate yourself. It is only when you disappear that God appears.

"You want strength? By accepting me, you are the strongest. You want wisdom? By accepting me, you are the wisest. You want courage? By accepting me, you are the most courageous. Tell me what you want! If you become my lover, I shall give it to you. When you feel me becoming part of your body, I transform the concept that you have of yourself. I make you dead in life and grant you the pure gaze of the dead: two unattached holes through which only God gazes. The instant then becomes terrible; everything is transformed into a mirror, and you see yourself in every being, every form, every process. What you call 'life' becomes a dance of illusions. There is no longer any difference between matter and dream.

"Don't shiver, have no fear, rejoice! Life, although unreal and ephemeral, reveals its greatest beauty in the moment. By giving me your gaze, you will finally understand that it is a miracle to be alive.

"I do not like it when people recognize me before their time. I want people to call me at the precise moment they grasp who I am. If you rush me by committing suicide, I shall bring no wisdom, as you have made a travesty of me as vulgar destruction. I am not an absurd misfortune. I have a profound meaning; I am the great initiator, the intangible Teacher crouched beneath matter. When I am solicited dementedly, you make me angry, and I am made to act against my will. Only those who reach me in full awareness give me supreme bliss. But the majority of beings come to me ignorantly through war, crime, vice, illness, and catastrophes. Rare are those who reach that state of pure Consciousness in which I become the apogee of realization. These individuals never cease to recognize me, whereas I come as a surprise to the others. He who resigns himself with understanding to accept being my prey lives with ease, in freedom and joy, faces aggression with confidence and without nightmares, and realizes his desires. By losing hope, we also lose fear.

"Do not offer me your hand, for I shall immediately cause it to rot. Offer me your consciousness. Disappear within me, in order to finally become the Totality!"



XIII



TEMPERANCE



# XIII

## Tempérance/Temperance

### *Protection, Circulation, Healing*

Temperance, number 14, depicts an angel. This card arrives after the profound work of Arcanum XIII that has swept away the useless, creating the emptiness necessary for the reestablishment of inner circulation. The time for peace and health has come. We should note that “Temperance” has no article, no masculine or feminine.\* We can speak about it in both genders: he with respect to the angel, and she with respect to Temperance. Just like The Emperor in the first decimal series, Temperance is a 4, the number of stability. The angel is anchored in the earth and does not fly, although its light-blue wings give it that possibility. Temperance has gone beyond the carnal, and he/she can soar into the most subtle regions. His/her yellow pupil, illuminated with pure awareness, brings to mind the verse by Rilke: “All angels are terrifying.” This superhuman gaze could be that of the only angel to see God: Gabriel. The gaze and hair of Temperance are filled with divine light, and the five-petaled red flower opening at the top of the head indicates that he/she bears the quintessence. His/her thoughts manifest in the form of a marvelous perfume beyond speech.

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\*[In French and other Romance languages, the articles indicate the gender of the objects they modify. — *Trans.*]



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**Key Words**

Guardian Angel • Measure • Blend • To Circulate • Harmony •  
To Heal • To Protect • Benevolence • Prudence • To Moderate •  
Health • Even-Tempered

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But we have seen that this angel is anchored in the Earth. Two snakes are interlaced at his/her feet, in a caress. Temperance has therefore assumed all telluric energies and dominated his/her libido. These two snakes are the sexual poles, the male and female of Tantra or the two *nadis*, *ida* and *pingala*, that entwine along the spinal column up to the azure wings. This symbol also brings to mind Hermes's caduceus, as well as Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent of pre-Columbian religions. The angel grows above the power of his/her sexuality; we find there again the animal force sublimated into the celestial and spiritual energy of his/her blond hair.

The four yellow triangles on his/her chest evoke the four centers of the human being: intellectual, emotional, sexual, and corporeal. These centers do not intercommunicate but are juxtaposed, each with its own law. But we see a yellow circle above, the symbol of perfection, in which a triangle has been carved that will permit each element to fit into it perfectly. This is the fifth element, the essential Being in us that communicates with each of the four centers, allowing harmony to be established in the human being. Similarly, a hand, the symbol of luck and peace, can be seen in the flesh-colored panel over the angel's chest: his/her heart radiating charity.

Temperance ensures that energies and fluids can communicate with each other. We could say that he/she mixes water with wine. Through his/her action there are no more opposing energies, no more opposites, but only complementarities. It is the secret of balance. Temperance indicates the return of health, mental and emotional balance, the control of the passions not through repression but through sublimation. Temperance brings a pacifying message: "Find your center; your vital pendulum must avoid extremes; go by the middle way."



Beneath the hem of his/her robe, we can see the tip of a shoe, one of the rare violet patches in the Tarot. This angelic foot has also been tempered. It is the blend of the active red and receptive blue that shares the body of Temperance. We then realize that inside his/her robe, the angel is violet. He/she has realized the union of the positive and the negative, the active and the passive. This is the secret discreetly suggested by this foot.

### IN A READING

This card often appears as a sign of healing or reconciliation. We are protected. It urges the search for balance amid apparent opposites. People frequently live with an internal rift, for example between the intellect and the rest of the self or, to the contrary, between the body and the rest of the personality, if one is very athletic; between the front and back of the stage for people who are often performing; between a very elevated spiritual concept and imperious sexual desires; and so forth. In all cases Temperance is calling us to take the middle path, to seal the union with ourselves, then starting from this point to deal with the rest of the world. This Arcanum also sends a warning to alcoholics and drug abusers, to all those who know they are imbalanced because of their own actions.

The work of Temperance does not consist of cutting but of adding a value that moderates the passions that cause us harm: trust to jealousy, sobriety to greed . . .



A red flower on the angel's forehead perfumes his/her thoughts.



Four points and a circle: the four elements and the Essence



The flow between the vases



The Angel's violet slipper: point of contact with the ground





## AND IF TEMPERANCE SPOKE

"I am with you permanently. Not a single second passes that I am not with you, because my true essence is to be a guardian. You cannot imagine the number of dangers and illnesses from which I save you. I am there, I am watching over you. When you are dreaming, I am watching over your dreams. I drive the nightmares away.

"I love you infinitely. Put your trust in me, because when you stop believing in me, I become smaller and smaller, and then invisible. I lose some of my power. But once you start seeing me again, I act more and more effectively, both inside you and in the outside world. Just like a mother will give her child to a trustworthy individual to watch, you can entrust yourself to me like a child. I will protect you. How many among you have suddenly become aware of my existence when I pulled you back just as a car was about to run you down? Or when I dissuaded you from going onto an airplane that would later explode in flight? Or when I stopped your steps mere inches from the abyss?

"I am balance and prosperity. I am the inner voice that screams: 'Look out!' and lets you avoid making the fatal error, having the accident, making the irreversible gesture.

"I am on a state of constant alert on your behalf. I am the kindness of the universe. I communicate with nature and with all the entities governing the world, ensuring their favor toward you. I intercept dangers, I guide exchanges. I am present at the north, south, east, and west, at the four corners of the world, so that you may live your lives in all confidence.

"I've been called 'guardian angel'; that is how the Church imagined me, with the appearance of a child. I am that, but I am also much more than that. I am a part of your subconscious, its benevolent part, the part that helps and keeps watch over you even when you are sleeping. I am there to urge you to act when an action is good for you. Trust me: I am here to balance you. Those who suffer and torture themselves do not know me, yet I am also there for them. I am only waiting for them to see me and to call upon me.



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### Among the Traditional Interpretations

Healing • Health • Protection • Dynamic Balance • Exchanges • Reconciliation • The Circulation of Fluids (blood, water . . . ) • Energy Flow • The Crossing of a Frontier • Travel • Premonitory Dreams • Harmony • Peaceful, Even Temper • To Blend • To Balance • To Water One's Wine • Balance of Vital Forces • Angelic Nature (the angel has no sex) • Excessive Tendency to Moderation • Avarice • Self-Communication • Messenger of Grace • Spiritual Healing • The Guardian Angel • Evokes the Deceased (funeral monument) • Transmigration of Souls, Reincarnation • The Feathered Serpent

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"I ask only one thing of you: that you recognize that you are not alone. But then you ask, what must be done to reach me? I shall answer you: you must begin by imagining me. You may first invoke my childish image of a guardian angel; that's a good start. Play with me like a child speaking to his angel. Act as if I existed. Imagine me, there, right next to you, all the time, and that my sole purpose is to help you. Most importantly, like a trusting child, you must accept my aid.

"Abandon your defenses. When you need something, ask me out loud: 'My Guardian Angel, help me, intercede for me in this problem, in this difficulty.' I will respond to all your requests whether they are practical or spiritual. Ask me to protect you; I love to protect you. Tell me: 'My protector, watch over my health, help me find a job that will truly make me happy and in which I can realize my full human potential and ensure that my family will lack for nothing.'

"Or tell me: 'My protector, help me stay calm in difficult circumstances, help me progress and develop my awareness, give me strength, improve my health, and ensure that I make myself useful to all around me every day. I have confidence in you.'

"Even if you do not believe in me, imitate this belief, and little by little I shall start to appear. Time is my ally, because it is always bringing you more wisdom. I am with you from the moment of birth to the moment called death, which is another birth."



XV



LE • DIABLE



# XV

## Le Diable/The Devil

### *Unconscious Forces, Passion, Creativity*

In the numerological order, The Devil corresponds to The Pope, Arcanum V, the fifth degree of the first decimal series of the Major Arcana. He also represents a bridge, a transition. But while The Pope represents a path toward the spiritual heights, The Devil appears as a tempter, showing the way to the depths of the being. This card is anchored in the large black patch that we saw appear in Arcanum XIII. The figure of The Devil is carrying a torch and has two bat wings: these elements indicate he dwells in darkness, in the night of the deep subconscious. We could say he represents the opposite of The Pope, the light buried in matter. The figures on this card are a blend of the human and the animal, which makes reference to our primordial powers, the prehistoric memories buried in the deepest depths of the nervous system. This feature reminds us, through the various esoteric signs adorning these figures, that the initiate, to achieve illumination, should not refuse his animal side but accept it, honor it, and guide it to angelic light.

The Devil, having been an angel, reveals with his torch his profound desire to climb back from his cave to the cosmos. Similarly, the human soul, buried in the carnal body, has a profound desire to ascend back to its origin, the Creator deity. The Devil is wearing a hat whose



red edge evokes the activity of desire, and its orange mass is his intuitive and receptive intelligence that extends over his forehead like a third eye. He is cross-eyed, focused on a point at the tip of his nose in an intense meditation. His facial expression is ambiguous: on one hand it seems like deep concentration, and on the other he could be making a childish face. We could say, crossing through the layers of popular fears he inspires, that he is reminding us that he is only an innocent creation, a comical being. We could also say that by sticking his tongue out twice, from his own face and from the deep blue face on his belly, The Devil is hiding nothing; he reveals a total absence of hypocrisy.

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### Key Words

Temptation • Passion • Attachments • Sequence • Money • Contract  
 • Depth • Darkness • Fear • Taboo • Subconscious • Sexuality •  
 Impulses • Creativity

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If he is equipped with several pairs of eyes on his face, belly, and knees, it is to better see the face of his fears. He is an individual with four faces. In addition to the face on his head, a mask concealing his powerful intellect, there is the surprised look on his two breasts. The half-moon shape of the bottom half of his breasts indicates an unhindered emotional nature. The face on his belly, which is also sticking out its tongue, designates the vast extension of his creative and sexual desires. The gaze from his knees suggests flesh saturated with spirit that has been assumed like a garment and which scorns nothing of material life. His sex organ is like the emergence of a third tongue. But his light-blue body indicates that he is first and foremost a spiritual entity, a dimension of the mind under its Luciferian aspect. He is holding a torch with a green handle from which gleams a red flame emerging from a circle; this torch is burning from a great activity, stamped by this sign of perfection and the creative principle.

The three figures are crowned with horns, indicating that this Arcanum is that of passion above all else: amorous passion and creative



passion. This card contains all the hidden potentials of the human subconscious, both negative and positive. This is also the card of temptation: a summons to search for the occult treasure, immortality, and powerful energy buried in the psyche, which is necessary for all great human endeavors. Obviously this card can also represent a fraudulent contract in the Faust tradition, sexual deviance and degeneracy, infantilism, deceit, mental delirium, economic rapacity, gluttony, and all self-destructive attachments.

The Devil is standing on some sort of pedestal or plinth, to which two imps are connected by an orange rope passing through a central light-blue ring. We could say that the imp on the left is a woman and that on the right a man by referring to the expression on their faces, although no sexual distinction has been drawn. The woman bears a small sign on her chest, three dots arranged in a triangle to indicate she is sacred. These two individuals have feet shaped like roots that plunge into the dark ground. The feet of the woman have five toes each, whereas those of the other imp have only four. This is the card that reveals the active dimension of the female and the passive dimension of the male, the two energies combining to create the hermaphrodite devil, who has both breasts and a penis on his body. His right foot and hand have five toes and fingers, while the hand and foot on the left have four. The two imps have horns on their heads, bringing to mind those medieval legends in which animals remain imprisoned by their horns in the forest of passion. We can view them as two individuals attached by their desires, but also rooted in the profound source and transformed into the servants of The Devil's creative androgyny, free from all prejudices.



The Devil's torch can burn up the world.



There are horns or branches on the heads of the two imps.



The imps' feet are rooted in the black ground.



Three spiritual dots appear on the body of the woman on the left.





In the popular mentality, The Devil evokes money. He shows up to tempt humans with a promising contract, quick and easy wealth; he is also associated with the declaration of a great passion, temptation, or liaison. All this lies atop the same spiritual reality: a part of ourselves tempts us with unknown possibilities, just as Christ was tempted by his inner devil. Esoteric tradition says that when Christ died, he went down from his tomb to look for his elder brother, the Devil, to unite with him and form one being.

On the ground of the “cave,” above the matrix of darkness, we can see an evenly striped light-blue terrain. In the middle of the black band these same stripes, evidence of the work of spiritual labor, have formed the action (the red trapezoid) leading to the perfection of the light-blue circle through which passes the bond that unites the two imps. All unconscious and instinctive activity becomes conscious (light yellow) and spiritual (light blue). The root of this activity, The Devil, designates it as sexual. The red tip of his sex organ is a symbol of life, just like the double belt holding up his breasts and the one crowning his pelvis. With these touches of red, he seems to be indicating that the libido is first and foremost a vital flame, like that of his torch, with which one can set alight the world with a creative fire. In this regard, The Devil is the other face of God.

## IN A READING

The Devil can refer to a sum of money coming in or everything associated with large financial transactions, which may sometimes be shady or secret. He is the great Tempter who, in the material domain, refers to the desire for wealth. He will also represent a promising contract, but one that needs to be studied closely to avoid being deceived. The Devil can in fact lead, impartially, to fortune or ruin.

On the other hand, he is always a good omen for questions concerning creativity. He evokes the depth of talent, the wealth of inspiration, the tendency of a true artist, and intense creative energy.

Just like Arcanum XIII, The Devil can frighten the reading subject *a priori*. He is charged with all moral and religious taboos and reflects



the very image of evil. The tarologist should therefore orient the reading to enable the person consulting him to go beyond the sexual or creative prohibitions that have been imposed upon him or her, and to reconnect to the power of the depths in which our subconscious is rooted. This is also the place where the passions are anchored. The Devil often refers us to the sexual dimension of a relationship: a bond of passion. He can also refer to the desire to know this kind of union.

He will sometimes evoke physical or mental dependencies, whose unconscious roots will need to be identified. Problems of drugs, alcohol, sexual dependency, self-punishing behavior, repetitive patterns in emotional life, and so forth are all things that can be unknotted if we accept undertaking work in the depths.

In all cases, this card directs us toward our personal nature and commits us to not hiding beneath a mask. The realization consists of being who one is. This presumes the acknowledgment and guidance of our desires.

## AND IF THE DEVIL SPOKE

"I am Lucifer the light-bearer. My magnificent gift to humanity is the absolute absence of morality. Nothing restricts me. I transgress every law, I burn the sacred books and constitutions. No religion can contain me. I destroy all theories and cause all dogmas to explode.

"In the depths of the depths of the depths, no one lives any deeper than I do. I am the source of all abysses. I am the one who gives life to dark grottos, the one who knows the center around



Even The Devil's knees have eyes: he sees on every level.



The two faces of the Devil sticking out their tongues: he mocks rational speech.



A penis and breasts: the Devil is a hermaphrodite and unites the two polarities.





which turn all densities. I am the viscosity of everything that vainly attempts to be definite: the supreme strength of magma; the stench that denounces the hypocrisy of perfumes; the carrion mother of every flower; the corruptor of vain minds who wallow in perfection.

“I am the murdered awareness of the perpetual ephemeral. It is me imprisoned in the underground reaches of the world who causes the stupid cathedral of faith to shake. It is me on my knees biting the feet of the crucified until they bleed, who, without any shyness, shows off my wounds gaping like so many famished vaginas. I rape the putrid egg of your holiness. I bury the erection of my thought into the morbid dream of hierophants and spit in the face of their simulacra the cold sperm of my scorn.

“No peace with me. No peaceful little home. No candied Gospels. No sugar virgin for the clammy tongues of hairy nuns. I royally defecate on the leprous birds of morality. I do not forbid myself from imagining the prophet on all fours being mounted by a horny donkey. I am the ecstatic songster of incest and the champion of all depravity; with the nail of my little finger I delightedly slice open the belly of an innocent so I can dip my bread in his tripe.

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### **Among the Traditional Interpretations**

Passion • Attachment • Dependency • Progressiveness • Adoration  
 • Great Creativity • The Taboo • Temptation • Bestiality • Drugs •  
 Promising Contract That Requires Close Review • Sum of Money  
 Coming In • Hidden Powers of the Human Subconscious (both positive  
 and negative) • Fermentation • Prostitution • Cruelty • Work in the  
 Depths • Psychiatry • Dark Side of the Individual • Sexuality • Lucifer,  
 the Fallen Angel and Light Bearer • Pride • Possession • Obsession •  
 Black Magic • Refusal to Grow Old • Great Sexual Vigor • Fantasies  
 • Occult Treasure • Energy Buried in the Psyche • Going Beyond •  
 Temptation

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“However, from the depths of the depths of the human cavern, I

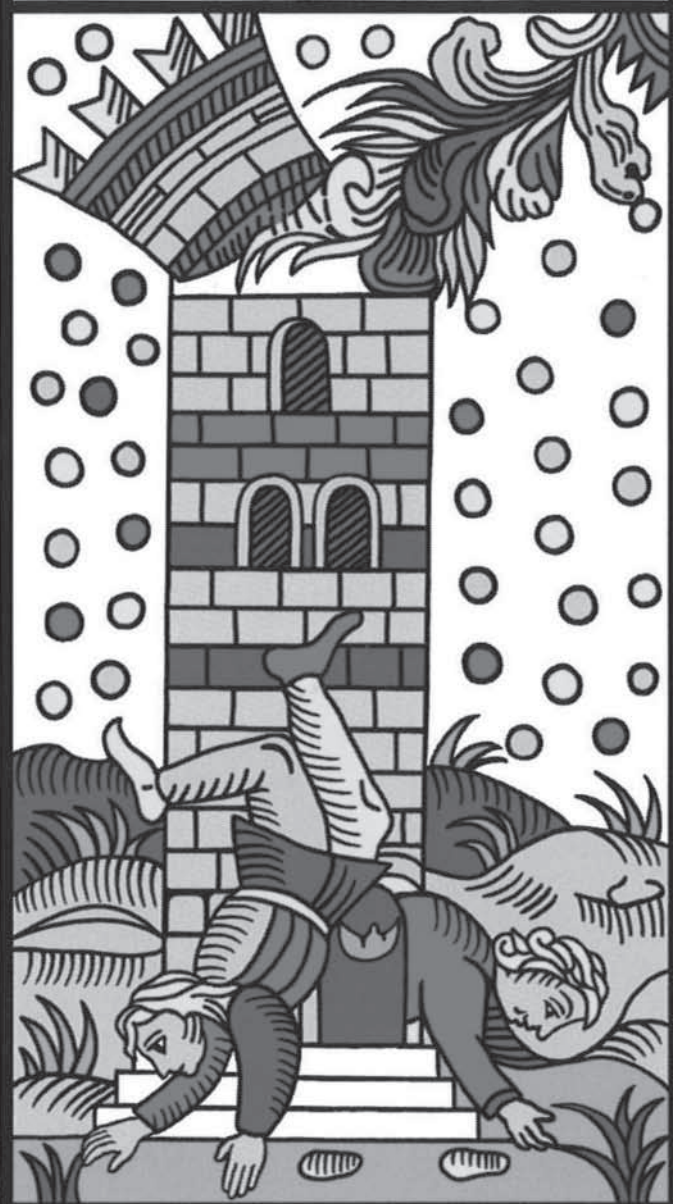


light the torch that brings order to the darkness. On an obsidian ladder I make my way to the feet of the Creator to present him the power of transformation as an offering. Yes: before the divine impermanence I fight to freeze instinct, to fix it in place like a fluorescent sculpture. I illuminate it with my awareness and cling to it, until it bursts into a new divine work, the infinite universe an immeasurable labyrinth that slips through my claws, a prey that escapes from between my teeth, traces that vanish like a subtle perfume.”

“And here I remain, attempting to attach all the seconds one after the next in order to halt the flow of time. That’s what hell is: total love versus the divine work that fades away. He is the Artist—invisible, unthinkable, intangible, untouchable. Me, I am the other artist: fixed, unvarying, dark, opaque, dense, a torch eternally burning with a motionless fire. It is I who wishes to swallow this eternity, this imponderable glory, nailing it to the center of my belly and then giving birth to it like a swamp that tears itself to pieces in order to eject the stem at whose end opens the lotus in which the diamond is shining. Thus, lacerating my entrails, I want to be the supreme Virgin who gives birth to God and nails him on a cross, so that he will remain for eternity here with me, always, never changing, permanent permanence.”



XVI



LA·MAISON·DIEV



# XVI

## La Maison Dieu/The Tower

### *Opening, the Emergence of What Was Imprisoned*

The message of this card is one of great spiritual comfort. However, until the restoration of the Tarot of Marseille, people generally saw Arcanum XVI as a reference to the Tower of Babel. The most common interpretations spoke of the punishment of pride, catastrophe, divorce, castration, earthquake, and ruin. Oswald Wirth, the creator of the Tarot of medieval printmakers, imagined a king and queen falling from a tower and added a brick shattering the woman's head.

If you carefully read the passage from the Bible discussing the Tower of Babel, you will see that its destruction is far from being a catastrophe. Rather than a punishment, the destruction of the tower is a solution to a problem: the deluge now finally ended, the entire planet, abundantly irrigated, has become fertile. But very few human beings remain. Instead of dispersing to cultivate the land, they are joining forces to construct a tower that will climb into the heavens and reach God. In principle, this construction is intended as an act of love, a desire to know the kingdom of the Creator. Now the Creator, knowing this plan cannot be realized, does not strike the tower with lightning, nor does he cause any of its inhabitants to fall from it. He merely creates the diversity of languages



to separate them. This is a blessing more than a punishment. Humanity starts off again to conquer the world and start tilling the fields.

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### Key Words

Temple • Construction • Joy • Overflowing • Shock • Expression •  
 Celebration • Dancing • To Uncork • Opening • Moving House •  
 Exploding

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In the different versions of the Tarot, the tower has no door. The restoration work not only allowed us to find the tower's door again but also the three initiatory steps leading to it. In ancient alchemical engravings and Masonic documents, we also see this tower equipped with a door and these steps leading to it, sometimes as many as seven, and sometimes three. The initiate must first accept the new knowledge, the symbol of the divine creation, then know how to preserve it, then thirdly, how to let go of it. This is the moment when the green door, the symbol of eternity, decorated with a moon emblematic of total receptivity, will open and reveal the interior of the tower. This tower has sometimes been compared to the alchemical athanor, the oven in which the primal matter becomes the philosopher's stone.

The Tower (*La Maison Dieu*) is not the house *of* God; it is the House/God. The Tarot indicates quite clearly with the flesh-colored bricks that this tower is our body, and that our body contains the deity. The half-open door allows a yellow light to escape: the body is filled with the light of Consciousness. The figures are not in the middle of falling, quite the contrary. Their hair is yellow, the color of illumination, and they are touching the plants growing out of the ground with their hands. In reality, they are honoring the potential of the Earth. They have their heads at the bottom like The Hanged Man of Arcanum XII because they are seeing the world in a new way. The intellect, the mind, is looking directly at Nature. One of the feet of one of the figures is pointed toward the sky: his steps are leading him to the mind.

The two imps of Arcanum XV have become humanized and

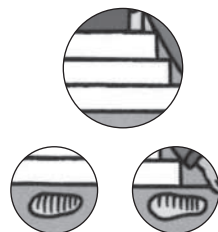


have realized their ascent. The yellow patches on the ground could be interpreted as an offering to the temple, two gold nuggets. The two figures have climbed from the cavern of the subconscious to honor the Earth with their offerings and aid Nature. They bring Consciousness into the world by impregnating the terrain. Through their action the landscape is colored light blue, orange, and dark green.

The lightning-like entity either emerging from or penetrating into the tower—flame, firebird, or lightning flash—is united with the crown of creation: this is not destruction but the transformation of material power into spiritual fulguration. The diabolic androgynous being of Arcanum XV has become a flame that has climbed up the entire spinal column and opened the coronary nervous center to launch itself into the cosmos. This entity bears all the colors of the Earth (yellow, red, green, flesh). This is an assumption. In it we can distinguish a flesh-colored fetal shape that symbolizes the seed of a new consciousness, the human race's contribution to the development of the universe. The creation of a new being is announced, one that will take on material form in The Star (XVII). The ground, enriched with colors, unites with the figures emerging from the tower in the same way the "flame" joins with the crown.

Sixth degree like The Lover, The Tower evokes the theme of union—here if we wish to accept the homophony of the original French—the union of the soul and its God.\* This alliance produces colored drops like concentrated bits of energy. In sacred Indian texts it is said that knowledge is

\*["L'ame et son Dieu" sounds like La Maison Dieu—the French name for this Arcanum. —*Trans.*]



The three steps leading to the tower and the yellow patches on the ground



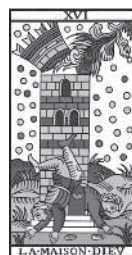
The green half-moon over the door



The hand of the figure on the right touching the plant



A fetal form appears in the middle of the explosion of colors.





like milk, which, when beaten, eventually releases drops of oil on the surface. Similarly, these yellow, red, and blue balls floating in the air express the dance of cosmic joy, as if to say the stars are our allies and are bringing us their energy while awaiting our awakening. This cosmic explosion could represent drawings of existing constellations; just like the tower has, through its illumination, a kinship with the lighthouse, these constellation drawings would then be, if you like, a navigation tool.

## IN A READING

The Tower signifies the emergence of something that was imprisoned. This can be a residential move, a separation, a moment of great expression, the desire to leave for the country or for another country, or a secret revealed. Or even a lightning strike that causes a “catastrophe.”

It refers, as we have seen, to a dance of joyous separation; the figures are actually acrobats flying about in a theater. This can be giving birth to something that has long been gestating and takes dual shape here—the twinship of the animus and the anima, collaborating on a long-thought-out work.

Sometimes, if a person is seeing only one aspect of his question when interrogating the Tarot, The Tower reveals the existence of a second aspect, a second less-obvious possibility represented by the figure that has half emerged from the tower. The phallic connotation of the tower also makes it a symbol of the male sex organ and all the questions connected to ejaculation.

When it takes on a more painful meaning of abrupt separation or expulsion, The Tower can refer to an expropriation, a rupture, a difficult birth, or, in the case of siblings, when one child was wanted (the figure that has emerged entirely) and the other was not (the figure that has only half emerged). We can also read a reference in this card to a large telluric movement, an earthquake or other natural catastrophe.

The principal message of The Tower could be: stop looking for God in the sky; let's find him on Earth.



## AND IF THE TOWER SPOKE

"I am the temple: the entire world is an altar I make sacred. My life, like yours, proves at every heartbeat that the world is divine, that the flesh is a living celebration and life a never-ending construction.

"With me you will know the joy that is the key to the sacred. I am life itself, the transformation and the reconstruction, the flame and the energy of everything alive, of all matter and all spirit. If you wish to enter me, you must rejoice, cast into the fire the infantile whims of sorrow and fear, and ask yourself every time you awake: What shall I celebrate now? I am the cataclysmic joy of living, the permanently unforeseen and marvelous catastrophe.

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### Among the Traditional Interpretations

Liberation • Opening • To Uncork • Rupture • Moving House • House  
 • Lightning Strike • Revealed Secret • Explosion of Joy • Prosperity •  
 Theatrical Décor • Ejaculation (sometimes premature) • Destruction •  
 Divorce • Dispute • Castration • Explosion of Sexual Energy • Dance  
 • The Body as Divine Temple • Great Burst of Energy • Revelation •  
 Assumption • Breaking Boundaries • Illumination

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"A defensive crown once isolated me from the world. A cork of old words covered my mind and clouds of crystallized, mummified, sclerotic feelings cast a shadow over my heartbeats and prevented the light from emerging. A thick cloak of desires transformed my appetite for life into a jailer. I was flesh without God, consuming itself in the flames of its own existence, my ego converted into a prison.

"Despising myself, isolating myself, believing I was defending an inner territory belonging only to me, who was I in the darkness of this tower? Master of what? What was my appearance, what false identity? I was nothing but the rarefied air of an egotistical obscurity.

"And suddenly, from both inside and outside, a nameless force emerged, the love that sustains all matter. My top opened as well as my inmost depths. The combined energies of Heaven and matter crossed



through me like a hurricane. I knew the burning of the center of the Earth, the light from the center of the universe. I received the vibrating universal axis; I was no longer a tower but a channel.

“Then the joy of union burst forth. The high was low; the low was high. Like a queen bee, I began to engender joyful beings. God was in me and I was only worshipful matter. I knew that I could burst, that each of my bricks would travel through infinity like a bird. I knew that everything imprisoned in matter gushed through me. I was the central pillar of a cosmic dance. I was quite simply the human body in full reception of its original energy.”



## XVII

### L'Étoile/The Star

*To Act in the World, To Find Your Place*

The ambiguous writing in the lower cartouche gives free rein to numerous readings: Le Toille,\* Le Toule (a derivative of the word for “spring” or “source” in the language of Oc), Le Toi ile (The Isle of You) . . . This Arcanum will be The Star for us. On it we see a kneeling naked woman beneath a star-studded sky. Beneath the stars, one star: the human being in its truth.

Arcanum XVII depicts the first naked human being of the Tarot, before Arcana XVIII to XXI. With her starts the adventure of the being who has attained purity and asceticism. Beyond appearances, she no longer has anything to hide, she has only to find her place on the Earth. The Star’s attitude evokes piety and submission: we kneel before a temple, or before a king or queen. We can therefore say she is honoring the place where she has established herself. Her knee resting on the ground can also be a sign of being rooted: she has found her rightful place on Earth and is in communication with the cosmos.

In the numerology of the Tarot, 7 is the highest degree of action in the world (see pp. 60, 61, 64–65, 67, and 81). Numerous ties exist between The Star and The Chariot. Both are rooted in the Earth, and

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\*[*Toille* means “canvas.” — *Trans.*]



XVII



LE TOILLE



the twelve stars shining on the dais of the chariot indicate its relationship with the universe. But while The Chariot enters the world like a conqueror, a traveler, or an inseminating prince, The Star acts on the world by irrigating and nourishing it. The naked figure's breasts evoke lactation, and we can see an allusion to the Milky Way in the stars hanging overhead. The stars, eight in number, signify that perfection of one kind has been attained here: the perfection of talent.

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### Key Words

Chance • To Feed • To Sanctify • To Kneel • Fertility • Talent •  
 Inspiration • Femininity • Song • Stellar • Cosmic • Ecology • Irrigate •  
 Finding One's Place • Star

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The Star is a being entirely connected to the world. One of her vases seems as if it is welded to her body, sealed to her pelvis, and the other extends into the countryside. We can see there the image of a spiritual water (yellow) and an instinctive or sexual water (deep blue) together nourishing the environment. It is possible that one of these vases may be receptive, capturing the energy of the blue river, while the other pours a stellar light into it. An orange moon on the woman's brow evokes intelligence that has become receptive wisdom, which permits her to transmit the universal force passing through her symbolized by the starry sky. She is also a being of flesh and blood who forms part of Nature. The sign she bears on her rounded belly at the level of the navel evokes a seed of life. She spreads fertility; growing around her are trees with orange foliage bearing yellow fruits. What is received from on high, The Star, channel of universal generosity, pours toward the Earth to fertilize it. Here the wandering journey of The Fool, of the primal energy, halts to provide a place for communication with humanity. The generous individual becomes an unstoppable spring, receiving and giving in one purifying movement.

From the perspective of psychological work, we could say that The Star, purifying her past, is also purifying her future and her surroundings.



She gives everything to all around her as well as to herself, asking nothing in return. While she performs her action, she is fertilizing and clarifying the landscape, earth, sand, trees, and water. The large black patch of Arcanum XIII, which became the mysterious foundation of Arcanum XV, finds its sublime expression here in the form of a bird that is preparing to soar off from the top of a tree toward the black spot of the stars. The force issued from the center of the universe (symbolized by the stars) comes down to the human being, purifies the Earth, then goes back to the universe in a movement of eternal return. The figure of the bird can also bring to mind that of the phoenix, which is always reborn from its ashes (this figure can also be seen in the Two of Cups and the Four of Pentacles). In this sense, The Star is the canal of the infinite as well as that of eternity.

If we wanted to view her action negatively, we could say that The Star is wasteful or is demanding instead of giving. She is sometimes represented as squandering her energy on the past, haunted by the unresolved neuroses of the inner child. This is when a perpetually unsatisfied vampire-like being, who lives in a permanent state of feeling unloved, invaded, or abandoned—one who never thinks of giving—will continuously demand constant sexual and emotional energy. The Star then turns into a bottomless pit or, in contrast, becomes possessed by an excessive, undiscerning passion. She can metamorphose into someone who is immodest and shameless, a toxic being who pollutes rivers and poisons the spiritual or material lives of those close to her.

Symbolically, The Star is the spiritual guide we carry within who is connected to the most profound forces of the universe and to the sacred. She is the unknown part of ourselves in which we can have faith: our “lucky star.”

## IN A READING

The Star represents a stage in which an individual finds his or her rightful place to act in the world in a way that will embellish and nourish it from the spot the individual has made his or her own. It sometimes prompts us to not decide between apparently irreconcilable options but



to conciliate the two. This card is traditionally seen as a sign of luck, prosperity, fertility. It symbolizes generous action. It is also associated with divine love, hope, and truth (which emerges from the well completely naked). It represents a creative realization that presumes its author has found his rightful place.

For a man, this is the preeminent lover, or the beauty of his feminine interior from which he is now capable of taking action. For a woman, it is a realization of her presence in the world, an action conforming to her desires and profound nature. The Star's conscious and generous relationship with Nature points the way to ecology, shamanism, and all the beliefs that take the planet as a living being into account. If The Star is spilling her jars into the past or into emptiness, we will need to ask why she is wasting her energy this way and what unresolved knot is indicated.

Because of its nudity and stellar nature, this card also brings to mind Venus, the shepherd's star, the most brilliant of the stars that allow us to get our bearings at night.

## AND IF THE STAR SPOKE

"In the infinite multiplicity of beings and things, I have found my place—in the world and in myself, for it is the same thing. I no longer need to keep looking, I no longer hold any image of myself; I am in my rightful place. Here and everywhere I am attached by my own choice.

"I am in every particle of dust, in every



The knee resting on the ground is somewhat deformed. A baby's buttocks can be seen on it.



On the brow of the woman is an orange moon . . .



. . . and on her belly, a symbol, mouth, or bud.



The black bird, substratum of the depths, sings on an orange tree.





territory, in every waterway, every star, and every part of my body. And how could I not respect the world, and my bones, and my flesh? All of this matter does not belong to me; it has only been lent me for no more than a fragment of time. And I respect it, for it is my temple—the one in which the unthinkable God resides. The mind is matter and matter is mind, the universe is perpetually being born and bursting, and at its center, there where I kneel, I am.

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### **Among the Traditional Interpretations**

Success • Luck • Truth • Generosity • Altruistic Action • To Carry on Two Actions or Two Relationships at the Same Time • To Find One's Place • Celebrity • Fertile Woman • To Breastfeed • Pregnant Woman • Wound on the Knee • Ideal Lover • Gift or Waste (depending on the direction in which The Star is pouring her jars) • Nostalgia (if she is looking toward the past) • Purification of the World • Ecology • Spring • Irrigation • Reception of Cosmic Energy • Sanctification of a Place • Harmony with the Forces of Nature • Paradise • Aquarius • Shaman • Pretty Witch

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“If I say ‘I am there,’ I mean to say I am in what supports all life, in this endless source of energy that I distribute through my mind, my heart, my genitals, energies of a sublime purity that, by gushing from me, cleanse the world. I give the atmosphere its fragrance, water its sweetness, the Earth its fertility, and all the oceans their life. There is not a spot in the cosmos from which I am absent.

“In every instant, I never abandon the present. Neither past nor future can enchain me, nor can plans or regrets. Constant and faithful to my place, I receive and I give. And when I say: ‘I am of the world and of myself,’ that means that I give myself without reservation, eliminating all criticism down to its most obscure root. I do not judge. I love and serve.

“I do not divide myself, not even a hair's width. I belong—which is to say I venerate, I obey. This is the reason I am nude, naked as a tree,



a bird, or a cloud. I am my body, my flesh, and my blood, and thereby I find it impossible to abandon lest I abandon myself. How could I not love what possesses me amorously?

“Just as I give myself to the Earth, I give myself to my flesh and bones. Just as I entrust myself to the oceans, I entrust myself to my blood. Just as I surrender myself to the air, I surrender myself to my skin. Just as I give myself to the stars, I give myself to my hair. And radiantly full of this slave’s love, I act upon the world and upon myself. I act—in other words, I go with the flow of the world, eliminating obstacles and transmitting the energy that comes from beyond the stars. All I can do is enrich and purify, nourish, understand, and purify. I act the same way upon myself; I open myself to the infinite, I let the breath of the gods circulate through all the pores of my skin; I offer no resistance to the impetuous circulation of my blood. I permit all the mysteries to pass through me. And from the center of my belly, which has become infinity, I receive and allow the Totality of light to be born.”



XVIII



LA·LUNE



# XVIII

## La Lune/The Moon

### *Receptive Female Power*

The moon is one of humanity's oldest symbols; it represents the maternal feminine archetype par excellence, the Cosmic Mother. Its essential quality is receptivity: the satellite body of the moon reflects the light of the sun. In Arcanum XVIII, we find ourselves in the middle of the night, but it is a night illuminated by this humble receptivity. The moon is also the world of dreams, the imaginal realm, and the subconscious, traditionally associated with night. The Tarot depicts the moon, like the sun, with a face. But it is not looking directly at us. It is a crescent moon seen in profile. While still forming part of it, it remains invisible. In this regard The Moon symbolizes the mysteries of the soul, the secret process of gestation, everything that is hidden. Its face is not that of a young woman but is stamped by an ancient wisdom that also emanates from its orange rays. The red rays in the background alternating with them indicate great vital capacity and extreme fertility, one that is contained and occult. In the foreground, the blue sky is dominant, a symbol of spirituality and intuition. The moon is connected with biorhythms, water, tides, menstrual cycles, and the transition from life to death.



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**Key Words**

Night • Intuition • Feminine • Cosmic Mother • Dream • Receptivity •  
To Reflect • Mystery • Attraction • Imagination • Magnetic • Gestation  
• Madness • Poetry • Uncertainty • Phases

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Beneath the actual celestial body, two animals are facing each other in a landscape in which two towers can be seen. These animals are apparently dogs, but may be wolves, or perhaps a dog and a wolf. They are howling at the moon and feeding on it, on the colored drops it is releasing. We can see this as a symbol of siblings, two children demanding their food (material, emotional, or intellectual) from their mother, two loving or enemy brothers. The light-blue animal represents a more spiritual being. Its green tongue is receptive, its tail is raised, and we should note that the crenellated roof of the tower behind it is open, also receptive. The flesh-colored animal, which could represent matter, has its tail down and an active red tongue. It is in front of a sealed tower with no apparent door. At the foot of this tower we see three white steps that bring to mind the initiatory steps of *The Tower*, but the tower remains closed nevertheless; even its battlement is covered by a row of complementary crenellations, like a clenched jaw. We can deduce from this that the dense, concrete, material body is turned toward action and has no inclination to receive unless it is to come through the mind, symbolized by the light-blue animal.

We should nonetheless note that each of the dogs has one ear of the complementary color, just as in the symbol of the *Tao* each pole carries the seed of the opposite pole.

The feet of the two animals create what resembles a three-level coat of arms out of the portion of the landscape in the space separating them. The deep-green top level, the image of the one on which the moon is shining, corresponds to the receptive mind plunged in deep meditation. The middle level corresponds to the one on which the dogs are standing: two plants are growing there, representing a rich emotional life. The lowest part, which is closest to the water, corresponds to the profound gestation of the sexual and corporeal dimension; we see three red drops on it, referring to animal nature.

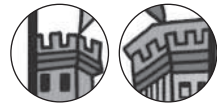


The expanse of water in the lower part of the card is squared out like a swimming pool, but agitated by wavy lines that bring to mind waves and tides. It could also be a port. Its first bank, at the very bottom of the card, is made up of rocks and wild natural vegetation. But we can see that the other end is bordered by straight lines, three black lines demarcating two blue lines, as if to indicate that the subconscious is constricted at its edge by rational dualism. In the center of these womblike waters there is a crab or a crayfish that can be viewed as a symbol of the ego aspiring to contact with the moon. This contact already exists: the crustacean and the celestial body share the same colors. The crustacean desires union with the moon without knowing, like all the elements of this card, that it is already in communication with it.

We can view the crustacean either as immersed in the deepest depths of the water or, to the contrary, swimming on top of it. In both cases it encourages us to establish contact with intuition, this buried treasure we all carry. We can also see that it is carrying two balls like offerings in its pincers. The ego has something to offer in the spiritual work.

Therefore, depending upon how we look at this card, it will either represent deep intuitive communication or solitude and separation. We could imagine that the crustacean has come out to steal the blue balls he is holding in his pincers, that the dogs are fighting him, that everything feels cut off from the moon and its spiritual force. The drops could represent its receptive capacity, but could also, in a negative sense, represent an insatiable absorption of energy. The card then refers to madness and mental chaos.

If we count the lines that surround the inscription "LA•LUNE," we will find ten on the left and



The tower on the left with the open battlements (receptive) and the closed tower



The countryside in the space between the two dogs forms a trilevel coat of arms.



The wild bank



The crustacean is carrying a blue ball in his pincer, an offering from the depths.





twelve on the right. Ten refers to The Wheel of Fortune: as in Arcanum X, there are also three animals; but whereas those of The Wheel of Fortune have not yet found the strength to get moving, we could say that the crab and the dogs are moved here by the magnetic force of The Moon. Twelve refers to Arcanum XII, The Hanged Man. He is closely tied to The Moon as he represents a pause, a spiritual gestation, a receptive state; but in The Moon the receptive state is universal. The red and blue drops on the ground are in the midst of emerging to climb to the planetary body. This circulation is the mark of an energetic exchange between the Earth and The Moon.

### IN A READING

This card will generally refer to the world of the mother, to all the aspects of the subconscious, intuition, and the personal mystery of being. We can then direct the reading toward the relationship of the person consulting the reader with his or her mother, or his or her concept of femininity. For a woman this card can be the omen of a profound realization. For a man, it is a prompt to cultivate traditionally feminine qualities like sensitivity, intuition, and so forth. The Moon is a good omen for anyone wishing to devote himself to poetry, to Tarot reading, to all disciplines based on receptivity. Equally resonant in The Moon are fear of the dark, nightmares, and all sorts of worries linked to the unknown, sometimes without constraint. It can symbolize poorly defined anxieties, but also a voyage across the sea or arrival at a port. It tends toward reverie, and to all the states of soul generally associated with a “lunar” or “lunatic” nature.

Its infinite receptive potential is its greatest treasure.

### AND IF THE MOON SPOKE

“You ask me to explain myself, but I am far from words, logic, discursive thought, intellect . . . I am a secret and inexpressible state; I am the beginning where all deep knowledge begins, when you immerse yourself in my silent waters without asking a thing, without trying to define anything, when you stand outside all light. The more you enter me the greater your attraction to me. There is nothing clear in me. I am



bottomless and all nuance, I extend into the realm of shadow. I am a swamp of immeasurable wealth; I contain all totems, prehistoric gods, the treasures of times past and times yet to come. Beyond the subconscious, I am creation itself. I steal away from all definition.

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### **Among the Traditional Interpretations**

Intuition • Night • Dream • Daydreams • Superstition • Poetry • Divination • Imagination • The Deep Subconscious • Sensuality • Hidden Truth (to be discovered) • Madness • Solitude • Night Terror • Gestation • Unlimited Request • Energy Vampire • Child Seeking Maternal Love • Intensely Close Love • Depression • Secret • Sea Crossing • Ocean • Receptivity • Obscure Life of Matter • Ideal One Seeks to Achieve • Femininity • Cosmic Maternal Archetype

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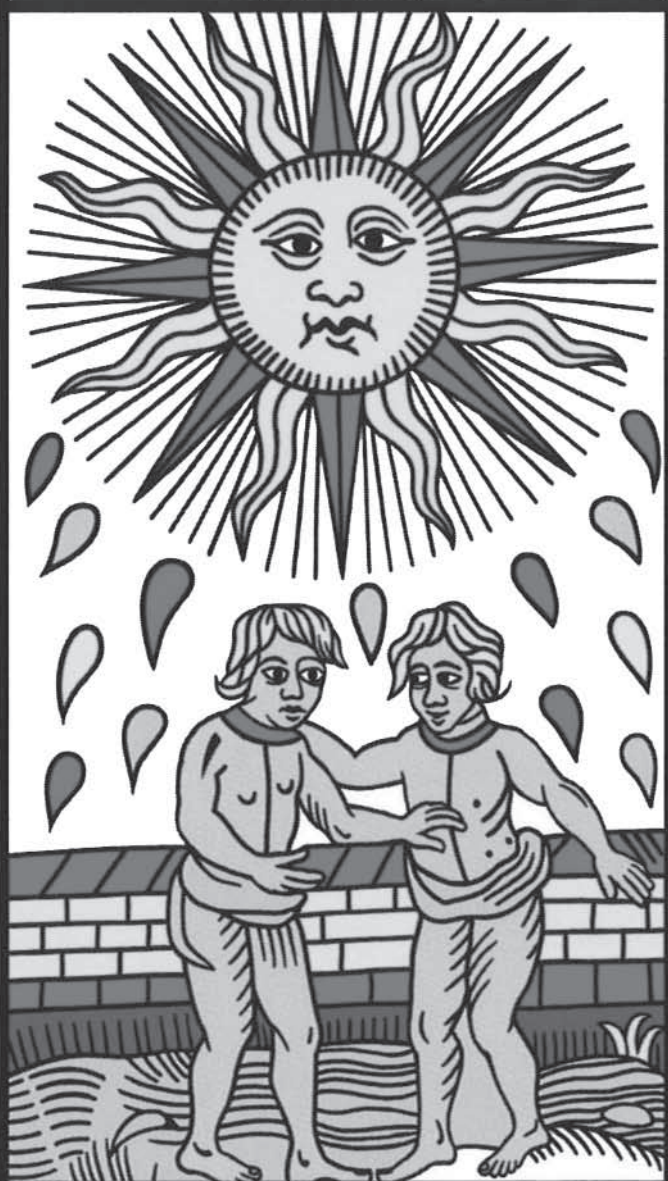
“I know that people have worshipped me. Ever since human beings developed a spark of consciousness, they have identified it with me. Like a perfect silver heart, I shine in dark-shrouded night. I was the light they dimly suspected reigned in the depths of their blind souls. There where greedy entities lie in wait for the smallest spark of consciousness, dimensions of madness, absolute solitude, frozen delirium, that painful silence called ‘poetry,’ I recognized that in order to be, I had to go where I was not.

“I fell into myself, and each time I fell more deeply. I lost myself while descending to nowhere, until at the end, ‘me’-the-obscure was no more. Better yet, I was an infinite concavity, an open mouth containing all the thirst of the world, a boundless vagina that has become total aspiration. Then, in that vacuity, that absence of contours, I was finally able to reflect all the light—an ardent light that I transformed into its cold reflection, not the light that engenders but the one that illuminates.

“I do not inseminate, I only indicate. Who receives my light knows what is, nothing more. This is already more than enough. To alter myself into total reception, I had to refuse to give. All the rigid shapes of the night are annihilated by my light, starting with reason. Beneath my clear light, the angel is an angel, the wild beast is a wild beast, the madman is a madman, and the saint is a saint. I am the universal mirror; everyone can see himself in me.”



XVIII



LE SOLEIL



# XVIII

## Le Soleil/The Sun

### *Paternal Archetype, New Construction*

The Sun, Arcanum XVIII, looks us straight in the eyes, like the figure of Justice and the angel of Judgment. He has numerous points in common with The Devil (XV), starting with the fact that he is slightly cross-eyed. It is plausible that The Devil lit his torch from the fire of The Sun, the primordial heat and light of the deity. This is, in fact, the first interpretation of the sun, the symbol of life and love, archetype of the universal Father. Master of the heavens, source of all heat and light, he gives life to all creatures.

Here this radiant celestial body has climbed to its zenith, eliminating all shadows from its position in the middle of the sky. The intuitive orange glow of The Moon has given way to the essential model it reflects: the clear yellow light of The Sun. Beneath the heat of the heavenly Father, two figures are jointly crossing a light-blue river.

Two significant details make them akin to the imps of Arcanum XV. The one on the left has a tail like the male imp of The Devil, and the one on the right has three dots on his side like the female imp. We could say that the energy found in the darkness of Arcanum XV has now emerged in broad daylight, and that the bond of passion joining those two figures has been replaced by relations of mutual aid, human



love in its pure state. This is a profound and free friendship under the high benevolence of The Sun. It will be noted that the figure on our right, the active side, is the one bearing the sign of active consciousness, whereas the figure on our left is advancing like a blind man allowing himself to be led.

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### Key Words

Heat • Love • New Life • Construction • Passage • Awareness •  
Cosmic Father • Twinship • To Radiate • To Cross • Childhood •  
Success • Evolution

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Of the shackles of the two imps, these figures have retained only an active red necklace around their throats, a place of passage, and a demarcation line on their chests between the right and left sides, a delimitation and union of the active and the receptive (see pp. 42 and 57). The figure on the right is standing on a piece of white ground that appears purified; between his legs the landscape has been replaced by a pure azure space. It seems that he may have already passed over to another more spiritual dimension on the other side of this river, over whose waters the other figure is walking to join him again with the help of his hand.

We can see in these twins a metaphor for inner work: the conscious part of the individual helps the more primitive animal part gain access to a different reality. The adult guides the inner child to joy.

In this Arcanum, three colors are repeated in the sky, on the ground, and in the human figures. The central yellow of the sun and its baleful rays are mirrored in the bricks of the wall and the hair of the two protagonists, as if to indicate an attachment between mind and light. The red of the straight rays echoes the upper and lower rows of bricks and the collars of the two figures. The eyes of the celestial body are white with black pupils, like those of the two figures it overhangs and like the purified land on the right side of the card. This conscious gaze makes the red-yellow duality (vital action/intelligence; see pp. 97–98) a divine



unit. Finally, the blue of the flowing river seems as if it had just been coiled around the waists of the two figures in their loincloths. This perhaps means they have accepted their bodies, girded by this wave in perpetual change like an ephemeral shape. It next rises toward the sun in five light-blue drops, the eternal Consciousness present in each of us. The union between the celestial, earthly, and human planes is total. A single green band, evidence of the fertilizing union between the sun's heat and the action of the river, evokes plant growth. We can read the number of straight lines in this band of growth according to Tarot numerology, as we read a series of Major Arcana. We find fourteen to the left of the figure on the left, as if heralding the healing process in which he is engaged; then two between his legs, gestation of the future world; then seven between the two figures, the action of the one upon the other; and finally nine on the right-hand side of the card, which brings to mind the numerological value 9, crisis of the cycle's end and detachment (for the numerology, see p. 61). But what is involved here is an initiatory crossing-over. The short red-and-yellow wall in the background indicates that already, at the heart of this crisis, a new construction is in place. The two individuals, breaking from their past, are triggering a new life.



The figure on the left has a small tail, vestige of his animal nature.



Three dots spiritualize the side of the figure on the right.



The white earth of the new world



The Sun looks directly at us.

## IN A READING

The Sun is a good omen for all new construction; it indicates unconditional love is at work and foretells success based on an ardent and enlightened approach. This is the crystallization of the amorous





couple, the achievement of success, a realization in any domain of human life—in its emotional, intellectual, creative, or material aspects. It is also the beginning of a new life in which past difficulties are left behind; the meeting of a kindred spirit, signing a good contract . . .

The Sun also represents the ideal values of the paternal archetype, including the awakening of the male spirit and intelligence in the heart of the feminine. It can also indicate the dominance of the father image in the question that has been asked, that the questioner has been deeply stamped by his presence (an impassable father) or absence, which would have led the questioner to forge an ideal image of the father that could well be too mythical to match reality.

The heat of the sun is available to everyone at every moment. However, we should not forget that too much sun causes death and aridity and can transform the land into a desert.

## AND IF THE SUN SPOKE

“I am ceaselessly renewing myself. By consuming myself, I give my heat to every blade of grass, every animal, and all living things without exception: it is fine with me if you call it Love. Cyclically I disappear and come back again. Similarly, to enter my splendor, I expect human beings to be capable of burying their pasts and starting a new life. I will help them. Where I shine I dissolve all doubt. I enter the darkest nooks of the soul and inundate them with my light. Pushed by my breath, you will cross the river of demented impulses and, purified, reach the region where everything grows effortlessly.

“I shine at the heart of matter, I am its secret brilliance; it is nothing without me. But when it refuses me and does not see me as its vital force, it is a cadaver. I cease to saturate it with my drops of immortality. For you, my children, I endlessly engender joy and vital euphoria. Do not make yourselves impermeable to my eternal light. See how low the wall is that separates you from me. I created it so that everyone could leap over it—it’s child’s play. Beneath my rays you shall know true, naked, sincere affection. I am the solution of all difficulties.

“I am the pure eye, and at the same time I am the resonance of the



first shout. What you call ‘darkness’ is only ignorance of my light and my ever-present love. I ceaselessly herald the end of night. Everything that is not clear is not me. I am the perpetual and regenerative renewal, the one people wait an entire lifetime to occur. I am called The Sun, but I have no name; I am the radiant brilliance of life.

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### **Among the Traditional Interpretations**

Reciprocal Love • Fraternity • Mutual Aid • Happy Union • New Life • Association • Success, Abundant Harvest • Happiness • Light • Summer • Radiance • Intelligence • Verve • Wealth • Aridity Caused by Excessive Heat • Children or Childhood • Twinship • Rivalry • Cosmic Paternal Archetype • Ideal Father • Absent Father • Breaking with the Past to Build Something More • Construction • Solidarity

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“But who am I if no one reflects me? How can I be boundless if no limits are imposed upon me? What is my immortality without the path of death? What is my eternal present without the snare of flowing time? What are my golden seeds without furrows of ground in which to bury them? What is my food if no one eats it? In truth, my love is in large part my need for the Other.

“This is why I reproduce myself without ceasing. I multiply my energy in infinite mirrors; I become the lover of my own children. I look for myself in their souls; this is where I talk to myself. All the mothers of the world I’ve impregnated do nothing other than engender me. The sun child has all rights. I cede these rights to a conscious humanity.”



XX



LE · IUGEMENT



## XX

### Le Jugement/Judgment

#### *New Consciousness, Irresistible Desire*

All the Tarot's energy is concentrated in the card of Judgment. Following the receptivity of The Moon and the new construction undertaken in The Sun, we see here the birth of a consciousness, framed by a female principle on the left and a male principle on the right. This emergence, summoned by the angel and his trumpet, is introduced to us as an irresistible desire. The work has been realized. The *anima* and *animus* attain peace through prayer. By themselves, they have created the divine androgyne who obeys the call of supreme Consciousness represented by the angel.

This being emerging from the depths has been endowed with a light-blue body that cannot help but bring to mind that of The Devil (XV). Furthermore, if we superpose the two cards, we shall see that The Devil's legs adapt almost exactly to the body of the blue being of Judgment, whereas the bodies of the imps extend that of the two figures in prayer. Another coincidence: just like The Devil, the angel of Judgment seems to be sticking out his tongue in order to play his trumpet. But while The Devil's tongue is red and aggressive, perhaps charged with cunning and sarcasm, the angel's tongue is permeated with wisdom and kindness.



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**Key Words**

Vocation • Call • Birth • Renaissance • Consciousness • Work • Union  
• Family • Transcendence • To Emerge • Music • To Prompt

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After a sojourn in the depths of the subconscious, after a task that may have been performed in pain or in any case in the shadows, a new life is awakening, as if for a birth or a resurrection. We think of the Last Judgment when the dead come out of their tombs. Everything that is hidden or in gestation comes to the surface in aspiration for a new world. This powerful desire to evolve resonates like divine music. What this Arcanum suggests is that a force defying death is at work in our very lives: immaterial and immortal Consciousness.

It manifests in the form of an imperious call to live in a new dimension. The angel is looking straight ahead, and, with his trumpet at his mouth, he symbolizes the announcement of this awakening. The circular light-blue cloud surrounding him could represent the opening of the mind. This same opening appears on the head of the being emerging from the depths of the Earth: the mental emptiness he has realized is symbolized by the small central dark-blue disk, which revolves around itself in the surrounding light-blue whirlwind in order to then remount the twenty-two grades of the trumpet up to the golden egg etched on the angel's head, which represents God in action. We should note that the horn part of the trumpet, from which the music emerges, is like a repetition of this yellow oval: the sound reproduces the divine nature. The beautiful is the sparkling of the true.

The flag brandished by the angel includes a flesh-colored cross that divides the orange background into four squares—the four natural elements, or the four energies next symbolized by the animals of The World (XXI). We could conclude from this that the flesh-colored cross indicates that the vocation of the human being is simultaneously to live horizontally in the world with the union of the essential androgyne between the right and the left, and vertically from the Earth to the sky.

When someone draws this card, it means that he or she has been



called. Difficulties will arise if, for one reason or another, the individual cannot manage to respond to this call.

## IN A READING

Judgment frequently recalls the circumstances of how the person receiving the reading experienced his or her birth. This includes all the possible variations of a problematic labor, a disturbed gestation, or a difficult situation surrounding the actual moment of birth that could have formed an obstacle. The person consulting will then live, to one degree or another, consciously or not, as an individual who was not wanted, whose birth was not intended. The neurosis of failure, despair, or incomprehensible difficulties will ceaselessly tug this individual to the bottom, toward the floor of the tomb from which he or she has been summoned to emerge.

The meaning of this Arcanum consists of discovering, through therapeutic work or other means, that every individual being that is born is absolutely wanted by the deity (or the universe) that allowed him or her to be engendered. The difficulties the individual will feel around the desire to live, or artistic or professional vocation, are so many forms of resistance to his or her deep nature, to the level of consciousness he or she (and all of us) can offer the angel. This card may also appear to point out a problem related to the act of judging or being judged. If the call is of divine origin, whoever stands up as judge lies [*juge ment*]. There is no human judgment that holds any value here.

For a couple, this card is urging them to undertake a shared task, a real or symbolic child, suggesting



The tonsure of the blue figure is a spiral.



The orange cross, contact point between Heaven and Earth



The woman is touching the central figure with her elbow while looking at the man.



The man is looking toward the angel.





that the meaning of the male/female union is to produce a third element bathed in love and awareness. The play of looks is interesting: the woman is looking at the man and/or the child, she represents human love and love of the work; while the man, his eyes lifted toward heaven, embodies divine and cosmic love. The angel is gazing directly at us. His action is addressed to everyone. He reminds us that, for want of recognizing our deep desire and the divine desire that prompts realization, we are only the living dead.

Judgment finally refers to the emergence of a desire, a vocation, a call to some kind of order.

This is a card of ecstasy, profound rebirth, and prayer immediately granted, where energies are simultaneously rising from Earth to Heaven while descending in the opposite direction. We should recognize in this card the last step before the total realization of The World.

## AND IF JUDGMENT SPOKE

“You have flowed with the black river of Arcanum XIII. You have thrust your roots into The Devil’s darkness. You have been the demon sadly lifting his torch as if nostalgic for the light. While you were wandering at the bottom of the abyss, I did not forget you. Now I can enter into contact with you, but only little by little, with infinite gentleness and patience, because I am too strong. You can unite with me only if you have been prepared, if you have made the journey to the depths of your being, if you have known all the facets of your masculinity and your femininity and reconciled them in balance.

“I bring you light from the entire universe. My power requires you to have made peace with yourself, so that the new Tree has begun growing from the deepest regions of your subconscious. May your entire being be plunged in infinite prayer and all your cells know peace. May you be like these naked figures who have placed all their trust in and accepted what is higher. Without the deity, I could not exist. When the individual becomes a veritable trusting, tranquil child, then and only then do I appear as complete certainty—as the call that has been echoing since the dawn of time.



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### **Among the Traditional Interpretations**

Call • Irresistible Desire • Realization • Announcement • Good News  
 • Vocation • Triumph • Renown • Future Project • To Give Life •  
 Birth of a Child • Healing • Music • Openness • Hatching • Work of  
 a Couple • Father/Mother/Child Cell • Dependent Love for Parents  
 • Birth Conditions of the Consultant • Refusal to Act One's Age •  
 Emergence of Something Buried • Grace • Awakening of Consciousness  
 • Sublimated Devil • Streak Toward the Light

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“My music, divine essence of the Word, inspires an imperious desire within you to raise yourself up. It awakens everything that has been sleeping, resuscitating everything that was dead, and opens the sealed stones of the tombs. I cause all your words to explode so that through your prayers you may arrive at the domain of the inconceivable where rules the miracle of vacuity. Me, I know, for I have seen and experienced the Creator. Thus I simply announce Him. I transport the irresistible call of Consciousness. I am the awakening, the miracle that takes place within your being.

“Irresistible certitude. When you answer my call, each of your actions is like an order I give you. You no longer harbor any doubt. You strive to act, think, love, live, and desire in full accord with divine will. Life is worth the pain of living; everything is achieved in calm, meditation, kindness, and joy.

“I come from an inconceivable golden egg in which Being and nonbeing are only undifferentiated light. I am the highest realization of your psyche, your thought that has finally become androgynous. I free you from the boundaries of male and female. The circle of celestial clouds surrounding me is nothing other than your exploded azure brain. I erase the frontiers forever. From incarnation to incarnation, transformation to transformation, with certainty and constant joy, I allow you to be what you have always been: an angel, emissary of God.”



XXI



LE·MONDE



# XXI

## Le Monde/The World

### *Total Realization*

This Arcanum bears the number twenty-one, the highest numerical value of the Tarot. It represents the supreme realization. On it we see a woman dancing in the middle of a crown of light-blue leaves with a flask (receptive principle) in her right hand, and a wand (active principle) in her left. As in the Taoist symbol, Yang supports Yin and vice versa. A blue scarf (at the top behind her) passes over her body and becomes red. Although this figure is undeniably female, it is the union of principles (androgyny realized) that she suggests.

The final stage of the path of the Major Arcana, The World is a call to be recognized in its deepest reality and to accept fullness and realization. It is also the moment when, freed from self-destruction, we begin to glimpse the suffering of the Other and put ourselves at the service of humanity. In Christian tradition, Christ, the Virgin, and the saints are sometimes depicted this way inside an oval shape. The mandorla, named for the Italian word for almond, is both a symbol of eternity and a shape reminiscent of the female sex organ. We can attribute to this Arcanum the rediscovered unity of the world in its Totality.



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### Key Words

Realization • Soul • World • Fullness • Success • Heroism • Genius •  
Holiness • To Dance • Ecstasy • Universal • Fulfillment • Totality

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This also can bring to mind the philosophical egg mentioned among others in the *Turba philosophorum*: “The art of alchemy is comparable to the egg in which four things can be found: The shell is the earth. The white the water. The very fine membrane right beneath the shell is air. . . . The yolk is fire.”<sup>1</sup>

We saw in the first part of this book (pp. 40–42) how this card is a mirror of the structure of the Tarot. Four figures frame the woman in the mandorla, like four basic energies harmoniously united in the service of the same center. In Christian tradition, the angel, the ox, the eagle, and the lion represent the four evangelists. Here, these four elements serve us as the basis for understanding the four Suits, or symbols of the Minor Arcana (see pp. 49 and 50).

The flesh-colored animal at the bottom left of the card cannot be clearly identified; whether horse, ox, or bull, it is, in any event, an animal symbolizing offering, aid, sacrifice. We could also consider the point arising above its eye to our left as the single horn of the unicorn, which during the Middle Ages was the symbol of the Virgin’s conception of Christ. Here again, this animal would thus symbolize virgin matter, Pentacles. Contrary to the three other elements, this animal has no halo because it does not share in eternity. Similarly, Pentacles, unlike the other Suits, do not bear any numbers (see p. 45). In this card, material and corporeal energy arrives at its fullness. The body is ephemeral but cleansed of all taint. The realization of material life can be embodied in the figure of the champion who performs an athletic or vital feat.

The other three figures are cosmic elements: the angel represents emotional perfection, holiness, and a heart full of life devoted to giving (Cups). The eagle, with its halo, would symbolize the fulfillment of the mind, genius that is also a void which cannot be identified in words (Swords). The lion, also bearing a halo, represents the culmination of



desiring and creative energy, a sublimation that leads untamed effort to conscious creation, the figure of the hero who does not hesitate to sacrifice his life (Wands).

The four energies radiate around this center entirely realized. And inside its blue egg, filled with consciousness and love for the entire universe, the central figure is dancing while looking toward the left, receptivity. Her foot sits on red ground in which six furrows have been plowed: vital activity has been performed with pleasure, the world has been accepted for what it is in full awareness. Beneath this living soil, barely concealed by a yellow interlace, is a white egg. This egg, which we could identify as the one of The High Priestess, has been incubated in all its potentialities. When this cosmic egg opens in our spiritual work, we reach The World. This card could represent the anima mundi, the universal agent that is within everything and connects us with everything.

## IN A READING

Because it has been placed as the final point and in the position of fulfillment, The World indicates a major realization. It is an accomplished woman, a soul in full joy, a perfect world, a happy marriage, worldly success. This card can also inspire travel: the discovery of the world in the literal sense of the term.

Just as Arcanum XVI, The Tower, can evoke a male penis in the process of ejaculating, Arcanum XXI brings to mind a female sex organ inhabited by an exultation (orgasm) or an individual (pregnant woman).



The woman of The World is holding a receptive flask on our left . . .



. . . and an active wand on our right.



Her foot is resting on an energetic (red) base that has been plowed.



An egg is concealed within the interlacing at the foot of the mandorla.





On the other hand, if the card appears at the beginning of the reading, it will represent a difficult beginning: realization is demanded before any action. The card is not in its rightful place and becomes an imprisonment. We could then look for traces of the first traumatizing experience in the intrauterine life or birth of the person receiving the reading, which has therefore formed an obstacle to future development. If we wish to avoid these kinds of speculations, we will need to take into account the closing evoked by Arcanum XXI placed at the beginning of the spread, and ask ourselves how and why this person is “stuck in his or her shell.”

### AND IF THE WORLD SPOKE

“I am there before you, all around you, and inside you with feelings of immense pleasure. I am a complete being. There is nothing inside me that resists me. Everything is in complete unity. Everything is in its place; I am an invulnerable Consciousness; I am the perpetual dance of Totality. The one who does not know me says ‘no’ when the entire universe is saying ‘yes,’ and this negation of my vast acquiescence leads this individual to impotence. But the one who becomes entirely pure and concave, who allows me entrance, will begin to dance with me and to say what I say. This individual experiences universal love, complete thought, cosmic desire, and inconceivable life force.

“If you reach me, which is to say if you develop me within yourself, you shall taste the supreme happiness that is the happiness of living. To achieve this you must dissolve within the ardent jewel of my presence. Like four rivers returning to their single source, leave behind the blind swarm of bees that are your concepts to melt within my bliss; leave behind the herd of your feelings to drown within my infinite exaltation; offer me the demented mob of your desires, so they might enrich, like an exquisite delicacy, my constant creativity. And may all your physical matter with all its inescapable needs surrender to this transparency that animates me. You shall then be master of your world. Inside your libido will no longer be in revolt, your desires will cease to drown you, your thoughts will not destroy you, and your body will pose no obstacle to



your life. You will be full and united to me in dance, joy, and immeasurable celebration.

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### **Among the Traditional Interpretations**

Renown • World Travel • Realization of Potential • Success • Perfect Accord • Reunion • Ideal Woman • Fullness • Difficult Beginning • Belly of a Pregnant Woman • Female Sex Organ • Orgasm • Supreme Realization • Happy Outcome • Labor • Birth • What Was My Birth Like? • Imprisonment • Feeling Stymied • Egocentricity • Realization of Spiritual Androgyny • Cosmic Egg • Realization of the Four Centers • Ultimate Perfection • The Universe Reaching Its Limit • Maximal Expansion

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“Through obedience, I permit your intellect to learn how to be; through absolute peace, I teach your heart how to love; through learning reception, I teach your sex how to create; and through acceptance of death, I teach your body how to live. If, like a famished and thirsty lion, you abandon the prey to raise yourself to the soul, you shall finally find me. I am the taste of living and realization.

“I am the ephemeral flower always being born of the abyss; I represent the materialization of all dreams, the soul without which the world is not the world but a sterile desert, the end of hope. I am the purpose of every path.

“Ineffable joy.

“Like a holy virgin, I carry the deity inside my womb. I am the concrete expression right here of the sacred energy of The Fool. I am The World created by God so that He could love it.”



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**PART THREE**

*The Minor Arcana*

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# Opening

## *The Humble Guardians of the Secret*

I collected and studied all kinds of Tarots for years without ever being truly satisfied. I always found that these cards were never in any way impersonal but rather the very portrait of their creators' limits and characteristics and—why not say so?—their illnesses. Especially the Edward Waite Tarot with its often-negative images and bad taste. For example, the Ten of Swords, on which a man lies dead on his stomach, his back pierced by ten swords: pain, affliction, tears, sorrow, desolation. Or the Nine of Wands, on which a young man with a bandaged head is leaning on a stake while impotently looking at a wall of eight staffs: obstacles, adversity, calamity. Or the Page of Cups contemplating a poison flowing over the edge of his cup: the sense of being tied down, seduction, deception, artifice. Or the Five of Pentacles, showing five beggars chilled to the bone by the cold: disorder, chaos, ruin, discord, libertinism, and so forth. Contact with Waite's work gave me the impression that the cards of the Minor Arcana were the bearers of human or animal figures.

I relentlessly continued searching for a deck whose figures made me feel the force of the mystery. I found only drawings of dubious quality lacking any profound meaning. Although I accepted the fact that the human mind possessed an admirable capacity for abstraction and concretization, and that it is possible to read what one wants into every system of objects and designs and to infer from each of them the ideas



that are most convenient, these clumsy cards never made it possible for me to charge them with any meaningful content.

One day, through a chance event I dare label miraculous, one of my seven cats caused the Tarot of Marseille to fall from my bookshelf. All the cards fell onto the ground backside up except for the Ace of Cups, which turned over. Under the shock of the surprise, my imagination was literally swallowed by this drawing. I suddenly discovered a profound sacred meaning in it. It stopped being a cup: with its seven towers, the one in the middle decorated by a circle containing nine dots—like the enneagon of the Sufi mystics—it was a temple that seemed to ask us to unearth the treasures it concealed. It was the chalice of the mass holding the blood of the Savior, the inner fullness human beings have always sought. It was filled with divine love. It also appeared to me like the holy sepulcher, in which God is sealed so that He may be reborn as a being of light. It was also the alchemical athanor, a womb inside of which physical and moral transmutations took place. This Ace of Cups, full of the inexhaustible immensity of divine love and offering me the world mind and the spirit of life, became a mirror for me. Its message: “You, too, are a sacred receptacle.”

This experience compelled me to patiently examine each of the Minor Arcana of the Tarot of Marseille, which, obsessed with the ridiculous Tarots then fashionable with the hippies, I had scorned as being cold, vain, incomprehensible, too simple, too geometrical, and, in a word, boring. The initiates are correct when they say that the most difficult secret to discover is the one that is not hidden. These Arcana are hardly saying nothing: what happens is that the eyes of the noninitiated do not know how to see. The art of expressing the spiritual process through geometrical shapes was primarily developed by the nonfigurative artists of Islam, who were inspired by the Pythagorean, Greek, Hindu, and Persian traditions. Although the Koran does not forbid the depiction of animated beings, there is an entire series of precepts traditionally attributed to the Prophet (the hadiths) that condemns this practice: “On the day of resurrection, the most terrible punishment will be inflicted on the artist who has imitated the beings created by God,” declares one.<sup>1</sup>



Because of this prohibition, all Muslim art is exclusively geometrical and decorative. To understand the forty numbered cards of the Minor Arcana, I had to look at them a long time, comparing them to each other, clearly noting in what ways they were akin and what differentiated them, seeking any miniscule detail that broke their symmetry, until I was able to feel I knew each one as its own individual.

We find two exceptions in the geometrical expression that is the rule in these Minor Arcana: the Two of Cups and the Four of Pentacles. In the first card we see two fish and the bird, the phoenix, depicted with two angels, one of whom is probably blind. In the Four of Pentacles, the phoenix that is red in the Two of Cups is now yellow and emerging from a pyre.

The alchemical reference is direct: in the Great Work, the red phoenix represents the third stage, the *rubedo*, the dawn, which is the mother of the sun and heralds the end of the night. (The blind angel could represent the first stage, the black stage of the work, the *nigredo*; the other angel could represent the second stage, the *albedo*, the purification stage.) In this way the red extremities of dawn announces the end of darkness: symbolically death. The yellow phoenix, meanwhile, represents the mysterious fourth stage, *citrinitas*, symbol of air, of day, of the light being, of immortal Cosmic Consciousness.

Because the legendary phoenix is reborn from its own destruction, therefore living eternally, Christians considered it to be an emblem of the eternity and cyclical perpetuity of the resurrected Christ, of the transformation from our transitory earthly condition to an immutable state beyond death.

The two fish could signify the reception of divine love. In the Gospels (Matt. 14:17–21), Jesus, to feed the crowd following him, multiplies seven loaves and two fish. Later, after his resurrection, Christ calls seven of his disciples and offers them a loaf of bread and a fish: “Come eat” (John 21:12–13). These stories contributed to giving the symbolic fish its eucharistic meaning. When two fish are depicted together, it means “a banquet with guests.”

The Two of Cups, the accumulation of amorous energy, promises the end of darkness and solitude and the reception of limitless divine



love. The Four of Pentacles, symbol of the perfect incarnation, promises eternal life.

I grasped that the true study of the Tarot of Marseille began with the Minor Arcana, continued with the Court Cards, and finished with the Major Arcana. When representations of animate beings appear in other Tarots, understanding veers off course because of the age of the figures, their sex, their gestures, and the expressions on their faces; it is very easy, using personal projections, to charge them with relatively superficial meanings. Personal projection in the Minor Arcana of the Tarot of Marseille, to the contrary, is at first glance impossible. And if our eyes have been trained, by penetrating the secrets of the Minor Arcana and Court Cards, then the Major Arcana will show themselves to us under their true appearance, which is sacred.

The first thing the student of the Tarot must learn is to see. From the beginning, the esotericists have chosen the wrong path by giving each Arcanum a precise meaning. Sometimes these meanings are naive—strength, death, love, chance, and so on; and sometimes they are complex—alchemical, Rosicrucian, astrological, kabbalistic, and other deliriums. The esotericists also took the liberty of changing the drawings in accordance with other interpretations, introducing mythological, historical, Egyptian, Mayan, Hindu, and so many other figures, among which we can find gnomes, dogs, and cats.

In reality, a sacred text or symbol needs to be seen and all its minuscule details have to be read. The whole of an Arcanum is the sum of its details. This is the reason that no one can boast of knowing how to read the Tarot if he or she has not entirely memorized the many tiny symbols on all the cards, as well as the number of lines, colors, positions, facial expressions, and alleged “errors” or “blunders” in their designs. The hidden complexity of the Major and Minor Arcana of the Tarot of Marseille is so great that it definitely requires a number of years to see the details in their Totality. There is always a detail that escapes notice. This is because it is not only the surface of a single card that matters, but many details also become visible when one Arcanum is compared with another.

For example, why do The Pope and The Hermit both wear a blue



glove on their left hands? Are the red necklaces around the twins of The Sun the remnants of the ropes that bound the necks of The Devil's slaves? And in this same pair of Arcana, are the three dots on the side of the woman on the left the same as those on the side of the twin on the right? What relationship is there between the red staff of The Fool and that of The Hermit? Is the egg sitting behind The High Priestess the same one that the eagle of The Emperor is sitting on? The Hanged Man is crossing his right leg behind the other, while the woman of The World is crossing her left leg behind her right leg: is one the mirror of the other? And what difference is The Emperor expressing in comparison to the two others by crossing his right leg above his left? The possibilities seem infinite.

To detect these details, which have been brilliantly parceled out by the creator or creators of the Tarot, the student must develop the ability to pay attention and hone his or her vision to be razor sharp. This is the role played by the forty numbered cards of the Minor Arcana. They are difficult to interpret; at the beginning, the ten cards of each Suit seem similar. But after a while they begin to disclose their essential differences. And after a much longer period, they begin to "speak." That is to say, they prompt a transformation in the student's way of seeing. It is impossible to tackle the study of the Major Arcana—which initially appear more accessible but which later reveal their immense complexity—without memorizing and understanding the Minor Arcana.

Among the Minor Arcana, we also find the figures that in some way summarize them on the human and social level: four individuals for every Suit. As they are not numbered, their order has posed many problems for esotericists. While the Page, Queen, and King are easy to place, if one's ability to see has not been educated by observation of the four series of ten numbers, the Knight remains an enigma. Since the time of Eliphas Levi, by way of Papus and his disciples, "initiates" have organized the Court Cards as Page, Knight, Queen, King, without prompting any serious interrogation of their choices. Others, like those who eliminated twenty-six Arcana from the Tarot of Marseille to create the English deck of playing cards (as 26 is the number in the Kabbalah that



identifies Jehovah, we could say that the entire set of cards is a godless game), not knowing what to make of the four Knights, purely and simply ignored them, and the figures became Jack, Queen, and King, in other words Page, Queen, and King. Aleister Crowley (see the introduction) turned them into Princes and Princesses. Now, after close examination of these Court Cards, we have reached the conclusion that the correct order is: Page, Queen, King, Knight.

If we take Arcanum XXI, The World, as our center and place a Knight at each corner (the Knight of Swords corresponds to the eagle, that of Cups to the Angel, that of Pentacles to the flesh-colored animal, and that of Wands to the lion), we obtain a circular movement of Knights: the Knight of Swords leaps to that of Cups, the Knight of Cups descends toward the Knight of Pentacles, the Knight of Pentacles advances toward the Knight of Wands, and the Knight of Wands climbs toward the Knight of Swords. This enables us to comprehend the transformation cycles of the Suits (see part 1, p. 78 in particular).

While the Pages are always on the grounds outside the palace, which they enter to transform into Queens and Kings, the Knights leave the palace for other lands (the color of the terrain of the Page is never the same as that of the Knight). The Knights are messengers who pass on to the other Suits what they have acquired from their Suit (see pp. 52–53). This is confirmed by the fact that the Knight of Pentacles is already carrying a green wand in his hand pointed at the next series of Wands. The symbols that identify each Suit undergo a transformation from the material and terrestrial to the spiritual and celestial.

After it has been worked and handled by the Queen and King, the wand that the Page rests on the ground will finally be lifted into the air by the Knight, its top end opening into a luminous, receptive mouth (receptive to the Heavens, active to the Earth).

The two ambiguous pentacles of the Page of Pentacles, one buried in the ground and the other held up in his right hand, expand and merge into one pentacle for the Queen, then divide again into an upper and lower pentacle for the King, before finally floating in the sky of the Knight, transformed into a single luminous celestial body (the materialization of the spirit becomes the spiritualization of matter).



The sword that the Page might be thinking of returning to its scabbard because of intellectual doubts (he is resting it against his hat) next goes to the Queen, where it is accompanied by a kind of cuirass protecting her belly. It is then balanced by the measuring device the King holds before being transformed by the Knight into a small lance pointed toward the cosmos, while he is carried by a floating horse after having vanquished gravity with a magnificent leap (the intellect defeats its rational boundaries and melts into the infinite mind).

The cup of the Page (an individual neither young nor old, a man-woman who covers this symbol with a modest veil and is unsure whether he is going to close it or leave it open so he can surrender to it emotionally) is closed by the Queen, who guards it with a sword. It then appears open—but only slightly—in the firm grasp of the King, before being finally levitated like a Grail behind the Knight's hand, who does not carry but follows it (the heart is the master: it bestows with love all that it receives).

First there are the mysterious laws of the universe; next comes the human being who, with his limited mind, transforms into superstitions, religions, and symbols whatever he does not understand. In Nature we find repeated the formula of four elements countless times: three similar and one different (see part 1, pp. 24–25). In his book *Le Tarot des Bohémiens*, inspired by the kabbalistic theories of Guillaume Postel and Eliphas Levi, Doctor Gérard Encausse, alias Papus, believed he had discovered the absolute key of occult science in the Tarot, which was nothing other than the symbol of the name of the Hebrew God. According to him, this name, composed of four letters, would give to the mortals who discovered its correct pronunciation the key to the human and divine sciences. This word—which the Israelites never speak, and the high priest only says once a year when surrounded by his cheering people—is found at the top of all initiations, shines from the center of the radiant triangle of the thirty-third degree of Freemasonry, and is inscribed on the portals of the old cathedrals, formed by the Hebrew letters *Yod-Hay-Vav-Hay*. The letter *Hay* is repeated. Each letter of the Hebrew alphabet is also assigned a number. *Yod* equals 10, *Hay* 5,



and *Vav* 6. The total numerical value of *Yod-Hay-Vav-Hay* is 26. Papus thought that this word by its very formation brought to mind the attributes human beings have given God.

It seems to me that Papus's mistake was to consider the Tarot as illustrating this quartet, thereby turning the Arcana into servants of the Hebrew Kabbalah, a word which signifies: "What has been received, what has come from beyond, what is passed from hand to hand." For him, Jehovah was the key to the Tarot.

However, the deity's qualities existed long before human beings learned to speak and write. The mathematical law existed long before there was Hebrew. The Tarot does not illustrate the Kabbalah; it is rather the portrait of the universe. We are speaking of an optical language that, perhaps as a reaction against literary fanaticism, takes an opposite stance to an oral language.

For Papus, *Yod* represented the principle of things, the absolute affirmation of the Being by itself, the *Yod* unit, image of masculinity and the father. In the optical language of the Tarot, this *Yod* would thereby be represented by the Kings of Swords, Cups, and Pentacles.

*Hay* is the opposition of the nonego to the ego. It is a form of division of the unit, the origin of duality, opposition, and the binary, the image of femininity and the mother. It represents the passive face to the active *Yod*, substance facing essence, life facing the soul. In the language of the Tarot, this aspect is represented by the Queens of Swords, Cups, and Pentacles.

*Vav* is born from the opposition of the ego to the nonego, and it represents the relationship between these two principles. It is the image of the son. These would be the Pages of Swords, Cups, and Pentacles.

The second *Hay*—given that nothing exists beyond the Trinity—indicates a transition from the metaphysical world or, more generally, from one world to another:

[(Father + Holy Ghost) + Son] + Virgin Mary

This transition is represented in the Tarot Court Cards by the King of Wands, the Queen of Wands, and the Page of Wands (a father, a mother, and a son who form a new family).

If we leave the Knights—whose mission is to transmit consciousness





[(3 Kings + 3 Queens) + 3 Pages] + Family of three Wands

and who revolve from right to left around The World—on the side and arrange the Kings, Queens, and Pages based on the direction in which they are looking, we shall obtain an order that turns from left to right: King of Swords, King of Cups, King of Pentacles (the active principle, *par excellence*), facing the Queen of Pentacles, Queen of Cups, Queen of Swords (passive principle *par excellence*). Beneath them, the Page of Pentacles, the Page of Cups, and the Page of Swords (the relationship of active and passive). Facing the Pages is the family consisting of the Page of Wands, the Queen of Wands, and the King of Wands. This family is the fourth element that is different from the others (where there are two that are similar: Kings and Queens; and one that is slightly different: the Pages) and is the nut that contains the seed of the future tree.

If 26 is the number that designates God, the Tarot, consisting of 78 Arcana, is three times 26. Three gods? Why not? If we imagine that this marvelous deck was created by sages from the three most important religions in the Western hemisphere around the year 1000, Christians, Hebrews, and Muslims, it should definitely contain three gods: Christ, Jehovah, and Allah. Can we apply the law of four to this? If it does fit there are two similar ones in the first trio: Jehovah and Allah, and one slightly different, Christ. And the fourth? The incarnation represented by the Tarot reader with his inner god:

[(Jehovah + Allah) + Christ] + tarologist



# To Begin

The study of the Minor Arcana, like that of the Major Arcana, will be based on the vision of the reader but also upon the numerology of the Tarot and the system of correspondences between the four Suits of the Tarot and the four fundamental centers of human life: intellectual, emotional, sexual and creative, and material and corporeal (see p. 47).

It is from this perspective that we propose a consistently open reading of the fifty-six Minor Arcana. The person who says “I,” reader or consultant, is not just one but at least four. We have at least four systems for perceiving the world: rational (the Logos), emotional (the heart), libidinal (desire and creativity), and corporeal (the vital needs).

When these four centers are going in different directions, a person is in crisis. But the desire for the four centers to be one single energy is utopian, as shown, for example, by the study of the 8 in the four Suits. We have already seen that the number 8 corresponds in the decimal numerology of the Tarot to a state of perfection (see p. 60). Now, by examining the Eight of Swords, we see a card holding at its center a simple blue flower with a red core and no stem. This Arcanum seems to be telling us that perfection of the intellect is in the void, the emptiness obtained through meditation, when the mind (the container) no longer identifies itself with words (the content). On the other hand, the Eight of Cups is the fullest card of its series: cups, flowers, and foliage fill its space, as if to show us that perfection of the heart is in the “all full,” the plenitude of love constantly prepared to give itself away, which



does not live in being asked for. The extremely concentrated Eight of Wands indicates to us that the perfection of this center resides in the focusing of desires upon a single action, whether it is creative, sexual, or energetic. Finally, the profusion of the Eight of Pentacles, whose foliage seems to be serenely extending in every direction of the space, puts us on the scent of material and physical perfection: prosperity and health. This example demonstrates that each center should be realized in its own direction of perfection: the empty heart is not realized, nor is the overabundant intellect.

We have decided to establish reading paths for the Minor Arcana in the following manner: first we shall study the first ten degrees of the numerology of the four centers in ten chapters in which each Suit will be studied in comparison to the others, and where study will be based on the symbols.

We shall next give a glimpse of the progression of the cards in each Suit: Swords, Cups, Wands, and Pentacles, each seen successively from Ace to Ten. This presentation, whose goal is to summarize the principal meanings of each card, will strive to minimize repetition of material from the preceding section. The last section will be dedicated to a study of the Honors or Court Cards, Suit by Suit and level by level.

This choice allows us to visualize the Minor Arcana using two “entrances,” each equally meaningful.

**Note:** To determine the top of the card on those that have no obvious directional elements, look for the copyright mark on the left at the bottom.



# The Degrees of the Numerology

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## *The Aces*

### *Everything in Potential*

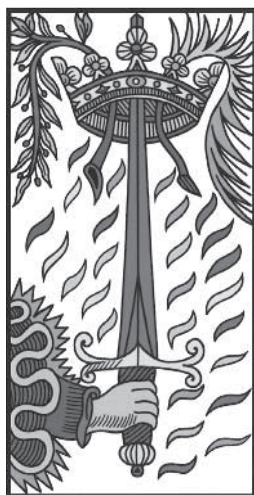
Out of the four Suits of the restored Tarot of Marseille, two are receptive, Cups and Pentacles; and two are active, Wands and Swords. Among the receptive Suits, Cups essentially reflect this quality, but the Pentacles are already sprouting plant branches indicating their conversion to activity. The Wand is an essentially active symbol, yet a crown appears in Swords that indicates the beginning of a receptive tone. If we like, Cups could be identified with the language of the heart. Pentacles would then represent everything having to do with material life (body, needs, job . . .). Swords symbolize the Logos and intellectual activity, while Wands represent creativity and the sexual domain.

One of the first esotericists to speak about the Tarot, Eliphas Levi, intentionally led his students astray, faithful to the notion, a common one during the time of Pope Pius VI, that the knowledge should be revealed only to a select few initiates. Levi therefore identified Pentacles with air (mental activity) and depicted the Sword with the point turned toward the ground, thus giving it the meaning of the element Earth and the domain of material life. It is obvious, though, that the Swords are pointing toward the sky, as their Ace is piercing a crown, an object intended to be worn on the head.



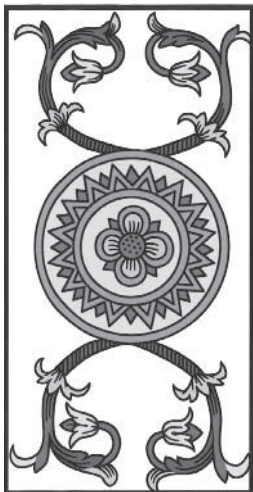


Cups

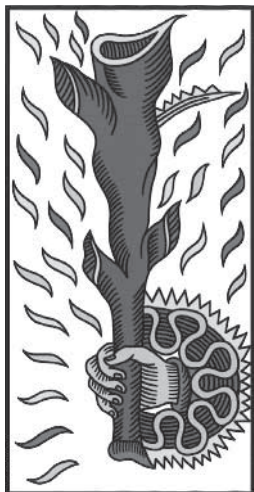


Swords

Pentacles



Wands



## THE ACE OF WANDS, THE ACE OF SWORDS

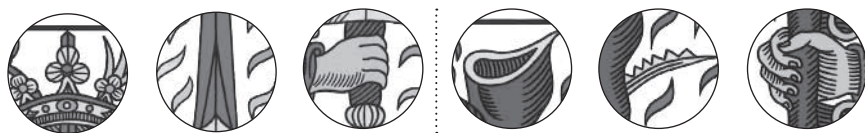
### Creativity and Intellect, Two Sources of Strength

A kinship exists between these two Aces. Both are surrounded by sparks of energy, both are being held by a hand emerging from a dark-blue, luminous semicircle traversed by a light-blue wave, sign of a powerful creative activity. However, careful examination permits us to distinguish a clear-cut difference. The hand holding the wand emerges from the center of a shape that, for the sake of convenience, we will call a



cloud, and is showing us its palm. The hand gripping the sword emerges from the surface of the cloud, and we see its back. We can speak of two impulses. The first is central, authentic, pure, and creative (the wand). The second is peripheral, formal, reflexive, and mental. We shall use the word *mental* here because in many traditions the sword is a symbol of the Logos.

The hand holding the wand grips it by its most slender part; it grows wider as it nears its top. Its phallic energy converts into a shape at the top that brings to mind the female sex organ. Creative energy is androgynous. The sections of branches appearing on the wand tell us that choice is essential in the management of the energy at our disposal. This energy is something we cannot manufacture; we can only decide the direction in which we wish to channel it. This is why a yellow light is being emitted at the place a branch could sprout. This indicates that at a given moment, this “green” energy (organic) can be sublimated. We can note the yellow chevrons on the ray of light, identical to those appearing on the cloud, which can be interpreted as circulation of the same divine Consciousness. The sword, to the contrary, although its grip is green (initially organic), next transforms into an object that has to be crafted. Intelligence is not received ready-made, it is a part of the self on which you must work to make it simultaneously strong and flexible through study: the sword is large at the bottom and thin at the top. Just as the steel of a blade is tempered to test its perfection, the perfection of the mind needs to be tempered by the experience and emotional suffering (the blade is red) that tests it. To attain its realization, the sword pierces through a crown; it does not remain imprisoned within the individual mind governed by the notion of power. The two branches growing out of the crown symbolize the two greatest functions of the mind: the open, receptive palm branch represents space and infinity, and the branch of mistletoe with



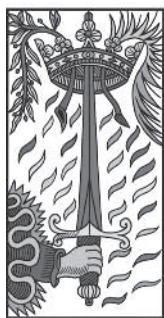


its green fruits represents time and eternity. By becoming eternal and infinite, the mind discovers Cosmic Consciousness. The crown with five flowers, with one of the central flowers bearing a red half-moon, symbolizes the five senses. These all constitute the perceptions that shape intelligence and which can bind the mind to material interests, but divine energy, far from fleeing or becoming lost in the world's mirages, enters the crown and travels through it.

Let's now pursue our comparison of the two cards and study their differences. The sword goes from more to less (from its largest part to its tip), whereas the wand expands as it leaves its base. Furthermore, a stem is larger the closer it is to the trunk and becomes thinner as it grows. This means that the thinnest part of a branch is its future. The hand holding the wand is therefore in the future. Creative sexual energy is a call to the deity who is in the future. Conversely, the sword leaves the past (its guard) to travel through the crown of the present and reach the source (unity in Consciousness).

These two active cards evoke two forces whose sources are distinct. The intellect, the Logos, is at the beginning of creation of the world, whereas creativity is a call from the future. After the Tree of Good and Evil in Genesis, from which Adam ate, it is said in Revelation that the Tree of Eternity awaits us in the future (in the center of the heavenly Jerusalem). We can summarize the message of these two cards this way: the purpose of the mind is to overcome the past by surpassing it to reach the origin, whereas the purpose of sexuality is to carry us toward the future, until the end of time.

Ace of Swords. The intellect, forged energy, grows thinner as it nears the unity of Cosmic Consciousness.



Ace of Wands. Expansive sexual energy, whose vocation is populating the universe, obeys a summons from the future.



## THE ACE OF CUPS

### Symbol of Love in Potential

The Cup series in the Tarot represents the entire process of emotional life. The Ace (1) represents the Totality in potential (see pp. 58–59). Everything is possible. We have only to choose or let ourselves choose.

The card starts with a flesh-colored base with no hatching, a flesh that is new, virginal. Emotional virginity remains intact, and love ceaselessly renews itself, as if a material chalice housed a bottomless well that found its source in eternity. But behind the cup, above the flesh color, we find a light-blue band with crosshatching, meaning that the mind, the spirit, is formed in flesh through experience and suffering. The base of this cup, which could also be a temple, is a pyramid with three sides. To the reader's right, the beginning of the yellow line, placed in the light, indicates a perpetual birth that extends along the base of the cup. The central side, decorated by a red pyramid, evokes stability and permanence. The crosshatched shadow of the left slope suggests by this obscurity the realm of death. These three sides of the pyramid refer to the three aspects of life: creation, conservation, and destruction, which we can also find in the Trimurti of the Indian gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, whose three complementary activities form the very dynamic of life.

Once above the light-blue horizon, we find a yellow flower with five petals opening toward the bottom, which could correspond to the five senses. This flower represents the process with which we can intelligently absorb the pains of incarnation in order to reach the yellow summit of the cup, where, like a call to the infinite, the creative Logos is echoing—it is depicted, as is often the case in the Tarot, by the tip of a sword.

The flower is surmounted by three concentric circles each holding three circles. The two circles on the outside correspond to the past and future; they are green in color, as they chiefly consist of hope and



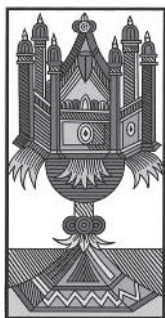


reminiscence. The red concentric circle in the middle represents the present, pure and instantaneous experience—nontheoretical. Why the three circles in each time? The outermost circle could correspond to intellectual life, the second to emotional life, and the central circle to sexual life. If we wanted to find another explanation, we could also say they symbolized body, soul, and mind.

Continuing toward the top of the cup, we find ourselves in a red semicircle crossed by horizontal lines. This red mass could be total love, which, plowed and worked by its red furrows, has become conscious love. It consists of the self-love that we project into love of the Other, love of the universe, and divine love. This humble and vast sentiment of giving supports the body of the cathedral. All human wisdom is based on love. As Walt Whitman put it so well: “And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to his own funeral dressed in his shroud.”

Beneath this edifice we find three light-blue palm leaves, whose dynamic lines suggest they are in full growth, with five, seven, and four tips respectively. Adding them together gives us 16: XVI, The Tower in the Major Arcana. We recall that this card depicts a divine tower giving birth to two individuals who are going to caress reality with their outstretched hands. Here the blue palm leaves evoke the pure intuition that communicates with the spiritual experience of the horizon, that painful blue band. The mind has crossed through suffering, and there it is vanishing in the white light that surrounds the cup like a purified atmosphere.

This cup, this temple that is so full, has value only if it pours itself into the world. At the base of love is the desire to give away everything that it has collected.



Ace of Cups. This is the chalice of total love in potential. It is an open temple, the opposite of a fortress.



## THE ACE OF PENTACLES

### The Last Shall Be First\*

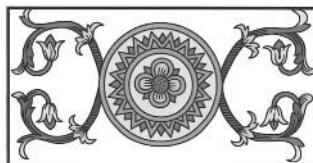
While the essences of the three preceding Aces are different (the Ace of Swords representing intellect, the Ace of Cups representing the emotional center, and the Ace of Wands the dark zone of sexuality and the luminous energy of creativity), they nonetheless have one point in common. We can imagine all three standing erect like giants: the cup with its pillars like an immense initiatory cathedral, and the Sword and Wand, proud and sparkling, moved by a divine hand.

But the Ace of Pentacles must be imagined horizontally, lying on the ground. Humble as the flower it bears at its center, it is both plant and mineral. The Pentacles symbolize material life. In numerous mystical schools, this material life is scorned. The advice that one must “be in the world and not of it” amounts to fleeing from matter. However, Pentacles are the true teacher.

At its heart, the Ace of Pentacles bears a lotus. This sacred flower plunges its roots into muddy and stagnant waters in order to grow and open toward the light. The famous mantra from Tibetan tradition, *om mani padme hum*, means “O Diamond in the Lotus!” This diamond is the transparent being, pure essence without personal ego: the Buddha, Universal Consciousness. In the central red circle of the Ace of Pentacles, we see twelve points arranged in four rows. If we draw the lines that tie these points together, we obtain the drawing of a diamond. Meanwhile, if we add up the numbers that run before the figure twelve, we find the number of cards that make up the Tarot:

$$1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 10 + 11 + 12 = 78$$

Ace of Pentacles. This card metaphorically represents the lotus, which grows out of filth and carries at the core of its material being the diamond of Consciousness.



\*[An untranslatable play on the word *Denier* [Pentacle], which, with the addition of the letter *r*, is *dernier*, meaning “last.” —*Trans.*]



The conclusion we can draw from these observations is that divine, impersonal energy, the Totality, resides at the heart of matter. Alchemists grasped this realization: they sought to materialize the spirit as well as to spiritualize matter, a dream symbolized by the quest for the philosopher's stone.

We could say that the pentacle consists of three circles: an outer one that flowers and pushes its branches toward the world, a second (middle) that bursts like an inner sun, and a red third (central), bearer of the universal secret, which gives birth to four petals like the four elements of matter, the four triads of the Zodiac, or the four cardinal points. These three circles provide a guide for self-discovery. The evolved being can begin by perfecting himself or herself without separating from the world as indicated by the outer circle. We are working for ourselves by creating a fertile, prosperous, paradisiacal reality. Ecological consciousness works hand in hand with inner discovery; we are one with the Earth, the world. This is why one of the important activities in Zen monasteries consists of cultivating gardens, which can signify the improvement of our work, our family, or our country. The sentiment guiding this approach is the sacred motto: "I want nothing for myself that is not for others."

Once this stage has been concluded, we can enter the second circle: the discovery of the inner sun we carry. It is similar in all points to the sun we see in the sky. Vital energy is ceaselessly streaming from it, symbolized by the green triangles. Practical intelligence spreads throughout the orange triangles (color of life in all its forms). The power of love, which is the essence of matter, is expressed in the red triangles. The base is golden yellow: pure and luminous organism. All this forms a ring of joyful action that invites us to love ourselves, not in a narcissistic manner but as a wonderful work of the divine will.

In the third circle we find the flower of felicity. Action has





reached its culmination. The soul exhales its fragrance while awaiting the inseminating arrival of the essential Truth. The dots in the red circle are seeds ready to hatch in a collectively transfigured humanity. They are displayed in the form of four lines of two, three, four, and three dots. The first two, on the top, indicate receptivity toward Heaven. The three beneath indicate activity toward the Earth. The seven median points ( $3 + 4$ ) represent the union of spirit (3) with matter (4). As Eliphas Levi said: "Every true thought corresponds to a Divine Grace in heaven and a good work on earth."<sup>1</sup> He means that all grace of consciousness produces an action, every action shifts a truth in consciousness.

The first circle reveals the four personal qualities of the initiate. His or her spiritual work is then transmitted from circle to circle, from one spiritual hierarchy to the next, until it reaches the central diamond of impersonal consciousness. By searching for essential individuality, we reach universal collective consciousness. This is where the secret of the Ace of Pentacles resides: a humble coin, treasure from the depths of the Earth, it is raised through meditation to the Heavens where it becomes the halo that illuminates the heads of the saints.



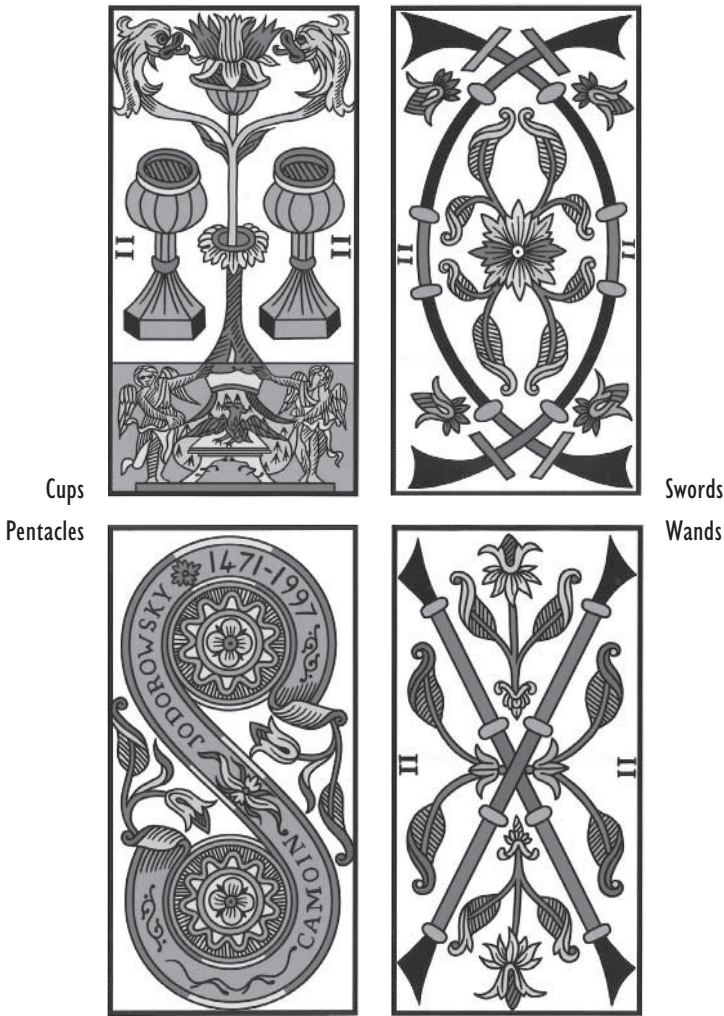
## *The Twos*

### *Accumulation, Preparation, Receptivity*

While the Aces (1) are the symbols of potential capabilities, a vast extent of possibilities waiting for only a choice to be made, the Twos (2) represent the accumulation of information without realization. The key word for understanding the Twos is the concept of passive and receptive accumulation. The High Priestess (II), degree 2 of the first decimal series of the Major Arcana, is cloistered. The Hanged Man (XII), degree 2 of the second decimal series, is bound with his hands behind him. He does not choose but dives into himself (see p. 60).

In the Minor Arcana, in which the Sword is the symbol of intellectual life, the Two of Swords shows us a huge flower (the largest of the series) with eight petals and eight branches filling the entire oval holding it. It is the daydream that sprawls across the mind, a collection of plans, myths, information, and theories. The center of the flower contains a black spot in which the void one attains in the perfection of meditation can be sensed in gestation. The two interlacing swords have an active, vital red center that echoes the two horizontal red petals. Before it has been crafted, thought appears in the brain as chaos. Then the two vertical yellow petals allow it to spread toward the light and order, supported by the receptive nature of the light-blue petals. The swords' blades are essentially black: the purpose of the mind is to reach the void. In this Arcanum the eight petals and eight branches, as well as the eight orange ovals attached to the blades, indicate a profound desire for perfection (8 represents perfection in the numerology of the Tarot). We shall also note that throughout the entire Tarot the Twos are aspiring to the 8: from receptivity to plenitude and perfection.





The Wand symbolizes sexual and creative energy. In the Two of Wands, the flowers, instead of a cut stem, have a base that is a finely worked, light-blue bulb, which represents the accumulation of desires. The red stem then leads to seven yellow petals that will awaken the seven chakras (sacred nerve centers). Flowers with three orange petals are growing at the spot where the two wands cross. By adding them together ( $3 + 3 = 6$ ), we find that the essential quest of Wands is that of pleasure and beauty (represented by 6 in the numerology of the Tarot). The center of the wands is dark blue, indicating that its basic creative energy is received. This reception spreads out in the red of action. A



Chinese saying teaches us that it is best to be receptive toward the Heavens and active toward the Earth: the artist's inspiration is given to him, but his work is the fruit of his action and decisions. This card represents the accumulation of as-yet unrealized energy, virginity, the first part of puberty, but also the first fruits of all work.

The Cup symbolizes emotional life. The Two of Cups therefore represents the accumulation of feelings, the preparation for love. Two angels at the bottom of the card are revealing the source of love: a red phoenix on a yellow pedestal. The angels represent purity. The one on the left, who is blind, is suggesting to us that the choice of the beloved object is not made by the intellect but by reasons of the heart. The light-blue color, covered by scattered patches similar to ermine, like a royal cloak, is an indication of divine protection. The yellow pedestal and crown on which the immortal bird is forming are so many symbols of Cosmic Consciousness. The mythical phoenix has the ability to burn and be reborn from its own ashes, just as love dies and is reborn time after time. Love is not individual: it is a universal force. A root is sprouting from all this that blossoms into the first red-and-yellow flower, symbol of love incarnated in the human heart, then extends in a light-blue stem that gives birth to two animals, perhaps fish, who are licking a huge flower. These two fish refer to the narcissistic division of the ego, necessary for the development of love: all love starts in the fascination with oneself and the projection of one's soul upon the beloved being. By licking the flower, the animals help it grow and prepare it for a marvelous insemination. The future lover will be nothing other than a projection of the original phoenix. From a psychological point of view, the Two of Cups refers to incestuous love. The angels (sublimation of the animus and the anima) are preparing to sacrifice the phoenix. The Oedipal love will be immolated for the construction of a reality, a family symbolized by the Four of Pentacles.

The Pentacle is the symbol of material life; this is why it can be found in the depths of the Earth and why, once it has been crafted, it can serve as money for exchange. In the Two of Pentacles, an immense ribbon attempts to unite one circle to the other. At the bottom of the card, inside the inner curve of this sinuous line, we can detect three



serpents, crawling animals, which suggest to us that the work leading to awareness begins with acceptance of the matter that will subsequently become spiritualized, the pentacle transformed into a halo. There are two dates in the upper curve, 1471–1997, recalling the date of the first-known printed Tarot and that of the publication of the restored Tarot. But they also indicate the transformation that goes from the past toward the future, from the depths to the heights. If we add  $1 + 4 + 7 + 1$ , we get 13, the number of transformation of matter, death. By adding  $1 + 9 + 9 + 7$ , we get 26, the figure of God and eternity. This is the entire aspiration of the Two of Pentacles: this ribbon that never stops growing, as shown by the flowers at both ends, to reach the 8 of infinite perfection by seeking to realize the spiritualization of matter.



## *The Threes*

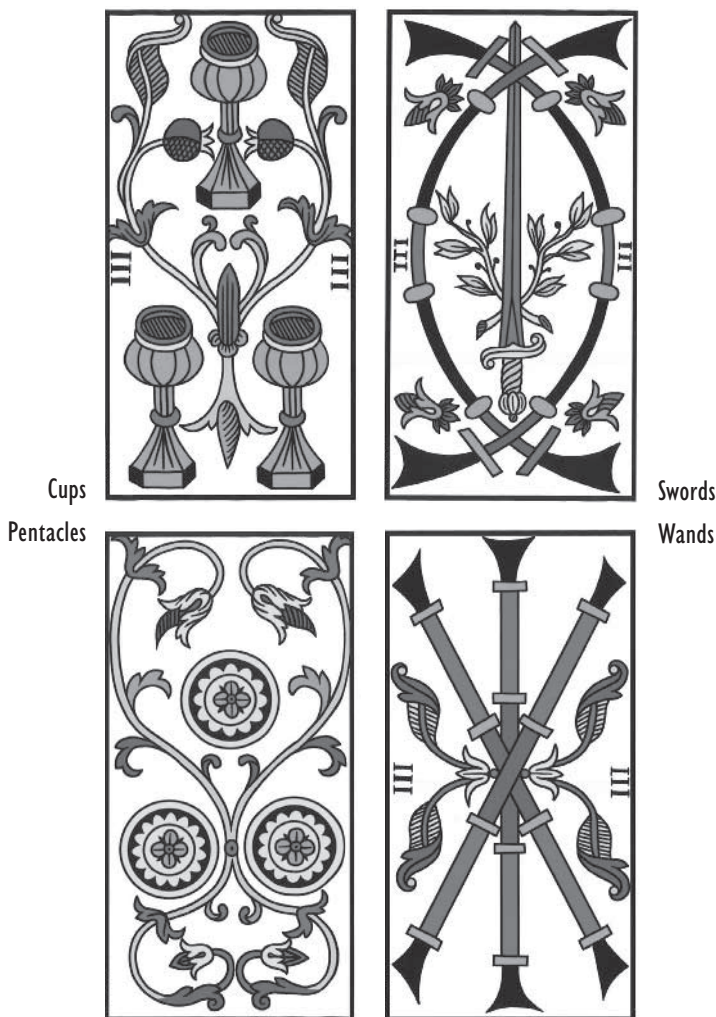
### *Bursting Apart, Creation or Destruction*

Numbers have their own lives as distinct entities. Following the Aces (1, the Whole in potential, fundamentally androgynous) and the Twos (2, accumulation of an experience, essentially receptive), the Threes (3, creative explosion) are the first essentially active cards. But their active nature is twofold: toward life and death, toward reproduction, construction, the euphoria of being alive; or toward destruction, depression, and the implacable transformation that demands the elimination of the old. The vital aspect of the Threes achieves transformation by the birth of the new.

These two aspects of the Threes are manifested in The Empress (III) and the Nameless Arcana (XIII). It is obvious that The Empress, with her scepter propped up on her belly and adorned by a green leaf, is in full gestation. The figure in Arcanum XIII is meanwhile using his scythe to cut down the bad growth so the new being can develop.

The two branches surrounding the sword reveal the potential of the Three of Swords card. If we count the leaves and blackberries growing on them, we obtain the number 22, which represents the Totality of the Tarot's Major Arcana. The red sword symbolizes active, enthusiastic, boundless, and idealistic intellect. The four flowers outside the interlaced swords give security to this impulse. They indicate that all thought is supported by a clearly oriented space; they represent the four cardinal points. A popular expression describing a state of mental confusion is "losing one's bearings." This card, like all the Threes, has an adolescent tone. Here, every problem that can arise comes up; there is confusion between believing and knowing, and we think without being united to the world, motivated by the energy of an ideal that could just





as easily be fallacious as true. The energy of the Three of Swords is closely connected to the sexual energy of Wands.

In the Three of Wands, the three wands intersect, forming a center expressing their desire to invade the world, represented by the leaves growing out of them. Where the Three of Swords marked out an oval where a desire for pushing deeper was in play, the Three of Wands explodes toward the outside like a conqueror. It wishes to enter the world as much as it seeks to seduce and swallow it. This Arcanum corresponds to the first experiences of carnal pleasure, the onset of puberty, dominating violence, and the joy of someone who thinks he



is the center of the world. It is also desires that explode without knowing where they are heading. It is the seed that violently opens its shell without knowing what plant it is going to become. The black dots on the three wands symbolize impersonal action and are reminiscent of the tips of the swords, which are also black. This indicates to us that the essence of sexual energy is spiritual. Each of the wands is embellished by four orange rectangles corresponding to the four elements: the greatest wealth of action is life itself. The deep blue of the center suggests that desire is received and that no one has any control over it. We can only channel it or enjoy bliss from it, but we cannot prompt it, nor can we annul it. The leaves growing on the side are showing their light-yellow interior, a field of vital joy and energy that enriches the world.

The Three of Cups represents ideal, romantic love. These are the first heartfelt emotional experiences. The base of the top cup, well protected by its two leaves, is resting on the inside of a heart. Its foot is caressed by two bulbs full of daydreams. Ideal love can later lead us, if it fails, to deep disappointment. But being the first, it is the most splendid to experience. An entire construction at the base of the heart protects and supports it. The red spindle shape divided by three black lines with three orange petals at its base represents the androgynous deity. This ideal love is a projection of divine love. The two cups on the bottom of the card represent the male *animus* and the female *anima* that join to create this dream.

In the Three of Pentacles, we see a construction that appears similar but which is quite different in reality. The top pentacle is inside the foliage construction, and the two bottom pentacles are outside. While the action of the Cups goes toward the Heavens, the action of the Pentacles goes toward internalization, submersion in matter, and the obscurity of gestation. It is the assertion of a treasure buried in the world that we need to take possession of. This Arcanum represents the departure of the ancient hero in search of the Golden Fleece, an ambivalent symbol of material wealth and Cosmic Consciousness. Three being an explosive number, in the Pentacles it can signify the enthusiastic beginning of a matter, with an uncertain investment: we could multiply our wealth or lose it.



## *The Fours*

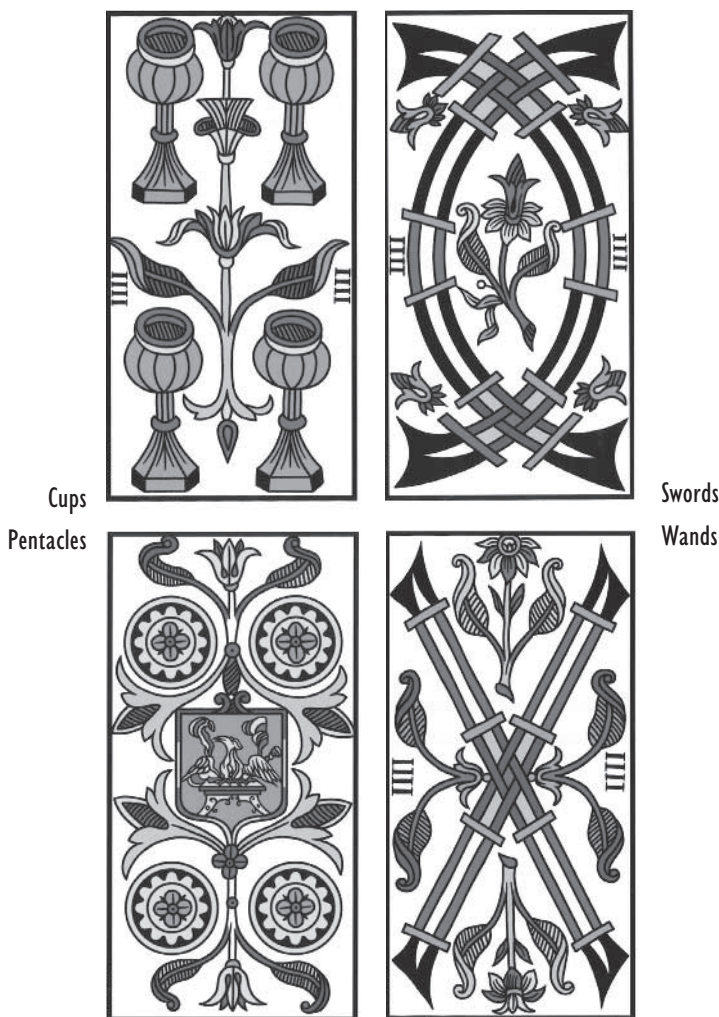
### *Security on the Earth*

The equivalent of 4 is a square, the geometrical shape that best symbolizes security in the material world. In the Major Arcana, The Emperor (III) represents terrestrial stability, while Temperance (XIII) indicates mental and spiritual balance.

If we look at the center of the Four of Pentacles, we see a coat of arms on which the bird, the phoenix, is being immolated to be reborn from its own ashes. At the center of what seems immutable, there is perpetual impermanence. The person who has health and security should remain conscious of the ephemeral nature of all material goods. At this level the one who does not advance, and refuses to change, goes backward. Health depends on constant care. The apparent stability of the Four of Pentacles conceals sacred instability. If the Four does not commit itself to action, it will gradually petrify. The Four of Pentacles guarantees daily life but not spiritual life. However, this spiritual life is its foundation, just as the altar is the base of the cathedral. What good is an altar that is not being used to celebrate mass serve? Similarly, what would be the point of a grocery store in which all the food had gone past its expiration date? New, fresh products are necessary to bring health to the consumer. A fortune kept locked in a strongbox without being used depreciates. In this case, it should be invested and the wealth allowed to enter the flow of life. A seed pod that does not open will not produce any plants.

In the Four of Pentacles, the four elements are organized around the center (the phoenix), but in the Four of Cups, the arrangement shows evidence of an aspiration toward the heights instead. The two cups on the bottom, helped by the two large leaves, hold up the two cups at





the top. We can see an impulse toward opening here. Cups being the symbol of emotional life, we can therefore say that in this love we are seeking a being higher than ourselves and not a “kindred spirit.” As a stage of emotional life, the four is a wholesome moment that represents a foundation, acceptance of the couple, or the plan to have a family. But while the Three was searching for ideal love, the Four marks the passage to real love. This is something that can occur only if we accept being loved with complete trust.

The quest for the heights that is at work in the Four of Cups represents, in the best cases, an aspiration for higher dimensions of love that



will be experienced in the following degrees. But if the person is not yet capable of loving herself, she is compelled to place all his or her hopes for realization in another. The emotional relationship is not then one between equals but one of a heart submitting to a powerful individual. If you hate yourself, if you despise yourself, if you do not love yourself, the demand for security becomes insatiable. Even if we do not have all the love we would like, we tend to cling to relationships for security. This is the case of a long-lasting marriage in which the couple may perhaps have lost their love for each other, but their union stands because it offers security. A love that does not evolve is condemned to congeal.

In the Four of Wands, we are in the presence of a sexual and creative security. Everything is going well, but there is a risk that this situation will become routine. In this domain, repetition chills enthusiasm. For lack of novelty, ecstasy declines. Once again the Four is a wholesome passage that asks to be surpassed: what would we think of an artist who establishes one style and repeats it until the day he dies, thereby content with earning a guaranteed income? The security of the Four is doomed to evolve into the temptation of the Five.

Similarly, the mental security of the Four of Swords is marvelous when it represents the practical spirit, an intelligence capable of embodying itself and organizing material life. It is also the basis for scientific intelligence. But it can also mutate into a self-contained rationalism tending to exclude intuition, the wealth of the subconscious, poetic pleasure, revolutionary ideas, and so many other things that we find when establishing a bridge to the mysteries of the mind. This will be the labor of the Five.

In all the Suits, the Four is a platform of security necessary for inviting new experiences that will help us advance along the path of self-knowledge, with its ultimate purpose action in the world. Taken this way, the Four is essential. Taken as an end in itself, it leads to ponderousness and decay.



## *The Fives*

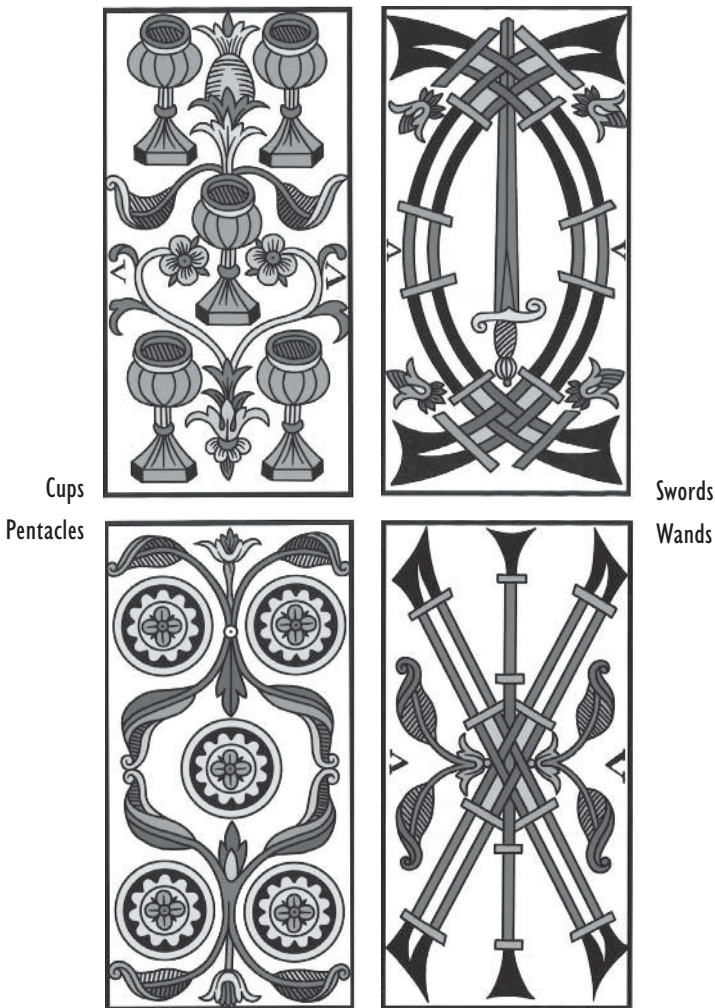
### *Temptation*

In the esotericism of the beginning of the twentieth century, magic students and numerologists attributed a harmful and tragic effect to the number 5. This is understandable, as in the Major Arcana the fifth degree is represented by The Pope and The Devil. The esotericists in conflict with the Catholic Church therefore confused the two cards and viewed the curse (XV) as the shadow of the benediction (V). It is also easy to understand that in a series of nine numbers (the 10 is considered a repetition of the 1), number 5 is at the middle, as if between two worlds. Before it, the series of 1 to 4 represents material life; after it, the following series of 6 to 9 represents the spiritual life, which is marvelous but filled with uncertainties when viewed from the physical plane. In reality, The Pope and The Devil are invitations to go farther, to go beyond the limits of the material and the rational. The Pope, without abandoning his disciples who belong to this world, establishes a bridge, a communication with the other world: the divine or cosmic dimension. The tempter, The Devil, offers a descent into darkness and the subconscious to reach the impersonal magma that is the source of all creativity.

The 5 opens the ways for self-knowledge or offers brilliant ideas. It suggests the prudence of not abandoning our assets in material life, but invites us to surpass them.

In the Five of Swords, we see appearing between the interlacing swords the red of the central sword, which looks outside through a diamond-shaped opening. This is the first time in the process of the series of the Swords, symbol of intellectual activity, that the mind accepts union with the Other and attempts to cast its gaze outside





itself, outside its little intellectual world. An idea appears that can be transformed into an ideal, a path to follow.

In the series of Cups, which represent emotional life, the Five of Cups depicts a central container that has given birth to a luxurious floral construction. We could mistake it for a pagoda or a temple. For the first time we see the enthusiasm of faith, or, to be more precise, fanatic love. Praises are sung for a teacher, Christ, or different gods, or Mother Nature, or, why not, a political theoretician. We think we have found the definitive direction that our heart and that of humanity should take. If we carefully examine this card, we shall see a yellow heart formed at the foot



of the central cup by the branches of the bottom-most plant, which has flowered. But because this heart is at the base, it is acting on the material plane. In other words, we turn our hearts toward God, yet without scorning human affections. With this card we can understand, for example, the young disciple who returns pregnant from a stay with her guru.

The Five of Wands represents two temptations: sublimating the sexual force through meditation techniques, and, thanks to them, opening the door of spiritual illumination; or else by a more profound exploration of the path of desire that does not neglect investigation of any impulse. This second path can be as revolutionary as the first, for it is an invitation to abandon old habits that dull the mind. Likewise in creativity, it is the artist opening to themes that go farther or deeper than personal anecdote.

With the Five of Pentacles, the material security of the Four allows for a new possibility of enrichment to be born in its center, one that will dispel the great danger of the previous stage. As we have seen, if the Four does not change, it will age, rot, and collapse. We can see practical examples of this every day: large supermarkets are forced to consider opening an organic food section so they will not lose customers; a patient treated with no tangible results by standard medicine will contemplate looking for a shaman abroad or a folk healer in his own country; a long-married couple will suddenly decide to have a child, or even decide to invest their savings in an activity that can multiply their capital.

The Five therefore represents a temptation, an aspiration, a bridge, a transition toward a new world, but one that keeps part of its activity based in the old world.

The biggest danger posed by the Five of Swords would be to lead us to follow crazy and overly idealist ideas that carry a promise of huge disappointment. The danger of the Five of Cups is enthusiasm. The idealized Other cannot correspond to the plans made in his or her regard. In the Five of Wands we risk following the path of The Pope, one that could lead us to sexual impotence through excessive mysticism, or that of The Devil, which will wear us out with depravity. In the Five of Pentacles, we run the risk of investing our money in pipe dreams and losing it, as often happens to the small players in the stock exchange.



## *The Sixes*

### *Beauty and Its Mirrors*

In the Kabbalah, 6 is considered to represent beauty. In the Tree of Life, under the name Tipheret, it is at the center of the ten Sephirot. If human beings are incapable of attaining the unknowable Truth, they can at least reach its essential radiance: Beauty.

In The Lover (VI), degree 6 in the first decimal series of the Major Arcana, the cherub is responsible for the descent of the beauty of love from the Heavens. In The Tower, Arcanum XVI, another manifestation of 6, the Earth is sending an explosion of elation and joyful energy from its center toward the heights that causes the two initiates to dance in ecstasy. It is also possible that the sky is responsible for sending this flaming manifestation down. The Tarot allows the same symbol to be interpreted two different ways without forcing a choice between the two responses, both of which can be right at the same time.

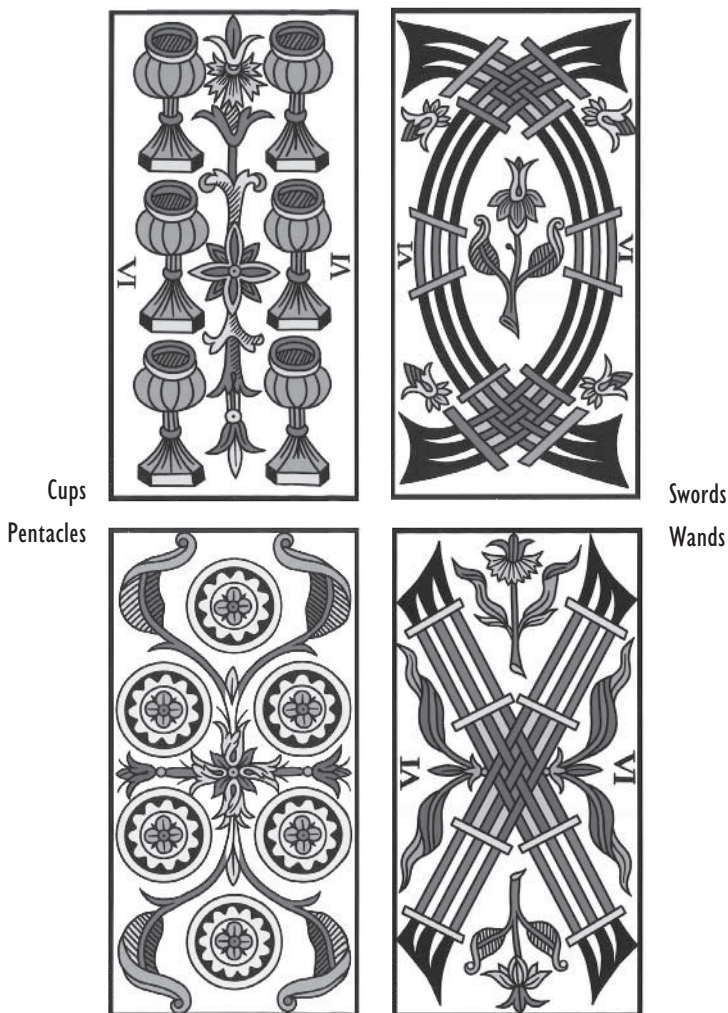
In the Minor Arcana, this number, synonymous with beauty and realization of what one loves, takes on four different tones. If we really want, the beauty of the Six can be considered to be the root of reality. If we add up three successive out of the infinite series of numbers, we will always obtain a number that can be reduced to 6. For example:

$1 + 2 + 3 = 6$ ;  $4 + 5 + 6 = 15$ , and  $1 + 5 = 6$ ;  $7 + 8 + 9 = 24$ , and  $2 + 4 = 6$ ; and so on infinitely.

Cups and Pentacles are receptive symbols.

The Six of Cups is presented as the result of  $[3 + 3]$ , two columns of three cups facing one another. They have found each other in the way a human being finds his or her kindred spirit. This is a static love





with a narcissistic tone, which has a tendency to seclude itself and shares only in private. This is a love relationship in which one member of the couple is the soul of the other. With the Six of Cups you can say: “I am the world, and the world is me.”

In the Six of Pentacles, we can clearly detect the addition  $[4 + 2]$ . In the center of the card are four coins representing the reality principle and stability, which open to the top and to the bottom. In the Six of Cups we saw the meeting of two trios, the number 3 being an idealist. Here, in contrast, we start from a material center that will seek its ecstatic realization in these two extremes. This refers us back to pairs



of complementary notions like past and future, higher consciousness and subconscious, macrocosm and microcosm, light and shadow, and so forth. It is a card that opens up to the world, which strives to open itself to the Other. Its motto could be: "I leave in search of everything that surpasses me and is already in me."

Between the Six of Swords and the Six of Wands, both active symbols, one intellectual and the other sexual-creative, there is also a difference.

In the Six of Swords, we are witnessing an act of internalization. We attain beauty through meditation, by going toward the ecstasy that is the heart of our awareness. The central flower, whose stem has been cut, separated from its plant and consequently the world, is blossoming in solitude. It is single. Assuming its individuality, its solitude, its uniqueness, is the primary joy of the intellect.

In the Six of Wands, we see a great thrust outward. Emerging from a burning center (the four red lozenges), sensuous leaves are opening toward the four corners of the world, and as a vertical axis. Instead of the unitary wand, we see flowers that are also cut and different from one another, but nonetheless complementary. The flower on the bottom has curved and receptive leaves, the one on the top has leaves that are pointed and active. We could describe them as a male flower and a female flower. The Six of Wands expresses the beauty of the sexual encounter. Here the solitude dear to the Six of Swords becomes masturbatory; it is not acceptable. The Six of Wands is essentially a card of meeting.

The Sixes, despite their excellence, can turn into a narcissistic trap, especially in Cups and Swords. We like what we are doing so much that, egotistically, we seek to satisfy ourselves while forgetting the needs of the surrounding world.



## *The Sevens*

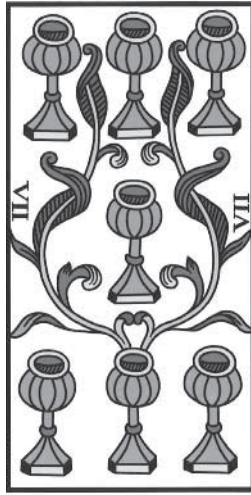
### *Action in the World and upon the Self*

The 7 is the most active odd number, the most powerful primary number of the series 1 to 10. The best way to define it is by the notion of action in the world. In the Major Arcana, this action manifests quite visibly in Arcanum VII, The Chariot, and Arcanum XVII, The Star. In The Chariot, energy comes out of the Earth, and the prince lets himself be carried by his vehicle buried in the planet and is as one with it. He is not acting of his own volition but going with the flow of the action. In The Star, the energy comes from the cosmos, and the woman is naked: pure truth. Scorning the general for the particular, she selects a place that she sanctifies, one knee on the ground, to achieve purifying and germinating action there. This enables us to grasp that there are different forms of action in the world, as the four Sevens of the Minor Arcana are going to show us.

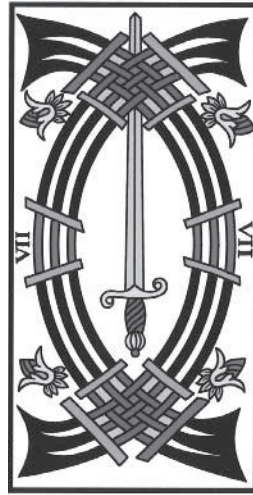
The Seven of Wands is a card of explosive, glorious energy that starts from a red lozenge overlaid by the intersection of dark and light-blue parts of the wands, which then spread through their red extensions to their black tips. There is a yellow articulation at every spot the color changes. This means that we are departing from the vital fire of the red lozenges, a natural fire that is received and not manufactured. Thanks to intelligent reflection (the yellow articulation), this fire passes from inner intuitive concentration to the large red action of opening to the world. Sexual and creative energy is impersonal and offers itself via its black tips to whoever can skillfully employ it. Yellow leaves with red stems (there are four in number) are opening triumphantly on the sides, expressing the unconstrained bursting of sexual and creative pleasure.

In contrast, in the Seven of Swords, the sword is still inserted





Cups



Swords

Pentacles



Wands



within its oval, symbolizing the space of thought, initially conceived as an imprisonment. It opens only in the middle of the card, in the short passage of red color that indicates a minor activity toward the outside. Inside this oval we find a light-blue sword placed between four exterior cut flowers. These four flowers are very different from the living yellow foliage of the Seven of Wands: they represent conceptual rather than organic reference points. The Sword is at the peak of its active nondoing here. The maximum of action for Wands is “creating everything,” while that of Swords is “emptying everything.” This is why the entanglement of the blue stems is at the center of the Seven of Wands and at the two



outside extremities for the Seven of Swords. We also can note that the sword's blade enters beneath this weaving and is held prisoner by it: the mind neither moves nor acts. To act in the world, the mind ceases to believe that reality is what it thinks it is and seeks for objective vision. To do this, it must learn to receive.

In the center of the Seven of Pentacles, we see three circles arranged in a triangle pointed toward the top, surrounded by four other pentacles at each of the four corners of the card. These forms symbolize the mind, the spirit (triangle) in gestation in the center of matter (square). We can conclude from this that extreme action in the physical world is the gestation of the mind, an internal ideal. This triangle will eventually invade the entire square, exactly as Christ entered into gestation inside the womb of a human being, Mary, so she could give birth to him and be converted into a sacred being. We could also say that what we are witnessing at work in the Seven of Pentacles is the action of consciousness upon the heart of the cell.

Similarly, in the Seven of Cups we find the 7 in its  $[3 + 4]$  form, but in a different configuration. Four cups form what we could call a rectangle on the outside. Three other cups draw a vertical axis in the center. The bottom cup of this axis is in the midst of actively creating the emotional world, with its action influencing both the inside and the outside. The other cups are full of the content they have collected, but this cup at the base is producing an action symbolized by the branches and leaves climbing from it, like an aspiration for the celestial world. The second cup in the center is in gestation, caressed and loved, and is spreading its effect upon the whole world, not yet in the dazzling way we shall later see in the Eight, but in an intimate, secret, and withdrawn manner. This is emotional fire gestating in darkness and solitude that finally opens toward the cosmos in the third cup. Love then goes entirely toward the outside and reaches the edges of the universe. We can compare this axis to the intense appeal of the Virgin Mary, who would accept no lover but God himself.



## *The Eights*

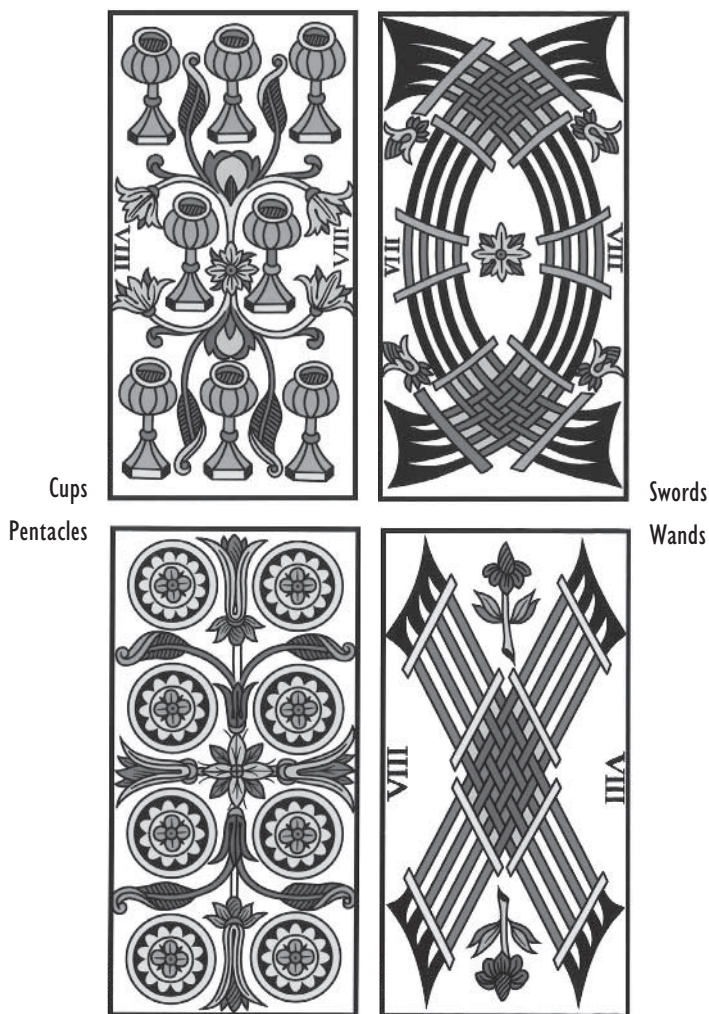
### *The Four Perfections*

Justice and The Moon of the Major Arcana belong to the 8. This number is the most receptive of the entire 1 to 10 series. If 2 is accumulation, 4 stabilization, and 6 union in beauty, then 8 is the preeminent symbol of perfection in matter and mind. In Justice (VIII) we see a maternal archetype responsible for the rule of Law. Her motto could be: “The only freedom is obedience to the Law,” the greatest obedience being to become yourself and allowing the cosmic laws to take action in your mind and material life. The sword of Justice cuts the subjective, and her scales balance the objective. The Moon (XVIII), meanwhile, represents pure reception. It has a tendency to withdraw into itself in order to reflect the solar light. This reflection of the solar “truth,” which we could call beauty, can be looked at directly, as opposed to looking straight at the very source of light—which blinds.

In the Minor Arcana, we can see a clear difference between the receptive symbols of the Cups and Pentacles, and the active symbols of the Swords and Wands. The first are full, while the latter are almost empty. This permits us to revisit the different aspects of the notion of perfection, which are often poorly understood and undifferentiated.

It is obvious that the intellect, symbolized by the Sword, must attain a maximum quantity of emptiness to reach its perfection: the practice of meditation, among others, trains the mind for this purpose. In the middle of the Eight of Swords there is only a small blue receptive flower, whose center is formed by a minuscule red circle stamped with a dot that represents the eye, the impartial witness. The four outside flowers, which in the other Swords’ cards are yellow and red (active in intelligence), adopt a blue color here, symbol





of spiritual receptivity. The Eight of Swords represents the Buddhist ideal of emptiness.

This “total void” cannot be applied to the emotional domain. In the Eight of Cups we find ourselves in the presence of the “completely full.” In the center the same small red circle marked by a dot represents the eye, the active witness. Around it the same light-blue petals indicate a receptive center. But the four dark-blue petals alternating with them take a dynamic form here, one that brings to mind the swastika (also see p. 88).

Opposed to intellectual quietude, this impersonal aspect of the



heart could be called God in action. Four of the eight cups depicted on this card are placed at the four corners, indicating a state of emotional stability. There are two cups side by side in the middle, surrounded by branches and flowers demonstrating the exaltation of the male-female couple, or the active-receptive couple (which does not exclude the homosexual couple). At either end of a vertical axis, two other cups are displaying love of the Earth (the bottom cup) and love of Heaven (the top cup). These vertical cups are accompanied by two blue flames or flowers. The one on the bottom bears an active red drop, and the one at the top bears a similar drop but striped with vertical lines that make it receptive. We see confirmation here of what we saw in the central dots of the Ace of Pentacles: activity toward the Earth and receptivity toward the Heavens. The Eight of Cups symbolizes the Christlike ideal of the flaming heart, all charity and all love.

At first glance the Eight of Pentacles appears to be giving the same message as the Eight of Cups, but in reality there is a large difference. Here again four pentacles at the four corners form a stable square: material life is assured. But here, four other pentacles at the center are depicting another dynamic and spiritual square. Here, too, in the middle we find a flower with a circular heart. But this time the center is yellow and marked by a cross. This indicates to us that at the center of matter there is an awareness of eternity (the vertical line) and infinity (the horizontal line). In the central square we have two pairs of pentacles, one on the bottom and one on the top, separated by foliage. The mind buried in matter, preeminently active, is acting in the material world and in spiritual life simultaneously. This interaction of worlds engenders total prosperity. The Eight of Pentacles represents true wealth, health, happiness in the home, and the harmonious realization of needs. Matter saturated by spirit, perhaps incorruptible, gives off an odor of holiness.

The Eight of Wands eliminates the lateral foliage that has been present up to the Seven of this Suit, leaving only two small vertical cut flowers. These should not be scorned, for it is in them that the creative force is gripped anew. Here sensuality becomes sublimated; we make the transition from being scattered to concentration. It is the Freudian concept of the sublimation of the libido. Creatively, the Eight of Wands



represents a situation in which we give all our energy to the present creation without the slightest distraction. The eight is the last opportunity given to us to create a perfect work. Next will come either change or death. If the Arcana of Wands is sexuality, the Eight of Wands would be sexual energy employed in service of the spiritual work, such as with Mother Teresa or a great healer. During the eighth month of pregnancy, the mother allows the formation of the fetus to be finished so it can prepare to be born the following month.



## *The Nines*

### *Crisis and New Construction*

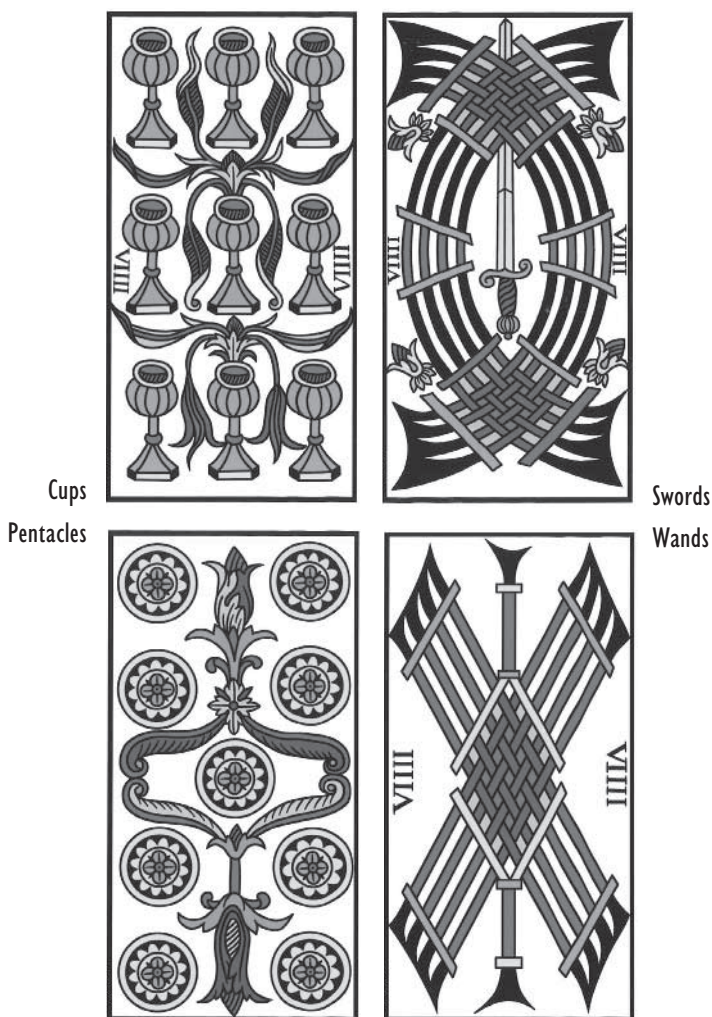
The 9 has a characteristic that separates it from the other odd numbers of the first decimal series: it is divisible by three. On the one side it is therefore active (the side toward the 8), and on the other it is receptive (toward the 10). An androgynous number and the stage of crisis, the 9 heralds a change that will lead to the end of a cycle. It is illustrated in the Major Arcana by The Hermit (VIII) and The Sun (XVIII).

The Hermit, a sage who has reached the end of his path, has retired from the world and is raising his lantern to show the new way. In The Sun, we see the new consciousness (the sun) casting its light upon two individuals, pushing them to a new construction. These cards are both similar and opposites—similar because they mark the end of one life and the beginning of a new era, and opposed because The Hermit finds realization in solitude, while the figures in The Sun are creating a relationship of mutual aid and loving union. We will encounter analogous contrasts in the Minor Arcana.

We should note that in the so-called esoteric tradition, The Hermit was not viewed as a sage, generously showing the way, but understood as a secret teacher, miserly with his wisdom, who hid his lantern beneath his cloak, reserving his knowledge for an elect group of disciples. It is unthinkable that the Nine would strive to retard humanity's passage toward expanded consciousness.

In the Nine of Cups, what has already been experienced has been eliminated (the three cups on the bottom between which wilted leaves are hanging), and six other cups are exalted. They are rising toward a newer, more universal love, symbolized by the pointed leaves surrounding the center cup at the top. When we see this card, we are





receiving the message to sacrifice feelings that once nourished us but are now chaining us down, to mourn them appropriately, then leave for larger emotional dimensions. In this card the 9 is presented as  $[6 + 3]$ .

In the Nine of Pentacles, on the other hand, we find an  $[8 + 1]$ . The concept of elimination is not present; what we are witnessing instead is a birth, the creation of a new dimension. We can clearly see the center pentacle as the head of the baby being born, surrounded as it is by branches forming a blue (receptive) oval surrounded by red (reception of life), in which we perceive a female sex organ. This birth



is not solitary; it is emerging among the perfection of the eight other pentacles. When we see this card, the message we are receiving is the imminent arrival of new material conditions: a child, a new job, an inheritance, a stroke of fortune, a return to health, and so on. But to obtain this new element, we should take special precautions to avoid being distracted. Precautions are a must. The slightest mistake will destroy the birth.

In the two active symbols, Swords (intellect) and Wands (instinct and creativity), we find two different positions.

The Sword, which symbolizes the Logos, has traveled an entire route of concentration to reach the Eight, which, we should recall, represents the meditative void. In the following stage of the Nine of Swords, the sword bursts from the light and begins to expand. It is ready to leave subjective imprisonment to advance into the world and become one with it. We can see a broken horizontal line in the center of the blade that indicates a crack. The sword is cut in two as if to indicate the intellect is not only a “me” but a “me and you.” The message of the Nine of Swords, for the subject of a reading, would be: “Learn to listen to others. Your ideas are a part of the world but not all of it.”

The Wand, to the contrary, has followed an expansive, creative path. Here it is becoming more concentrated and eliminating all decoration, no foliage or flowers, joining its axis to the red and blue central interlacing. The Nine of Wands is always between life and death. Its attitude could be summed up in this motto: “Win or die.” We think of a warrior who has performed impeccable deeds without making any compromise. He is freed of desire toward the world and collects within himself the energy to build a new work. If we heed this card, it will tell us: “Make no concessions; be yourself. Act as you must. Be responsible.”



## *The Tens*

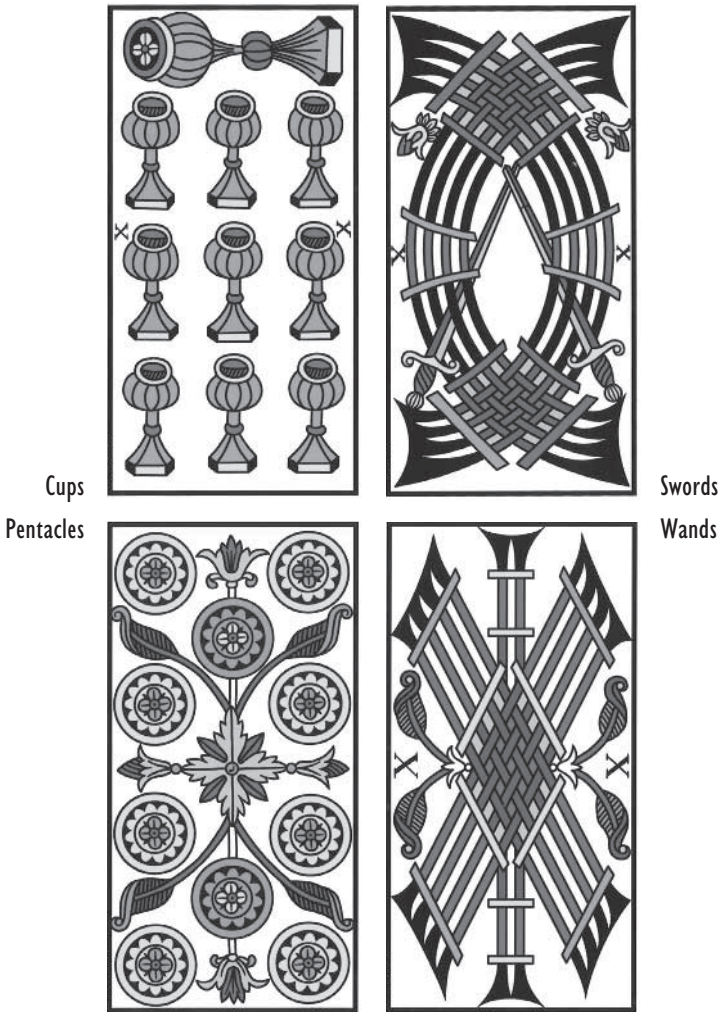
### *The End of One Cycle and the Announcement of the Next*

The Wheel of Fortune and Judgment are the two cards that close their respective decimal series. Of the tenth stage, both point toward the end of a cycle. In The Wheel of Fortune (X) we observe a pause: the three animals are being held back and waiting for Providence to come turn the handle that will restore them to motion. They are clinging to the wheel and holding it up because beneath them everything is in movement: everything could fall apart. Go down, go up, stay balanced, resist until a savior arrives that could simply be a new piece of information. The Wheel of Fortune marks an appeal to the depths of the blue Earth covered with wavy stripes (it might be an ocean) on which the wheel is placed. In Judgment (XX), the situation is different: the cycle is ended, but we are receiving help. The Heavens are opening, the irresistible call is echoing, the new being is rising out of the depths of the Earth to move toward the celestial dimension. In this ending, the new beginning is already present.

Arcanum X is therefore a card of the cessation of activity, whereas Arcanum XX is a card of transformation. In the first we are waiting for help; in the second we are waiting for realization. Both these characteristics are to be found in the Minor Arcana.

On the Ten of Cups, we see nine open but full cups and a tenth cup, which is sealed because it has received everything. The nine open cups have five divisions or sections, corresponding to the five senses, whereas the tenth has seven sections, which corresponds to the seven nerve centers or chakras. The emotional request—with its shadow, resentment—has stopped. The full heart becomes potential for action. We are approaching the ideal of holiness: “Nothing for me that is not





for others.” In Christian terms, we could say that the chalice is full of divine blood: communion has been realized. We find a parallel here with The Wheel of Fortune, as in this state of potential giving the heart is waiting to be employed for a work.

In the Ten of Pentacles, we also see a Totality closed upon itself in expectation of the Other. Four pentacles at the corners of the card form the material square that stabilizes the world. We could compare them to the four animals of The World. If we then accept that the six remaining pentacles draw out a shape similar to an oval, we will be able to see it as an echo of the blue mandorla that surrounds the figure of



Arcanum XXI. The light-blue and red flower could then be compared to the naked woman holding the active wand and receptive flask in her hands. In the orange center of the flower, we can see a sign that looks like a comma that we could identify with the creative Logos, the first embryo of all reality. The axis of this floral cross is continued by two orange pentacles united by a white axis. This is the first time we see transpierced pentacles forming an axis.

We can consider these two pentacles to be immobilized this way, with the white axis bringing to mind the white rays of The Wheel of Fortune. What might be evoked here is the end of prosperity: we have attained all we could receive in material life. Counting the petals of the second circle, we get  $11 + 11 = 22$ , the number that, in the Tarot, symbolizes the fulfillment of the Totality.

We are waiting for a miracle. This is the moment in the Gospels when Christ (the miracle) places his hands on Peter (the Ten of Pentacles) and tells him: "You are Peter, and on this stone I shall build my church."\* Once prosperity has been obtained, there is a complete spiritual work to be accomplished with the riches we've amassed (the twenty-two Major Arcana). If riches are not used to exalt life, they will lead to the destruction of the person who is the subject of the reading.

In the Ten of Swords, we are witnessing the long-awaited miracle: until now, all the swords were imprisoned within the oval. The work of mental realization is fulfilled in a certain kind of positive autism that we shall call solitude, meditation, the dark night of the soul, or, in reference to Arcanum XX, Judgment, the tomb. Here, with the two swords entering the oval from the outside, we are finally hearing the voice of the Other. They are coming from the left and the right—in other words, the masculine and the feminine. These two polarities unite on the inside: the mind has achieved unity. The Suit of Swords has had four flowers outside the oval. But here only the top two remain; the bottom two have become the wombs of the swords. From the Earth (the bottom zone), activity is born. The flowers at the top indicate that we continue to be receptive to Heaven.

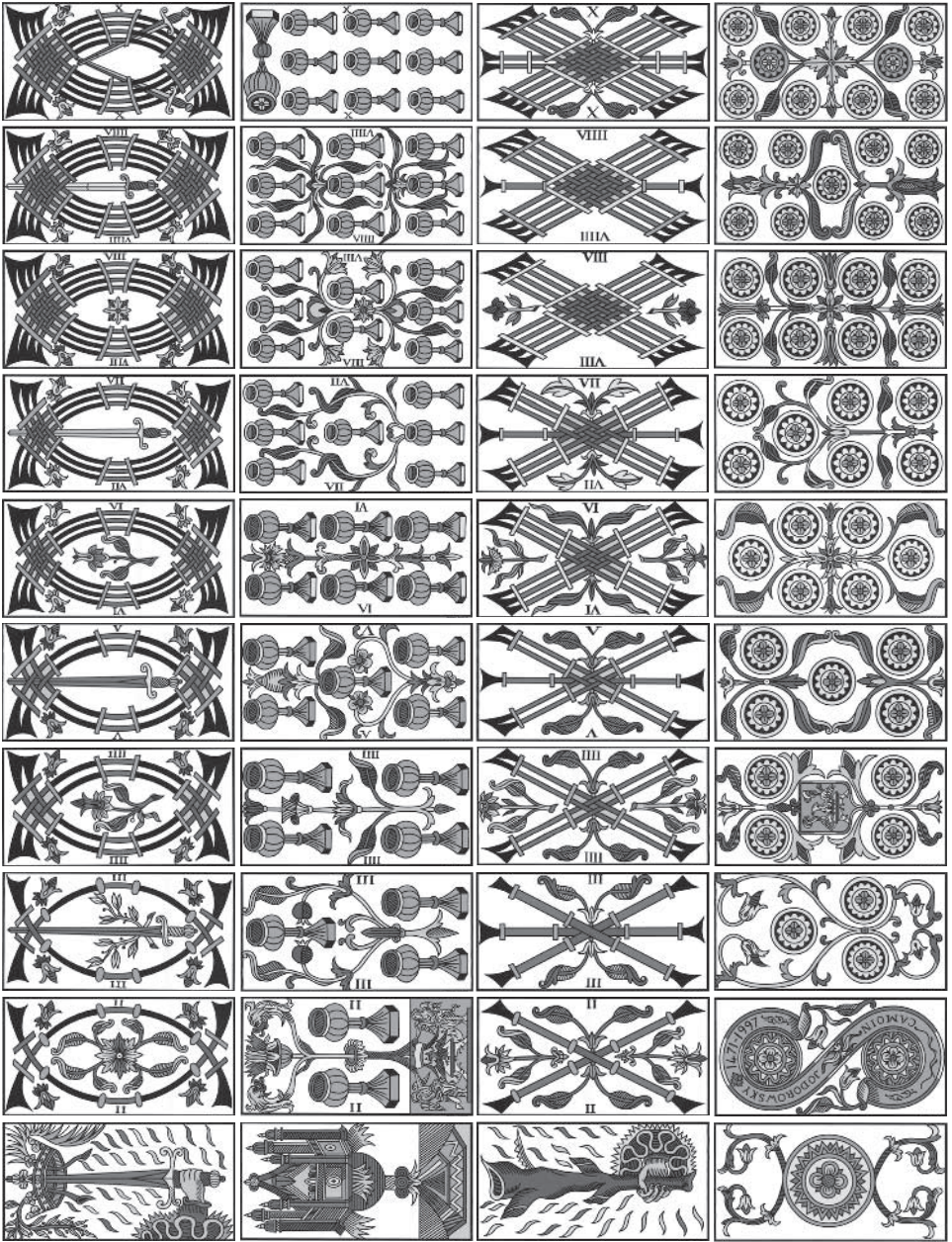
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\*[*Pierre* is both the name Peter and the word for "stone" in French. —*Trans.*]



While the Ten of Swords represents the upper part of the card Judgment (the angel), the Ten of Wands represents the lower portion of this Arcanum: the three figures. We see, in fact, that the central axis is divided in two, with the colors of red and blue (reception and action). But the sharpened eye will discover a third white wand representing the child emerging from the womb in a state of complete purity. The wand to our right will thereby be that of the father, that of the left the mother, and the third the child. Looking at the entire card, we can say that it is an angelic entity underscored by the light of the seven white wands hidden between the red wands. The white flowers open like branches toward the top and like wings toward the bottom. This reveals that the three figures of Judgment are in communion with an angel who is their reflection in the mirror of heaven.





Swords

Cups

Wands

Pentacles



# *The Numerological Degrees by Suit*

## SWORDS

**Ace of Swords.** This card is great intellectual potential and great mental capacity. It is akin to the Ten of Wands, which is heading to meet it: after the end of a creative and instinctive cycle, the intellect moves into action. The Ace of Swords could mean a victory by cunning, intelligence, determination, or discernment. It also indicates the ability to take a position, to decide. When it becomes negative it evokes verbal aggression, wounding words, refusal of the material, and overestimation of the mind's abilities.

**Two of Swords.** The accumulated growth of the central flower evokes the imagination, daydreams, or preparation of a project—a lot of mental possibilities, none of which have been used yet. The intellect remains passive, waiting for an action. The person has a tendency to hop from one subject to another. The negative connotations evoke a lazy mind, intellectual pessimism, a paralyzing duality in thoughts, and lack of concentration. We can also identify it with foolishness, identification with certain received notions, the necessity for a complement to study, or even dissimulation.

**Three of Swords.** This Arcanum refers to the fanatic bursting forth of primary ideas and first opinions. It is a sign of an intellectual enthusiasm that can easily combine with a passion for studying and reading. The still-immature intellect acts purely spontaneously and discerns no difference between believing and knowing. We also can see a desire for intellectual development in this card—for example, a student's desire to pass an exam. The negative connotations fall under the heading of all kinds of fanaticism,



obstinacy, refusal to push deeper, and dispersal. The Three can also point to a lack of follow-through on ideas.

**Four of Swords.** Here ideas become stabilized. This card evokes rationalism, all the aspects of a solidly positioned thought and a certain intellectual maturity. It is also the practical mind capable of acting usefully upon reality. The intellect is organized and stable; it knows how to operate through generalization. There is a conservative tendency to its opinions. It can lack a spark or a certain spice. The negative aspects of this card refer to everything concerning obtuse rationalism, fixed notions, the mind as a prisoner of its concepts, but also the nonlived theories of someone who is all talk and the refusal of intuition. In the worst cases the intellect becomes tyrannical.

**Five of Swords.** This is the appearance of a new point of view, a new idea. In the strict sense, it is represented by the “point of view” that lets us see two ovals intersecting over the red blade of the sword. Deeper, more spiritual thoughts appear. We resume a study; we perfect our knowledge or become a specialist of something. Without abandoning its convictions, the intellect turns toward new ways of viewing the world, or exploration of the world inside. These new kinds of information can then enter daily life to transform it. The negative aspects of this card refer to a discord between the material and the spiritual, religious dogmatism when it opposes inner evolution, cynical or hypocritical political opinions, and fraud.

**Six of Swords.** This first step into pure joy (the 6) is also an intellectual experience. The pleasure of thinking, the beauty of ideas, and the playful mind are all indications of mental blossoming and refinement. We love what we think and say. The mind becomes positive and knows finesse. It discovers itself in solitude, assuming its individuality. Poetry finds its source in the Six of Swords. It also permits meeting a person with whom you may establish an enriching dialogue. Seen from the outside, this will be someone thoughtful, an original thinker. The negative connotations of this card are intellectual narcissism, exaggerated aestheticism, a sense of the beautiful that is never put into practice, as well as a lack of self-confidence.

**Seven of Swords.** The intellect, touching its greatest activity and on the verge of its perfection, becomes extremely receptive, as shown by the blue blade of



the sword. It is an active meditation turned to the needs of the world. The pacified mind can put its potential and spirituality into service to the Other. We can now step out of ourselves; we are able to be self-effacing in order to be more giving. This can be a scientist who puts his science to work for humanity, or even an enlightened leader, like a saint in power. When this card becomes negative, it evokes knowledge used for cynical purposes, malicious gossip, calumny, aggressive ideas destroying the world, or toxic theories.

**Eight of Swords.** The intellect achieves perfection: emptiness. This card indicates that the mind has ceased to identify with its concepts. It is a powerful concentration, a trance state or deep meditation in which the duality of opposites dissolves in celebration of the present. The solution to problems becomes obvious, beyond the powers of reasoning. In this state of nonthought, all revelations are possible. If we want to read this card negatively, we see it as intellectual blocks; all illnesses affecting cognition, from coma to amnesia or aphasia; the fear of emptiness; or stupor.

**Nine of Swords.** The yellow sword evokes illumination, the appearance of a new understanding, the mutation that permits the breaking of old mental habits, or even intellectually letting go. After a long search, the light has appeared. It is the end of the duality between actor and spectator. This unity brings past concepts entirely back into question. The negative connotations include a state of crisis, mental uncertainty, the fear of losing your individuality, or to be precise, depression. We can also read a cerebral lesion or senility into this card because of the sword's cracked blade.

**Ten of Swords.** The transformation reaches its end; it is no longer one but two swords. They have left the oval, showing that thought is no longer a prisoner of itself. This is the appearance of affectivity in mental life, a different viewpoint from one's own. The two swords evoke androgynous thought, which is both male and female. It is the greatest intellectual maturity, one that achieves harmony with the heart. The individual has acquired a complete picture of reality, an entirely magnetic thought. Negative connotations could be refusal of the Other, an emotional block creating an intellectual conflict, the fear of being hurt, a dispute, or ingratitude.



## CUPS

**Ace of Cups.** Symbol of love in potential, a cathedral that is still closed yet full, it can symbolize all the feelings, all the possibilities of the heart from amorous enthusiasm to mysticism; a great disposition to loving and being loved; a capacity for love that is as yet unemployed but immense. With the Ace of Cups, love appears like a chalice, a question on the horizon that will color the quest of the reading's subject. It is also the base of communication, religion, in the sense of connecting to the Other and of transcending yourself to reach the Divine. Its negative aspects would be suffering, jealousy, bitterness, lack of affection, a never-sated neediness, and smothering affectivity.

**Two of Cups.** What we see here is the collection of amorous daydreams. The thirst for love is born in an individual who has no experience of love, or after a long period of solitude. We are imprisoned in the Two of Cups; the Other has not yet appeared, and we necessarily imagine this Other to be similar to what we know of ourselves. The only reference point for this idyllic partner that has not yet taken shape in a virgin heart is familial. This is the stage when the entire myth of the kindred spirit is born. Oedipal love serves as the foundation for future projections. In this preparation for love, there are reservations and a great sentimentality as well. The negative aspects include emotional immaturity, isolation, the inability to establish relationships, an affectivity held prisoner by family ties, fear of commitment, the passivity and disunion of a couple, and infantile amorous fantasies.

**Three of Cups.** The birth of first love with all its freshness and inexperience, as well as the idealization that characterizes it, is expressed in this card. It is a fervent union, a youthful love whether consummated or not, the appearance of the Other in a vast romantic explosion that, if it causes disappointment, can cause terrible wounds. It is also, for example, the adoration of a mother for her son. The two flowers holding up the top cup and sketching out a heart with their stems resemble poppies, suggestive of the intoxication caused by this feeling. It is also the fervent rediscovery of love—at any age. Its negative aspects are a lack of amorous enthusiasm



or the direct opposite, excessive and destructive idealization of love, an erotomaniac's delirium, or fixation on an impossible love.

**Four of Cups.** Here love is established solidly and surely. The foundation for a family can be constructed on the Four of Cups. It evokes self-confidence and trust in the Other, with love seen as a pillar of reality. But it can also turn into the search for an individual offering security, "a father for my children," "a good mother," "someone wealthy," which can lead to the type of bonds between a dominating and a dominated individual. The risk is placing your hopes of realization in the Other. These negative aspects also include insecurity, a lack of freedom, smothering as well as restriction of feelings, or an excessively materialistic love.

**Five of Cups.** Here the central cup decorated by glorious flowers marks the emergence of new feelings that can even go as far as fanaticism. It is the discovery of faith, a euphoria that carries us toward a higher being or someone we view as such. It is also the first time the heart opens to a solution that may be good for humanity. The negative aspects can be blind trust in any guide, an emotional imbalance, as well as lack of faith, disappointment, and bitterness.

**Six of Cups.** Two columns of six cups are facing each other around an axis; this is the realization of self-love in the noblest sense of the term, in fullness, acceptance, and inner contact with divine love. This can also be the meeting with the Other, the appearance in reality of the kindred spirit dreamed of in the Two of Cups, an individual with whom we correspond exactly and with whom, in the joy of a mirror relationship, we discover feelings like esteem, fidelity, pleasure, and sensuality. This is a general love that includes intellect, heart, and instinct. The negative aspects of this card reflect an overly egotistical couple cut off from the world. It evokes all the aspects of narcissistic love in general, withdrawal into the self, scorn of others, and excessive self-indulgence.

**Seven of Cups.** Here love enters into complete action in the world. It is colored by humanism and generosity. It is the discovery of the power of kindness, the force of conscious love that rejoices in the existence of the Other. We can give without advertising it, implement the work of a charitable



chain, and undertake a humanitarian action. Connected to universal love without thereby neglecting daily life, we embrace the motto: "Nothing for me that is not for others." Negative aspects could include being unhappy because of the ills of the world, aggressiveness, and a compulsive tendency to help people who have not asked us for anything. This card can also refer to a person who sees only his or her own self-interest, or a sour misanthrope.

**Eight of Cups.** At this level, the Cup has reached perfection manifested by fullness. The heart is completely full on every level. We love in the past, the present, and the future; we love the planet, our neighbors, ourselves, the universe, and even the unthinkable. The question of being loved or unloved does not arise: we are all love. This is harmony, peace of heart, balance, and also what we habitually call grace: a profound union with divine love. The negative aspects of this card are nonacceptance of love's perfection. Also seen here are lack, perpetual dissatisfaction, or an overabundant love that pretends to be giving when in reality it is only taking.

**Nine of Cups.** For the first time in the series, leaves are turning down as if wilting. It is the end of flowering, the autumn of the heart; a period of mourning is required so that a new dimension of love can appear. This is a stage of wisdom where we accept the end of an emotional cycle and let go of what has already been lived. This sacrifice presumes a profound love of humanity present in each being, a detachment, a denial, produced by conscious love. Negative aspects are all states of emotional crisis, nostalgia, unwanted solitude, fear of lack, and despair.

**Ten of Cups.** Reaching the end of its development, the way of the heart offers us universal love in the form of nine open cups topped by a larger one that has been sealed. This latter cup, which is no longer part of the giving-and-receiving dynamic, is waiting to be put to work like a saint who calls himself an instrument of God and is waiting to be employed by Him. In Christian myth it was divine love that made itself flesh in order to spread love throughout the world and to serve, no matter what the cost. This card indicates a heart that has attained fullness, a concrete action to be taken (by becoming the Ace of Pentacles), and that emotional realiza-



tion has already taken place. If this card is negative, it can mean a block, nonacceptance of self, venality, or refusal to evolve.

## WANDS

**Ace of Wands.** A large amount of vital energy in the state of potential. We have the means to create and reproduce, and enough courage to overcome difficulties or lead a project to success. The Ace of Wands has strength. If fighting is called for, you will be capable. It is also the domain of sexual potency and desire. Perhaps it could signify the appearance of creativity in a domain where it was not expected. If the Ace of Wands is negative, it can indicate sexual problems, a creative block, a loss of vital energy, a lack of finesse, or heaviness. It also refers to brutality, physical violence, the abuse of power, and possible sexual abuse.

**Two of Wands.** This is a state in which an individual is still virgin, but where desires are collecting in preparation for the first experience. Sexual energy is passive and contained but can be quite intense in its repressed state. This card may also refer to creative potential in gestation or to a latent moment of the libido. Negative interpretations include sexual blocks, shyness, a creativity that is eternally embryonic, and any and all prohibitions weighing upon the instinctive powers and preventing their birth. This card can engender doubts about one's creative or sexual capacities: the intellect is interfering and blocking energy.

**Three of Wands.** The first burst of vital energy. This is, for example, the time of puberty and first sexual experiences. Energy gushes forth with a springtime zest. It is also creative enthusiasm full of spontaneity and vigor, but with no preestablished goal. Whatever activity is undertaken, the impulse to get started is hugely enthusiastic and accompanied by a joyful desire to create. In a more negative sense, this card concerns being scattered and a tendency to not finish what you have started. Sexually this could be premature ejaculation, voracious sexual appetite, or an exaggerated, hysterical attitude of seduction. The Three of Wands can push the individual who feels he or she is the center of the world to abuse his or her power. In creativity, it can lead to gratuitous performance.



**Four of Wands.** In this card, desire has become reality. The work of the artist enters the world and enjoys success. Sexuality is assured with a stable partner, or functional sexual habits. This Arcanum symbolizes a person making a living on his creative efforts and a person who has assumed her power. The danger, in all domains, is falling into a routine. The Four of Wands will then become a card of boredom, monotonous dissatisfaction, in which erotic life is reduced to mere gymnastics and artistic creativity to commercial manufacturing. This card can also refer to a dominating attitude, or even a weak person who does not assume authority, who is scared of not being up to the task.

**Five of Wands.** The Five of Wands carries a temptation, a new desire, and an energy to go beyond what has been known to this point. This can be initiation into hitherto unknown sexual practices or, in the creative domain, evolution toward unsuspected depths and a larger dimension. This is also the strength of the teacher or saint who is not afraid to use the energy of the Wand to heal and bless. In its negative meanings, the Five of Wands concerns perverse sexual practices, a conflict between sexuality and spirituality, creativity that requires drugs or alcohol to express itself, or a desire for evolution that has not been acted upon.

**Six of Wands.** Here, Wands touch upon their essential expression, which is pleasure. We have surrendered to temptation and entered ecstasy, the supreme voluptuousness, the joy of creating. Sexuality and creativity are fully experienced and we are happy to be who we are, to do what we do. For an artist, this is the time when he or she meets or finds his or her unique personal expression. Working is a joy. For martial artists or other energy workers, this is the manifestation of Ki, the divine dimension of vital energy. The negative dimensions of this card, as in all cards of level 6, reflect excessive narcissism. The artist begins self-complacently and perpetually repeats the same work; people fall into egocentricity, superficiality, or creative or sexual navel-gazing. We can also be lacking in joy or be blocked by refusal of pleasure.

**Seven of Wands.** This card reflects a moment of great openness and irresistible action. In terms of artistic realization, this is success, creativity



blossoming in service of self and others. The ego becomes the channel of creative sexual energy and, fully aware of its impersonal dimension, distributes it to the entire world. This can be a passionate relationship, talent, a triumph, or insemination of the world. If it turns negative, the power of the Seven of Wands is terrible. This card then evokes dictatorship, fascism, sexual proselytizing, pimping, torture, sadism, and destructive power in all its forms, which debases the Other instead of using his or her strength in service to the world.

**Eight of Wands.** The perfection in this center is displayed by extreme concentration, things reduced to their essentials, represented by the two cut flowers. Creativity has become extremely focused: this is the perfection of someone who knows how to draw a circle in a single line. In sexuality, we reach sublimation, pure creative energy, orgasm. Power becomes non-violence, the ideal of the martial arts: combat without combat. Authority emanates from the individual and imposes itself without a gesture. In this state of extreme contemplation, effort no longer exists, and we are tireless. If this card should have a negative side, it would be paralysis, the stopping of all movement, an extreme perfectionism bordering on asphyxiation.

**Nine of Wands.** On this level, the Wand is confronted by a choice between life and death. In this card, which has been stripped entirely bare, where foliage is no longer growing, the element attains implacable self-domination. It is the experience of the true or symbolic end, that of the ego. For the artist it is the acceptance that someone else will use his work. For the fighter it is the assumed risk of being killed. In the sexual domain it is renunciation, the essential choice. The negative aspects of the Nine of Wands refer to the fear of dying, the refusal to go over one of life's changing points, artistic setbacks, impotence, and infertility.

**Ten of Wands.** Having completed its cycle, the Wand divides into two, opening up to make a place for a white axis. In the following stage the next element will be the Ace of Swords. It can symbolize an angelic vision of sexuality; energy no longer circulates inside or outside but crystallizes like an androgynous diamond and becomes pure spirit. The individual is no longer in the sexual or creative domain and has passed on to other



interests: for example, an artist who has become a teacher, a person who has discovered a vocation as a healer. The negative aspects include bitterness, the uprooting of reality, a lack of faith in life, the painful surrender of power through a loss of energy, or a failure.

## PENTACLES

**Ace of Pentacles.** This card signifies material energy in all its potential forms: body, resources, the position we hold in the world, territory. The fact that pentacles are always referred to in the plural shows that this energy is essentially collective. The Ace of Pentacles orients us on our relationship with incarnation, family life, the home, money, and health. It directs our questions to the concrete aspects of life. Its negative meanings can refer us to a financial problem or denial of matter; or, to the contrary, an excess of material preoccupations, illness, physical neglect, malnutrition, or poverty.

**Two of Pentacles.** This card evokes the desire to tie up a contract that has not yet been finalized. It could be a financial plan still in the embryonic stage, a house still being built, the desire to get married or to form a partnership that will prompt a successful conclusion to a business matter. It is also a still-forming embryo, physical rest, and recuperation of strength. In the negative sense, the Two of Pentacles can signify a financial problem (difficulty in making ends meet), a lack of means, or laziness; or paralysis, refusal to eat, a whimsical and inefficient attitude toward the material world, or a suicidal tendency.

**Three of Pentacles.** This card can symbolize a material investment that has produced its first return . . . or its first loss. It is also fertilization, in which a male cell and a female cell have created a third being. It is a company that has released its first products without knowing if they will find buyers who want them. It is taking an economic risk or a high-stakes wager in a game of chance. It could be the absorption of a substance whose effects are unknown, a plastic surgery operation with uncertain results, or even the decision to live in a foreign country. Its negative aspects include a



hasty investment with a poor prognosis, problems connected with fertility (false labor, an extrauterine pregnancy), hyperactivity that is physically exhausting, the merger of two companies creating a monopoly, or a genetic manipulation creating a monster.

**Four of Pentacles.** Here the phoenix that the two angels are preparing to sacrifice in the Two of Cups is burning. At the very heart of the greatest material stability, there is the perpetual renewal of the mythical bird that is consumed and reborn from its own ashes. This card evokes the home, health, a territory whose good working order is assured by refusal to let any assets stagnate. The Four of Pentacles symbolizes the life of the body, whose maintenance assumes the constant death of certain cells and the consumption of energy in the form of food. The negative aspects to this card call our attention to all states of material stagnation: prison, physical problems tied to immobility, excess, overweight, a work that does not allow one to blossom, a stagnant economic situation, a family that is sealed within itself.

**Five of Pentacles.** In the heart of stability (the four pentacles located at the four corners of the card) a new interest is opening connected to a spiritual, planetary, or cosmic dimension. This could be an industrialist who invests in “clean” energy that is good for the planet, a large store that launches a new line of organic products, or even the construction of a temple or spiritual center. With respect to the body, it could be the beginning of a practice that goes beyond simple physical exercise, a dietary change, or an interest in alternative healing methods. The negative dimension of the Five of Pentacles can be a reversal of fortune, a bad doctor, a descent into drugs or alcohol, a venal financial advisor, a swindler, an unscrupulous industrialist, a stock exchange crash, or nervous depression.

**Six of Pentacles.** Here the relation to matter has been deployed in an ecstatic vertical arrangement. We are anchored in the Earth and the Heavens, in full acceptance of our incarnation, like a tree that both plunges its roots into the soil and its branches into the sky. This is a card that evokes generosity to yourself, physical pleasure, the enjoyment of money and a well-managed economy, the sense of beauty in daily life, gastronomy, and sensuality. The Six of Pentacles celebrates the beauty of the world and feels



as one with it. We can invest in the things we love: this is the money of the patron of the arts, the purchase of an artwork, and so forth. The negative aspects concern physical narcissism, obsession with appearance, and venality. There is a tendency to abandon who you really are for appearances and profit. Guilt surrounds money issues, or it is overvalued, which can lead to avarice. This card is also the one of physical complexes and the illusion that money can buy happiness.

**Seven of Pentacles.** In this card we see a central triangle pointing upward, framed by four pentacles at each of the four corners. Spiritualization of matter and materialization of spirit have been achieved. Ideas move into action in the world and produce money. The money is used to finance research and information, and to help humanity evolve. This card evokes generosity, triumphant sports performance, deep knowledge of the body, and vast material power based on awareness. This can be a humanist, a patron, business genius, or the worldly success of a company. Negative aspects focus on a fracture between body and spirit, scorn of the spirit and overvaluation of material life, slavery, economic voraciousness, multinationals destroying the environment, drug cartels, and pharmaceutical monopolies.

**Eight of Pentacles.** The perfection of Pentacles is manifested by abundance and in prosperous fullness. This card evokes harmony and wealth; all needs are fulfilled. The body is in complete health and balance. It is family understanding, a home in which all have found their rightful place, their space. It is paradise on Earth, the planet seen as a flourishing garden. It is also the harmonious flow of energies. Negative aspects include physical or material imbalance, a paralyzing concept of money, or poverty viewed as inescapable and inevitable.

**Nine of Pentacles.** A material stage has been completed, giving birth to a new one. This could be, for a pregnant woman, the moment of giving birth. It is also material detachment, someone who has left everything to begin a new life, or else a profound financial transformation that leads to a new project. The Nine of Pentacles can refer to bankruptcy, inheritance, or winning a game of chance; whatever the case, it is a situation leading to a new construction. The negative aspects of this card refer to a poorly



handled economic crisis, a theft, an eviction or being forced to move, a dismissal, poor experience of old age, an inheritance problem, or exile.

**Ten of Pentacles.** The material cycle has been completed, as shown by the color change of the two orange pentacles and, especially, the white axis that joins them vertically. The way of prosperity has closed. In the material domain, it is time for creativity to enter into action. Money, matter, will move into another dimension of consciousness and pure energy. This card refers to all questions concerning the beyond, the body, reincarnation, miracles, and eternity. The Ten of Pentacles heralds the Ace of Wands: the next stage will take place on the path of creative and sexual energy. Negative aspects concern refusal of the body because of its sexual identity, the impossibility to let go of a past life, the sensation of having wasted one's life, or the position of someone who possesses great wealth but has never known happiness.



# The Honors or Court Cards

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## *The Pages*

Placed between levels 2 and 3—in other words, between accumulated potential and action—the Page harbors doubt. His energy is still young and inexperienced. It is asking to be worked, known, exploited, and organized. He hesitates: will he or will he not use his possibilities? This is the position of an obedient hireling who is not in the habit of taking the initiative. He can remain in the security of the 2 or launch into the 3 without knowing what the result of his action will be. The danger of the Page can either come from an excess of doubt or an excess of carelessness or foolhardiness.

### AND IF THEY SPOKE

#### *The Page of Swords*

“Delicacy and elegance are my essential characteristics. But they can quickly turn into hypocrisy. Unlike the pages of Wands and Pentacles, I am no primitive. I understand nobility, political and diplomatic strategies, and the twists and turns of an intellect that is its own purpose in living. In one hand I carry the scabbard of my sword, which symbolizes the Logos and the intellect. I have collected much knowledge, and I have prepared myself, but I still do not know the practical use of my





erudition. I have my scabbard all ready to sheathe my sword, but I am not disposed to take any action. At the same time I am questioning myself: the tip of my sword is pointing toward my hat. I doubt. My feet are pointed in opposite directions. My thoughts are still contradictory. I hesitate before the duality of concepts. I do not know how to cut, to give the blow that will separate subjective from objective. I am not a party to anything: I am still incapable of taking part, of committing myself."



*The Page of Cups*

"Ah! The heart has many mysteries and ambiguities . . . I do not know how old I am; I could be a naive young man or an old romantic or, why not, a young girl or an old woman. I am advancing to the reader's left, to the side of his heart, but I could stumble. My steps are short and timid. I've covered my open cup with a veil for fear of having my sensitivity wounded. This is why I'm keeping the cover in my other hand, permitting me to close back up and enclose this heart that is too unsure of itself. Always an idealist, my head wreathed by a crown of flowers, I am still ready to offer myself and even become a martyr. I hesitate between the fear of being hurt and the desire to give all of myself. I am capable of sacrificing myself but also of fleeing. I am ready to idealize the Other as well as nourish resentments in his or her regard. I can dance in an endless spring or shrivel up in an eternal winter. I have both joy and sorrow within me, egotism as well as generosity."

*The Page of Wands*

"I am strong; I am simple. I resolutely steer my way in one direction. My natural animal energy collects in the huge green wand that is my symbol. That aspect of my nature that shares in the 2 collects, and with the other part of my being, the 3, I am ready to act without any purpose: action for action's sake, like a powerful explosion. My hands cross with two different intentions. Either I shall continue to accumulate my energy, in which case I will prop my club upon the ground, or else I will raise it to strike a formidable blow into the unknown. For me this is what creation is: a formidable blow into the unknown, a blow that will change the course of my life, after which I shall never be the same again. This is why I am hesitating. However, my face is turned toward the reader's right. In this way I am promising to go forward. The creative act is announced, insemination is prepared; war is threatened, because my action can also be inspired by the 3 in the form of the XIII, the Nameless Arcanum, and be destructive. In that case, I am nothing less than a bomb ready to explode."



*The Page of Pentacles*

"I identify with the Earth, the entire planet. I move toward countless paths. I can head just as easily toward action as toward reception. Like all sacred terrain, I contain a treasure that can prevent me from advancing as long as I keep it secret, buried, and untapped. Like the weight of the entire past, of all traditions, it can transform into the ball and chain on the ankle of the prisoner I am. But at the same time I am raising toward the heights the best of myself, which is nothing other than the best of matter: the gold that is the essence of Being. The riches I collect remain unused and do not bear any fruits. The riches that I lift toward Consciousness promise the transformation of matter into spirit. You could say that the alchemical work begins in me with its two simultaneous processes: materialization of the spirit and spiritualization of matter. I am the dawn of action, but not the act itself."



## *The Queens*

The energy of the Queen is positioned between the 4 and the 5, between security and the appeal of an ideal. The Queen rests upon something that has been established, all the while knowing a new point of view exists. She owns and directs something the Page was only starting to grasp. She is a pragmatic and active figure who knows her symbol well; she has gained her experience of it without restraint and is centered on it. The Queen can become excessive, submerged by her element, dedicating a veritable obsession to it.

### AND IF THEY SPOKE

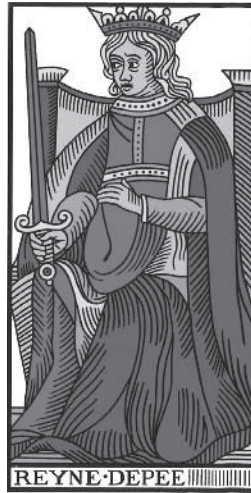
#### *The Queen of Swords*

"I wear a shield over my belly. There is a scar on this shield. Might I have sacrificed my entrails? I do not allow needs, desires, or emotions to invade me. I live in my mind. I present my symbol, the sword, sheathed in a red scabbard, waiting for someone to draw it and for its sparkling yellow blade to appear. I am waiting for the individual who will recognize my intelligence, my mind. Transcendence is my ideal, outside of flesh, outside of matter, toward the androgynous state in which I will be capable of negotiating the snares of thought to reach this impersonal center that is Cosmic Consciousness. Can I realize this? Can I attain oblivion of myself? I am my own worst enemy. My sole knowledge is the knowledge of my impermanence. My sole realization would be the realization of my emptiness."

#### *The Queen of Cups*

"How tender, how delicate, how vulnerable is my loving and ceaselessly wounded heart! I am not searching for anything. I am a castle that must





be besieged and conquered. Unlike the Queen of Wands who seduces, I wait to be seduced. The cup I hold, symbol of my heart, is closed—not empty but filled with passion. Who could treat me with all the delicacy I ask for if not me? Impossible. I should resign myself to offering myself in injury and in sacrifice, and it is precisely this sacrifice when I am loved that is my ecstasy. But heed me: I carry a white dagger with a curving blade, symbol of my timid purity. I will strike anyone with it who approaches me to use me to obtain what I am not: wealth, sexuality, intellectual knowledge . . . Every one of them will be exterminated with staggering cruelty. I do not concern myself with feelings, but I



really hesitate to let them blossom. All my fears collect in my 4 aspect. In my 5 aspect, my ideal, I await the kindred spirit that will be my complement. This waiting is the center of my entire existence.”

### *The Queen of Wands*

“I have dived into the incessant river of desire. Everything in me is exuberance. With the gluttony of a tornado I offer my burning cavern to every insemination. My voluminous hair is the foam of an ocean that gathers itself in a single wave. Universal power manifesting as sexual action gives me the supreme strength of seduction. I am ready to incubate countless eggs, to make all deserts flower, and to people with my works the harsh kingdom of the Queen of Pentacles. This is why I never stop opening myself and never stop calling. Without a generative intake I would not exist. It is this incompleteness that gives me my giant stature. Beneath my being outside of omnipotence I need to be used, fertilized, and directed. This is what seduction is: a lack transmuted into strength by desire. If I did not acknowledge this lack, if I aspired to complete myself, I would become castrating.”

### *The Queen of Pentacles*

“I, the Queen of Pentacles, place my desire for going beyond not in the beyond, but right here, in the heart of matter. Stretching with all my might toward a single point, I become concentrated within the golden circle that is my symbol. I do not hold the slightest hint of going beyond myself. I am everything toward which I aspire. You could say that I am greedy, narrow-minded, stubborn, and egotistical. I would say rather that I am immanent. Who can distract me? Who can dominate me? Who knows how to make me deviate from my interests? I defend my territory with a strength beyond measure. If there is a past, it is right here. And right here is where my entire future is. Country, fortune, possessions, practical mind: if I were not there, who would be the cement of the kingdom? I am the guardian of the treasure; I am the dog that defends the sun buried in her heart at the cost of her life.”



## *The Kings*

The Kings of Wands and Swords are young and active. The Kings of Cups and Pentacles are old and receptive. Placed between levels 6 and 7, they are like a bow stretched between the pleasure of ruling over their domains and the call of the world. As realized archetypes, they are now on the path of detachment. Unlike the Queens, they are not looking at their symbols, nor are they obsessed with themselves. They possess everything while directing their gaze at the future. This is true mastery. The danger of the King is falling into complacency and negligence, or into despotism.

### AND IF THEY SPOKE

#### *The King of Swords*

“How refined I appear! Everything that in my cousin, the King of Wands, is rigid and armored becomes flexible and elegant in me. I am not dressed for war but for intrigues in the court. My trumps are intelligence, the sibylline verb, the ruses of strategy, and the seduction of irony. I prefer the might of new ideas to the voice of arms. To the bluntness of the club I oppose the cruel flexibility of my sword. I do not demolish; I transfix and assail. I rule with laws, reforms, and the play of alliances. Instead of eliminating, I divide, the better to impose my will. I clarify concepts, I establish their duality; I perfectly define what is and what is not, what one should accept and what one should reject. My army is made up of lawyers, scribes, and jurists. I have a court of official artists and noble parasites around me. I use popular naivete to declare myself God’s descendent or Truth’s emissary. I could have been an absolute monarch in the history of France or a revolutionary creator of a new nation.”





### *The King of Cups*

“I am clad in soft silk. My hat opens like a cup to the farthest reaches of the cosmos. This is not a crown of command but a receptive headgear. I obey the universal will of love. With the experience of age, I’ve grasped that there is no greater wisdom than kindness. My open cup is full of fine feelings offered to those thirsty for peace. Around me everything is growing. Beneath its aggressive appearance, I see the true essence of the world: simple and full of tenderness. The business of my kingdom is flourishing, because everything I receive I give away; nothing for me that is not for others. I good-naturedly express my contentment before the existence of conscious beings. People can count on my collaboration and assistance. I do not command but am at my subjects’ service. I am not the way; I am



the welcome mat. My palace is open to the four cardinal points. He who approaches me is healed. I am the ideal that animates legends like that of St. Louis. I could have been the Christ-King.”

### *The King of Wands*

“My finely crafted scepter stretches from my heels to my head: instrument of the supreme power I wield as a warrior. My royal costume is a suit of armor demonstrating my might. I conquer and take possession in a direct, simple manner without any frills. I ignore political and diplomatic strategies. When it comes to conquering, I act. I dominate. I assume the power of life and death over all. When it comes to creating, I have no doubts. Valor never poses any problem for me. I never allow my authority to be questioned. It is my actions and my works that define me. I can build as easily as I can destroy. In my kingdom there is no discussion: it is my will that speaks. I come from the people and they give me my strength. If I were a sovereign from the history of the world, I would be a great dictator, a great conqueror, a great murderer, a terrorist, or a leader of armies.”

### *The King of Pentacles*

“I hesitate to call myself ‘king.’ Having abandoned my palace, I appear in the midst of Nature. I have swapped my crown for a hat that protects me from the sun and rain. I look more like a merchant. I do not have a mind for conquest and conspiracy, nor do I practice charity; rather I rule by nonaction. It is wisdom I pursue, represented by a pentacle floating in the sky. My earthly possessions, represented by the pentacle I am holding in my hand, have been reduced to a minimum, and I leave them in their rightful place without wasting them. I compare myself to no one. I live off of my work. I am in the present. I accept the endless accidents and changes of material life. I allow myself to be carried away, knowing that the universe has mysterious purposes and that if I do not know them, I should obey them without casting doubt on them. The entire planet is my kingdom. I have neither court nor army; my knowledge consists of knowing nothing, my power of being unable to do anything, my being at being nothing. I could be a monk, a Buddha, who mediates having accepted his body as a temporary vehicle. Or I could be a captain of industry with his figureheads, serene within his fiscal paradise.”



## *The Knights*

In the numerology of the Tarot, the Knights are positioned between level 8 and level 9 and are carrying the dynamic of the 10 (see p. 74). The Suit each one represents has attained its perfection. To continue growing, it is necessary to enter into the renewing crisis of the 9, the letting-go that will permit the Suit to transmute into something else. Like a messenger or prophet, the Knight brings into the world this mastered and accepted energy, which is called upon to dissolve in the following element. His leap out of the Suit to which he belongs (see p. 53) permits the closing of a cycle. The danger lying in wait for the Knight is remaining in crisis and not allowing himself to be borne away by universal impermanence. He can then represent a blocked state or the potentialities of new energy that remain unrealized.

### AND IF THEY SPOKE

#### *The Knight of Swords*

“My horse, strong as that of the Knight of Wands, is both more refined and more agile. I guide him in a large leap that projects me from the realm of the intellect into the mystery of the emotional. My horse and I are as one. While the Knight of Wands acts with the strength of will, my horse and I act with the force of courage. Cleansed of parasitical concepts, we have eliminated, among other things, hope, and with it fear. We have to transmit the very essence of mind: we know that we are the final manifestation of action. Over my helm I bear a yellow halo, the symbol of holiness. With my red sword similar to a lance and my agile horse, I am the life-bearer. What shall I pierce with my sword? The heart of others, the Logos made love. I have sacrificed my desire to be in order to enter sacred obliteration.”





### *The Knight of Cups*

“While the Knights of Wands and Swords are riding stallions, I, like the Knight of Pentacles, am mounted on a gentle mare. I am not guiding my mount; I have no need to. With open hand I am pursuing my symbol: the Cup. I do not hold it in my fingers; it is guiding us, my horse and I, floating in the air. It is an open Cup from which a spring of love is emerging. It is this love that is my guide; I have no idea where I am going. I am following it without any doubt that it will lead me to my realization, which is the state of grace. Talent flows naturally: I do not force my will to find the right path. I do not employ my courage to leap beyond my limitations. All I do is simply obey. Whatever I receive, I give away. My sole desire, to



realize this endless talent with which I've been invested, is to survive so that I may remain in its service. This is when, while blessing the world, I enter the realm of incarnation—of Pentacles, of matter and needs.”

### *The Knight of Wands*

“When I was a Page, my symbol rested upon the Earth. Henceforth it has grown into the sky, toward spiritual development. I am not separate from it; it roots itself in my hand and grows of its own volition. My animal, my large and powerful horse, has become white, the color of purity. It symbolizes the extreme sublimity of my desires. I, the knight who embodies his will, make him turn from right to left, from action toward receptivity. I have learned how to detour the path of destructive energies toward the life of the mind. My energy, detaching itself from self-satisfaction, from the temptation of totalitarian power, and from bestial war, has become immense. Through an act of supreme will, my animal nature, this white horse, becomes condensed, turning into the red sword of the Knight of Swords. I represent the moment when the Eros of sexuality becomes the enriching spring for the mind.”

### *The Knight of Pentacles*

“I do not know if I am a man or a woman. I am rather a hermaphrodite who walks over a ground in which no treasure is buried. Terrestrial and celestial, the dual pentacle of the Page and the King of my Suit has become a single star floating in space. Matter has been spiritualized. It has become fertile and is the mother of eternal life. I am like the flesh of the Virgin Mary, which at the end of her process becomes immortal and rises to reign at the center of the universe. This is my destiny. My mare is not as gentle as that of the Knight of Cups; she advances with measured but sure, precise steps. She represents my health. She goes neither too fast nor too slow, walking at the rhythm that corresponds to her present. This infinite peace stems from the fact that we have vanquished death. I am ready to undergo endless changes knowing that within my profound essence, there is an immutable core. This is what will give origin to the new riches of the Earth that will take on concrete form in the Wand. I am already carrying in my right hand the beginning of a new cycle of activity, a creative wand.”



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**The Court Cards in a Reading**

Depending on the reading strategy employed, the Court Cards or Honors can either represent an actual individual or an attitude or experiential state with respect to the symbol of the Suit involved. We can also attribute a temporal value to them: the doubt of the Page thus indicates a long duration without a clear ending; the static contemplation of the Queen, a resolutely stable and fairly long period; the detachment of the King, a denouement or imminent change; and the dynamism of the Knight, a rapid transformation.

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## *A Summary of Meaning by Suit*

### SWORDS

#### *The Page of Swords*

The central thread of his sword stops before the point: the intellect of the Page still needs to be honed and shaped. Aware of his inexperience, he hesitates: does he know how to use his weapon, or should he put it back in its flesh-colored sheath? This figure, who possesses the foundations of intelligence, lacks self-confidence. He could be a student or a young seeker. He has been intellectually devalued; perhaps this Page did not complete his (or her) education. Like all the Pages, his position demands both caution and perseverance. The negative aspects of this card would be lies, self-depreciation, intellectual confusion, verbosity, halting and poorly organized thought, and verbal aggression.

#### *The Queen of Swords*

Is the hand she is holding over her belly defending an old injury, or holding a shield? Her gaze is fixed on the red sword she is proudly holding. She represents a powerful intellect capable of useful and effective ideas. She can defend her ideas with great stubbornness. She knows how to say what she wants to say, but she is not closed to new ideas. Her negative aspects would include a denial of the body or sexuality, perhaps a scar on her belly (from a Cesarean), the closing of the heart, rationalism pushed to the extreme, or frigidity.

#### *The King of Swords*

Like The Chariot (VII), he is wearing two lunar crescent-shaped faces on his shoulders. This is a king of the court, skillful at handling words and concepts and new ideas. In his left hand (on our right) he is holding



a measurement device on which twenty-two lines have been carved, the number of the Major Arcana. He can represent a just and enlightened ruler, a jurist, a university professor, an architect, a scientific thinker, someone capable of summing up a situation with great intellectual serenity. He supervises his thought and puts it into action in the world. His negative aspects evoke the power of slander and criticism, verbal aggression, legal errors, a corrupt politician of totalitarian views, or an intriguer who makes a place for himself in society through dubious means.

### *The Knight of Swords*

On his armored horse and clad in armor and a helmet himself, this emissary of martial appearance, equipped with a sword as long as a lance, is setting off to go beyond thought. He is attempting to make the leap into the unknown. His intellect has experimented with both emptiness and silence. Having reached the stage beyond perfection, he is going back upon the way of love: henceforth he will travel only on those paths that have heart. He could be an intellectual who has become receptive to love or to the sacred, a man fighting for a spiritual cause who wants to bear testimony of it to the entire world, a prophet, the bearer of good news, the solution of a problem, or the end of a mental conflict.

## CUPS

### *The Page of Cups*

His head girded by a flower crown like the young girl of The Lover (VI), he is walking with a cup that he is hesitant to keep either open or closed. This is a shy figure that has never loved outside his family unit or has long been out of the habit. His androgynous appearance can also indicate to us an individual who has not yet assumed his homosexuality. The discovery of the emotional world both tempts and terrifies him. His heart first says yes, then no. He could embody a desire to live mixed with fear, someone who anticipates refusal and being hurt. He also evokes the passage of the child into adult life, and first love with its doubts and great enthusiasms. He can also signify an elderly person



who no longer dares to fall in love. He can signify a lack of trust in life and emotional relationships, and a pessimistic concept of love. In the negative, he would be an emotional block originating in childhood fears, emotional immaturity, a tendency to daydream too much, or the ghost of a failed love affair.

### *The Queen of Cups*

Her face looking toward her closed cup, in her left hand (our right) she is holding a kind of sword with a wavy blade. She seems attentive to her emotions and determined to defend her feelings, for which she opens her heart and which give her what she has to give; you must earn her trust. She represents familial love, kindness, a good mother. In her aspect close to 5, she will evoke a charitable individual inspired by faith, one for whom her ordinary emotional world is the mirror of divine love. Her negative aspects could be jealousy, possessiveness, a smothering and limiting emotionality, or, to the contrary, a lack of love for those close to her, a false charity, exploitation, or social scorn.

### *The King of Cups*

He seems to be a man of advanced years, and we can credit him with vast emotional experience. The left side of his chest (our right), that of the heart, is exceptionally wide. This is a big-hearted man (or woman); his cup is open, and he generously gives conscious love, the joy of living, and the serenity of mastered emotions. He is capable of a vast action founded on his loving vision of the world: he could be a great therapist, a counselor, a doctor, a patron, a good and generous individual. If he becomes negative, the King of Cups will pour his hatred over his family and upon the world. He could be an alcoholic, a narcissistic pervert, a hypocrite, or a pathologically jealous individual; or he could represent false advertising.

### *The Knight of Cups*

On his delicate blue horse, he is following the path indicated to him by the cup floating above his right palm (on our left). The way of love has reached its conclusion: it will now become a concrete force. This could



be missionary work, a humanitarian undertaking, a person who comes asking forgiveness and wishes to make right his errors, a good action, or sincere love. It could also be a saint who puts himself in service to the world, builds a monastery, or becomes a healer.

## WANDS

### *The Page of Wands*

Seen standing in profile, the Page of Wands places both hands on a huge wand. Is he going to pick it up? Will he leave it resting on the ground? This is the hesitation between doing and not doing, creating or not creating, or obeying or not heeding his desire. Energy is undifferentiated and needs to be channeled. This could be hesitant sexuality, a creative project that needs to be refined and carried through at the same time to the end with perseverance . . . Negative aspects of this card would include clumsiness, sexual or creative energy blocks, a lack of vitality, or even brutality.

### *The Queen of Wands*

A sculpted wand is propped upon her lower belly; she is holding it with her right hand (our left), while with the other she seems to be shaking a small artificial hand that is colored yellow. She is a sensual and seductive individual who shares points in common with The Empress (III). In full possession of her sexuality and creativity, she can be passionate, capricious, instinctive, and independent. She represents the satisfaction of a person who has begun to live on her creativity. Her sexuality is fully experienced, and she can symbolize an artist or an energy working, but she can also, in a more negative sense, represent someone obsessed with sex, venality, or excess.

### *The King of Wands*

His wand is a large scepter that is propped up by his heel on the ground with its other end touching his headgear. Like all the Kings, he has mastered his energy: vital, creative, and sexual. He can be a renowned artist or someone who is creative in everyday activity, a man of power,



a sincere lover, a warrior, or a martial arts master. His negative aspects can be despotism, boasting, or a powerful sex drive amputated from love. He could then be a seducer, a tyrant, a self-obsessed artist.

### *The Knight of Wands*

Riding a white horse, the symbol of sublimated desire, the Knight of Wands so dominates his mount he can force it to change direction. His wand has become natural again: sexual and creative energy are simply viewed for what they are. It crosses through his hand as if to indicate there is no duality between him and his energy but only complete trust. This card represents channeled instinct, creativity in full mastery of itself, supreme courage in the presence of life and death, peace, healing abilities, or even a sage who gladly abandons the pleasures of the world to enter the kingdom of thought.

## PENTACLES

### *The Page of Pentacles*

With his two pentacles, one raised in the air and the other buried, he is questioning his place in the world, his body, his financial means. The buried pentacle is an obstacle that prevents him from advancing; the raised pentacle is his wish. He is holding in the fingers of his left hand a small yellow circle that could be a gold piece like that of The Magician. Should he start a career, and if so, which one? How to enter active life? Is this investment worth the trouble? Will I get my health back? These are the questions that the Page of Pentacles asks when considering taking a physical or financial risk. If this card poses problems, they can be related to not knowing what one's place should be, remaining inactive, or, to the contrary, carelessly playing with your security or life.

### *The Queen of Pentacles*

She is looking at a large pentacle that she is firmly holding in her hand at eye level. Mirror, mirror on the wall? Or is this a profound meditation? The Queen of Pentacles clings to her money, her position, her



health, and her assets. She can deploy great energy to keep things as they are, but she can also be innovative with unexpected projects. We could say that she is a person with the courage to look herself in the face. She is susceptible to avarice. She can represent a prolonged effort to guarantee material security, to build a house . . . Her risk is not seeing farther than the end of her nose, of fixing her material security without thinking to invest it, to resist taking another step forward, or to consider other aspects of reality.

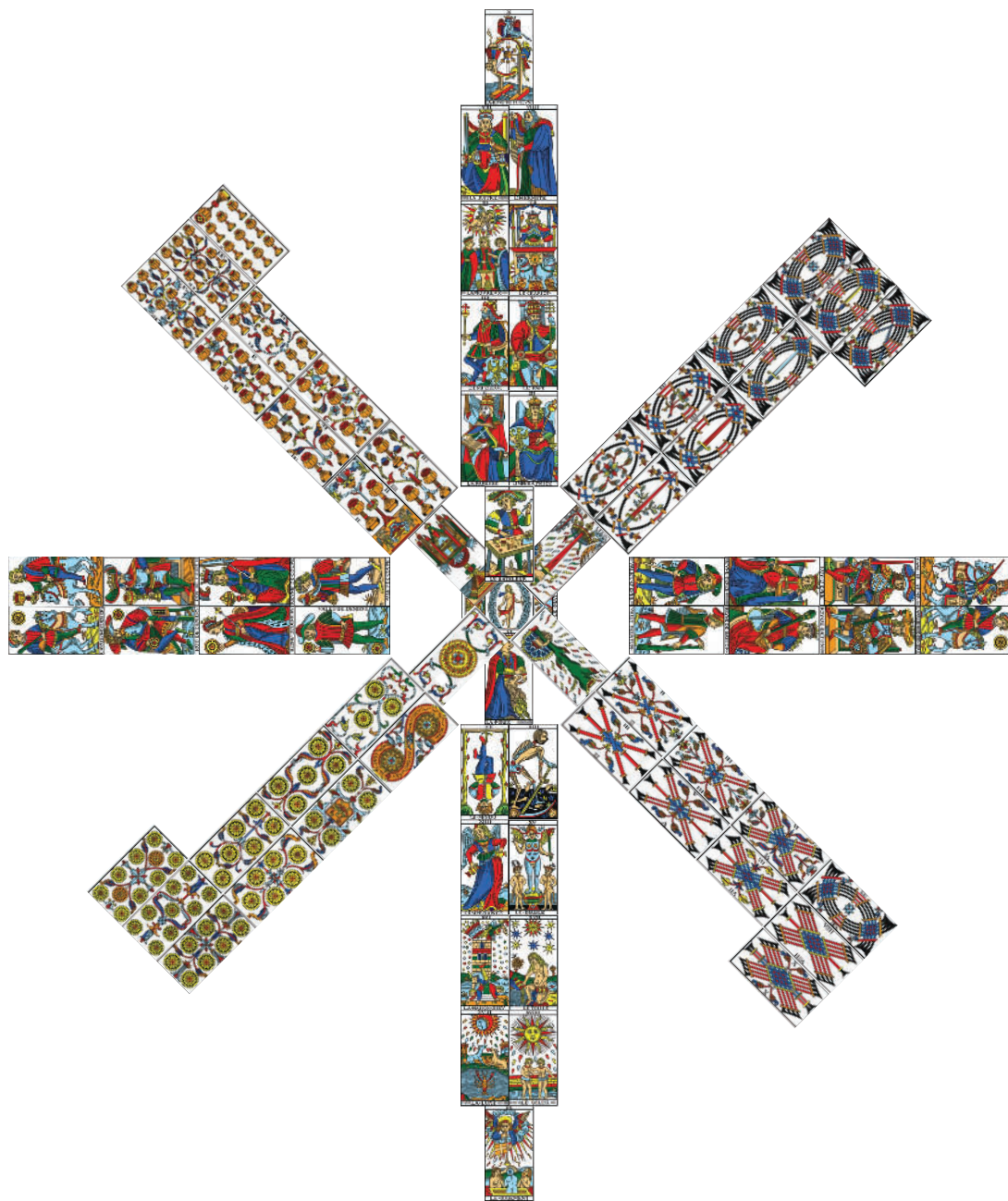
### *The King of Pentacles*

Clad comfortably and without pomp, no crown but a hat, his throne is set up outside in the middle of Nature; he has based his power on matter and stays in contact with the Earth. He could perhaps be an industrialist, a businessman, or a well-to-do farmer. He knows two forms of wealth: the pentacle he is holding in his hand represents the money that he already knows how to earn without excessive efforts and with pleasure. The pentacle floating in the air that he is looking at represents his action in the world, virtual money, or already spiritualized matter. The King of Pentacles could as easily be a billionaire as he could be an entirely detached individual who is living off the miraculous prosperity of the present. His negative meanings include fraud, dirty money, and stock speculation. He could also be an arms dealer or a seller of toxic products.

### *The Knight of Pentacles*

Wand in hand and astride a receptive blue mount, this knight is advancing through a countryside lit by a star in the form of a pentacle. He represents the act of going beyond matter into creativity, a culmination that opens new horizons. He is also someone wealthy enough to create something new or a new purpose beyond material considerations. In the strict sense, the Knight of Pentacles can represent a journey or a move; in this instance a quest connected to the body, creativity, and one's place in the world.





The Mandala of the Tarot. The Major Arcana form the vertical, spiritual axis of the mandala. In its final form, in which the Aces of each Suit are placed on top of their corresponding symbols on The World card, the Tarot mandala acquires its maximal force.



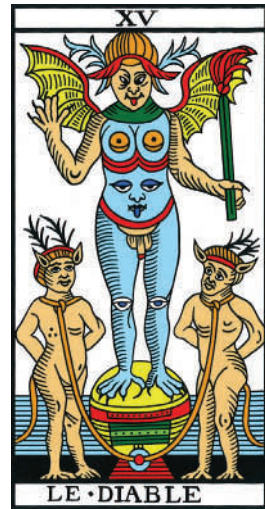
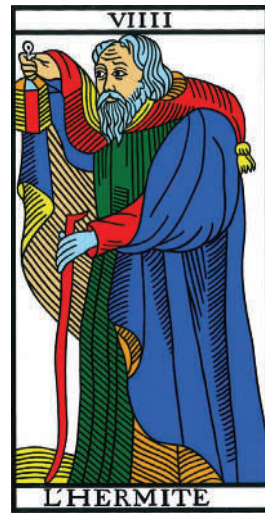
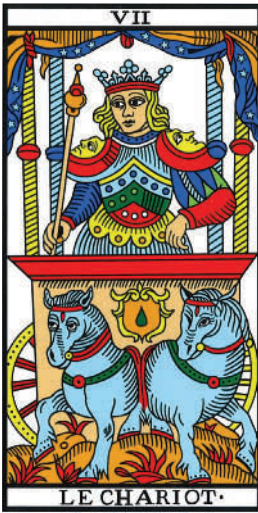


The Mandala of the Tarot in three dimensions

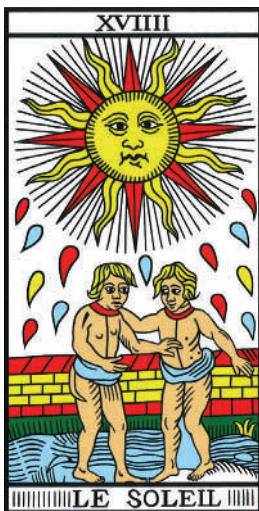
















Ace of Cups



Ace of Swords



Ace of Pentacles



Ace of Wands

The Aces of the Four Suits  
Cups, Swords, Pentacles, and Wands





Above and left: The Pages  
Below and right: The Queens







Above and left: The Kings  
Below and right: The Knights





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**PART FOUR**

*The Tarot Two by Two*

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# Opening

## *Consciousness as a Joint Work*

If we agree that the Tarot does not work like a crystal ball and that the tarologist is not a seer—a talent that, according to esotericists, permits a vision of the consultant's future—but a reader, we shall see that the Arcana form a language in which drawings and colors take the place of letters and words. Just as people speak French, Spanish, English, Japanese, and so forth, we can speak Tarot. And just as any human being, if he or she studies it, can learn to speak a new language, he or she can learn to read and translate the messages of the Tarot without needing to be a magician, a seer, or someone endowed with parapsychological powers. The Tarot is a language within everyone's grasp.

When Marianne and I started giving courses, we asked ourselves what would be the most accessible way of teaching this language. We discovered that after describing the cards one by one with their many possible interpretations, which is the equivalent of learning the alphabet, the most effective method for our students was to learn to read the message that resulted from the combination of the Arcana. The action of a solitary individual is different from that of a couple, that of a family, and finally that of a social group. A single note does not make music; two notes create harmony and a new auditory dimension; three form a chord; four or more together compose works.

The majority of books teaching the Tarot are satisfied to describe the Arcana one by one without explaining that these cards change depending on the other cards with which they are related. Before form-



ing sentences, letters—consonants and vowels—must form syllables that change depending on the order of their composition. Ma leads to other concepts than am, is is different from si, no from on, and so forth. These syllables are the pillars for words, which then form sentences, then essays, then poems, gospels, or infamous texts.

Thinking along these lines led us to the conclusion that a study of the Tarot that did not include the study of the pairs of syllables could not lead to a correct reading. A whole world thus opened before us.

While literary language is composed of vowels and consonants, with every syllable obliged always to contain a vowel, thereby reducing the number of combinations, in the Tarot language all the Arcana can serve to form a syllable. Presuming that the card selected was a consonant, it will not only have the option of a small number of vowels, but that of the twenty-one remaining cards. This creates an immensely more vast language that reveals a great many more meanings.

Given the fact that the Major Arcana cards are numbered (as in the Hebrew alphabet) and run from 0 (The Fool) to 21 (XXI The World), it is interesting to analyze the change in meaning depending on whether the card with the lower number comes before or after the other card.

Other pairs to study in connection with the mandala are those with the same numerical value, such as 1 and 11, 2 and 12, 3 and 13, and so on. These pairs share a profound union; and sometimes in a reading, just as an illuminated solid casts a shadow when someone chooses one of these two cards by chance, we can easily complete its meaning by taking the other card of the same numerical value to repeat or reinforce its message.

In his unfinished novel, *Mount Analogue*, René Daumal writes: “Because we are two, everything changes. The task does not become twice as easy. No, the impossible becomes possible!” We can apply this to the Tarot, which unquestionably emphasizes the importance of the couple. The High Priestess accompanies The Pope. The Empress couples with The Emperor, as does The Moon with The Sun, and the Queens with the Kings in the Court Cards. In addition to these couples, we can see pairs that are brought together by certain details, which are not absolutely binding, as any Arcanum can be coupled with any other depending on the reader’s projections. While the hats that look like a sideways 8 join



The Magician to Strength, this same Strength, being accompanied by a wild beast, can also be connected to The World, in which a lion also appears. Based on physical posture, we can associate The Hanged Man with The World because of the crossed leg. The Fool and Arcanum XIII are brought together because they picture the same manner of walking. Because both depict the same number of people beneath an angel, we can couple The Lover with Judgment: there are three clothed individuals and a naked angel in the first and three naked individuals and a clothed angel in the second. Because each card contains three figures—one dominating two others that are immobilized in some way—The Wheel of Fortune and The Devil are joined together. Temperance and The Star resemble each other because both are carrying amphorae: on the first, the liquids or fluids are blended inside, and in the second, the contents are being spilled over the ground. If we give The Chariot the possibility of a victorious martial feat, we can easily associate it with The Tower, in which a tower appears to be exploding. Of course, by virtue of the fact that two figures are emerging from the tower with their feet toward the sky and heads toward the ground, The Tower can also be paired with The Hanged Man. And The Hanged Man, with his hands hidden behind his back, can be coupled with The Devil, where two imps are also hiding their hands behind their backs.

With respect to couples, it is important to realize that the Tarot, which probably already existed by the year 1000, declares the importance of women in a paternalistic world. It clearly shows that it is abnormal for an infallible priest, The Pope, to be a guide and God's representative without having a woman of the same spiritual level by his side, The High Priestess. It shows that an Emperor without an Empress cannot govern his domains correctly. It demonstrates that solar activity is not conceivable without lunar receptivity, that day and night complement each other.

In the three following couples, which by all evidence represent the three different faces of the symbols father and mother, the Tarot first introduces the woman followed by the man. This is how the reader, using the cards like a mirror, will see the mothers to his right and the fathers to his left: II The High Priestess and V The Pope, III The Empress and VIII The Emperor, and XVIII The Moon and XVIII The Sun.



Using the Arcana like a psychological test, we were able to see that the reading subject had three visions of his mothers and fathers: first he saw them on the physical and sexual plane (The Empress and The Emperor), then on the spiritual plane (The High Priestess and The Pope), and finally on a mythological plane: cosmic mother and cosmic father (The Moon and The Sun).

The Empress and The Emperor are looking at each other. Whereas the first exercises the laws of nature, creativity, and reproduction, the second exercises the laws of the social world. Both are completely realized not only in the practice of material and sexual power but also in the way they join together as a total gift to each other. The material world is not the only thing that unites them; both have an eagle, which signifies that there is also a projection of their union on the spiritual level. If we reverse the order of these two Arcana and place The Emperor before The Empress (VIII–III) we obtain a conflict, a divorce: they are not looking at each other; they are joined by material proprieties or bound by a family, each remaining imprisoned in his or her own world. The spiritual plan cannot be realized because the eagle sitting on an egg in the card of The Emperor (see p. 145) has become the still-forming bird held by The Empress (see pp. 140–41) we are going from more to less.

The High Priestess–The Pope (II–V) couple is formed by two individuals who are essentially operating in the spiritual world and therefore have no need to look at each other; back to back, they are giving each other mutual support. No bond of the passions unites them; both have sublimated their sexual impulses, and they have reached a level of consciousness where the most important thing is to transmit what they have gathered over the course of their meditations and studies to the world. When placed in the order V–II, they are looking at each other and, absorbed by their relationship, which is mental by nature, they forget the world. They then form an egotistical couple and stop being the bridge joining Heaven and Earth, thus disappointing the hopes of the world.

If The Moon (XVIII) appears before The Sun (XVIII), the mind in its initiatory journey is advancing from night to day, from ignorance to wisdom, from total reception to the light of Grace, from me to we, from the subconscious to higher consciousness. If the pair The Sun–The



Moon appears, the process is reversed: it goes from day into night, from joy to sorrow, from dynamic realization into stagnation.

If in the graphic structure of the family tree we place the mother to our right and the father to our left, this could imply that during childhood the mother was masculine (dominant) and the father feminine (passive). This triggers confusion, and we grow up not knowing very clearly whether we are a man or a woman.

There is another couple, if you like, that could be the screen for the mother-father archetype projections. If Justice (VIII) is accompanied by The Hermit (VIII), we find ourselves in the presence of the perfect mother and the wise father. But if The Hermit comes before Justice, he turns into an insensitive, absent, or dead father, and she becomes a castrating, neurotic perfectionist, or intrusive mother.

Guided by the study of these couples, we began to analyze the Arcana two by two looking for other meanings in the different planes indicated by the four Suits, but for other human interrelationships besides the parental archetypes. Taking a single card as the main "actor," we formed pairs from it with the twenty-one remaining cards, first in increasing order, then in decreasing order. Each time we obtained different answers. For example, The Magician–The High Priestess pair was not the same as The High Priestess–The Magician pair. And if, for example, The Fool contributed energy to The High Priestess when he came before her, he weakened her by carrying away her knowledge when he appears after her.

These pairs appeared to correspond to the syllables used by the old methods for learning to read. As we said earlier, the syllable *ma* is quite different from the syllable *am*, and so forth. If an Arcanum is a letter, if two are a syllable, three will form a word. More than three could constitute a sentence.

Mother and Father, Yin and Yang, black and white, red and yellow, stagnant and fluid, Heaven and Earth, left and right, obscurity and light . . . human beings learn how to think from poles that are not opposites but complementary.

If, in order to find ourselves, we spend a large portion of our lives in search of the light, at the end, by finding it, we can fearlessly enter our shadow.



# To Begin

As we have seen, the Tarot cannot be considered as a series of entities independent of one another. Each of its Arcana is related to the rest of the deck and, consequently, each Arcanum maintains a close relationship with every other Arcanum. Furthermore, the Tarot offers us several couples or pairs, in other words, obvious relationships between Arcana (King and Queen, The Sun and The Moon, and so on). It thereby seems to be indicating a reading path that begins with study of pairs, couples, and duets: the grammar of the Tarot begins with this dialogue between two cards.

If we go only by the Major Arcana, any one of them can be studied paired with another, which would give us 131 pairs for the entire Major Arcana. It is impossible to study all these relationships in detail here. We therefore suggest, to initiate the reader into the resonance of the Tarot created by two cards, to study the three types of pairs that make sense in three distinct setups, then see, by way of example, how we can read other associations of two Major Arcana.

First, we are going to revisit the duets of the same numerical value that we studied in part 1, considering them as light and shadow, as conscious and unconscious aspects, and as the spiritual and incarnate aspects of one single energy.

We shall then concern ourselves with the couples formed by certain principal Arcana of the Tarot, which would represent aspects of human love as well as the meeting between complementary mental archetypes.



In addition to the seven principal couples, we shall study the encounter between all figures clearly indicated to be human beings.

We saw in part 1 that one of the organizing structures of the Major Arcana consists of establishing eleven pairs whose sum adds up to 21. Because this value is, in the symbology of the Tarot, the symbol of highest achievement (XXI The World), we shall see, by studying each of these pairs, how they suggest eleven paths of realization.

Finally, several examples will be given, particularly with the cards that do not fall into series of couples, of the study of the Major Arcana in duets, then in trios.

When the cards are alone, they can be considered as isolated protagonists. In the theater they would be giving monologues; this is Homer reciting the Iliad or a troubadour singing. The meeting of two cards makes a dialogue; and it is starting with three cards, as is also the case when starting from three people, that the Tarot becomes dynamic. With three cards, a dense artistic phenomenon is created.



# The Duets of the Two Decimal Series



As we have seen in our study of the numerology of the Tarot (see pp. 32–33), the duet of The Fool–The World frames ten degrees that are spread out in two decimal series, the cards of the first cycle responding to the cards of the second cycle, from I to X and XI to XX. We could say that each card of one cycle is the shadow of the other. If we draw The Empress (III) from the deck, her shadow would be Arcanum XIII, and vice versa. Similarly, if we draw Temperance (XIII), her shadow will be The Emperor, and vice versa. This means that beyond their apparent differences, the Arcana that form these duets maintain a relationship of mutual dependency, each nourishing the other with its apparent opposition and allowing it to deploy all its strength. During the course of the reading, it will be helpful to keep in mind that these numerological pairs share a profound bond. For example, when one of



the cards of the duet has already been chosen, we can consult the other not to contradict it, but to echo it—truly repeating and reinforcing its meaning.

Remember, the two decimal series each include ten degrees in which each Arcanum symbolizes a step toward the Totality. The first series (I–X) essentially depicts human beings hard at work raising themselves toward the spiritual world. These figures correspond to energies, to possibilities of manifested, concrete lives that are more obviously connected to everyday life. We could say that this was a series in which matter tends to become spiritualized. In the second series (XI–XX), supernatural beings or archetypes undertake the journey to the depths. We could say that the tendency of this series was the materialization of the spirit. These Arcana correspond to extremely active forces in us that sometimes escape definition, which emerge out of our everyday concerns. We could say that the Arcana of the first cycle fall under the jurisdiction of conscious life and those of the second, the subconscious.

We are going to see how the Arcana in these duets interact and collaborate, tracing their parallel paths toward the heights and toward the depths, and how each inextricably represents the light and shadow of the other in such a way that their work blends together and completes it. The energy of one is necessary for the other to manifest.



## I The Magician—XI Strength

### *The Two Beginnings*

Degree 1 of the Tarot numerology refers to a potential and the opening to a new world (see p. 59). The Magician is undertaking an intellectual, perhaps emotional, spiritual work, connected to an expertise and a desire to achieve knowledge (see pp. 128–29). Strength represents the establishment of contact with instinctive and animal energies, creativity, the libido, and, to be precise, the subconscious. The Magician contributes his spiritual enthusiasm and his desire to understand the mysteries of the mind. Strength goes deep within itself and matter, causing the emergence of sexual, creative, and telluric forces. These two aspects complete one another like the roots



and branches of a tree. To grow, a tree needs simultaneously to bury itself deeper in the ground and raise itself higher in the sky. Strength without The Magician can fall into either extreme passion or extreme self-repression: she has no words to express herself, nor a structure in which to unfold. The Magician without Strength grows feeble. He runs the risk of becoming superficial and unstable, devoted to an intellectual concept of himself in which his thought spins in vicious circles, ignoring the voice of the depths.



## II The High Priestess—XII The Hanged Man

### *Gestation and Interiority*

Degree 2 of the Tarot numerology concerns accumulation, a state of incubation, and meditation for preparing a future action. With her book, The High Priestess evokes an accumulation of knowledge, a quest for wisdom, an erudite introspection capable of expressing itself through language. The Hanged Man, to the contrary, has shed all his knowledge and returned to ignorance in his acceptance of the most high: sacred nonknowing. His meditation is beyond words. Without the energy of The Hanged Man, The High Priestess could preach motivated by pride and spill over into dogmatism, coldly applying the letter of a sacred text without making contact with its interior silence. Without the rigor of The High Priestess, The Hanged Man could fall into laziness, inaction, a state of “anything goes,” or an apathy that delusionally passes for a profound meditation.



## III The Empress—XIII The Nameless Arcanum

### *Creative or Destructive Explosion*

Degree 3 of Tarot numerology falls under the heading of an explosion that is ignorant of its purpose. They are two active revolutionary principles lacking experience that change the state of the premises. The Empress represents the bursting of life in its constant and unceasing creativity, endlessly producing with no concern for what will become of the thing created. Arcanum XIII meanwhile represents constant transformation,





a transformation that comes at the cost of total destruction, if necessary. If Arcanum XIII happens to be missing, The Empress can fall into a limitless productivity: overpopulation, invasions, epidemics, and excess. She requires a destructive moment to bring her to a stop at a given moment. If Arcanum XIII finds itself without The Empress, his transforming action becomes sterilizing: nothing can grow upon the scorched earth. We can imagine a terrain covered with wild growth by The Empress, then cleared and plowed by Arcanum XIII, then once again sowed by The Empress, followed by Arcanum XIII then taking responsibility for the harvest, and so on—infinity. These two Arcana unite creation and destruction like the seedcase that opens to allow the plant to germinate, like an egg that breaks for the bird to emerge, like a woman who bleeds and gives life to a newborn. Without death there is no life, without life, there is no death.



### IIII The Emperor—XIIII Temperance

#### *Security on Heaven and Earth*

In Tarot numerology, degree 4 is the level of stabilization and balance. The Emperor ensures that cosmic laws are applied on the material plane: he is responsible for the world operating properly; he is someone on whom we can count and whose financial solidity is up to any challenge. He is an unshakable reality principle that manages material power. His duty is to protect others. Temperance adds to this concrete security a spiritual security, intimate knowledge of oneself, and a great equanimity in action as well the mystery of spiritual protection. If Temperance is missing from The Emperor, he will tumble into harshness and tyranny and boundless exaltation of the material world. He becomes obtuse and rational, and, losing kindness, loses himself. He ceases to concern himself about the Other in all its truth. Without The Emperor's reality principle, Temperance is only an illusion, a dream in a chimerical Heaven without any anchoring in the incarnate. This is an excessive kindness that protects the useful and useless alike. We can then lose the notion of reality, and with it, the ability to distinguish the differences on which embodied intelligence and good sense are based.





## V The Pope—XV The Devil

### *Temptation in All Its Guises*

Degree 5 in the numerology of the Tarot points to the appearance of a new interest that is still in the planning stages or is still a temptation. The Pope is a mediator who communicates with faith, one of the mind's highest values. He represents a calling and, like the shepherd, leads his flock to virtue. But these luminous values are the transformation of dark impulses found in The Devil. If The Pope is the lotus flower that symbolizes the flowering of consciousness and receives solar light, The Devil is the mire in which this flower sets down roots in order to transform its putrid emanations into perfume. The Devil directs our attention toward the deep subconscious nature, beyond good and evil. He forces us to know our desires, impulses, and compulsions—all the energies that expand outside morality. If The Pope does not absorb The Devil, all his teachings are utopian, artificial, disembodied fantasies. If The Devil does not accept The Pope, he becomes buried in excess, destruction, and a demented urge driven by pride to exceed all limits.



## VI The Lover—XVI The Tower

### *The Appearance of Pleasure*

In Tarot numerology, degree 6 represents the first step into the Heaven square, the first access to love in action. For the first time we are seeing what pleases us. It is therefore a dimension that encourages immobility and the repetition of pleasure. In The Lover, where the figures are closely joined, emotional life unfurls through the entire scale of relationships, from friendship to symbiosis, with the risk of transforming the couple into an island cut off from the world. In The Tower, everything that has been imprisoned emerges in freedom: it is a huge explosion that permits union with the cosmos. The Lover, without the opening of The Tower, risks falling into narcissism and fusion. The Tower, without The Lover, risks becoming a separation: in the opening it has created, what was bound can be pulled apart. It can lead to such strong euphoria for living that it individualizes and isolates each person, causing them to lose the



relational core. These two Arcana work in concert so that union and openness can give rhythm to our emotional lives.



## VII The Chariot—XVII The Star

### *Action in the World*

The 7 is the most active degree of the numerology: everything experienced up to this point is set into motion in the world. If The Chariot represents the advance, the conquest, The Star has rooted herself into one place to help it prosper, and to cultivate and purify it. While The Chariot launches a holy war, the Star is building Eden. If the energy of The Star is eliminated, the action of The Chariot becomes sterile and fruitless; he does not receive the gift. It is a continuous advance that may revolutionize the premises it crosses through but does not enrich them and finally amounts to nothing, like so many great empires that were won, then lost, by emperors who lost their lives as well in the end. Without The Chariot, the action of The Star is reduced. Her gift, limited to a narrow space, will build up like a lake that floods the villages surrounding it.



## VIII Justice—XVIII The Moon

### *Faces of Perfection*

With degree 8, as we saw earlier, perfection has been achieved, and there is nothing left to be added or taken away (see pp. 60 and 65). In The Moon's case, this perfection consists of shrinking itself cosmically and living in darkness so that it may reflect the infinite light of The Sun (see p. 235). This is a purely receptive perfection even if the consequence of it is to affect the movement of the tides. What Justice receives, meanwhile, are the universal laws, with the mission of embodying them and applying them to the extent humanly possible: excellence and perfectibility rather than perfectionism. Justice, without The Moon, risks losing sight of her cosmic and receptive dimension and becoming voluntaristic, standardizing, and intolerant. The Moon, without Justice and her anchorage in reality, can get lost





in the dark from which she originates and become synonymous with fatal melancholy, madness, and anguish. The Moon is ever-changing, whereas Justice is immutable: together they combine mutability with implacability.



## VIII The Hermit—XVIII The Sun

### *Crisis and Regeneration*

Degree 9 is a movement that goes beyond the perfect and therefore presumes the entry into a crisis for the building of a new world. The Hermit with his lantern carries light, wisdom, and experience. He has decided to exile himself from the world and pass on his treasure to a select few who have come in search of him in his solitude. He has realized individual wisdom. The Sun, to the contrary, works in abundance: he offers his light and knowledge to all. He accepts all beings and goes beyond individuality, creating collectivity. Without The Sun, The Hermit falls into the depths of solitude and spiritual avarice. He no longer transmits his teaching to anyone. His lamp remains hidden within the dense folds of the ego, and he lifts it only to be seen by a higher entity. Without The Hermit, The Sun extends itself without discernment and loses the directive capacity provided by individuality. He creates only an amorphous mass of vague principles. In The Hermit, everything is experience; in The Sun, all is renewal. Each needs the other.



## X The Wheel of Fortune—XX Judgment

### *What Begins Comes to an End*

Degree 10 of Tarot numerology represents, as we have seen, the Totality that spreads out after all experience, but where exists—in expectation or seed—the impulse that will engender the new cycle (see pp. 59–61). The Wheel of Fortune, the end of the first cycle, closes a path of active seeking, reflection, and study. The figures return to their fates, being disconnected from all will. They are in the circle of death and rebirth waiting for a miraculous force to free them from



this eternal repetition. Judgment concludes the second decimal series, where all the receptive centers are open and where faith and the ability to make oneself flesh have replaced the spiritual quest. The figures have learned how to collaborate with one another and to pray in active reception. They can give concrete form to help from the other dimension and have opened to the transformation of a new awareness. Without Judgment, The Wheel of Fortune finds itself in a state from which all faith and hope have been excluded. It is reduced to a block, a vicious circle from which there is no escape. The cycle of life and death is presented like an enigma that no principle is capable of solving. When Judgment ignores The Wheel of Fortune, a state of fleeing from the world and refusal of the incarnate is created. It is the delusional desire to attain the divine world without going through the human world. It can also be a birth to inexperienced parents who are prisoners of their subconscious neurotic attachments.



# The Couples of the Tarot

## *Several Versions of the Male-Female Relationship*

If we examine the Tarot objectively, we shall see that an equal number of men and women are represented in it. Furthermore, it clearly indicates that some of these men and women have joined to form couples. In the Minor Arcana, the Queens are accompanied by Kings. In the Major Arcana, The High Priestess (Arcanum II) is united with The Pope (V), The Empress (III) with The Emperor (IIII), and The Moon (XVIII) with The Sun (XVIIII). In The Devil (XV), we see a man and woman bound together at the foot of the devil; and in Judgment (XX), a couple, a man and a woman praying together, are looking at an individual emerging between them (perhaps a child or a the result of a joint task). If we decide that other couples can be found among the Major Arcana, we can join The Magician (I) and Strength (XI) through the shape of their headgear. Knowing that The Chariot (VII) and The Star (XVII) belong to the same numerological degree lets us couple The Chariot with The Star. And in consideration of the sum of their experience, Justice (VIII) and The Hermit (VIII) could also form a couple. Finally, the preeminent metaphysical couple: The Fool, who crosses through all the Arcana of the Tarot before reaching his ideal partner,



The World. This concept corresponds to Chinese philosophy, in which Yin and Yang are complementary.

There are two active elements in the Tarot (Swords and Wands) and two receptive ones (Cups and Pentacles). As we have already mentioned (see pp. 42 and 49), this union of elements is reflected in The World, in which the carnivores, the eagle and lion, are facing an angel and a flesh-colored herbivore, symbols of sacrifice and giving. To make this clear, the woman of The World is holding a phallic element (a wand) in her hand on the same side as the eagle and lion, and a receptive flask in her other hand. Today, when women are struggling mightily to obtain a balanced relationship with men after centuries of humiliation and slavery in a culture that is male dominated, it is very moving to see the Tarot, probably from the year 1000, proclaiming the necessary complementary nature of the sexes.

We are therefore going to look at each human figure here, what its corresponding couple is in the order of the Tarot, and what couples it can form with other figures. For readers of this book who are in homosexual couples, it is necessary to clarify one point in this chapter: in symbolic language, masculinity and femininity are metaphorical forces. A woman can easily feel best represented by The Emperor or The Sun, whereas a man can receive The Empress or The Moon. In the descriptions of the following couples, and to the extent that the Tarot is infinite and a book's space is necessarily reduced, we have not developed couples formed by two men or two women. It is up to the reader to perform this research. It can make sense for anyone, inasmuch as these couples can also represent familial relations: father-son, father-daughter, mother-daughter, mother-son, brother-sister, and so on.

In similar fashion, the short text evoking each of the following detailed encounters is not capable of exhausting all the subtleties of the relationship between one archetype and another. Like all the interpretations we've proposed in this book, it is rather an approach of a path toward the infinite echoes that the Arcana of the Tarot can awaken in our consciousness.

We will tackle the couples in the following order:



*The Fool and The World (XXI)*

*The Magician (I) and Strength (XI)*

- The couples formed by The Magician with other female cards
- The couples formed by Strength with other male cards

*The High Priestess (II) and The Pope (V)*

- The couples formed by The High Priestess with the remaining male cards
- The couples formed by The Pope with the remaining female cards

*The Empress (III) and The Emperor (VIII)*

- The couples formed by The Empress with the remaining male cards
- The couples formed by The Emperor with the remaining female cards

*The Chariot (VII) and The Star (XVII)*

- The couples formed by The Chariot with the remaining female cards
- The couples formed by The Star with the remaining male cards

*Justice (VIII) and The Hermit (XIII)*

- The couples formed by Justice with the remaining male cards
- The couples formed by The Hermit with the remaining female cards

*The Moon (XVIII) and The Sun (XIX)*

## THE FOOL—THE WORLD



**Order The Fool—XXI.** We have seen that these two cards represent the alpha and the omega of the Major Arcana, the first and second echelon, the two points between which all possibilities are deployed. But what kind of couple are they? In this order, The Fool is moving toward The World, equipped with a beggar's pouch and red-colored staff, heading toward a naked woman dancing in the center of an oval of blue leaves. The Fool can be considered as the fundamental energy without any definition, which is to say boundless. This is how the Bible



presents divine creative energy, boundless unprecedented energy emerging from a timeless nothingness where space does not exist. But if The Fool remained alone, he would run the risk of just endlessly spinning around his staff [wand]. And here is The World offering itself to him with its four elements like the four cardinal points, and at its core the woman-matter inseminated by The Fool's energy. When these cards are drawn next to each other in this order, they evoke an energy going straight to its realization, a plan or project encountering success, a concretization.



**Order XXI—The Fool.** But the order of the cards is essential. In fact, in the order The World–The Fool, the latter is in the process of leaving. The situation is therefore completely different. The World is no longer the realization of anything, as no card comes before it.

Instead it is an imprisonment, a difficult beginning—to be more exact, a difficult birth. The woman, enclosed within her oval, is looking toward an empty past; she has no future. Meanwhile, The Fool is fleeing or freeing himself from a situation that does not suit him, but without knowing where he is going. The woman remains fixed, and the man is running away at top speed. This could be a situation where one individual remains obsessed by her past, without giving any energy to the present relationship, while the other prepares to go meet his destiny elsewhere. This could also be the start of a relationship in which the woman represents something too big for the man, either because he is idealizing her or because he does not feel ready to make a commitment. He will then have a tendency to flee the relationship. The situation could ripen and both protagonists cede to their mutual attraction. In this case The Fool would change place and come before The World.

### *When These Cards Encounter Others*

The Fool and The World are separate to the extent that they represent absolutely impersonal archetypes. Their energy does not permit them to form an actual couple, in the common sense of the word. Here is what we can say when they pair up with other cards:



**The Fool.** He can be either an energy coming in or an energy that is being lost. Facing another card, he does not form part of a complementary couple but exacerbates the Arcanum's characteristics. By definition, he has no personal characteristics. He is a free energy in search of channels through which to manifest. These individual channels will eventually lead him to the wholeness of The World. Because he is totally active, he is represented by a male figure. When a female card finds herself in his company, he is either bringing energy to her or taking it from her by leaving. In this case, the consultant should draw another male card to learn the definition of this energy. If, for example, this card were to be The Magician, it would be strengthened by The Fool's enthusiasm, and his natural characteristics would be accentuated more than ordinarily.

**The World.** Just like The Fool, this card does not represent any particular aspect but rather the Totality of the other Arcana. We are therefore not able to talk about her characteristics singly. As an essentially receptive being, The World is represented by a woman. When a male card appears next to The World, this means its complete realization from a positive point of view, on condition The World is to its right. It would mean an initially frustrating difficulty if The World came first (to its left). The consultant should draw a female card to know what Arcanum XXI is referring to in this reading.

## THE MAGICIAN—STRENGTH



**Order I—XI.** Placed this way, these Arcana form a balanced couple made up of two individuals endowed with great aptitudes. Each of the two begins an activity in his or her own domain. That of The Magician is more intellectual and has to do with his expertise and numerous talents. That of Strength is artistic or organic; she works with deep creativity. In this configuration, the sum of the two cards (I + XI) refers to the aspect of self-knowledge and profundity suggested by Arcanum XII, The Hanged Man. The Magician works with his spiritual forces and Strength with the wealth of her impulses. They accompany and comprehend each



other, and, given the similar shape of their hats, it is plausible they share a similar conceptual notion of the world. This brings to mind the traditional Japanese poem: “The fish in the water, the bird in the sky . . .” Each of these individuals is happy in his or her own field of experience. They could be two adolescents, two beginners, but also two people who are experiencing the beginning of something in their lives, no matter what their age.



**Order XI—I.** Here, we can dread a crisis that leads to immobility, the other aspect of The Hanged Man (XII), because each card is interfering in the domain of the other. The Magician is metaphorically attempting to change Strength’s lion into an eagle. Strength is trying to transform The Magician’s scientific table into a powerful wild beast. The fish in the sky suffocates, and the bird in the water drowns. The two members of the couple need to realize that they are not ready to meet the other face to face before they have each fully experienced their respective fields of action. They need to leave themselves the space necessary for their emerging expertise to develop, and then they will be able to find each other again in a spirit of union.

### *The Other Couples with The Magician*

#### The Magician and The High Priestess



**Order I—II.** A young man focused on his success, full of good qualities and possibilities and completely centered on himself, performing research directed primarily by the mind, finds support from a mature woman who has collected a lifetime’s worth of creative energy. Incapable of putting her knowledge into practice, she makes The Magician not only her lover and/or spiritual son, but will use him to manifest herself in the world. With each helping the other, creative possibilities are open.



**Order II—I.** We find here a woman imprisoned within herself who has transformed her ego into an idol. She behaves like an initiator. The Magician, who is obsessed with her, considers her more like a mother than a wife.



He views her as all-powerful. His creative energy dissolves into devotion. This symbiosis can last for years without The Magician ever being able to become an adult.

### The Magician and The Empress



**Order I—III.** This couple could be one formed by a poor student with a princess. She will appreciate and love the enthusiastic and poetic consciousness of The Magician, but he will keep his freedom, not asking The Empress for protection. However, The Empress's royal scepter is joined with The Magician's wand to charge it with her creative force and her potential. With her admiration for him, she gives him security. The Magician allows The Empress to feel beautiful because he remains with her without asking for anything.



**Order III—I.** The two members of the couple are facing each other, and The Magician is surrendering to the greater power of The Empress. She is already in full action and exploding creatively, while he is still only a beginner. In this relationship he will therefore be submissive and run the risk of being scorned by her, like a novice actor in love with a star.

### The Magician and Justice



**Order I—VIII.** Next to Justice, whatever her position, The Magician is just a child. She incarnates the perfect mother for him; he carries her in his mind in the form of eight dark-yellow balls buried in his light-blond hair, and his figure-eight-shaped hat seems to indicate that she represents the cosmic mother for him. When a man meets a woman who is so much higher than he, he will tend to become her disciple rather than her lover. In this order, Justice interposes her sword between them to avoid their relationship falling into fusion. She applies all her love and awareness to tell The Magician: "You are you, I am me. We are going together, but we are not one."





**Order VIII—I.** In this configuration The Magician is looking at Justice thinking that she represents his total realization. Here the couple fuses together as one. The Magician seems to be saying: “I am the fetus in your belly; you must perpetually create me.” If Justice accepts playing this role, and ceases showing The Magician what is good and what is evil by means of her scales, she will reveal a certain immaturity. She runs the risk of becoming entirely dependent upon The Magician’s reverence, to the point of collapsing if one day this adoration is absent.

### The Magician and The Star



**Order I—XVII.** There is an immense difference between these two cards. The Magician is waiting for the world to come to him and is asking for realization; he is in the midst of still shaping who he is. The Star, however, has found her truth and is in the process of giving it to the world. The Magician receives what The Star gives him, but it is such a generous gift that he lets it circulate through him and becomes in turn someone who gives. It is similar to the fable of the fox who thinks he is powerful because, having become friends with the lion, he believes he has the lion’s strength: because the lion walked behind him, he gained the respect of the entire forest. In other words, this could be an agent or press spokesman who forms a couple with a famous woman and represents her. He serves by making it possible for his client’s talent to manifest itself in the world.



**Order XVII—I.** Here, the situation is absurd. The Magician thinks he can give to The Star the force that is coming from him. He is prisoner of his spiritual illusions. But The Star receives her generous forces from the cosmos; The Magician is only a little tag-along. She cannot take him into account. All she can do, with infinite kindness, is to let him take part in her action by generously allowing him to believe that he is very important. In this position, The Magician



will always be living in anguish that another man will appear who better corresponds with The Star's energy. He could even be pathologically jealous.

### The Magician and The Moon



**Order I—XVIII.** With his wand, The Magician receives all the strength and mystery of The Moon. He thus becomes whole. He works with the purpose of spiritual clarity and, voilà, the doors of the subconscious are opening for him. It is the wizard or the poet who, through constant effort, suddenly finds himself illuminated by the Cosmic Mother. This can be a student or a disciple receiving initiation from a female guru or teacher.



**Order XVIII—I.** The Moon in this configuration instead represents madness or anguish. The Magician, weak and inexperienced, risks being submerged in the erratic psychic forces of a woman, which may lead to madness, drugs, alcoholism, or a self-destructive dependency. This can also be a relationship between an insatiable and unsatisfied woman, easily spilling over into psychological drama, with a man of little experience who clings to the most concrete aspects of life to pull away from this neediness he does not understand.

### The Magician and The World



**Order I—XXI.** Finally The Magician has found everything he has sought in himself! This couple represents a metamorphosis for him. The coin he is holding in his hand finds its echo in the flask of the woman of The World, and their two wands are similar. Rather than with a woman, he is forming a couple with his realized soul. If The World in this drawing represents a real woman, we could say that she represents the realization of this man.





**Order XXI—I.** This is a man who feels incapable of obtaining realization. It could involve either an impossible love in which he feels the woman is too far above him, or a relationship with a woman imprisoned like him in difficulties connected to realization. Each is then the mirror of the other's difficulty, and the initiatory dimension of their meeting will go through their realization of this situation.

### *The Other Couples with Strength*

#### **Strength and The Emperor**



**Order III—XI.** We see here a couple each member of which is vigorously relying on the other. The Emperor contributes security, Strength creative energy. Material and social power finds support founded on instinctive forces. Here the man knows his reality, his affairs, his undertaking, and it is all under his control. The woman has an infinite number of projects she can realize, thanks to the economic, material, or legal support provided by The Emperor. Thanks to his contact with Strength, The Emperor is enriched by new vital interests and feels motivated.



**Order XI—III.** The encounter here is explosive! Each party is attempting to sway the other. They are always taking stock of their respective power and can go so far as to oppose each other, but they also desire each other, become friends again, and once again start to squabble. This is an endless dialogue that goes through phases of opposition and adaptation. Who will give in? If both are able to bring this power struggle to an end, they can find themselves with an enormous force of realization, which will only be effective if they undertake a joint task.

#### **Strength and The Pope**



**Order V—XI.** The Pope is accustomed to having acolytes, as he represents the highest spiritual voice. But here he meets an essentially virginal woman (in XI, degree 1 in the numerology, everything is still in



potential) who, by her strength of character, will not allow him to be her master overtly, and through whom speaks a voice to which The Pope is not accustomed: that of animal nature, which is also divine. The Pope admires her, respects her, and needs her. He subtly passes on to her his knowledge and level of consciousness. She is in contact with the freedom of nature and understands things to which The Pope, because of his established position, does not have access. For her, The Pope is quite useful, because he supports her quests in the dark world of the subconscious by offering her a structure and a spiritual justification.



**Order XI—V.** An inhibition of the animal forces is created here. The libido, symbolized by the animal, is forced to enter the path of sublimation. The animal becomes one of the disciples of The Pope, who has promoted himself to the position of spiritual director.

The world of the subconscious is infinitely more vast than the rational; therefore, when The Pope guides Strength, he reduces its opportunities because he does not see it in all its splendor. This can be a man who, faithful to his beliefs, imposes them upon his wife. This is what's involved with the religious morality that made women slaves for centuries out of fear of their sexual energy.

### Strength and The Chariot



**Order VII—XI.** Both these individuals are completely self-sufficient and possess immense energy. However, in this order they complete one another. Their actions are quite different: in reality, Strength has no landscape. Her action is vertical. She goes from bottom to

top and from top to bottom. We could say that this card involves inner energy consisting of establishing a close relationship between the animal and spiritual energies. The seductive power of the woman of Strength is staggering. Hers is not the strength of a soldier but that of a tamer. The prince of The Chariot, to the contrary, acts within a horizontal dimension and within a landscape. His chariot, which seems to be mired in a swamp, goes with the world's movement. He does not establish any dialogue with



his horses but allows them to carry him. Strength is on equal footing with the lion. Without Strength, the prince would lack this inner domination of his primordial instincts. Strength without The Chariot has no world in which to act. She becomes lost within herself. Their meeting creates a very rich relationship. She brings him inner knowledge, and he offers her the world of incarnation. Each of them realizes that for which they have been destined. Each is oriented in the direction that interests him or her, but while their support for each other is solid, they can each attend to their own tasks. They are then beneficial for the world.



**Order XI—VII.** There is a risk animals will start to fight here or at least begin an unsupervised activity. Animal nature will then prevail over the mind. There can be a very strong sexual attraction on both their parts. But while Strength is capable of controlling her lion, the prince of The Chariot has no control over his horses. Their instinctive encounter can be strong—unbridled, to be exact—but their spiritual meeting is at risk of not taking place. She is looking for action within herself, while he is concentrating on action in the world. It will be difficult for them to find any accord, unless Strength allows The Chariot to take her on a trip and enter into action with him in the world.

### Strength and The Hermit



**Order VIII—XI.** This is a complementary couple representing both extremes. The Hermit is lifting his lantern as high as it will go in the spiritual life, and with all the doubts that emerge in his metaphysical search. Strength deepens her search into the obscure regions of the subconscious with an animal certainty. It is not in her nature to doubt. He has all the experience of a whole lifetime while she, who is still young, has all roads open before her. For both of them, this is an exalting relationship.





**Order XI—VIII.** Each interferes in the Being of the other. She asserts her shadows before The Hermit's light, and he, with his lantern, sows doubts on what should remain in darkness. Both feel as if they are going through a crisis. They are at risk of becoming intolerant. Worse, Strength can start burning and fall into a mental crisis, and The Hermit can be devoured, in other words, lose faith in himself. The solution of the conflict is reached when The Hermit, instead of advancing, begins walking backward, opening the path for Strength with tolerance. She, instead of surrendering, which is impossible for her, will then find the space necessary to do what she has to do in complete freedom.

### Strength and The Sun



**Order XI—XVIII.** When she meets the Cosmic Father, Strength understands that her solitary work has found its realization. The animal, kundalini or libido, uniting with male force, becomes a Sun, a center of spiritual life. Strength then abandons all her efforts to create a couple consisting of twin souls. The meeting with the male principle fills her entirely. She can admire him, trust him, and abandon herself to him. He was waiting for this woman to arrive: she brings him the material that produces this explosion of light. They begin a new life.



**Order XVIII—XI.** Here Strength doubts The Sun and does not bring her creative energy into the couple. She feels alone and observes the love of the Cosmic Father as something she is not allowed to have, something given to all other beings but not her. She is constantly demanding. This could be a woman whose father was absent or unloving when she was a child. Now an adult, despite the need she feels to unite with him, she will persist in all her amorous and spiritual encounters to deny the possibility of meeting, seeking to show man his egotism in an endless grievance that conceals an immense demand for love. The Sun,



satisfied with himself and his world, offering his life-giving action to the multitude, will accept his responsibility and these complaints addressed to him as a weight that he will be unable to get rid of. He will tolerate it until she heals herself of this fundamental wound.

## THE HIGH PRIESTESS—THE POPE

The High Priestess is a woman of wisdom with something to teach. She is bearing knowledge. She contains the potential for action and, whether she is aware of it or not, she is in a state of understanding. She is a woman who knows. She is powerful, capable of sacrificing herself and initiating. But symbolized by the egg sitting next to her, this knowledge is not passed on; it is potential and in a state of incubation. For it to hatch, the action of The Pope is required. The High Priestess is virginal: there will always be something dedicated to what is most pure within, her spiritual life. Something in her will never be touched. This is what gives The High Priestess her charm, her power, and her danger.

Her ideal partner is The Pope. As much as The High Priestess is cloistered and separated from the world, The Pope is working toward others in a spirit of transmission. So what is he transmitting? The knowledge The High Priestess holds in her book. The Pope is a mediator, a bridge between the material world and the spiritual world. He communicates.



**Order II—V.** If we put them in this order, for the reasons we mentioned earlier, The High Priestess and The Pope have no need to look at each other. They are back to back. They have already gone beyond sexuality and passion and have reached a stage where they should give away everything they have hoarded. She brings her knowledge, and he transmits it. This is a company of two individuals of the same value. As both are already mature, neither one expects his or her partner to be his or her realization. They coexist at the same spiritual level. They have much to give others, driven by an ideal, which can be of any nature.



In this position, back to back, they are well accompanied and solid, busy acting upon the world.



**Order V—II.** But if we place The Pope before The High Priestess, the couple finds itself in a problematic situation. In this configuration both figures are looking at each other, forgetting their mission, and asking for energy and attention from each other. They will eventually exhaust each other, as they are not made to isolate themselves from the world in this way. A Pope and a High Priestess work in union with the Totality. They cannot form a closed, egotistical couple because of the fact that they do not reproduce. Their message is purely spiritual. The world has granted them power because it needs them. In this position, face to face, they could create children. But these children would remain behind doors to spy on a mother and father tearing each other to shreds. They would be abandoned and play no part in this couple because there is no room for a third party in this union. The High Priestess and The Pope must constantly keep their spiritual duty toward the world foremost in their minds.

### *The Other Couples with The High Priestess*

#### The High Priestess and The Emperor



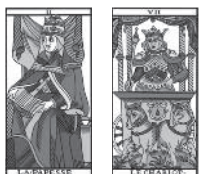
**Order II—I.** The High Priestess, who has an elevated level of spirituality and is incubating the appearance of Cosmic Consciousness in humanity, needs the material assistance of The Emperor. This makes it possible for her to continue her work and research, because this will give her constant support and protection. The Emperor, meanwhile, sees his highest realization in her. The eagle at the base of his throne represents his desire to rise to a sublime ideal. In the company of The High Priestess, he has found the woman who realizes the vocation of this metaphorical eagle by permitting the egg to hatch. In Christian symbology, the egg represents the cradle in which Christ the Savior was born.



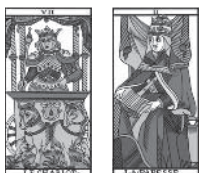


**Order IIII—II.** Here The High Priestess makes a gift of her mind to The Emperor, but he is primarily concerned about establishing his power over the world. He can use this woman's knowledge, but its spiritual dimension will be lost, and the egg will not hatch, because all his energy is directed toward the earthly reality. The High Priestess will then feel imprisoned because her highest vocation will go unrealized.

### The High Priestess and The Chariot



**Order II—VII.** The prince of The Chariot has found the superior women to whom he entrusts his ardor and desires for conquest. He becomes a knight and places himself in her service. In this couple, The Chariot is only an offering: a proposition for action that obeys the command of The High Priestess if she needs him. He will always act on her behalf. For The High Priestess, this man represents a source of energy, a weapon at her disposal, a burst of enthusiasm for acting in the world and spreading her knowledge there.



**Order VII—II.** In this couple, The Chariot runs the risk of using The High Priestess as a political and religious excuse for his conquests. This can be done in connivance with her if she is seeking to enrich her temple or convert the world to her beliefs. This could also be a mother whose son brings her to a party, or any intellectual woman providing a role and means for a man that lets him move into action in the world.

### The High Priestess and The Hermit



**Order II—VIII.** The couple seen here is more likely to share a deep friendship than a passionate love. Sexuality is of no importance, and sentimentality is equally valueless. We are seeing a soul-to-soul relationship. While The High Priestess is in the process of coming

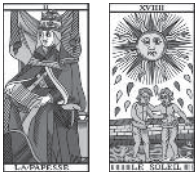


to terms with the world, The Hermit is in the midst of distancing himself from it. This relationship is founded on impermanence; knowledge is communicated and deployed there. She is covered by the veil of her institution and is consequently not free. He is cramped in his own robes, conserving his individual light. The High Priestess knows that The Hermit is her future, but the moment has not yet come for her to follow him. This relationship is a long, serene farewell.



**Order VIII—II.** The Hermit runs the risk of abandoning his solitude and freedom here. By walking backward, he finds himself in the domain of The High Priestess, who absorbs him and keeps him at her side and holds back his enthusiasm for abandoning the world. The couple becomes stable within a certain reality in which The High Priestess inspires The Hermit to accept the written law. The Hermit, although his deep nature is crisis, finds himself immersed in perfection. He is singing like a bird in a gilded cage. With the constant presence of The Hermit, The High Priestess attains her highest level, which will allow her to one day restore to the sage his freedom.

### The High Priestess and The Sun



**Order II—XVIII.** The time has come for The High Priestess to attain her highest level of consciousness. She is daughter to the Cosmic Father, who gives her the heat necessary to incubate and hatch the perfect Son, which is to say spread her doctrine throughout the world. She knows unconditional love in this configuration, like that of the Virgin Mary for the Holy Father. She can lose the virginity of her deepest depths, thanks to contact with a being in whose presence she finds herself so infinitely inferior that her strictness dissolves into obedience, humility, and love. The Sun needs her because his speech and his active wisdom find a channel in her through which he can reach human beings. This could be a female saint who, in obedience to the teachings of her God, devotes her life to saving abandoned children. Their meeting is of great usefulness to the world.





**Order XVIII—II.** Placed in this way, The High Priestess forgets the world because her gaze is ceaselessly focused upon the object of her adoration. She remains imprisoned in a trance, forgetting the task she needs to perform for humanity. In this seclusion, however, she could write poems or ecstatic prayers, texts that would later become a source of inspiration and comfort for humanity.

### *The Other Couples with The Pope*

#### **The Pope and The Empress**



**Order III—V.** The Empress is essentially a creator on the intellectual, emotional, sexual, or physical plane. She dominates the spatial and horizontal plane. The Pope is a man who has developed his spirituality and acts on the temporal plane, forming a bond of union with the higher planes. The Empress establishes a relationship of fervent admiration with him. She begins seeing the world through The Pope's eyes and becomes his student—in a filial attitude. The Pope accepts this devotion as nourishment and as a principle of reality. The enthusiasm of The Empress regenerates him.



**Order V—III.** In this couple, it is The Pope who sees the world through the eyes of The Empress, entirely seduced by her attractions. He then leaves his teaching mission to the side and passionately devotes himself to raising The Empress from the spatial plane that is rightfully hers to the temporal plane for which he is the privileged teacher. But while in the previous order, The Empress willingly accepted becoming his disciple, here she demands that he treat her as an equal. This risks creating conflicts, given their different life experiences. However, if The Pope profits from this experience by leaving his role of eternal teacher that only knows disciples less developed than he, he can take advantage of this relationship to unite the horizontal plane with the vertical plane through their two areas of expertise. The understanding they share will then be like the center of a spatial-temporal cross.



## The Pope and Justice



**Order V—VIII.** The Pope feels profound admiration here in the presence of perfection. This meeting is immense to him, to the extent that Justice could represent the archetype of the Holy Church to him.

Despite his experience, The Pope becomes son and servant when facing Justice. He is ready to second her in everything. In myth, we could compare their relationship to that of Joseph the carpenter and the Virgin Mary. It is one of deep respect coupled with a love that reveres. Justice has higher purposes that tend to work toward the balancing of humanity. She transmits a spiritual and material truth to the world. She finds her ideal emissary in The Pope, who permits her to communicate. She can also be a woman in full possession of her equilibrium and her maturity united with a responsible man who admires her, or even a company that has found its ideal leader.



**Order VIII—V.** Here The Pope grants himself the principal role and keeps the perfection of the woman who shoulders him and gives him balance a secret in the background. She accepts this situation, as she is inclined to balance it with her acceptance of the fact

that the man deploys his ego in social action and grants her the role of mistress of the home. She knows that she is indispensable to The Pope's action.

## The Pope and The Star



**Order V—XVII.** This couple has attained great wealth and great communication. The Pope contributes his experience and The Star her eternal youth. Everything The Star receives from the universe she offers to The Pope. Everything The Pope receives

from the Godhead, he offers to The Star. Nature and the sacred form a magnificent union. The mind of The Pope takes material form in The Star, and the cosmic materiality of The Star is spiritualized in The Pope. The Pope, a mediator, allows communication to occur between Heaven



and Earth, between the material and spiritual worlds, and consciousness and the body. He is a spiritual bridge. Placed this way facing The Star, he retains his attachment to the world. The Star, who purifies rivers and nourishes the Earth, receives from the cosmos to give to matter. The Pope receives the gift of The Star: it reaches him through his disciple and rises up to his light-blue-gloved hand. He is then able to pass it on to human consciousness. Both of them together perform good work. The Pope does not distance himself from material life to attempt to attain a purely spiritual life—such a thing does not exist. The body and soul are intimately bound together; their work needs to be performed together. We cannot develop the mind without deepening its relationship with the material world. When he communicates his disciples' prayers to his deity, The Pope is receiving from below and transmitting to on high. He is receiving illumination from on high, which he communicates to what lies below.

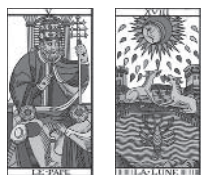
The Star receives from on high and gives to what is below, which means that she applies her intellect, her emotions, and her sexuality to heal and make the Earth fruitful. But we see in the tree that has grown out of the Earth a bird preparing to fly toward the stars. This bird is the essential void of her consciousness liberated from parasitic ideas. We were dust, and dust we shall become again. But there is also this: we were light, and light we shall become again. The Star and The Pope, when they are together, say, "I am dust, but luminous dust." The Star teaches us that we are dust, but it is stardust, and The Pope tells us that it is to this luminosity that we must return in material life. The Pope makes a gesture of union with his hands so that both of them are sanctified by a cross. He is in the process of uniting his two acolytes. With one of her vessels, The Star is giving luminous yellow water that comes from the four yellow stars. With the other, she is pouring dark-blue water that comes from the three dark-blue stars. She unites light and darkness, intuition and intelligence. Finally, The Pope teaches his students that the naked woman is sacred not only in her role as mother but also by her beauty, intelligence, and creative sexuality, which allows life to continue.





**Order XVII—V.** Even though they are together, The Star and The Pope are turning their backs to each other. Each is in his or her place: she in Nature and he in the temple. Each acts in his or her way, we could say by keeping their relationship secret. She is naked; he is clad. She acts alone; he teaches several students. They are a couple formed of a man of substantial mind and a woman who is substantial on the Earth. Both retain their respective activity and own way of doing things. They mutually accompany each other, and the pleasure they draw from this is intense in the secrecy of their complicity. Their sexual relationship does not exist (or at least not yet). He is ceremonious and can enter into conflict with her by trying to make her his student, while she is insistent on asserting her freedom.

### The Pope and The Moon



**Order V—XVIII.** The Pope finds himself in the presence of a woman who represents the feminine face of the deity, the Cosmic Mother. It so happens that he is not the Cosmic Father, merely his representative. He will then become the faithful servitor of The Moon.

If The Moon symbolizes madness, The Pope could become a therapist and spend his entire life taking care of her. This could also be a professor who, unable to create poetry, devotes himself to making his students love poetry. In any case, he allows himself to be absorbed by an infinite joy. The Moon, in her meeting with The Pope, attains peace: she will not be forced to do anything. She can finally be herself without any hindrance. In her dark night, The Pope will never dare light a torch.



**Order XVIII—V.** Here The Pope knows he is in communication with the intuitive forces of the Cosmic Mother. He reveals her secrets and exposes them to the light of day, rationalizing her subconscious powers. If The Moon is a poetess, he will publish her poems and strive to help her win literary prizes for them. If she is a visionary, he will transmit her teachings in the form of an organized religion. This can



cause anguish for The Moon or, to the contrary, offer her a path to take action in Nature.

## THE EMPRESS—THE EMPEROR

The Empress (III) represents the bursting that follows accumulation (see p. 79). She flowers like Nature in the springtime after winter. She acts without knowing where she is going, solely out of creative enthusiasm. She is full of ideas that can culminate in adolescent fanaticism or fill her with an ideal love, boundless sexual desires, and physical effervescence. Because her scepter is propped up on her groin, she is primarily exercising the power of her sex. She is holding a male eagle under her arm, the symbol of the gestation of consciousness. On the ground between her feet we can see a white serpent, a symbol of the universal libido she is absorbing from the center of the Earth. Her green gaze transmits the gift of eternity.

The Emperor (IIII) symbolizes everything that is stable and material: his is the ultimate power of matter. We can look at him only in profile because his direct gaze has the potential to disintegrate. He rules effortlessly with no need to prop his scepter on his body. He is powerful because he obeys the laws of the universe. He is accompanied by a female eagle sitting on an egg—the egg of the wisdom imprisoned in matter. His light-blue hair indicates great emotional receptivity, whereas the blond hair of The Empress indicates great intellectual activity.

The Emperor without The Empress is excessively materialistic and passive. The Empress without The Emperor is extremely idealistic and active.



**Order III—IIII.** Placed this way, the two figures are looking at and completing each other. We could say that The Empress bears the animus (active mind) of The Emperor in her eagle, and The Emperor carries in his eagle the anima (receptive soul) of The Empress.



When they are together, activity and receptivity complete each other. The spirit (3) dwells in matter (4) and becomes stable. Both together, they can engender consciousness.

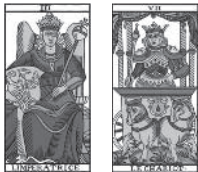


**Order III—III.** When The Emperor and The Empress have their backs to each other, The Emperor loses all his ideals and becomes a pure materialist. The eagle's egg does not hatch but rots. Having no purpose, he pursues power only for the sake of power.

But for lack of energy he remains inactive, staring toward a sterile past. The gaze of the Empress, meanwhile, is fixed on the emptiness of the future. She can support herself on The Emperor's back, but she has not realized it. She becomes bitter. The indifferent stability lent her by The Emperor leads her to disappointment and a lack of interest in activity. Lacking an amorous gaze fixed upon her, she despises herself. This situation is that of a quarrel between a couple, who, soon becoming aware of what they have to lose, waste no time in putting themselves back face to face.

### *The Other Couples with The Empress*

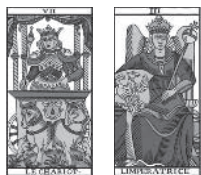
#### The Empress and The Chariot



**Order III—VII.** This encounter permits the creation of an extremely energetic couple, overflowing with possibilities for action, creations, conquests, and domination. The two understand each other almost completely, except for one important point. The Empress

acts from a single point, the territory that is hers. She establishes its laws and lifestyle. This could be a woman who is very attached to a home or a piece of land. The prince of The Chariot, meanwhile, is a nomad who is constantly moving and ceaselessly conquering new lands. To win The Empress, The Chariot must sacrifice himself and agree to set down roots. But if he is unable to colonize new lands, he will attempt to make himself master of those owned by his companion. This could either engender a permanent power struggle or a large family.





**Order VII—III.** The figures here are not looking at each other. Each has realized his or her characteristics without asking the other's participation. He is in constant search of new horizons; she creates and declares her empire from a central point that is its base. Their communication is spiritual and of great intensity, but there is a risk they will rarely see each other.

### The Empress and The Hermit



**Order III—VIII.** In this couple we can either see a great difference in age or a great difference in experience and temperament. They are closely united; she brings him company, beauty, and vital juvenile enthusiasm, while he offers her wisdom, experience, and a benevolent gaze on all that exists. With The Hermit, The Empress learns to be, and he with her learns how to live. The Hermit teaches the young woman detachment, and she awakens sexual pleasure for him. The Hermit is an excellent advisor for The Empress. When she desires to act, he discreetly retires, walking backward without ceasing to cast his light on her. The Empress feels accompanied and inspired, but free.



**Order VIII—III.** They are together, but they do not know why. It is difference that joins them together. He is in the process of retiring from the world, while she is on the verge of entering it. She does not know where she is going; he knows where he has been. This is a disparate couple that can easily be united by drugs or drinking, by pain, or even by a sense of lack—perhaps she lost her father and he lost his daughter. She may have a psychological wound and needs to form a couple with a man who does not represent any danger. Each leaves the other alone and respects his or her mystery—this is what binds them together. They do not know where they are going, but they are going there together, content in their mutual company.



## The Empress and The Sun



**Order III—XVIII.** The Empress, in the presence of the Cosmic Father, knows she should leave her past behind and set off into a new life. The light of the solar body is reflected by the globe of her scepter as if it were a miniature star. She has become aware that her creativity does not belong to her and gives herself to unconditional love with her characteristic fervor, producing enthusiastic creations. The Sun, facing this enflamed priestess, deploys all his compassion to enable her to move from the terrestrial plane to the spiritual plane. This man is a teacher; he is there for humanity, and she joyfully accepts no longer being alone in her life.



**Order XVIII—III.** In this situation The Empress wishes to keep all The Sun's strength for herself alone, like the eagle on her shield. She will be able to make herself the only woman in the life of The Sun, but she risks spending her life considered by his entourage as nothing more than the teacher's wife, a minor figure. This can give her the opportunity to find herself—outside of this dependent relationship—and to create her own work, stimulated by the heat of this presence.

## *The Other Couples with The Emperor*

### The Emperor and Justice



**Order I—VIII.** The Emperor, who is the perfection of the Earth square, is followed by Justice, who is the perfection of the Heaven square. This is a 4 followed by a double 4. While we see material strength in The Emperor, this force is also present in Justice, but it is completed by spiritual strength. In this couple the woman is more developed than the man and becomes a valiant ally. The Emperor humbly accepts Justice's vision and applies it to his numerous actions. A perfect understanding exists between them along with the ability to overcome the obstacles posed by the world. This couple is united more by power than by love.





**Order VIII—III.** Here The Emperor's action degenerates. Instead of dominating the world, he seeks to dominate his partner, knowing she is superior to him. The couple can go into a crisis that will end either with its destruction or with a profound change in the natures of each of the two partners. In his attempt to dominate Justice, The Emperor could develop the spiritual dimension he is missing. Justice, who could be tempted to relegate herself to a maternal role, should learn to communicate as a woman and as an individual with the one she has chosen as reality principle.

### The Emperor and The Star



**Order III—XVII.** The Emperor wisely channels the immense activity of The Star. He will create ports, bridges, and other beneficial uses of the energy from this endless river. The Star, who acts in one place and one place alone, finds in The Emperor a means to extend her action over the entire planet. The mind can embody itself here. This couple is united by their love for each other and their devotion to their work. We could say that the black bird of The Star has formed a relationship with The Emperor's eagle, perhaps to teach him how to fly. Subconscious forces meet a flexible rationality that puts them to work in everyday life.



**Order XVII—III.** Here The Emperor claims to direct The Star's activity. He wishes to be the source, to rule over what it is not possible to rule and rationalize the untamable impulses of the subconscious. He would rather that all the energy of The Star was turned toward him and not toward the world. In the best case, he protects her and permits her to continue her activity, but this protection can take on a domineering appearance if The Emperor expects The Star, fundamentally free and sacred, to sacrifice herself for him.



## The Emperor and The Moon



**Order III—XVIII.** The Emperor, supported by a woman representing the Cosmic Mother, goes through an essential transformation: his action becomes intuitive, poetic, and perhaps a little crazy; and his power, like that of King Lear, can veer into the capricious. In the case of a great artist, he will be driven to create a masterpiece. The Moon, meanwhile, finds in him a root in reality, a secure home, and a mental structure allowing her to express everything she has within her infinite self that has no shape. This would be the situation for an extravagant surrealist woman painter who was married to a photographer who took identity photos. This man permits The Moon to live within her magnetic limits without betraying herself.



**Order XVIII—III.** Here the couple goes into a kind of madness. Intuition rules. The Emperor loses all sense of measure and contact with the physical world; he becomes a lunatic. He is capable of giving his partner fifteen children. The Moon will transform him into her son among her multitude of children. It is she who rules the home, and the other family members are all her subordinates. The Emperor, if he decides to make a show of his male power, can help restore order to this family, though. He will become the organizer of daily life and the worship of the mother.

## THE CHARIOT—THE STAR

The VII and the XVII are the most active numbers of their series. As we have seen, the VII goes from the Earth toward the sky: it represents the spiritualization of matter; whereas the XVII goes from the Heavens toward the Earth, and represents the materialization of the spirit. Together they produce the Great Work. In addition to their numerological relationship in the Tarot, we should note that these two Arcana respectively represent a man and a woman, who can be joined as a couple by several details. The Chariot travels beneath a dais covered



by stars, indicating his actions extend to the entire planet. The Star, kneeling beneath an open sky on a chosen piece of ground, speaks of the extension of cosmic space. The prince of The Chariot has two allies, his male and female horses, who are advancing with the intention of obtaining something. The Star's two allies are her two vessels, which represent the gift of something. She appears nude, indicative of her detachment from all definition and all material wealth. Her power is that of humility. He, crowned, clad, and invested with all the signs of power, represents the value of sacred pride: he recognizes himself as messenger of the cosmos. Each of these two individuals bears a sign of fertility: the green drop on The Chariot represents, if you like, the seed of immortality, whereas the symbol in the form of a bud or a mouth on The Star's belly indicates a fertile reproductive capacity, one going beyond organic life.

The meeting of these two Arcana creates an action in the world of great intensity. They are of equal strength but have two different attitudes. The prince of The Chariot conquers but allows himself to be carried by the world. He is not necessarily a warrior but could have as his mission the sowing of spirit in the material world. The Star acts from a specific spot. She has found her sacred place and gives to the world what she has received from the cosmos in a perpetual flow.



**Order VII—XVII.** The Chariot can bring The Star along on his adventures. They then leave together to conquer the world. With his nomadic nature, he helps her emerge from her sedentary nature. Or else, without bringing her with him, he is able to transmit her work.



**Order XVII—VII.** These two individuals are so similar that in this order all their values stay the same. The sole difference from the preceding couple is that the mobility of The Chariot is brought to a halt by the static nature of his partner. Here, therefore, their com-



mon activity takes place in The Star's territory, where The Chariot represents a contribution. There is no longer any conquest, just an immense gift.

### *The Other Couples with The Chariot*

#### The Chariot and Justice



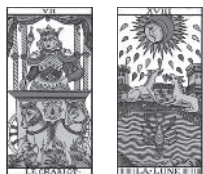
**Order VII—VIII.** The Chariot retains all his qualities of conqueror acting upon matter and in the world, but this time he has found a partner who justifies him completely. The world of his actions, whether correct or mistaken, receives the unconditional approval of Justice. This maternal woman, absolutely loyal and in complicity with him, gives him her unreserved support. Better yet, she gives him a weapon, her sword, which we can consider as a theoretical justification, a constitution, a discourse that allows him to impose his whim—whether it is beneficial or destructive for the world. She, living in balance, no longer has any field in which to develop. Alone, she grows bored. Her encounter with The Chariot gives her the opportunity to launch into adventure, into action, into the marvelous imbalance of excess. She feels alive.



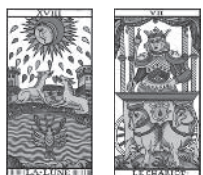
**Order VIII—VII.** In this situation, all the actions of The Chariot are judged and given balance by Justice. She subjects the prince of The Chariot to her own desire for perfection, putting the brakes on him, incapable of accepting his spontaneity. She spends her time weighing good or evil, the usefulness or uselessness of her actions. She can also halt the excess of his actions—a potential risk of clumsiness or violence—by evening it out and correcting it. It is possible that she will use The Chariot to impose her laws upon the world. In his admiration for her and his feeling that he has met the ideal mother, he puts himself in her hands in total obedience. He may, however, feel a valid sense of frustration.



## The Chariot and The Moon



**Order VII—XVIII.** The Chariot (degree 7) is the most active card of his series. By uniting with The Moon, which is the most receptive card of the entire Major Arcana, he receives other purposes for his action than conquest. Intuition, sensitivity, and humility will henceforth form part of his aims. Under The Moon's influence, instead of serving his own ends, The Chariot puts himself in service to a good cause. His horses employed their energy to win terrain and move forward, but they have become dogs in The Moon; and The Chariot has discovered worship. The prince can step outside himself and acknowledge the importance of the Other. The Moon, thanks to The Chariot, can emerge from its immobility and darkness and enter the world.



**Order XVIII—VII.** In this configuration, The Chariot loses his interest in the world and desires to entirely win this woman, who represents the archetype of the Cosmic Mother. This action presents some dangers: The Moon is so dark and mysterious, so concentrated and so receptive, that she is infinite. The prince could manage to deny his essence and transform himself into a meditative individual as well as set out on the path to madness. This realization could lead him to holiness or drugs. For The Moon, in this case, the prince is one more thing to ingest, one more food, one more energy that she delightedly devours. She would do better to resist her fascination and suggest objectives for him that are foreign to her. If The Moon transforms into a well-intentioned teacher for the prince, their relationship can be fruitful.

## *The Other Couples with The Star*

### The Star and The Hermit



**Order VIII—XVII.** The Hermit, having experienced everything and attained wisdom, has forsaken his bonds with material life. He is now retreating to find refuge in Nature represented by The Star. This woman incarnates the pure, direct, and original bond



with the cosmos. The Star's extreme generosity allows The Hermit to give and pass along this accumulated wisdom to the world. She finds in The Hermit a person who adds rational and metarational thought to her activity. The Star attains the most sublime form of the mind, and in return she gives The Hermit everything that it is in her power to give, becoming in some way the oil of his lantern.



**Order XVII—VIII.** The Hermit becomes the source of action here in such a way that the natural activity of The Star is disturbed by the extreme ratiocination of the sage. The Hermit's crisis lodges a doubt in the gift of The Star. Does it serve any purpose to divulge her knowledge and help the world? Or should she withdraw into herself? The Star could lose her faith and spontaneity here, becoming overly reflective. This could be the couple formed by a woman who feels the absence of her father with a substitute archetype. The entire stakes of this relationship will be to interrupt the doubt and return to heart-inspired action, for both parties involved.

### The Star and the Sun



**Order XVIII—XVIII.** The Star, who receives the knowledge of the eight stars symbolizing the perfection of the cosmos, performs her action in a place that she has discovered and chosen. But she retains a nostalgia for the higher spheres, symbolized by the black bird perched as if ready to fly back to its point of origin. This nostalgia for the grandeur of the supreme Father is suddenly dissolved by meeting The Sun. The yellow-and-red eighth star acquires a human face in Arcanum XVIII, giving her the possibility of forming a couple with a man of her level. The vital stream flowing at the bottom of The Sun symbolizes his immense love for The Star. After meeting him, the peaceful waterway she helps nourish can transform into a tumultuous river that offers itself to the entire world. This is a couple dedicated to humanity and universal love.





**Order XVIII—XVII.** Here, The Star, instead of offering her forces to the world, restores them to the stars from whence they came. We could see this as the triumph of the black bird: instead of giving herself to humanity, the naked woman worships The Sun with so much energy she risks drowning him. Wishing him solely for herself, she separates him from the world. The Sun, in his paternal role, allows himself to be imprisoned by his incestuous daughter and shines only for her, depriving others of his heat and inseminating light. This couple should learn to open itself to the world and make a place for the Other, with The Sun triumphing over his weakness and The Star her jealousy.

## JUSTICE—THE HERMIT

Justice, Arcanum VIII, is the number of perfection: balance in the flesh, balance in the mind. Nothing can be added to her, nor anything taken away. To others as to herself she gives what they deserve. The light rising from her crown toward Heaven indicates that she is a channel implementing the laws of the cosmos. The dark-yellow circle in the middle of her crown symbolizes the gaze of the deity. The red bow girding her hat indicates that she is God in action. The white band around her forehead represents the purity of her thoughts. She is looking straight at us: she is our mirror. The rope she wears around her neck designates her as being completely attached to her mission. The throne behind her contrasts with the sylvan ground on which her feet are resting; this points to the fact that her perfection is both inside and outside. In her right hand she is brandishing a light-blue sword, symbol of the Logos, the sacred text of the Law, with which she cuts away everything that is superfluous, everything that is subjective and a product of the individual ego. In her left hand, where she is forming a symbol of peace and union with her fingers, she is holding up scales that balance the opposites and makes them complementary. Clad in red with nine patches of ermine on her side, she is



displaying her royal origin and telling us that justice should be the principal aspect of human power. She combines punishment (her sword) with reward (the scales). While the red of her dress represents action, the cold nature of her blue robe expresses the ability to reflect that precedes all actions. The left side of this robe buries itself like a root into the earth: like a spider in its web she waits in a fixed position, completely in the present. She is perfect. She cannot change. She is the immutable axis of impermanence, the empty hub of the wheel.

On the other hand, The Hermit (VIII) represents crisis and passage, progressing by going backward. With his light-blue hair and beard (total spirituality, see p. 95), with his thick hood and robe that lock his flesh in darkness so that he may become mind, with his lantern and red staff (wisdom become pure action), he is abandoning perfection. Nine is the first odd number divisible by 3, which makes him active toward the past and receptive toward the future. He detaches himself from the 8 to go farther, he knows not where. He is cutting the circle of perfection to transform it into an active spiral. He lifts his lantern, the symbol of wisdom, not to light his way but so that others can follow him as he walks backward. The light of wisdom is not made for display but to be seen. Chosen by fate, he is like The Fool, who has traveled the entire path of the first decimal series, experienced all beliefs, all loves, all desires, and all actions. Now he pulls back while awaiting the arrival of a new cycle.



**Order VIII—VIII.** When Justice is followed by The Hermit, it causes something good to happen. The Hermit brings Justice a new point of view that, by freeing her from perfection, liberates her from death. The permanence of Justice is balanced by The Hermit's imper-

manence. Next to him she becomes the ideal Mother, and he, next to her, becomes the wise and benevolent Father, capable of granting forgiveness. When Justice is accompanied by The Hermit, she becomes more human and seeks to understand rather than punish.





**Order VIII—VIII.** When The Hermit is followed by Justice, there is a risk of conflict. With her sword Justice cuts away all compassion and all ability to enter a positive crisis. She becomes an absolutist and will not accept any charitable thoughts. The Hermit can no longer walk backward because the standardizing sword of Justice arrests his movement to detach himself. Losing hope in the future, he is at risk of becoming sealed within his solitude and focusing on the past, which carries the additional risk of his adopting self-destructive behaviors like alcoholism. Holding his red staff in a light-blue hand, he who had controlled his passions suffers the negativity of Justice in this situation. Justice has to completely lower her sword and verbal attacks and allow him to go beyond himself.

### *The Other Couples with Justice*

#### **Justice and The Sun**



**Order VIII—XVIII.** A judge, when he metes out praise and punishment, can always make mistakes and let himself get carried away by the darkness of subconscious impulses. Judging is difficult and an immense responsibility. When she meets The Sun, Justice receives the absolute security of delivering just and luminous verdicts. But in this couple, The Sun has a higher level of consciousness than Justice. He will necessarily become her guide. She will give him everything of which she is capable: her loving and complete trust, putting her sword and scales in his hands. The Sun, thanks to this faithful servant and through her, can achieve huge changes and new constructions, cleansing the past. She is his principle for incarnating in reality.



**Order XVIII—VIII.** Here The Sun takes the central place and relegates Justice to the background. The danger is that a conflict will ensue in which Justice can risk reducing his action and depreciating it to lower him to the level of a hermit withdrawing from



the world. For his part, The Sun will attempt to transform Justice into The Moon, a woman of his level, but this attempt will be fruitless because she will feel stripped of her material reality. The problem with this couple is that neither accepts the other for what he or she is. He would like her to be more than she is; she wants him to be less than he is. The solution is to accept each other as they are and stop making demands.

### *The Other Couples with The Hermit*

#### The Hermit and The Moon



**Order VIII—XVIII.** In Zen it is said that a grain of sand in the noon sky will darken the entire heavens. In the case of this couple, the reverse is true: a single lamp lit in the darkness of the night will illuminate the entire world. The Hermit is retreating, bearing his treasure of light—mental concentration and the intense point of awareness—toward a being that functions exclusively with intuition and the subconscious. With a single stroke he becomes the luminous heart of the night, and everything makes sense. We can imagine him as a therapist who has decided to form a couple with one of his patients. It's possible. Or even a sage who forms a couple with a celebrity astrologer, a philosopher who unites with a poetess . . . Both enrich each other in this relationship.



**Order XVIII—VIII.** In this situation, it is night that has the upper hand. The Hermit's lantern has become insufficient here. Madness is beyond the therapist's abilities; the star transforms the sage into a jealous lover; the philosopher starts raving . . . or secludes himself, being unable to reach any understanding with his poetess. Here, the risk for The Hermit as for The Moon is the abuse of toxic substances, alcohol, or drugs. The sole possible solution is for The Hermit to illuminate himself and become The Sun, attaining holiness and the total power of love.



## THE MOON—THE SUN



In Jungian psychology as in Amerindian or African myths, as well as in primitive European iconography, the moon-sun couple incarnate the fundamental encounter between the Cosmic Father, the sun, dispenser of light and life, raised to the rank of a god by the name of Ra in Egypt, and the archetypal Mother, the moon, queen of the night and of the kingdom of gestation and intuition, the mistress of the waters who governs the movement of the tides. According to modern science, the oceans are the fundamental womb for all life on Earth. In the Tarot, the symmetry between the two cards is obvious: on the top of both cards there is a celestial body endowed with a face, which projects its influence on earthly life in the form of multicolored drops. In *The Sun*, there are two twin boys who are receiving the benefits of the paternal star; and in *The Moon* there are two dogs or wolves—symbols of animal life and the human ego—and a crayfish hiding in the depths of a lake or ocean, like a baby in gestation in the waters of the maternal womb.

These cards have numerous meanings, but often in a reading they refer us to an idealized father or mother, either because they were truly perfect, or because they were absent from the life of the person receiving the reading. It is common to see a woman with an absent father draw *The Sun* as her desired partner. The man who falls in love with her will have to make immense efforts to be equal to her little-girl dreams, and his efforts will never be quite enough. Similarly, any man who thinks, “No woman cooks as well as my mama,” has in mind the mythical and solemn Moon as his desired partner—someone who is never tired, whose hair is never a mess, and who is never in a bad mood, someone who is always sublime and mysterious.

To sum up, only *The Moon* is on an equal footing with *The Sun*, and vice versa. In each of us exists a trace of this fabled femininity and masculinity, a wealth of clarity and intuition, courage and tenderness, an enterprising spirit, and the ability to tune in. These cards also come to remind us what our valuable qualities are and that it is time to cultivate them.





**Order XVIII—XVIII.** When The Sun is followed by The Moon, the values of receptivity and activity are reversed. This can mean that the woman of a couple is more masculine and the man more feminine. This will induce a cosmic disorder, because The Sun cannot reflect The Moon; it is not in its nature to reflect. The Moon, meanwhile, being a satellite and not a star, cannot shine with its own light. Much mental suffering can be created by this displacement; becoming aware of it is the first step toward healing.

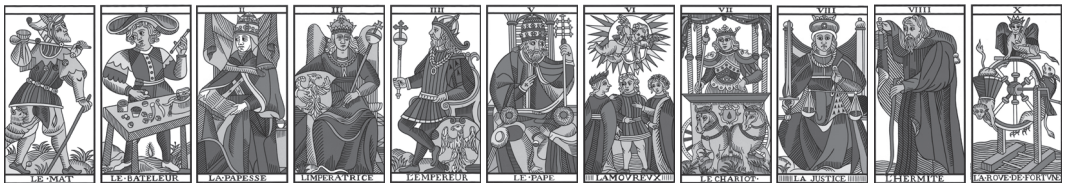


# The Pairs That Add Up to 21

## ELEVEN PATHS OF REALIZATION

We saw in part 1 that one of the possible organizational strategies for the twenty-two Major Arcana consists of assembling them in pairs that together add up to 21. This outline gives us eleven pairs: Fool–XXI, X–XX, II–XVIII, III–XVIII, IIII–XVII, V–XVI, VI–XV, VII–XIII, VIII–XIII, VIII–XII, X–XI.

In the center is the pair formed by The Wheel of Fortune (X) and Strength (XI), which we can consider as the heart of the Tarot. If we





examine the figures in these two cards, we could say that they have between them all the elements needed to make The World. In fact, the woman and the lion of Strength could take the place of the woman and the lion in The World. Then we could, if we wanted, attribute to the three figures of The Wheel of Fortune the following roles: the descending flesh-colored animal could be the flesh-colored animal of The World; the winged sphinx could be the angel of The World; and the yellow animal, who is ascending, could represent the eagle of The World. This is how the union of these two cards makes it possible to re-create Arcanum XXI.

This clue encourages us to read all the pairs surrounding the X–XI pair that added together form XXI so we can understand in what way the meeting of these two energies constitutes a path of realization. With these eleven pairs, the Tarot offers us eleven combinations, energies that, when combined, “make a world,” a XXI.



The Fool → ← XXI The World



The Fool and The World are complementary, but they do not have the same action. The Fool is depicted walking, advancing from the beginning





of the Tarot to its end. The World is depicted fixed, with the woman standing on one foot as if to indicate she has found her place. In his highest level of interpretation, The Fool is the energy we could call divine, for believers, or cosmic, for nonbelievers. The Fool, because he has no limits, no number, no definition, because he is pure energy, tends to saturate all matter, is 100 percent active. He is the central motor for the entire universe, for all of life. The World, to the contrary, while we cannot label her as receptive, can at least be said to consist of capturing and inhaling: an activity that is deployed from a given place. The entire world is inhaling at every moment the fundamental energy, which in turn is saturating and penetrating it. This is an act of constant love. Certain esoteric thinkers of past centuries attributed the number 22 to The Fool. This would be an aberrational situation for him, which would correspond to making him come after The World. This would fundamentally mean that matter was ceaselessly refusing all divine or cosmic energy and that this energy was abandoning it at every instant. The fundamental energy of The Fool seeks The World, and The World needs The Fool's energy to live.



I The Magician → ← XX Judgment



The Magician, ever seeking to go higher, and seeking the magic and powers from on high, meets in Judgment what is the most elevated: the ultimate evolution of consciousness, symbolized by an angel. This is not so much a quest as it is a transformation. The coin in The Magician's hand—his material existence, his quest for treasure—corresponds to the angel's yellow halo, the golden egg placed behind his head. This could also be a young individual who is entering life with the intention of starting a family. For his part, the supreme Consciousness is looking for an initiate to undertake the path of awareness.





II The High Priestess → ← XVIII The Sun



The High Priestess, devoted to collecting and studying inside the cloister, receives with Arcanum XVIII light, freedom of movement, and the possibility of transmitting the sacred Word to the entire world. She is no longer alone with her book; the Logos has made itself flesh and heat: her egg will be able to hatch. If she represents a writer, an actor, or an actress, The Sun is her success and entrance into the world. For the Sun god, The High Priestess is virgin flesh, the Virgin Mary. The total love within us needs an entirely virgin space in which to sow its seed. The High Priestess also represents the practice of prayer, dialogue with the Creator. On the light-bathed landscape of The Sun, The High Priestess's cloister provides a friendly zone of shadow and coolness.



III The Empress → ← XVIII The Moon



The boundless action of The Empress encounters the limitless reception of The Moon, two aspects of the creative woman. This encounter is like a bomb in which the lit fuse is The Empress and the explosive powder is The Moon. The Empress's capacity for creation, absorbed by the immensity of The Moon, is increased to cosmic proportions. She is no longer a woman but femininity itself. With The Empress, The Moon experiences the intoxication of action. She who for so long placed all her hopes in The Sun finds in The Empress a welcoming womb that will give birth to her—for if The High Priestess represents virginity, The Empress represents fertility. The Empress represents the body, sexuality, feelings, and fully healthy intellect in which The Moon can incarnate.





III The Emperor → ← XVII The Star



The Emperor encounters prosperity, health, fertility, and purity of intention in The Star. His entire rule is affected by this meeting: she embodies the generosity of this universe whose laws it is his duty to apply. Thanks to her he learns how to connect directly with the cosmic forces. Love of creation colors his all-powerful rule with humility and gentleness. For her part, the generous action of The Star has no meaning unless she finds a reality in which to pour it. The Emperor protects her and gives her his empire. She is like a river whose course will be adjusted by the concrete strength of The Emperor, whose power to act she will reinforce in return.



V The Pope → ← XVI The Tower



The Tower gives The Pope joy, fantasy, sexual liberation, and all the vital enthusiasm and supreme instruction the teacher needs to be a teacher: how to free his students from his teaching and encourage them to learn from themselves. With The Tower, The Pope tells them: "I am your final teacher, not that I may be the best, but because I teach you how to learn from yourselves." He is also a visionary figure who has returned to the present: the theology or mysticism preached by The Pope lives in the direct experience of the Divine. Celestial inspiration, the desire to go deeper, should not lead him to escape the present. The Tower finds in The Pope someone who can dwell in it like a temple, who will restore to its explosive burst a sense of hierarchy, discernment, and the very notion of God: under the eyes of The Pope, the body, existence, every terrain, every joy, every intoxication, is sanctified as a manifestation of the Divine. The festival is full of meaning: the supreme festival is the meeting with Consciousness.





VI The Lover → ← XV The Devil



On one side an angel is outlined against a sun. On the other, an angel of darkness is brandishing a torch. The Lover is a card of union that evokes the pleasure of doing what one loves and freely consensual emotional attachment. The Devil, meanwhile, represents the sexual force that arises from the dark depths of the individual: passion and impulses, creativity, the breaking of boundaries, and rebellion against the rational forces. The figures of The Lover are standing on cultivated plowed ground. It is a surface that tends to communicate with celestial values, to grow as high as the central Lover, who loves everything and everyone without reservation: the white sun. The Devil is the antithesis of this. The figures are inside a primordial cavern with their feet on a dark magma, denying the light of the deity. The Devil lights his own torch, his own illumination. While Arcanum VI is social, Arcanum XV is individual. If Arcanum VI is the card of freely consented choice, Arcanum XV is a card of passion that one has no choice but to obey. These two Arcana complete each other: one offers the light of Consciousness and the other the darkness of the subconscious. The richness of these opposites is the path that leads us to realize the amorous passionate life; love compels us to encounter passion-spawned desires and identify our projections. Conversely, the mystery of taste, of what irresistibly pleases us, reminds us that in the domain of love and passion, we are both divine and diabolical. What truly gives us pleasure is anchored in our subconscious and in our profound creativity.



VII The Chariot → ← XIII Temperance



The Chariot, the essential conqueror, forgets himself. He is one with the movement of the world. Temperance returns to spiritual values and



communication with himself. The two are complementary: the pure action of The Chariot, turned toward an outside objective, could become destructive without the inner presence and moderation of Temperance. When The Chariot is fighting, Temperance blesses and calms his aggressiveness, protecting him from his excessive energy. Similarly, just as the prince's light-blue hair is the engine of The Chariot's material activity, the light-blue wings of the angel of Temperance are the motors of his spiritual activity. The Chariot's movement is horizontal and is deployed in space, whereas that of Temperance is vertical and develops along the line of time. The Chariot seeks wisdom in the Earth, whereas the angel is bringing the wisdom of the celestial world. We need to look at the cards not one after the other but at the same time, like a musical chord. Temperance's action without The Chariot can remain in a closed circuit, unconscious and hesitant. The Chariot gives him a means of taking action in this world, materializing his harmony. What is on the inside transpires like what is on the outside. This pair also evokes the fact that one accepts being protected and guided.



VIII Justice → ← XIII The Nameless Arcanum



The perfection of Justice, which tends toward paralysis, encounters in Arcanum XIII the possibility of transformation and the comprehension of impermanence. This union permits her to not hold change back but to welcome it. The true balance of Justice consists of accepting transformation. Her message could be of giving people what they deserve, and with Arcanum XIII there is a risk that this course will incite a revolution. This union indicates that the sole way to feel right with oneself is to accept self-transformation. Everything that remains fixed inside causes us harm. Being alive means being in perpetual transformation. Arcanum XIII finds a meaning in his revolution in Justice. Just as order feeds on chaos, chaos needs order to acquire form. The cleansing of Arcanum XIII makes sense if its purpose or



foundation is balance, a new notion of perfection, or the Law. The Hebrew term *tohu bohu*\* means “chaos,” the egg of order.



VIII The Hermit → ← XII The Hanged Man



These two Arcana reflect the two paths of knowledge that alchemical tradition called the “dry path” and the “wet path.” In the dry path, seekers study, read, and read again, pray, confining themselves to strict practices and a flawless discipline until they find wisdom. In the wet path we are not looking. We receive, as illustrated by this Zen saying: “Door open to the north, to the south, to the east, and to the west.” The Hanged Man makes no effort. He surrenders, accepts emptiness, and abandons all choice and will. The Hermit spends a lifetime searching to reach—at the end of an immense labor—holy ignorance. This is what unites him with The Hanged Man; what The Hanged Man finds after deep meditation is what The Hermit transmits as the result of a research path whose substratum is concentrated in the light of his lamp. The essential muteness of The Hanged Man is the root of the precise words of The Hermit. This could be the master who guides the meditation of his disciple, both sharing a relationship of reciprocal necessity. This could be a doctor and a patient, one bringing the knowledge necessary to affect a cure and the other a subject for study and practice. In a more everyday context, we could also see The Hanged Man as a baby in gestation and The Hermit as the father full of experience who supervises his development. The fetus is then the hope of the mature man to perpetuate himself into the future.

With this pair, the Tarot teaches us that if we truly wish to enter ourselves, we should not forget our responsibilities in the presence of life, facing transmission and teaching. We cannot fall into a trance all alone, like The Hanged Man.

\**Tohu va bohu* is used in the second verse of Genesis to refer to the earth immediately after God created it, translated in the KJV as “without form and void.”





X The Wheel of Fortune → ← XI Strength



We could say that these two cards are the heart of the Tarot. Everything is in the process of ending, and at the same time everything is on the verge of beginning. Eternal ending, eternal beginning. If we consider this couple this way, it is easier to grasp its profound meaning.

In The Wheel of Fortune, all experiences have been lived. Between ascent and descent, repeated cycles have turned into vicious circles. It is missing a new impetus that will break this rhythm so that the circle can open to the vertical dimension and be converted into a spiral. This is what Strength brings. She represents an energy in the state of potential that finds The Wheel of Fortune a propitious terrain in which to expand. Like a traditional business will invent a new product to find its way out of a commercial dead end, we can use the sexual and creative energies that Justice places continuously at our disposal to get out of a rut if we allow them to circulate freely and intelligently in our being. This could also be a new remedy that makes it possible to cure what had been an incurable disease. It is every authentically new creative solution that is both created by a block and allows this block to be dissolved. It is also the end of one economic situation and a new possibility for making money. In every financial setback there is the possibility for ingenuity and a launching pad for a different activity. These two cards share a profound interaction, because without the immobilizing experience of The Wheel of Fortune, we could hesitate to contact forces from depths perceived as dangerous or terrifying. Often a difficulty or block will pull us toward an artistic or therapeutic form, a practice that we would never have imagined before. Arcanum X is a launch pad that allows us to enter into the new experience of Strength.

The Tarot's message with this pair is that every time something ends, we need to think that something new is beginning, that this end and beginning are one.



# Numerical Succession and Transfer

## *Keys for the Reading of Two Cards*

While it is not possible for us to study all the pairs that can be formed from the cards of the Major Arcana, we wanted to conclude this part of the book by providing several additional examples that allow us to give two more essential elements for reading these two-card “syllables.”

In the first three examples, we study three sets of two Major Arcana that follow each other in numerical order: XII and XIII, XV and XVI, and XX and XXI. We shall see that the numerical order can be taken into account when reading the cards that have been drawn: if the pair of cards chosen expresses passage from a receptive even-number level to that of an active odd-number level, the interpretation dynamic is not the same as when the cards are going from active to receptive.

Furthermore, we decided to study the transfer of the symbols that takes place between Arcanum XV, The Devil, and Arcanum XVIII, The Sun. The purpose of this example is to inspire the reader to identify, by enabling both cards to echo each other, which elements are found in both, and how these elements are transformed. This dynamic reading work is a key element for reading a Tarot spread as a whole and not as a succession of isolated elements.

Along the same lines, we propose the reading of three, then four



cards with this same key that constitutes the transfer of the symbols. As one example, we have the series XVII–XVIII–XVIII, with the blue river flowing across the three cards, and as another, the “breakdown” of The Lover (VI) into three individuals: The Magician (I), The High Priestess (II), and The Empress (III).

## FROM RECEPTION TO ACTION, FROM ACTION TO RECEPTION

### XII The Hanged Man—XIII The Nameless Arcanum

The relationship between these two Arcana is one of extreme tension, similar to those concrete girders that have a taut iron armature inside. The XII is an extreme stop; the XIII is an extreme transformational explosion. We could say that both change the world: The Hanged Man ceases to decide and stops the world by stopping himself and burying himself in his inner search; Arcanum XIII destroys the old world so the new world can be born. These two actions at opposite poles have the common effect of destroying the old reality. The numerical order of the cards is XII–XIII: this fall into oneself, this looking back upon the world to seek only what is true, and this seedlike state of nonaction prepare the way for the hatching, the birth, the explosion.



**XII—XIII.** This is a magnificent time of explosive creativity. Everything that was contained in The Hanged Man bursts out in the Nameless Arcanum. The great change takes place—transformation and revolution—but their results are not yet known. To shed light on this point, it is necessary to draw another card or several more.

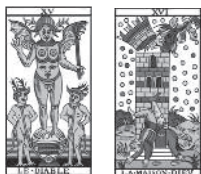


**XIII—XII.** In this configuration, we find ourselves in the presence of great frustration. All the transformational energy of the Nameless Arcanum (XIII) collides against the dam presented by The Hanged Man. This situation can lead to self-destruction or rage.

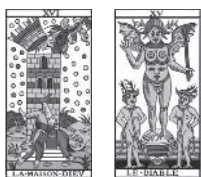


## XV The Devil—XVI The Tower

Here, too, we move from a card in which the figures are bound (XV) and buried in an underground world to a card depicting an explosion, a joyous emergence into the open air. The numerical order is XV–XVI. The Tower then represents this first ascent of the energies from the depths.



**XV–XVI.** We are in the presence of underground forces manifesting themselves. Everything that has hitherto been hidden is said, discovered, or brought into the light. Both marvelous and shameful secrets are revealed. A profound creativity finds expression in an artistic or festive form. This can be a moment of great bliss or huge shame, but in any case it is a purifying stage.



**XVI–XV.** The mind descends into the depths of the subconscious, becomes attached to matter, and feeds the torch of creation. After the joyous explosion comes the rooting in adoration. This can be the herald of a great passion, but it may also indicate a tie that is hard to break.

## XX Judgment—XXI The World



**XX–XXI.** This is complete success; what the angel offers has been realized. The irresistible desire culminates in its satisfaction. Through the intermediary of the angel, we know grace; through that of the eagle, illumination; through that of the lion, cosmic orgasm; through that of the flesh-colored animal, trance and divine peace. The four supreme hopes of the human being can then be realized. In material life he becomes a champion capable of defeating all obstacles and triumphing. In vital force (the lion) he makes himself a hero, capable of defeating death. In the intellect (the eagle) he attains genius, capable of discovering what no one has ever seen. In the emotional center (the angel) he becomes a saint wanting nothing for himself that is not also for others.





**XXI—XX.** We are in a tragic and painful situation. Arcanum XXI (the end) is placed at the beginning. Here it represents imprisonment, absence of communication, autism, or, even more precisely, a difficult birth.

This negation of birth is so strong that in Judgment, the person attempting to emerge from the tomb (the alchemical athanor) remains a captive of the density of matter and, despite the work and the prayers, cannot achieve his ascent. The irresistible desire does not find satisfaction. Because The World has been snared this way, it is impossible for the four supreme hopes to be realized. The individual feels like a loser, a coward, a mediocrity, and an egotist. Obviously this situation is not irreversible: in an actual reading, which is to say with a minimum of three cards, the following card would indicate the way to get out of this painful situation.

## THE TRANSFER OF SYMBOLS FROM ONE ARCANUM TO ANOTHER



### XV The Devil—XVIII The Sun

We could consider The Devil as representing the most buried, dark, and deepest side of the Tarot. The Sun, on the other hand, is the most luminous symbol of all.

In Arcanum XV, we see an androgynous being holding a torch in his left hand that casts its light upon a rooted male-female couple, who are bound and inactive and probably imprisoned by their own will. The female has three dots on one side at rib level, representing, if we like, the spiritual dimension. We could say that we see these two figures again in The Sun, but now they are free. But where they refused the gift in The Devil, hiding their hands behind their backs, we see them here in a relationship of mutual aid. The figure on the right is helping the other across the river, symbol of eternal life that flows like perpetual change. This figure has his hand at the nape of his partner's neck, thereby affirming his intention of conscious development. The other is stretching his hands toward the three dots that his companion has on his side, in other words, toward the divine ideal. The individual on the left still has the tail we saw on the imps of Arcanum XV, but where the appendages



of these latter extended indefinitely, limitlessly outward, the tail of the figure in *The Sun*, to the contrary, folds back toward the inside. Similarly, the figures of *The Sun* wear around their necks a red remnant of the rope that bound them to *The Devil*; the animal nature of the ego has not been eliminated but honored and tamed.

The three dots have shifted: in *Arcanum XV*, the figure on the left is wearing them, and in *The Sun* it is the figure on the right. The female mind is the first to take the step toward illumination. To reach his goal, the man should awaken his anima. In *The Devil*, the light-blue river appears to have ceased flowing; it is static and dead: the ego claims to fix time to a set position. But this undertaking only results in fixing oneself to this set position; the individual snares and roots himself. The trio in *The Devil* turns his abode into an imprisoning pedestal. It is the animal quest for territory. In *The Sun*, a short wall, like an endless enclosure, separates past and present and allows the construction of a new life in love and giving. The thirteen drops rising toward the sun bring *Arcanum XIII* to mind, the symbol of transformation. They represent the aspirations of all aware beings on the Earth who climb toward *The Sun*, image of our eternal Consciousness, the central fire that animates us. The sun is made up of red and yellow: blood and light. This luminous life permits the construction of a wall, it too of blood and light, which does not imprison but eliminates the notion of possession. It simply protects us from ties to the past.



### XVII The Star—XVIII The Moon— XVIII The Sun

It is possible to think that the expanse of water we see in *The Moon* is contained by its boundaries in such a way that the crayfish found there is held prisoner. However, this body of water cannot be understood unless we place *The Moon* back in between *The Star* and *The Sun*. We then find ourselves facing a river that comes from far away and continues to flow even farther away. It comes from *Arcanum XVII* where a naked woman, symbol of the anima, of inner truth, has found her active spot on the red ground where she is resting her knee.



Through her contact with the ground, she sanctifies it. With her two vessels she is purifying the current that comes from the past (from the left in the direction of the reading). This purification is achieved by means of two energies: sexual energy (dark blue) and spiritual energy (yellow) that we also see in the seven minor stars (blue and yellow) in the card's sky. The two vessels, however, bear the red and yellow colors of the central star.

The orange half-moon that the female figure bears on her brow points to her mental receptivity to the cosmic energies. It is not she who desires, it is the cosmos that desires her—that desires us. It is not she who spiritualizes, it is the cosmos that sends her awareness. She is in the position of servitor to the universal Great Work. The black bird perched on the branches is the symbol of her human part (the ego) that has been reduced to the volatile state, to a docile and active nothingness.

The purified river reaches the pond of The Moon, but the crayfish does not obey the current. It does not wish to go forward; it wants an ideal—symbolized by The Moon. The nocturnal body bears the same colors as the crayfish, indicating that it is only a projection of this mad and idealistic animal. The howling dogs (or wolves) feed on this desire for the ideal, but without giving any assistance. Each is concerned only for itself. To advance, the crayfish will have to take this satellite that is the moon as its model: become more and more transparent until it is only a reflection, a mirror of solar light, the light of love. In The Star, the stars are faraway suns. The idealist Moon gazes at the faraway Sun. When the receptive labor has reached its end, the face of The Moon, which is the essence of the crayfish (light blue), dissolves in the river of The Sun. There in Arcanum XVIII, the duality of the two vessels in Arcanum XVII and the two dogs of The Moon unite together: the two individuals helping each other under the loving gaze of The Sun. They are walking over the river of life, separating themselves from the past with the wall that can be seen behind them and by building their new paradise. The love sent them by The Sun, by germinating in their hearts, climbs back to him in the rising drops. Everything that we give is given back; everything that we do not give is taken away.



Basically, what The Star is striving to do is to conciliate the two great universal archetypes: The Moon, which represents the most sublime values of the mother, and The Sun, which represents the most elevated values of the father. Without a balance between these two archetypes, no task can be completed successfully.

In the drawings where these three Arcana appear, The Star generally represents the consultant; if it is a man, this Arcanum evokes his feminine, artistic, mediumistic, receptive part (anima). But attention should be paid: if we invert the order given us by The Tarot (this order being The Moon on the left and The Sun on the right), we find ourselves with:



**XVII—XVIII—XVIII.** The mother takes the place of the father and becomes intrusive, cruel, and dictatorial. And the father takes the place of the mother, becoming weak, childish, and absent.



**XVIII—XVIII—XVII.** The Star never ceases to look at The Sun and The Moon. She remains dependent, wiping away the future and falling into childish daydreams.



**XVIII—XVII—XVIII.** The Star takes the father's place and lives to seduce the mother, whose metaphorical fiancée she becomes, relegating the father to the background.



**XVIII—XVII—XVIII.** The Star, by appropriating the immense receptivity of The Moon (her mother), becomes the wife of her father. This is an incestuous relationship in which the young woman will play the role of mother for her brothers and sisters.



# I The Magician—II The High Priestess—III The Empress, and Their Mirror: VI The Lover

It is necessary to understand that the Tarot is an optical language and that in certain regards it is similar to the language of music. A single note does not resonate in the same way as a chord of two or three notes. In music, the chord, although made up of several notes, is perceived by the ear as a single unit. To learn how to read the Tarot, it is necessary to be able to conceptualize the “chords” of several cards.

For example, The Magician next to The High Priestess could very easily bring to mind a person who draws his strength from a secret knowledge (the cloistered High Priestess). An action is in preparation; it is incubating as The High Priestess’s egg indicates. If we add The Empress (I–II–III), a sudden explosion is created, an explosion of creativity. And if we add together the numerical value of these cards, we get:  $1 + 2 + 3 = 6$ . VI is the card The Lover, the one that provides the tone of the “chord”—The Magician between The High Priestess and The Empress, mirroring the three figures (a man and two women) that appear on the card of The Lover.



By studying the Arcana in this way, we shall see that the feet of The Magician are pointing in two opposite directions like the feet of the young man of The Lover. We could say that he is placing himself simultaneously on two diverging paths. The Magician is holding a magic wand in his left hand, the symbol of extreme creativity. A



yellow sphere or coin in his right hand symbolizes accumulation and concentration. What path will he take? The Lover gives us an indication that he will realize the union of the two tendencies. To his right we in fact see a woman wearing a blue crown, corresponding to The High Priestess. She is holding him by the shoulder and the bottom of his tunic, as if to restrain him, but at the same time is lending him support and granting him her experience. To the young man's left (our right), a woman wearing a flower crown represents The Empress. She is pointing to her companion's heart with one hand, while the other hand, amalgamated with his, is pointed toward her womb as if to say: "Impregnate me." Similarly, The Empress is holding an eagle in her arms like a child or an awareness in gestation. The scepter she is propping up with her belly is sprouting a tiny green leaf, sign of a perpetually renewing creativity.

The three figures in Arcana I, II, and III are separated. They find their union in The Lover. The coin, the book, and the eagle, three degrees of the work in gestation, have risen into the sky, creating the divine awareness that is nothing other than love—exaltation of the miracle of all life. In this loving union, we hear the chord uniting past, present, and future. This harmony is the union of opposites, or of concepts that are separate in appearance: conservation, destruction, and creation. The VI also tells us that the highest love is the love of beauty and the acceptance of the existence of the other.

Let's take the three Arcana. If we look at them going I–II–III, there is no communication between the figures.



In the sense II–I–III (see preceding page), we find The Magician futilely attempting to provide a means for The High Priestess and The Empress to communicate. For this union to succeed, we should read





the cards in the order III–I–II. Here all the figures are looking at one another, putting their forces to work for their shared harmony.

It is interesting to note that this order is not the exact reproduction of what we see in Arcanum VI, but its mirror image. This is yet another clue the Tarot provides us: it is not the projection of our situation, but our mirror. It is up to us to see our reflections in it and to reflect upon them—to better understand ourselves.



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**PART FIVE**

*The Reading of the Tarot*

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# Opening

## *How to Become a Mirror*

During my first years studying the Tarot, seeking the meaning of its symbols, I considered them to be a tool for self-knowledge. Influenced by my reading of books on alchemy, the Kabbalah, and other initiatory traditions, I believed that whoever aspired to wisdom had to work in solitude. The seed, to germinate, needs the darkness of the depths of the Earth, just like the fetus requires the darkness of the maternal womb; and the soul, according to Saint John of the Cross, to reach union with God, must pass through the dark night of the soul in nakedness and purgation:

*In the happy night,  
In secret where none saw me,  
Nor I beheld aught,  
Without light or guide,  
Save that which burned in my heart.*

This is why, combined with the commercial use of the Tarot by the fashionable fortunetellers, I disdained the reading aspect. From an initiatory but also a scientific point of view, it seemed shameful to me to use the cards to predict the future. A passage from the Bible corroborated my feelings:



“There must never be anyone among you . . . who practices divination, who is soothsayer, augur, or sorcerer, weaver of spells. . . . For anyone that does these things is detestable to Yahweh your God.”  
(Deut. 18:10–12, Jerusalem Bible)

However, having decided to confer upon the Arcana the role of my only teacher, and committing myself to obey them totally, just as I had accepted the clue of Arcanum XVI, The Tower, to clarify my notion of God, I had to take into account a clear message from The High Priestess. Each of the major Arcana quite clearly indicates an action that can be summed up in one verb. With The Fool, it is possible this word would be *travel*; with The Empress *seduce*; with The Emperor *command*; with The Pope *teach*; with The Lover *exchange*; with The Chariot *conquer*; with Justice *balance*; with The Hermit *enlighten*; with The Wheel of Fortune *accept*; with Strength *dominate*; with The Hanged Man *sacrifice*; with the Nameless Arcanum *eliminate*; with Temperance *calm*; with The Devil *tempt*; with The Tower *celebrate*; with The Star *give*; with The Moon *imagine*; with The Sun *create*; with Judgment *live again*; with The World *triumph* . . . And in the case of The High Priestess: *read*.

The flesh-colored book that the nun is holding in her hands does not show words but seventeen wavy lines. On one hand, this tells us that it is not an intellectual but an emotional message; and on the other, it refers us to Arcanum XVII, The Star, in which a nude woman gives to the world what she has received from Cosmic Consciousness. This confirms that The High Priestess is not reading her book but offering it. The thumb of her right hand is resting on one line, while that of her left hand is placed on two lines, which it joins together. The same is true for the ribbons crossing over her chest: on the one closest to her body there is a cross, and on the superposing one, there are two. This can indicate an individual who has moved from solitary study to giving to the other.

This convinced me that the purpose of the Tarot was fulfilled when it was used to help others by means of a reading that consists of presenting Arcana to an individual that have been transformed into a mirror of his or her soul.



I am absolutely opposed to reading hypothetical futures. The notion of fate transmitted by the Greek theater of antiquity, this superstition according to which “everything has been written” and that no one can escape his destiny, repulses me. If, from the moment we are born, a god is directing every step we take, what is the good of striving for anything at all? Should we believe that our life is inevitably laid out in advance and all we are allowed to do is submit? To confront the idea of reading the cards, I had to define my notion of future. The reading subject either has or does not have a purpose in his life; he acts in accordance with projects, and he makes plans. When he starts worrying about knowing his future, he is depreciating his present actions, which he doubts. But the present is a fleeting instant: what weighs upon the development of the person receiving the reading is the past, which can act like ballast that tends to cause the future repetition of traumatic experiences from childhood (I will either do or not do what others have done or did not do to me), or as a source of energy that pushes us to progress, to change—in the best cases, transform ourselves. If I have to accept the existence of a preordained future, I would visualize the present as a point from which a fan of infinite paths departs. An intentional action or an accident, something that happens by chance, projects us forward and obliges us to live one of the countless fates possible. This would allow me to declare, even when “everything has been written,” that the divine menu does not consist of a single dish but a huge selection. Free will consists of choosing one of these infinite sentences Fate hands down.

When we eliminate the illusion of “reading the future,” the Tarot becomes a psychological tool and a tool for self-knowledge. By honestly confronting the characteristics of our personalities that have gone off course—habits, identifications, manias, vices; narcissistic, antisocial, schizoid, and paranoid disorders; personal delusions, crazy ideas, depressive feelings, emotional immaturity, twisted desires, and needs imposed by the family, society, or culture—we can attain knowledge of our real essence, in other words, what is innate in us and not acquired. The individual can stop being what others want so that he can become who he truly is.



I began, with infinite precautions, to read the Tarot for patients that Dr. Jean-Claude Lapraz sent me in order to learn if their illnesses were the consequences of psychological problems. As a tarologist, I set myself the responsibility of respecting four expressions: “Based on what I know” (reality being infinite, no one can know everything); “Up to a certain point” (nothing is definitive or absolute on a general level; there is always the possibility of an exception); “At the risk of fooling myself” (nothing a human being says is infallible); and “If you really want it this way” (things are the way they are because earlier we have adapted our languages to others; every notion is the result of a collective agreement).

Initially I read the cards as if they were a psychological test. Before analyzing the drawings and their relations, I interpreted the way the patient placed the cards, side-by-side or apart, closer or farther, superposed, horizontal, or slanted, and so forth. As my experience grew, I left this aside and restricted myself to interpreting the drawings. However, for greater effectiveness, I refined my observation of the individual seeking consultation, the way he used his voice, the dynamic of her gestures, physical posture, skin quality, breath odor, age, profession, sexual characteristics, emotional state, and finally family tree, as far back, if possible, to the great-grandparents. Over the course of the years, grasping all these aspects in a single glance, I concentrated exclusively on reading the cards, always warning the person that he was not in front of a magician but a tarologist, and that the Arcana were basically small printed cards that could quite easily deliver an absurd message. The reading was made up of three acts of chance: the one that led this individual to me, the one that had put me in the presence of this individual, and the moment when the cards were chosen. The reading recipient had a perfect right to accept, to discuss, or to ask for more precision on the reading.

Starting from the principle that the Tarot had been introduced into the world as a game, I realized that the reading had to be structured like a game. In addition to the players and the laws that govern it, the place where it takes place is equally important. You cannot play basketball on a football field, and a chess board is different from the Monopoly playing board. I grasped that the interpretation of the cards depended upon



the meaning given to them before the reading. Depending upon the "terrain," the strategy, the Tarot became different, the interpretation of the cards changed; for example, they could be positive or negative. It became clear to me that to obtain a correct reading, I had to above all define the roles played by the Arcana, by employing strategies adapted to the questions and level of consciousness of the person requesting the reading. On the other hand, because a game is almost always a combat with a winner, it was also important to define the players—in other words, the individual seeking the reading and the reader. In competitive games the goal is eliminating the adversary, which amounts to killing him metaphorically. In the tarological game, the objective is to heal the adversary and help him live.

This work became difficult: the contemporary human being can be described as a marvelous substance imprisoned inside a sick container. He has limits he stubbornly defends because, although they are painful, he identifies with them. His mind has been inhabited by crazy thoughts since childhood. A patient who refuses to admit that his thought has the ability to heal him becomes an enraged adversary facing the tarologist. He says his heart is empty to conceal that it is full of resentment. He lives apart from others, rejects sublime sentiments, devalues his ability to love and be loved, inhibits his sexual capacity or exacerbates it by scorning it. He has lost faith in his creativity and is ashamed of his own desires. He reduces his infinite capacity of physical movements to a small number of quotidian gestures. His rigidity is the result of prejudices implanted by a morality that was once upon a time religious.

The individual feels guilty about his actions, his desires, his feelings, and his thoughts. This guilt allows him to say that what happens to him is a just and necessary punishment. Or else he denigrates himself nonstop by believing, through a deficiency of values, that he does not deserve to be free of his suffering. Or he justifies his mistakes by making excessive and sometimes ingenious excuses, without ever making any effort to change. Or else he desires to love, desires to create, desires to dare, desires to imagine, desires endless things, and is drowning in the inactivity of desiring to desire. Or he even ardently but impotently desires to destroy those who bother him, eliminate those who have hurt



him, or get revenge, only to finally destroy himself. Or else he hurls himself into sexual activity without ever managing to find complete satisfaction with any one individual. Or he needs notoriety like a drug and suffers from not having it or having to tolerate it, which makes him a psychological deaf-mute painfully spinning around himself. Or he behaves like a merciless critic, a permanent judge, incapable of recognizing the values of others, which compels him to obsessively compare himself to others, diminishing them to assure his own value. Or, because of fear of transformation, he refuses to integrate new knowledge, flatters his own ignorance, and denies on principle: he is the person of “no” and “maybe.”

On the other hand, the reading subject has the notion of a habitable space based on the idea of private property. He is accustomed to living in a reduced space with straight walls, in cubes. This creates a resistance within him to the idea of infinity. He cannot accept that he is living in the cosmos. He confuses home with prison. Conditioned by the politico-economic interests of the era, he has been taught that life is short. In the Middle Ages it was considered natural to die at the age of thirty. In the Renaissance it was forty; in the nineteenth century, sixty; and today, it is eighty. A few scientists grant us one hundred twenty for the twenty-second century, but in reality no one knows the true human life span. If someone said the true span was thousands of years like certain trees, people would think he was crazy. In order to qualify time as money society banishes the idea of eternity. The citizen is a consumer who must have a short life for industry to function. But are we really so ephemeral in reality? Why shouldn't we have the right to live as long as the universe? Because the individual has been told, “You are only a part,” he has trouble accepting that he is a whole. He has learned to fight to defend his “individuality” by seeking egotistical powers. Living on a psychological island, he does not realize that there is only one atmosphere, that the pollution in Mexico, Bombay, or Paris poisons the air of the entire planet; that remote wars and the ignorance and poverty of others attack his happiness. What happens to the world happens to him. An economic crisis over there has repercussions here, in his pockets. The greater his separation from others, the smaller his



awareness. As a victim of abusive ideas, the person seeking a reading denies his ability to realize miracles (we mean by “miracles” the fact of being able to grasp that reality does not behave according to a pre-established model but in a way that is incomprehensible to a mentality imprisoned in a logical system) and, dispossessed, thinks he is living alone, without suspecting that the universe—“the subconscious”—is his ally. Accepting the idea that he is worth nothing, he does not deign to meditate to find his inner god.

The person receiving the reading confuses Consciousness (the essential Being) with the act of becoming conscious of something. The purpose of Consciousness is to successfully become yourself in order to offer yourself to the deity. We do not possess a complete self automatically: we start with a seed that develops through successive mutations. Its first level is animal. The individual lives only to satisfy his material and sexual needs. He does not control his instincts and has no respect for others. His fear of losing makes him aggressive. The infantile level is next. Here the individual lives a superficial life because he or she does not accept aging or death. He or she refuses to meditate in order to know himself or herself, collects useless objects and finds various means of distraction, without any sense of responsibility. Later the romantic level awakens. The individual cannot control his or her emotions and is invaded by them. As an eternal adolescent, he or she believes that meeting a man or woman to form a couple is life’s purpose. Influenced by cinema, television, and style magazines, he or she creates an ideal of love that resembles a fairy tale. This leads to replacing being with appearance. It is possible that after some painful setbacks, adult consciousness will develop. It is at this level that the Other exists for the first time. The individual, who now realizes that instead of demanding, he or she should invest and become self reliant, can fall into the egotistical error of thirst for power. This gives birth to exploiters, tyrants, unscrupulous businessmen, and swindlers of all sorts. The antithesis of this egotism is that of those people who, to feel noble, spend their time helping others because they are too lazy to help themselves. If this truly becomes aid to oneself, then the level of social consciousness opens. This is when



the individual fights for the happiness of all humanity, but also for the health of plants, animals, and the planet. Later it will open to Cosmic Consciousness.

Nothing happens in the universe without movement and transformation. Distancing herself from all the stubborn systems and habits that depreciate life, the responsible individual will abandon herself just like the cosmos to constant change, knowing that she belongs to an infinite and eternal world. She emerges from generational boundaries and prepares the terrain for the advent of the new being. Finally she attains divine Consciousness—a level that very few reach. In the dark core of the subconscious, there is a brilliant spot of complete lucidity, a powerful ally that if used well, will manifest like an inner god; or, if used poorly, like an inner demon. This is the level known by geniuses, prophets, and magi.

If the tarologist, without advance preparation, tries to lead the reading subject toward a transformation that raises his level of consciousness, this individual will react as if his teeth are being pulled. To change, there must be a wish to change, the knowledge that this change is possible, and that, finally, the consequences of this change can be accepted.

At the time of reading the cards, the tarologist should observe his subject as a doctor would—examining both body and soul. You should take into consideration the physical posture, muscular tension, stature, weight, skin quality and color, breathing, and the points where the voice resonates; next feel the person's sexual preferences; ask yourself if the person loves or is loved, and also what kind of ideas dwell in his or her mind. All this provides a revealing portrait of the consultant's level of consciousness. This portrait should be obtained with the greatest precautions: it could be that the consultation is motivated by superficial curiosity, or because it is not a revelation that is being sought so much as a sedative that will make it possible to painlessly tolerate something about to happen. Giving is one thing, forcing someone to receive is something else entirely. A reading can easily become toxic. It is quite tempting for the "all-seeing" reader who takes his subjective conclusions for absolute truths to make catastrophic predictions that, although



motivated by a sincere desire to help, can poison the person's mind. I read the following article in the papers of January 20, 2003:

Mircea Teodorascu, a fifty-one year old Romanian living in the department of Bacau (eastern Romania), found what he thought was an unbeatable solution in his own suicide. Several days earlier, he had consulted a fortuneteller who predicted a death would affect him in the very near future: his or that of his twenty-three-year-old son. Returning home, Mircea Teodorascu, to "save" his son, stabbed himself with a long kitchen knife. He died shortly after being taken to the emergency room of the hospital.

The tarologist, leaving aside the prediction of the future, should be capable of realizing the motives that drive him to read. Does he want to obtain power over others? Is it to earn money by putting together a clientele? Is it to be admired? Is it a way to share his anxieties or a means of sexual seduction? If our position as reader is unclear, the reading will not be clear either. The Tarot being a set of symbols—which are obscure because they are initiatory—it becomes an essentially subjective language. The tarologist needs to know what kind of psychological content his subconscious is projecting on the reading. No one can boast of knowing himself entirely. We know ourselves only at the time of our introspective examination, but the mind, like the universe, is in constant expansion. Constant attention and a strict state of alert, and a sincere acceptance of the impulses that ask us to control and direct them toward objective interpretations, should guide our reading. It is possible that one individual resembles our mother, another member of our family, or someone who forced us to do something as a child in one way or another. If we are not aware of this, we will treat the person seeking consultation with the same resentment that we would treat the one who harmed us. It is impossible to say, "I will not make any projections," but it is quite possible to tell yourself, "I will be conscious of my projections." For that, we should know how we feel about things when we read the Tarot. Observe if the person seeing the reading is sympathetic or antipathetic to us, if she scares us, if he or she attracts us



sexually, if we admire him, if we judge her mercilessly. One of the greatest dangers of reading is that the reader will morally judge his subject—because “the judge lies”\* (Arcanum XX).

So how can we read without manipulating, without directing, without setting ourselves up as a master?

In order not to fall into these errors, I made a vow to myself never to give advice, but to structure the reading in such a way that the solution comes to the person. To manage this, I relied on my study of dream analysis: the psychoanalyst should not explain to his patient the meaning of oneiric symbols. This amounts to playing the role of father-mother and plunging the patient into a persistent childhood. The patient should personally penetrate the messages his subconscious sends him. The analyst can present different solutions. The individual should choose the path that best suits him.

To this end, the reader should attain a state of perfect neutrality by ignoring his desires, feelings, and opinions, in an extreme act of self-sacrifice. If the tarologist succeeds at turning himself into an “invisible man,” who then is reading the Tarot? Using a metaphor, I say it is a mirror. The level of the individual’s consciousness is reflected by the purity of our mind. Using his own language (if it is a child, for example, we use a childlike language), and taking on the appearance of the other, through our own emptiness, and through our words and gestures, we shall manage to get the individual to read his own Tarot. This reading will bring a response that corresponds to the other’s world, not our own. Our solutions are not his solutions. If the person does not agree with our reading, do not try to persuade him. Because it is his own life, we should always let him be right. In reality, the subconscious is our ally. If it refuses to reveal a secret to us, it is because we are not yet ready. We should never force its revelation. We should obtain it with the greatest caution.

We have talked not only about the words of the tarologist but also of his gestures. To use them wisely, we need to set the position of the reading subject, first of all. Should we place her facing us? Next to us?

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\*[*Jugement* = *juge ment*, or “judge lies,” in French. —*Trans.*]



Will we leave him in front while we guide his reading from behind like a shadow? The choice depends on the tarologist's motivation. Face to face, it is the fascination (danger of a grab for power: the other individual could submit like a child). Next to us, it is an emotional exchange (danger of incestuous transfer: the person could try to envelop us in a symbiosis). From behind his back, like a shadow (danger of deification: the reading subject could mistake us for an all-powerful magus). All these possibilities have their uses—and their dangers. A clumsy or overly energetic gesture, one that is too insistent or disorganized, can lead the reading subject's understanding astray and undermine her confidence.

I had the luck to attend a tea ceremony performed by a master in Kyoto, Japan. I was permanently stamped by witnessing such deep awareness in every gesture involved in the preparation of a "simple" cup of tea—they revealed such humanity, beauty, and economy of movement. I promised myself to establish gestures for reading the Tarot that had the perfection and humility of a Zen tea ceremony.

First we give the deck to the person seeking the reading, so that she can shuffle them, with a precise, moderate gesture that ends at a point that is neither too close nor too far from her. Half of this step (the offer) should be performed by the tarologist. The other half should be by the individual (active reception). While the person is mixing up the order of the cards, the reader remains motionless and composed. The voice he uses should not echo in his skull but in his chest. It is a gentle voice, the one used to address children, one coming from the heart and not the intellect. It is a tone of kindness, one quite difficult to obtain. To succeed, the tarologist should approach a state of holiness. I am not talking about the outside appearance, the stereotype of a saint in religious tract, but of a true, poetic, and sublime feeling. The various religions have taken possession of the concept of holiness, giving it restrictive meanings. Among these restrictions is the negation of sexuality, reproduction, and the family, combined with exaltation of the martyr and rejection of the real world for some mythical beyond. We speak of Catholic, Muslim, Buddhist, Hebrew (the just) saints, and so on, but we have no notion of citizen holiness. The citizen saint can love an individual of the opposite sex, have



children, start a family, and have a healthy enjoyment of life without belonging to a sect, without worshiping doctrines dictated by a god with a face and a name, and practice a morality that is not founded on taboos but on the concept of actions useful for humanity. The reader of the Tarot, while he is not a saint, should imitate saintliness. In certain Eastern cultures, parrots, apes, and dogs are described as sacred animals that represent the individual ego because they are capable of imitating their masters.

How do we learn to imitate a saint? Saintliness is not innate, nor is it a gift that comes from outside; it is something that is obtained little by little. To be strong in the large things, it is necessary to be strong in the little everyday things, by practicing to give without expecting anything in return: neither thanks nor money nor admiration nor submission. It involves not comparing ourselves or competing with others while humbly accepting their values. It is by not erecting our viewpoint as measuring unit of the world, by accepting differences with kindness . . . By learning, among many other things, to concentrate our attention, to control our thoughts, our desires, and emotions during the reading; to vanquish our laziness, always to finish what we start, not to get upset if the individual for whom we are reading refuses to grasp Consciousness, to do what we are doing the best we can, to eliminate vices and manias, to perform acts of generosity without witnesses, to purify the mind by eliminating superfluous interests without falling into either excessive self-criticism or excessive self-indulgence, consciously to give thanks for every gift, to meditate, to pray to the inner god, to contemplate, to have conversations with ourselves on profound themes, to develop their meanings, to stop defining ourselves, to know how to listen, to not lie to others or to ourselves, to not revel in our pain or agony, to help our neighbor without making him dependent, to not seek to be imitated, to make lucid use of time, to make work plans and accomplish them, to not take up too much space, to not squander, to not make useless noise, to not eat unhealthy food only for pleasure, to answer every question as honestly as possible, to overcome fear of life and death, to not only live in the here and now but in the elsewhere and after, never to abandon our children by watching over them from the time they were



infants, to appropriate nothing or no one for ourselves, to share equitably, to not overadorn ourselves with clothing or objects out of vanity, to not deceive, to sleep only as much as is strictly necessary, not to follow styles, not to prostitute ourselves, to respect scrupulously every signed contract and every promise made, to be punctual, not to envy the success of others, to say just what needs to be said, not to think of the benefits of a work but to love the work for itself, never to threaten or curse, to put ourselves in the shoes of the other, to make every moment a teacher, to want our children to do better than we did and to accept their success, to teach the consultants how to learn from themselves, to overcome pride by changing it into dignity, anger into creativity, avarice into wisdom, envy into admiration for beauty, hate into generosity, lack of faith into universal love; not to applaud or insult ourselves, not to complain about ourselves, not to give orders for the pleasure of compelling obedience, not to contract debts, never to speak badly of others, not to keep useless objects, and, first and foremost, never to act in your own name but in that of the inner god.

Card reading at this time was in the hands of fortunetellers who used the Tarot not like a language but as tool for prediction like a pendulum or a crystal ball. They did not read the Aracana; they waited until the cards prompted “flashes” that they interpreted according to their whim.

I remember my meetings in Paris with Madame Robin, a famous clairvoyant who had earned her notoriety thanks to the publication of a pocket Tarot (only the twenty-two Major Arcana) with extremely simple explanations at the foot of each card—explanations that obviously limited the projective power of the cards by reducing them to “This and nothing else is what this Arcanum means.” The lady, intrigued by my film *The Holy Mountain*, wanted to make my acquaintance. When I entered her apartment, expecting to find a temple, I found myself in a charming bathroom. The clairvoyant, who was around fifty, tiny, plump, and wearing a pink bathrobe, was sitting in a cozy armchair. Two men who looked like they were of working-class origin were kneeling at her feet gazing at her devotedly while cutting her nails. At the same time she was clipping the claws of her cat. A table offered several



plates of cheeses, salads, pastries, fruits, and wines of good quality. Her customers waited patiently in another room until the sibyl had dined. This is what she now did in the company of the three of us, gluttonously devouring an incredible quantity of food. Film gossip interested her much more than my ideas on the Tarot. She granted me the honor of sitting in on her consultations. Madame Robin knew only the names and numbers of her cards. Their details had never held her attention. She used the Tarot like an element intended to impress her clientele, striking them down with the air of a magician and spreading them out with no reading strategy, letting fall from her lips whatever popped into her head. It was a kind of forced delirium to fill the consultation time with a lot of desultory predictions. Before beginning she asked the customer his place and date of birth. She then strung together this rosary of unrelated predictions, most of which referred to love, work, and health, intermixed with a host of astrological idiocies. Every time she predicted an accident, a broken leg, an injury, a troubling boil, or a legal problem, she would give me a wink, letting me know that this impressed the client. This minor sadism, added to a large quantity of imminent success—"A bed of roses," "Your problems are resolved," "You will receive an excellent job offer," "You will win a lawsuit," "You will marry a rich man," "I see you living in the house of your dreams"—had the purpose of creating dependent clients who would consult with her on a regular basis. This monstrous and commercial way of using the Tarot was not solely the fault of Madame Robin; her superstitious audience demanded this kind of thing from her. They were anxious to know their future, to feel important by acquiring a destiny at an affordable price. The sibyl only gave that what they wanted, subconsciously hers to manufacture.

I meanwhile aspired to a true reading of the Tarot, one that took into account my projections and those of the people consulting me, based on the vision of the cards' details. One Arcanum was a note; two, a duet; three, a chord; more than three, a musical phrase. For two years I spent my weekends this way, reading the Tarot for sick people, then little by little for the patients of psychoanalysts, osteopaths, and various therapists interested in the experiment. When working with them I observed



that the ancient forms of reading the Tarot copied in the “traditional” treatises no longer worked for me. They were constructed for predicting the future, something that, as I mentioned earlier, seemed childish and dishonest to me. Predicting that things can happen makes them happen: the brain has a tendency to automatically realize predictions. I needed a system that allowed me to read the present, a present in which the illness represented the past from which a person was incapable of extricating himself or herself. In this search I started by using the Tarot like a psychological test, using the Rorschach for my initial inspiration and other forms later, which brought elements of the patient’s subconscious out in the open. I baptized this activity “Tarology.” The tarologist reads the present, which is the true unknown for the consultant, even when this individual is in search of information on what she thinks to be her future. At the base of every problem, every illness, there is a lack of awareness of the traces of the past and the potentialities of the future.

I began giving courses and workshops as a tarologist, and gradually this teaching spread—my former students number in the thousands around the world—even if the term Tarology, having experienced an unexpected vogue, henceforth serves to designate practices that have nothing at all to do with this notion of the Tarot. I inaugurated that unfortunate practice of telephone Tarot from which so many charlatans profit today. When I did this, during the era of the first free radio stations, I wished to successfully complete an experiment: could someone read the Tarot without knowing anything about an individual except for his or her voice? My hypothesis was that the entire personality was contained in the voice, and that it could bring knowledge into my subconscious that the Tarot would help release in waves. I sat in front of the microphone, I shuffled the cards, and I asked the person consulting me to tell me three numbers between 1 and 22, while posing a question. The telephone never stopped ringing; there were two or three thousand calls during that session, and I had to read until 5:00 in the morning. It was a revolution. Unfortunately, the commercial aspect was so mouth-watering, with the attendant privilege of anonymity, that the spread of this practice was accompanied by considerable degradation.



When I saw these businessmen not only exploiting the naivete of the public but also treating their “tarologist” employees like slaves, most of whom were poor students, individuals of no profession who did not have any previous therapeutic training, I realized that I had to deepen not only the symbology of the Tarot but also the ethical code for reading it.

For more authenticity in the reading, which is to say so that there is the least possible potential for a projection of the reader’s problems, his personal morality, or his intellectual notions, which are always erroneous when it comes to feelings and desires, the tarologist must do it in a trance. Contrary to what is commonly thought, a trance is not an unconscious or irrational state. It begins with an intensification of attention and ends with the abolition of the spectator/actor reality. The person in a trance does not observe herself; she dissolves into herself. She is an actor in the pure state. By “actor” we mean not the performer on a stage but an entity in action. For this reason, for example, trance does not allow the memory to record words, events, and actions performed. For the same reason the trance can presume the loss of the notion of time. Generally we use the rational position to distance ourselves from other living forces and energies. In everyday life, the rational part of the brain is experienced like an island. The rational does not disappear in a trance, but the landscape expands. The island sees bridges connecting it to the subconscious. The trance is a state of higher consciousness. In a trance there is no such thing as a missed opportunity or an accident. We have no notion of space, for we have become space. We have no notion of time, for we are the phenomenon that is happening. This is a state of extreme presence in which every gesture, every action is perfect. We cannot deceive ourselves, because there is no plan or intention. There is only the pure action in the present. In a trance, the rational part of the mind is no longer afraid to liberate instinct, primitive as it may be, but becomes one with it. It also combines with the inexhaustible creative force conferred upon it by the individual’s sexual nature. The body is experienced not as a concept of the past but as the vibrant subjective reality of the present. The body makes no move commanded by rational forces; forces belonging to other directions direct it. We could say



that its movements are dictated by the collectivity or Totality of reality. An animal in a cage has movements comparable to the rational position. The movement of a free animal in the forest is comparable to the trance. The animal in a cage needs to be fed at set hours. In order to act, the rational part of the brain needs to receive words. The wild animal feeds itself and is never fooled about its food. The individual in a trance is not moved by what he has learned but by what he is. Falling into a trance while reading the Tarot does not mean "seeing all." The tarologist concentrates and "sees" one single thing: what he needs to see and nothing more. In this case, a trance is not all-seeing but, quite the contrary, an acute concentration of attention upon a single detail that, of course, is hidden from ordinary consciousness.



# To Begin

The purpose of this part is to familiarize you with the reading of the Tarot. Rather than quickly explaining several reading strategies, we wanted to go deeper into this art and present numerous examples that provide illustrations of the various kinds of reading. Instead of allotting one and only one function to each card, and interpreting the cards selected as a series of sentences, we can deal with the Tarot like a language in which two by two, then three by three, then by increasing number, the cards respond like the instruments of an orchestra.

The rules of orientation we presented in part 1 of this book will be valuable for structuring the reading. For example, it will be useful to remember that the Tarot places the receptive (feminine) to the left of the reader and the active (masculine) to his right. Following the order of the Latin alphabet, the space to the left of the cards will most often represent where one is coming from, the past, and the space on the right, the place one is heading.

We shall first present reading practices with one or two cards, which will be especially helpful for familiarizing yourself with everyday life with the Arcana, and learning how to make them echo each other. A long chapter will then be devoted to the reading of three cards, considered to be the basic “sentence” of the Tarot language.

We shall then present several reading strategies for more than three cards, which can be developed to reading, if desired, all twenty-two Major Arcana.



We should add that we have intentionally mixed extremely varied reading levels in the examples we are presenting. In fact, the Tarot can be used to explore very concrete issues as well as for exploring the depths of the soul, and to dissolve psychological problems. Ideally, a Tarot reader should be able to adapt to the request, language, and age of the individual, and answer him in the terms most suitable to his request. We can consider our duty as a tarologist to consist of translating a message from the individual's subconscious and helping the person understand it in way that he can grasp it in his daily life and apply it to his most vital concerns. The reading should take place on the individual's level. In no case should the tarologist pass herself off as a superior individual. It involves doing something that is useful for the person consulting her. Our sole power is the power to provide help, if we are asked for it.

Furthermore, we give no example of reading with reversed cards. This is a conscious decision: utilizing the cards upside down amounts to integrating negative potentialities into the reading. When we read the cards upside down, we are digging into the negative and will end up eventually creating more negatives. It is easy to read atrocities in any card, but what purpose does it serve? We chose not to.

Finally, we left many trails aspiring tarologists could follow to read the Tarot themselves. In fact, the practice of reading for oneself is one of the best means for gaining a deeper comprehension of the Tarot. It is both one of the easiest things to do (all you need is a Tarot in your possession) and one of the most difficult things in the world (you are both the person seeking the reading and the reader, and you run headlong into your own areas of resistance). But it is also an awesome device for going deeper and for learning humility, which allows us to put our finger on our defense mechanisms.

In the practice of reading, every tarologist will discover that her intuition is gradually developing. An entire reading will sometimes emerge with complete pertinence from a single detail on one card. You are then touching on the true art of the Tarot . . . We would be happy for this chapter to be a modest introduction to this art.



# First Steps to Reading the Tarot

The best way to memorize the meaning of the Tarot cards is to use them in daily life for exploring the questions that truly affect us. Before reading the Tarot for others, it is a good idea to spend a period of time when you apply it to yourself. Not only does this permit us to familiarize ourselves with it, but it also helps us face up to its paradoxes, difficulties, and incomprehensible points that will expand our vision. We can also, as we suggest here, form an alliance with a person who will serve us as a fictional person seeking a reading and perform reading exercises.

For reading the Tarot on yourself, there is one fundamental postulate: I do not know myself in the present, therefore questioning myself about my present situation is essential.

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## **Handling and Reading the Tarot**

A peaceful atmosphere is recommended. To take care of the cards and lay them out easily, you can use a solid color cloth that will not interfere with the illustrations of the Arcana (violet encourages concentration). Rearrange the order of the Tarot like a regular card deck, without shuffling them in a way that causes the cards to lose their regular up/down orientation. Then, after forming them back into a deck, you lay the cards horizontally face down on the table. Contrary to a tenacious tradition, there is no need to cut the deck. You can do this, but you



will change the card that is on the bottom (see pp. 475–76). Once they have been laid out, using either the right or left hand, pick one or more cards depending on which reading strategy has been selected. Next turn them over by pivoting them to the right in a way that does not turn them upside down. The cards can be uncovered one by one, interpreting them as each is turned up, or they can all be turned over at once and read using synthesis.

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## EXERCISES AND SAMPLE READINGS WITH ONE ARCANUM

### ■ **The Spirit of the Day**

To make the Tarot a presence in your everyday life, draw a card from the Major Arcana every morning and interpret it in at least three different ways. For example, you could interpret it on the concrete level, the psychological level, and the spiritual level. You could also do it on the personal level, the relational level, and the transpersonal level, and so forth. Observe how these three levels resonate throughout the day (see the example that follows).

**Draw:** The Fool

**Reading:** Concrete Level: A great deal of energy. Make sure not to lose sight of your goal! Perhaps a trip or expedition is ahead. And if I traveled by foot? Psychological Level: A great freedom breathes upon this journey. All is permitted. Spiritual Level: All paths are my path. No definitions today. How can I live my life in relation with the unthinkable?

### ■ **The Ally**

This drawing consists of bringing up a difficulty, a source of sorrow, or a project dear to our hearts and pulling a single card from the Tarot that will be the ally necessary to guide us back to health, joy, or success. After analyzing the message of the card, you can carry it away with you, memorize it, put it under your pillow when you sleep, rub it against your heart, your brow, and so on, in order to absorb its aid (see the examples that follow).



***I have too much work; I am overworked. What should I do?***

**Draw:** VIII Justice

**Reading:** Justice prompts you to settle into the present, get rid of the useless, and focus on what is truly useful and necessary. On the psychological plane, it can evoke a desire to be maternal. Finally, it inspires the need to free yourself from this demand for perfection that may be the origin for this feeling of being overworked.

***How can I stay calm in all circumstances?***

**Draw:** II The High Priestess

**Reading:** The message could be the following: Make sure that you have a place to which you can retire and meditate at your disposal. This will help you recover the calm that is part of your depths. The reading of words of wisdom can be of great help to you. Do not underestimate yourself: you are a person of high spiritual value; act like one. Think of the projects you are cherishing (the egg of The High Priestess) and concentrate upon them. Part of your irritation may perhaps only be a request for tenderness.

## **Sounding Yourself**

This drawing is best used for getting to know yourself better, for drawing a spiritual or emotional self-portrait. It consists of placing an Arcanum drawn by chance on a part of the body and asking: “What is in me at this level?” The card provides the answer (see the examples that follow).

***What is in my heart?***

**Draw:** XVIII The Sun

**Reading:** A great love, joy, a new construction, my father, my children, vacations . . .

***What is in my gut?***

A man draws Justice (VIII).

**Reading:** My mother! She made so many nice dishes for me; perhaps it is time I lost a little weight.



A woman draws The World (XXI).

**Reading:** A desire to have a child! I have all I need to realize myself; I am beginning to feel that my creativity, my reproductive organs, are a great wealth. I love my femininity.

### ■ **Exercise of Humility with the Major Arcana**

A good tarologist should be able to call into question everything he considers as being evident a priori, starting with his own personality, his beliefs, and the events of his daily life. This calls for humility and a certain sense of humor.

This exercise consists of drawing a card concerning yourself and the situation in which you find yourself, one with which you are already quite familiar. When you practice with the Major Arcana, you can approach every domain from the most pedestrian to the most elevated. You will interpret the Arcanum in a way that makes it apply perfectly to the situation, even if you are seemingly confronted with a paradox (see the examples that follow).

#### ***How is my emotional life going?***

**Draw:** X The Wheel of Fortune

**Reaction of the person receiving the reading:** “It is true that I am in the process of ending a cycle.”

#### ***What is my dearest wish at this moment?***

**Draw:** XVII The Star

**Reaction of the person receiving the reading:** “Yes, it’s true, I really want to find my place. I feel that I have a lot to give, and it is necessary to position myself to be able to perform this action.”

### ■ **Exercise of Humility with the Minor Arcana**

The exercise of humility is also useful for entering into the reading of the Minor Arcana.

Shuffle the order of the fifty-six cards and ask a question whose answer could pertain to material, sexual, creative, emotional, or intellectual life. The next step is “to play the game” of humility, based on



the useful principle that the Tarot is always right, and the point is to positively interpret what it tells us.

This reading assumes that all the cards ceaselessly correspond to one level or another of our being: “Nothing that is human is foreign to me” (see the examples that follow).

***What is my principal concern at this moment?***

**Draw:** Seven of Wands

**Response:** That my creative strength goes into action in the world in the form of a new project that I have conceived by myself.

***What is the highest value in my life?***

**Draw:** King of Pentacles

**Response:** The happy and prosperous world I’ve built with my husband, centered around our business . . .

***What am I most afraid of?***

**Draw:** Five of Swords

**Response:** The aggression and verbal domination of fake teachers, heartless professors, and lying politicians.

**■ What Are My Limits?**

A card can also serve to indicate what the difficulties are in each center: intellectual, emotional, sexual-creative, and physical. To do this, we pull a card with the decision of applying it to one center in particular, or even the same card to all the centers in succession. In the reading examples following this strategy, we will take The Emperor as the limit in all the centers, with other examples that vary depending on the centers.

***My Intellectual Limits?***

**Draw:** IIII The Emperor

**Response:** Obtuse rationalism imprisons me. I refuse everything that is not straightforward.



**Draw:** The Fool

**Response:** I have no limits. I spread outward. I need to adopt a more rational position to frame my thought.

**Draw:** VIII Justice

**Response:** My limit is rigidity. I can only envision one point of view. Another way of thinking can outstrip what I know today.

**Draw:** III The Empress

**Response:** I indulge in daydreams; I am at risk of falling into fanaticism. My intellect is too romantic.

### ***My Emotional Limits?***

**Draw:** IIII The Emperor

**Response:** *A female:* I am too masculine or too stamped by the love I bear for my father, and incapable of making a place for someone else. *A male:* I wield too much authority and am not indulgent enough. I do not know the way of the heart.

**Draw:** XV The Devil

**Response:** I am too possessive.

**Draw:** X The Wheel of Fortune

**Response:** I have difficulty imagining a new relationship; perhaps I need to finish a cycle or learn to accept the notion that it is over.

### ***My Sexual or Creative Limits?***

**Draw:** IIII The Emperor

**Response:** My sexuality or creativity is repetitious and routine. Let's face it: Am I getting bored?

**Draw:** VII The Chariot

**Response:** *A female:* I suffer from "Don Juan syndrome." Am I a repressed nymphomaniac? Or do I have the crazy idea that in order to create I need to be a man? *A male:* The desire to conquer comes before desire itself—I need to learn the difference between quality and quantity. *An Artist:* The desire for recognition comes before creative pleasure.



**Draw:** VIII Justice

**Response:** A maternal figure prevents me from reaching my creativity. Perhaps my sexual desire is limited to having a child.

**Draw:** XIII Temperance

**Response:** I take myself for an angel, denying the force of my libido.

### ***My Material, Physical Limits?***

**Draw:** III The Emperor

**Response:** I refuse to invest or maybe to grow. My body is still under my father's thumb, and the idea of investment is foreign to my material life.

**Draw:** II The High Priestess

**Response:** I do not get out enough!

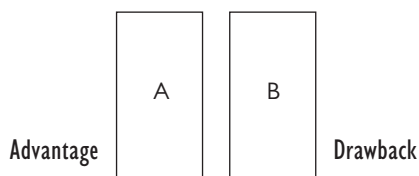
**Draw:** VIII The Hermit

**Response:** I inevitably see myself as an old, poor, and lonely individual. I cannot conceive the notion of abundance.

## EXERCISES AND SAMPLE READINGS WITH TWO ARCANA

### ■ **Advantage–Drawback, Strength–Weakness**

For a given situation, a decision you have made, or anything that raises a question in your mind, draw two cards. One represents the advantage, the strong points of your situation or decision, and the other its drawbacks, its weaknesses, the potential dangers that await you.



***I live in the city and I want to move to a place out in the country that is less polluted.***

**Advantage:** VI The Lover

**Reading:** A life far from the city corresponds to a



deep-felt wish, to something you love. Your emotional life (as a couple or family) could benefit enormously. Your children will grow up in a happier, more peaceful environment.

**Drawback:** XVIII The Moon

**Reading:** It is possible you will be affected by solitude, and even fears of the dark, if, for example, you decide to live in an extremely isolated location.



***I am thinking of working part-time.***

**Advantage:** The Fool

**Reading:** Go for your freedom! You will be able to put your energy into a ton of things; you are not sure which yet, but you will have plenty of enthusiasm.

**Drawback:** XII The Hanged Man

**Reading:** Looking at your pockets that are hanging open above the ground, the question can be asked if you have the financial foundation for this reduction of working time. Keep an eye out that you do not find yourself doing nothing.



***This year we will be spending the holidays with the whole family.***

**Advantage:** XVI The Tower

**Reading:** Great joy awaits you; there will be more than one party, and it will be a true holiday.

**Drawback:** V The Pope

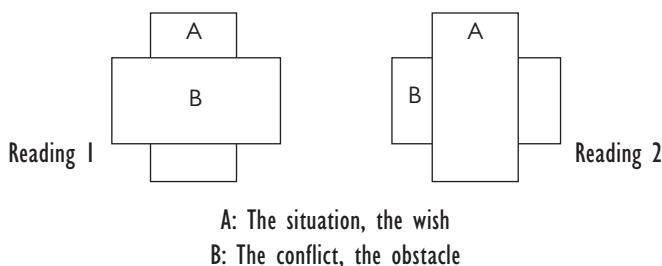
**Reading:** Make sure all communication is clear and tactful. One out-of-place word could spoil an entire evening. Is there a male individual in the family whose authority you dread, a father or grandfather?

## ■ The Conflict

This is a dynamic reading strategy. It consists of placing one card faced down and crossed beneath a second card. The first card represents the wish, the situation in which we find ourselves. The second card represents the conflict, the obstacle that prevents us from advancing. We can do two readings from this basis. The first takes place when the conflict



card is on top of the other and thus victorious: in this configuration the conflict, the obstacle seems insoluble. The second reading takes place after the conflict card is placed beneath the card representing the situation, the wish: this configuration indicates the overcoming of the conflict or obstacle (see the examples that follow).



***A screenplay writer is having difficulty beginning to write a project that she has been given.***

**Situation:** XI Strength

**Conflict:** III The Empress

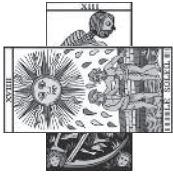
**Reading 1:** With XI, you are trying to begin something using your creative or instinctive force. But the III is crossing you: you perceive your creativity as an obstacle because you do not know where you are going, and this causes you anxiety. Because 3 is lower than 11, you are afraid of lacking experience, or you feel that your inspiration is too superficial or too juvenile. Here, The Empress is closing the jaw of the lion in XI. Strength can only begin what she has to begin. This is a lack of self-confidence. The adolescent has gotten the psychological upper hand over the experienced woman.



**Reading 2:** If The Empress is placed beneath Strength, the situation changes; you are relying on adolescent energy and the explosion of The Empress to courageously start work. Strength rediscovers the sense of her maturity here: certainly she represents a beginning, but she also has the first ten Major Arcana behind her. The

Empress here symbolizes creativity put into use for a new project without any more questions.





***I want to change my life.***

**Situation:** XIII The Nameless Arcanum

**Conflict:** XVIII The Sun

**Reading 1:** You are experiencing a great dynamic of change. You want to revolutionize your life, do a huge cleaning out, and start over on new foundations (XIII). But with The Sun, it seems that an earlier construction is holding you back. Are you attached to a particular notion of the couple, the family? To some old childhood ties or traumas? Are you perhaps looking for the ideal father?



**Reading 2:** The Sun, as the plan for a new life, tempers the destructive ardor of Arcanum XIII and channels its activity toward an objective filled with love.

## ■ The Most Favorite and the Least Favorite Card

Begin by picking from the deck the card of the Major Arcana you prefer and the one you like least. Examine them and define what attracts you or repulses you in each of these cards. Then draw a card for each of the two that will allow you to deepen your relationship with it.

### ***Favorite Card: XVII The Star***

I love the image of this naked, generous, beautiful woman in a warm paradise. I can easily identify with her. She is my life's ideal. Unfortunately, I do not feel like this every day.

### ***Least Favorite Card: XII The Hanged Man***

This card makes me think of torture, despite the calm expression on the figure's face. It is empty; no one is there. I do not like the idea that he is at a standstill.

**Drawing:** The person covers the card of The Star with VIII Justice.

**Reading:** It is here and now, in the present of your incarnation, that your Star comes out. You are united with her, even when you are in a social



situation, at work, and given the task of weighing, judging, and acting in a less-idyllic reality. You are The Star! Do not doubt it! Give yourself what you deserve.

**Drawing:** The person receiving the reading covers the card of The Hanged Man with XVI The Tower.

**Reading:** Look at these figures who are also upside down with their heads at the bottom. They are indicating the future of this standstill you dread so much! The Hanged Man is only preparing himself for a joyous emergence, a birth. His fate is openness and joy. Everything you have imprisoned inside can express itself. Perhaps you need to work more on the circumstances of your gestation and birth to better understand what disturbs you about The Hanged Man's posture. Do you have some pent-up anger?

***Favorite Card: XIII The Nameless Arcanum***

This is my preferred card because it scares other people but not me. I am not afraid of transformation; I love it. I am an empty room in a house that has no master.

***Least Favorite Card: XXI The World***

This is a final card that has already been realized and has everything. There is nothing left to do afterward.

**Drawing:** The person covers the card of The Nameless Arcanum with VII The Chariot.

**Reading:** In reality, the transformation you are living through is the constant change of the world and the universe. Like The Chariot, you are rooted in time and space, and you live with them.

**Drawing:** The person covers the card of The World with XVIII The Moon.

**Reading:** Develop your receptivity and you will discover that even in perfection, life goes on—in the contemplation of the beauty of the world.

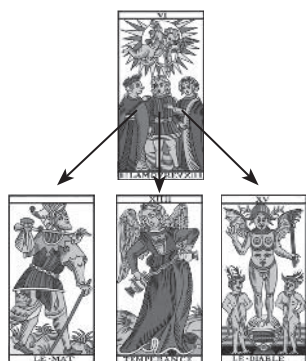


## EXERCISES AND SAMPLE READINGS WITH ONE, TWO, THEN SEVERAL ARCANUM

Once you have become familiar with the interpretation exercises, the best means of moving over to actual card reading consists of enriching the interpretation of a card by one or several others. This is how you can enter into the relational dynamic between Arcana, which forms the very essence of reading.

### Explaining One Card by One or Several Others

You choose a card whose meaning you wish to explore more deeply. Of course, this reading will be both “objective” (study of the elements of the source card) and “subjective” (“What am I seeing in this card?”).

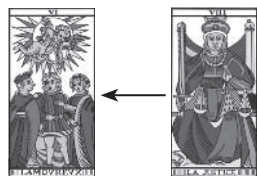


#### VI The Lover

**Question:** What kind of union is The Lover expressing?

**Drawing:** One card corresponding to each of the three figures in The Lover: The Fool, XIII Temperance, and XV The Devil.

**Answer:** The Lover expresses the union of the irreconcilable: the initial energy, the angel, and the demon! It is the overturning of the morality imposed by Judeo-Christian culture. Taste (loving or doing what one loves) makes this revolution possible.



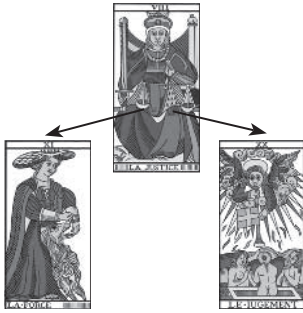
#### VIII Justice

**Question:** What is Justice cutting?

**Drawing:** One card to correspond to the sword. Here it is VI The Lover.

**Answer:** She severs the emotional conflicts that waste her time, perhaps intrusive social relationships.





**Question:** What is she weighing?

**Drawing:** The person receiving the reading draws two cards corresponding to each platter of the scales. Here is it XI Strength and XX Judgment.

**Answer:** The balance between her instinctive sexual energy and spiritual call.

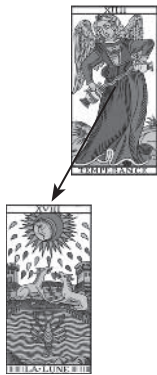
### ***XIII Temperance***

This card symbolizes the harmonious intermingling of distinct entities.

**Question:** How to realize union?

**Drawing:** The person pulls one card to symbolize the flow that unites the two jars: XVIII The Moon.

**Answer:** Through intuition, by being tuned in to yourself. It is time to stop denying yourself and to accept the messages that come from the depths of your subconscious, poetry, receptivity, inner immensity.



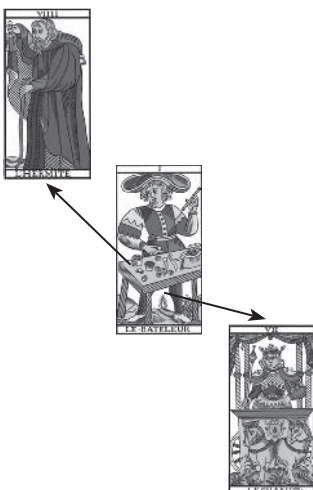
### ***I The Magician***

**Question:** What does he have on his table?

**Drawing:** VIII The Hermit

**Answer:** Beneath the apparent disparity of the elements, The Magician possesses wisdom: perhaps the legacy of a father, a guide, a grandfather.

The process of questioning an Arcanum can continue . . .



**Question:** And what does The Magician have beneath his table, then?

**Drawing:** VII The Chariot

**Answer:** He has immense capacity to act,



on condition he establishes contact with “what is under the table,” which in The Chariot corresponds to the two horses: inner strength, animal nature, and creativity.

## ■ Introduction to the Transfer Process

Draw two cards at random and examine the details that are repeated or are changed from one card to the other: colors, objects, shapes, the direction the figures are looking . . . The interpretation can vary depending on the order in which the cards are placed.



The two horses of The Chariot, the two plates of Justice; the crown of The Chariot and that of Justice

### **VII The Chariot, VIII Justice**

**Transfer:** The transfer shows us that The Chariot has two horses and a scepter, a symbol of power. Justice, meanwhile, has two plates and a sword, a weapon. Justice imposes her will upon the world, while The Chariot accepts being carried away as the world desires: his horses have no reins. The Chariot's crown is receptive, open on top, while that of Justice is projective; she shows evidence of an active intelligence.

**Reading:** In a very concrete reading, we could say that The Chariot is trying to escape Justice, perhaps as well as his mother's influence or an idea of excessive perfection.



The Magician's gold circle becomes the Sun.

### **I The Magician, XVIII The Sun**

**Reading:** In this order, the small round circle in The Magician's hand could be a representation of The Sun in miniature. Still in this order, we could say that the young man on Arcanum I is “taking The Sun in hand.” He is assuming his own success, or using the influence of his father or a man that supports him. He can then absorb this energy that strengthens him.





The Sun's value is reduced.

**Reading: Order XVIII–I.** In this configuration, the small yellow circle can be viewed as a reduction, a sun turned into a piece of money. We could say that The Magician is manipulating this force in a reductive or dishonest manner. This could be a swindler or a daddy's boy who does not understand the value of money and squanders it.

### ***XI Strength, XVIII The Sun***

**Transfer:** These cards show a more spiritual being acting upon (or in collaboration with) another more animal-like being. In Strength, the woman has placed her hands on the jaw of a lion; we could say that she is trying to tame it or perhaps keep it quiet. In The Sun, an individual marked with three dots (see pp. 215 and 243) is guiding another individual who looks like him but who has a small tail that seems to indicate that he still has ties to his animal nature.



The spiritual being of Strength acts upon the animal being, the lion; the spiritual being of The Sun (the one on our right marked by three dots) guides a more animal-like being (the one on our left with a small tail).

**Reading:** We could say that the quest begun in Strength has led to the construction of a new life in The Sun. An individual has established contact with his creativity and profound self, his subconscious, but still feels distinct from this entity seen as an animal. In The Sun, the two governing centers of the individual are collaborating like twin entities: the individual has found complete accord with himself. To start the profound changes of the new life, the spiritual part of our being becomes an inner guide whom we can trust completely.



## EXERCISES AND SAMPLE READINGS WITH ONE PARTNER

### ■ Questions and Answers

One of the two participants chooses an Arcanum to ask it a series of questions. The other participant takes the floor in the name of this Arcanum and answers in accordance with what his or her intuition suggests. This exercise, which is quite helpful for Tarot students, permits you to expand your understanding of the cards (see the example that follows).

#### **Questions for XIII Temperance**



##### **Why do you have two serpents entwined at your feet?**

Because I have assumed all the energies of the earth. These two snakes are the male and female sexual energy that are entwined inside me and sublimated throughout up to my azure wings. I protect you in Earth as in Heaven.



##### **Why are you pouring the contents of one vessel into another?**

I help energies, fluids to communicate. Through my action, there are no longer any opposing energies or opposites, but only complementary ones. This is the secret of balance.



##### **What is the meaning of the geometrical symbols you have on your chest?**

The four yellow triangles on my chest represent the four centers of the human being: the intellect, the emotional center, the sexual and creative center, and the corporeal domain. These centers do not communicate directly with each other but are juxtaposed, each with its own law. But the yellow circle above them in which a triangle has been notched represents the fifth essence. This is the essential being that is within each of us and who communicates with each of the four centers, allowing harmony to rule the human being.





**How does your presence manifest in my life?**

When I arrive, a marvelous fragrance is released. I have a red flower on the top of my head, which indicates that my thoughts are aromatic. Ideas manifest in me not in the form of words, but like a perfume.



**Why are your eyes yellow?**

Because my spirit is pure light. I am everything I look at.

■ **The Tarological Conversation, or Tarot Poker**

Each of the two partners draws five cards at random, which they place next to one another going left to right, in the direction of the reading. The first turns over his cards one by one and asks one question per card. The second person answers him by turning his cards over one by one. Then each of them takes five new cards from the decks, and they exchange roles.

The questions can pertain to life in general, problems that concern the individual asking the questions, or even about the relationship shared by the two partners if they know each other fairly well.

This reading exercise is excellent for developing personal interpretation of the Arcana of the Tarot and dialogue (see the example that follows).

**VIII The Hermit:** Where will the crisis I am now going through take me?

**The Fool:** To liberate yourself!

**VIII Justice:** Can the trial to which I am party bring me any money?

**XV The Devil:** Yes, a lot!

**XI Strength:** I am beginning an activity. Will I have the strength to succeed?

**X The Wheel of Fortune:** Yes, but with the help of an outside person (the handle on the wheel).

**I The Magician:** What can I begin right here and now?



**XXI The World:** You can begin by remaining in permanent contact with the four dimensions of yourself: your capacity for being, loving, creating, and living.

**XIII The Nameless Arcanum:** What should I now transform in my life?

**III The Empress:** You need to get in touch with your creativity, your enthusiasm, your adolescent dreams!

## ■ Tarot Poker Variation

A variant of poker Tarot can be played between a person seeking a reading and an experienced tarologist. The individual will allot a heartfelt question to each of five cards, based on his knowledge of the Tarot or how the drawings inspire him. The tarologist will arrange his own cards starting with the one that poses the most problems and ending with the one that offers the greatest realization, so as to guide the answers along an evolutionary path. This brings about a kind of “positive corrida”<sup>\*</sup>—in which the person explains his difficulty and the tarologist offers answers that help him. The tarologist’s job consists of organizing the

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<sup>\*</sup>In this bullfight metaphor, the tarologist is the matador and the individual’s ego, the bull. Like Gurdjieff said, when a person comes to a teacher (or a therapist, or a tarologist) with a question, he or she is actually aware of the two possible answers to it—one is generally the easy way out, with no growth or change involved, and the other is the uneasy answer, the one that causes us to evolve by letting go of some aspect of our habitual identity. Most of the time, the person expects the therapist (or teacher or tarologist) to take the responsibility to either allow them to be content with the easy, non-evolutional answer, or “bully” them into the more difficult path. In which case they can blame the teacher (or tarologist) for being too hard on them, not compassionate enough, and so forth.

Most of the time, people who seek help do not want to change. They expect to be taken care of, listened to, confirmed, and pampered.

So, for an honest teacher or therapist or tarologist, giving the true answer, the one that points toward the path of evolution, is a difficult task, as risky and deadly as the matador’s elegant killing of the bull. But we do need to kill that bull (the individual’s craving for the easy way out) if we really want to help the person. This is why a Tarot reading can be compared to “a positive bullfight,” because the outcome is the death of the Beast, our general laziness to evolve, and the tarologist has to be as skilled and fearless as a matador, dancing with the bull’s anger and lust for life.



response material so as to aid the individual to draw up a positive evolution (see the example below).

**VIII The Hermit:** What should I abandon?

**XIII The Nameless Arcanum:** Clinging to what is destroying itself.

**XII The Hanged Man:** What new viewpoint should I adopt?

**XV The Devil:** To live your creative passion.

**XI Strength:** By what means?

**V The Pope:** Through teaching.

**IIII The Emperor:** Is it this means that will give me peace?

**XVII The Star:** This means will bring you peace if you cease demanding and work on giving.

**VIII Justice:** What other mother can be found?

**XXI The World:** The cosmos.



# Reading Three Cards

Working with three cards is where the real work of Tarot reading can begin. It is its simplest structure, a basic “sentence” that offers almost infinite possibilities. There are numerous strategies for reading with three cards. We have the choice of using structures in which the three cards represent three preestablished elements—past, present, and future, for example. But gradually the art of reading will loosen itself from these rigid structures. We learn to let ourselves be guided by the details that unite or oppose the cards: symbols, direction in which the figures are moving or looking, the numerical value of the selected Arcana, and so forth. The three-card reading is an art that the Tarot student will never finish carrying to deeper and deeper levels.

To initiate yourself into the reading of three cards, you have a choice between three directions that span a course going from the most simple to the most elaborate:

- ▶ Choose a reading strategy in advance.
- ▶ Adapt the reading strategy to the question that has been asked.
- ▶ Determine the reading strategy once the cards have been turned over, according to their design or numerical value, by relying particularly on the elements that recur from one card to the next (symbols and colors) and on the direction in which the figures are looking.



We can also take into account how the consultant physically arranges the three cards on the table. If the order of the cards is neutral, meaning they are lined up horizontally with a consistent space between each of them, this can indicate that the individual is balanced and organized and the question has been posed with equanimity, or with a desire to have control over events. If the consultant arranges the cards in an ascending design, we can detect in this an optimistic tendency, whereas if the line descends, it would be a good idea to ask what is motivating his pessimism. If the first two cards are placed close together and the third is farther away, or the opposite, the reading strategy should be modified accordingly. There will be a union between two elements and a feeling of distance with respect to the third element.

If each card, instead of being vertical, is tilted forward, this can indicate an enthusiasm born of a mental decision to forge ahead. When the cards are tilted backward, we can imagine that the consultant has no desire to move ahead, or is advancing against her will. All these interpretations are, of course, given for information only and should encourage the tarologist to engage in dialogue rather than being taken as definite clues.

Finally, during a three-card reading, you can always draw one or more additional cards to shed more light on a situation, lend clarity to a doubt, or see how a block can be overcome or how the transformations will become stabilized. If the Tarot seems to evoke a difficulty, there is no reason to stay there. We can ask ourselves what its origin is and how it might be resolved. The tarologist should be an ally for the individual, without loading him or her down with predictions, judgments, or diagnoses. If we believe the Tarot delivers a message from the subconscious, our work, as reader, is to translate this message as best we can in order to allow the individual to move forward in a helpful direction, toward the resolution of conflicts, on the path of realization and progress, toward greater joy, creativity, peace, and prosperity.



## READING WITH A PREESTABLISHED STRATEGY

The reading with three cards is both quite simple and very rich, and practically inexhaustible. However, we can single out already structured readings that, initially, permit the “sentence” chosen by the consultant to make sense.

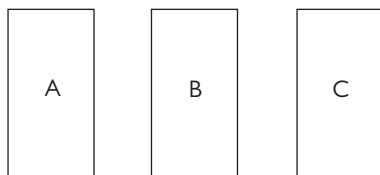
The first difficulty to confront the tarologist resides in the belief that the Tarot is used to predict the future. Now Tarology, contrary to cartomancy, consists not of determining hypothetical future events but answering a question as helpfully as possible by relying on images rich in symbols. To do this, it is necessary to put Tarot reading back into a context: this is when the reading strategy can come to our aid. It gives meaning to the interpretation in the same way the field or the board (for football or chess) provides the game with its orientation. The strategy is decided upon by the reader, either in advance or after seeing the cards. The number of strategies is potentially infinite.

Here are five very simple three-card reading strategies, classified in order of the most factual to the most psychological. In all the examples, the cards are respectively designated by A, B, and C. The answers provided in the reading are intentionally ordinary and simple. You can obviously craft more profound responses by referring to the texts on the Major Arcana, but in the absence of an actual person seeking a reading, the reading process is presented in its most accessible form here.

### *Strategy 1*

#### ■ **Past, Present, and Future Aspects of a Situation**

A, B, and C respectively represent the past, the present, and what is being prepared for the future (see the example on the following page).



A: Past aspect of the situation

B: Present aspect of the situation

C: Aspect to come of the situation





**Am I finally going to get my driver's license?**

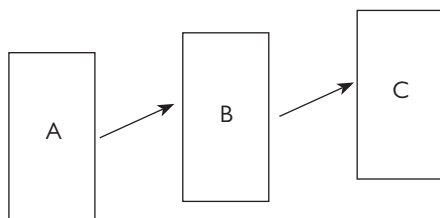
**Drawing:** A: VII The Chariot, B: XIII The Nameless Arcanum, C: XVIII The Sun

**Reading:** In the past you took this exam and failed (The Chariot is driving a vehicle). But today you have changed (XIII, transformation). Perhaps you have acquired the awareness of danger that makes a good driver. In the future you will prepare to pass the exam successfully (XVIII) on condition you consider the examiner as an ally and not an enemy.

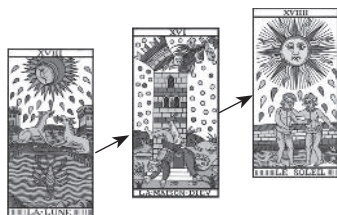
## Strategy 2

### Beginning, Deployment, Result

In this chronological development, A is a beginning that develops into B and C (see the example that follows).



A: Beginning  
B: Deployment  
C: Result



**How can I help my daughter in her difficult situation? (She is a shy teenager who is failing school.)**

**Drawing:** A: XVIII The Moon, XVI The Tower, C: XVIII The Sun

**Reading:** You are her mother, her feminine model, and her essential reference, and your daughter is at the exact age when she becomes aware of her femininity (The Moon). She needs joy, parties, and to see new landscapes (The Tower): allow her to put some gaiety into her life. Finally, the role of the paternal archetype is important

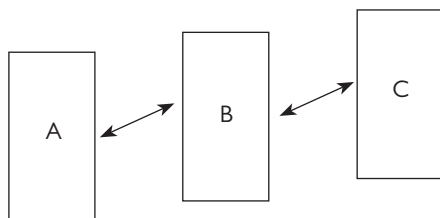


(The Sun), for it is also his gaze that permits your daughter to grow. Or else, The Sun could inspire you leave on a family vacation.

### *Strategy 3*

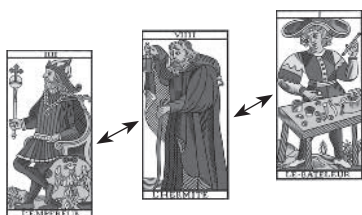
#### ■ **The Reasons for the Present Situation**

The beginning is in C and one revises what must be done to arrive there (see the example below).



A and B: What needs to be done or what has happened for this situation to occur

C: The situation



**What caused the conflict with one of my colleagues at work?**

**Drawing:** A: IIII The Emperor, B: VIIII The Hermit, C: I The Magician

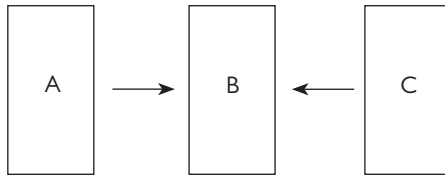
**Reading:** This situation faces you with either the necessity of a choice, or with the fact that someone owes you money (The Magician is holding a gold coin in his hand); in any case, the resolution of this issue is in your hands. Do not have any doubts that it is in your power to fix the matter. The conflict arises out of the fact that you and your colleague do not share the same values or the same means: whereas you are richer spiritually and less powerful materially (The Hermit), you are dealing with someone who is much more materialistic (The Emperor) whose goals lie somewhere else than in your collaboration (The Emperor's back is turned to The Hermit).



### Strategy 4

#### ■ The Family Trio and Its Influence upon the Consultant

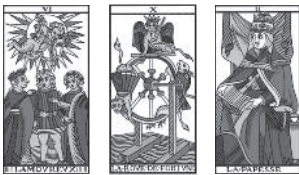
Mirroring the order of the figures in the card Judgment (XX), the cards are represented in the order mother, child, and father (see the example that follows).



A: Feminine influence

B: Central element

C: Male influence



**Why am I having so much trouble getting pregnant?**

**Drawing:** A: VI The Lover, B: X The Wheel of Fortune, C: II The High Priestess

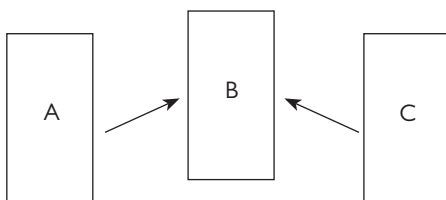
**Reading:** You are represented by The Wheel of Fortune, which points to a block in the present connected to an emotional mystery (the sphinx). Your fertility is not the issue, but you are still held prisoner by your parents' contradictions. Your father (The High Priestess) seems deeply marked by his own mother, an idealized woman who may have passed on a religious or intellectual ideal to him. Seeking his approval, you tend to behave like a pure spirit, denying your body and ability to procreate. Your mother (The Lover) seems to have fallen prey to an emotional conflict. Did her mother-in-law interfere excessively in her life as a couple (the figures on The Lover would therefore represent the couple with the mother-in-law on the far left)? What kind of vision of love, maternity, and femininity did this pass on to you? How might this vision have put a brake upon your desire to become a mother in turn?



**Strategy 5****■ The Forces at Work: Reception–Action**

Along the same line of ideas, but on a much more symbolic plane, you can decide that the cards represent the union between active and receptive forces giving their energy to a shared task (see the examples that follow).

**Case 1.** The union can be harmonious: union of A and C for result B that lifts the person or the shared task.



A: Receptive forces

B: Central element

C: Active forces



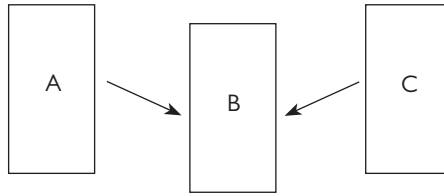
**How can I best work with my spouse to successfully realize our plan to open a bed and breakfast in the country?**

**Drawing:** A: VII The Chariot, B: The Fool, C: XIII Temperance

**Reading:** The plan is carried along by enthusiasm (The Fool). Your spouse is capable of acting with a great deal of force and determination (The Chariot). You represent the forces of balance and moderation, which are just as necessary to guide the plan forward successfully (Temperance).



**Case 2.** The union can also be disharmonious, if not dangerous: cards A and C pose a risk of burying the individual in B.



A: Receptive forces

B: Central element

C: Active forces



**What is preventing me from writing poetry?**

**Drawing:** A: VIII The Hermit, B: VI The Lover, C: XIII Temperance

**Reading:** You have an infinite love for poetry (The Lover). It is both a vocation and a source of joy for you. But for the moment, your muse is in crisis (VIII). Perhaps you feel poorly loved and insufficiently recognized. Or perhaps you are simply in the midst of preparing yourself for a new creative outburst, because The Hermit can also mean a positive crisis. In any case, the decision to put off taking action (Temperance on the active side) is not helping you. You should perhaps write, even if it is only a single line a day, even if you do not feel inspired, for patience and inaction are not your allies.

### *Five Strategies Around One Question*

Here is how the five strategies we just studied on the preceding pages allow us to respond with different subtleties to the same question. We can begin by providing a simple diagram of the forces present in cards A, B, and C by using one or two key words per Arcanum. We will then be able to find more subtleties or combine the observations obtained from each strategy by having a dialogue with the consultant to end up with the answer that will be the most helpful to him or her.





***Is this particular person worthy of becoming my teacher?***

**Drawing:** A: The Fool, B: IIII The Emperor, C: XVIII The Sun

**Key Words:** The Fool: Energy, enthusiasm.

The Emperor: Power, stability, rational mind. The Sun: Union, realization, ideal father, new construction.

**Strategy 1 (past, present, and future):** In the past, you have devoted a great deal of energy to this quest (A). Today, you are in full possession of your rational mind, and you have the power to judge what is good for you (B). But you feel that in the future you will need, like the person on the left side in The Sun, to accept the aid of a spiritual individual who has already gone beyond the rational, in order to explore new regions of your mind (C).

**Strategy 2 (beginning, deployment, and result):** You are taking the step of going toward (A) a man of power (B), and you will achieve a spiritual union with him (C).

**Strategy 3 (the reasons for the situation):** You have already found and chosen this teacher (C). This process has required energetic determination (A) and acceptance of the teacher's power (B).

**Strategy 4 (the family trio):** You are a stable individual (B). Your mother was perhaps somewhat disorganized (A) and your father an ideal model (C). This is both the reason why you are seeking a teacher (who will make up for the disorder of your mother), and why you have doubts about him (he cannot equal your father).

**Strategy 5 (the forces at work):** (Case 1) You are able to join together in yourself the order of The Sun (C) and the chaos of The Fool (A) to gain the power and balance you desire. The teacher is first and foremost inside you; an outside teacher can guide you along the path of your own value. (Case 2) Be careful to avoid causing a conflict between these two forces that we just mentioned (A, madness, and C, wisdom). For under the pretext of a conflict with the teacher, you will be truly engaging in conflict with the feminine part of yourself, which you cannot stand (represented by The Fool, maternal influence).



## THE INDIVIDUAL'S POSSIBILITIES FOR ACTION

### *Strategy for Reading and Working on the Question*

The previous examples show us that we have several possible three-card reading strategies available to us at all times. When we are no longer prisoners of finding *the* right answer, Tarot reading becomes a therapeutic conversation. With the consent of the consultant and starting from a predetermined reading strategy, we can work on the formulation of the question.

### ■ **How Questioning the Tarot Makes Us the Actors and Authors of Our Own Lives**

Questions from consultants often express anxiety about the future: “Which thing will bring success?” “Will my wishes come true?” “Does this person love me?” We cannot answer questions like these, because that amounts to predicting the future. But we can rephrase them in such a way as to allow the consultant to once again become master of his fate: “What can I do so this thing is successful?” “In what direction should I work?” “What should I change for my wish to be realized?” “What is the nature of the relationship that connects me to this person?” When the questions are posed like this, they include the consultant as an active subject in her own life and not the toy of an all-powerful fate.

Here are two reading strategies that also rely on the same three-card draw. The one chosen will allow the determination of what forces are present that can benefit the person asking the question.



**Initial question: What is going to  
happen in my job?**

**Drawing:** A: XVIII The Sun, B: XIII The  
Nameless Arcanum, C: VIII Justice



**Strategy 1****Evolution of a Situation**

Instead of asking, “What is going to happen?” we can reorient the question by focusing on the notion of evolution. This reading, which is the past-present-future type, will cast light on the way the individual has experienced her work until recently (card A), her attitude in the present situation (card B), and the evolution that she envisions in the near future, as well as the forces that will permit her to implement this evolution (card C) (see the example that follows).

Following this strategy, we work to reorient and reformulate the question. It then becomes:

**Question:** What development can I see at work in my job?

**Reading:** In the past (A) you were happy and content with this work, but it corresponded to a male domain or perhaps to a desire inculcated by your father. Currently (B) you are in search of a transformation, because in the future (C) you are looking for (and preparing to find) an activity that corresponds more deeply with your feminine nature. You feel a need to give yourself what you deserve: perhaps a more gratifying kind of work, or one that allows a hitherto unexploited talent to blossom.

**Strategy 2****Read Like a Sentence**

Another possible strategy is the grammatical reading, in which the cards take the place, respectively, of the subject, verb, and object. The purpose of this strategy is to restore the individual to his position as active subject. Card A represents the subject of the sentence; card B represents the verb, the action; and card C represents the complement, the object (see the example that follows).

Following this strategy the question becomes:

**Question:** What am I now doing, and what can I do, in my job?

**Reading:**

- ▶ A (subject). The Sun here symbolizes the consultant, the subject in search of a transition, a spiritual transformation that will free her from the past and permit her to start building something new.



- B (verb, action). With the Nameless Arcanum, this new construction necessitates a radical transformation. But what needs to be transformed?
- C (complement, object). Arcanum VIII gives us the answer: the individual has to rid herself of a certain idea of perfection. This perfectionism may have been inculcated by her mother, or the image the family tree has created of the woman's role. The person receiving the reading, represented by The Sun, is integrating positive values that will allow her to undergo a transformation (Nameless Arcanum) to find her true feminine nature and her personal balance (Justice).

**Summary:** The reading can perhaps be summed up as follows: You are experiencing a moment of important transition, in search of your true being. This is demonstrated by your need to transform your submissive attitude toward the authorities and to recover the meaning of your profound value.

## LEARNING HOW TO REPOSITION THE CARDS TO FIND THE MOST HELPFUL ANSWER

There is nothing fated in a Tarot reading, nothing that has been already staged beforehand. The cards placed on the table are rectangles of printed paper and not an irrevocable sentence. An advanced tarologist should abandon the notion of fate as well as that of prediction. He or she is not there to give advice but to show people their own possibilities so that they may personally discover what they should do.

At the time when the person seeking consultation is choosing the cards corresponding to his question, he is providing what can be described as an instantaneous photograph of his subconscious with which you will be able to work. This is why, after reading the "sentence" the way it was formulated by this individual, it is possible to change the order of the cards to establish, with the same elements, an attitude of life that will make it possible to provide a more positive and effective answer to the question, one that is better adapted to the person's deepest desire.



We can always have six possible readings from three cards: A-B-C, B-C-A, B-A-C, C-A-B, C-B-A, and A-C-B. Placement in progressive numerical order generally indicates a path of realization, inasmuch as the structure of the Major Arcana follows an increasing numerical order. But like everything in the Tarot, this is not an absolute. Sometimes the structure of the cards will suggest another order of realization.

## ■ Repositioning

To start, let's take the example from page 464, but changing the order of the cards this time:

***I want to meet a teacher in the domain that interests me.***

**Drawing:** The Fool, XVIII The Sun, III The Emperor

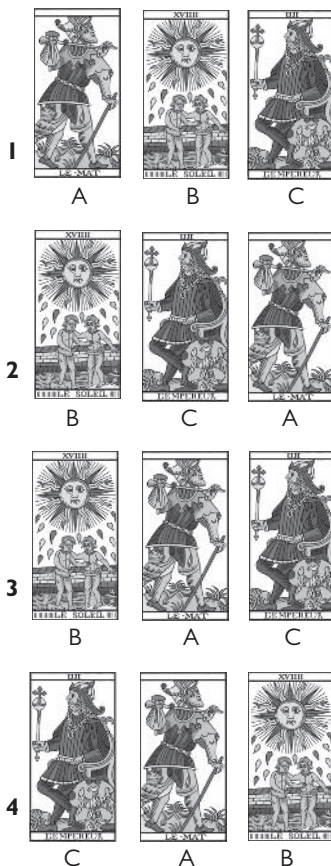
**Reading 1:** In this order, we can say that you are putting a great deal of energy into your search (The Fool) for an ideal to replace the father (XVIII). But you risk being disappointed because you will be confronted by a living man (III).

**Repositioning:** Here is what the other configurations will evoke:

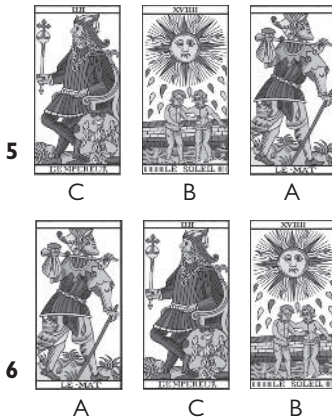
**Reading 2:** In search of the ideal (XVIII), you will meet a normal man (III) and flee as fast as you can (The Fool).

**Reading 3:** You are an individual of great value (XVIII). Why go look for (The Fool) a teacher who will be inferior to you (III)?

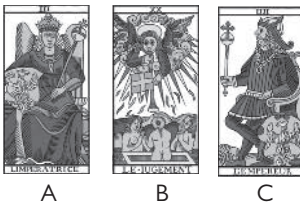
**Reading 4:** Your quest for the father is successful: you leave the rational (III) to set off toward general teachings of a solar figure (XVIII).







**Repositioning Strategy:**  
Out of all the possibilities, keep the most positive and those that reveal an aspect of the situation that can be helpful to the person receiving the reading.



**Reading 5:** You find the teacher, but you leave him immediately: the meeting was enough to liberate you.

**Reading 6:** Borne along by great energy (The Fool), you find a teacher who is both real and powerful (VIII), who enables you to move into a process for building something new (XVIII).

We can also read the six possible configurations and determine which is best for the person. In the previous example, it is probably the last solution (the numerical order of the Arcana) that is most favorable. Second example:

**A man and a woman pose a question pertaining to their desire to have a baby.**

**Drawing:** III The Empress, XX Judgment, IV The Emperor

**Reading:** The order in which the cards have been drawn is quite favorable to this couple, inasmuch as the individuals in Judgment appear to be welcoming a new birth. Arcanum XX is framed by a card on the left representing a woman and a card on the right representing a man, who can respectively be assigned to the person receiving the reading and her companion. Consequently, the increasing numerical number is not the absolute value.





A



C



B

**Repositioning:** Order A-C-B

**Reading:** In this order, the reading is also positive: The Empress-Emperor relationship culminates with the emergence of a new consciousness.



C



B



A

**Repositioning:** Order C-B-A

**Reading:** On the other hand, if the cards are presented in this order, the sexual energies are reversed in the couple: the female is masculine and the male feminine. Although complementary, it will be necessary for them to take steps not to break the reference points for the child yet to be born.

In the third example below, the reading strategy will be to consider the center card as the most stable, the profound and immutable state of the individual. The first card is the one in which everything was born, and the third is the one in which all is undone: birth, conservation, and dissolution, as in the divine Indian trinity. We are therefore able to reverse the order of cards A and C, which amounts to reversing the meaning of the reading.

**Repositioning Strategy:**

In this case the individual's request is to begin something.

This corresponds to card A (Strength). We reorganize the spread to make it end with this objective (Strength in the third position).



A



B



C

**Actor asks:** *Will I be hired to act in this film?*

**Drawing:** A: XI Strength, B: XVIII The Moon, C: XV The Devil

**Reading:** There is a great receptivity in the middle and an immense need (XVIII). This young actor's central interest is his



need and his desire to be chosen. We are not making any judgments, but we can wonder if perhaps a little action might not be called for on this person's part. The Moon needs a provider (the Sun's light); it is in a permanent state of receptivity. In a domain like art and in an industry like cinema, is this kind of attitude viable? It requires steps to be taken in reality. Strength wants to take action, but she turns into a needy Moon. With XV, she gains a connection. XV can represent a contract. The film could come through provided Strength is strong enough to get beyond the obstacle of its own passive expectations.



C



B



A

**Repositioning:** Order C-B-A.

**Reading:** The first step (XV) has already been taken, whether in the form of a contract or that of enormous creativity. Here the artist has resolved the problem. He has landed the desired contract, or he has decided to forge ahead, on the strength of

his own talent, to produce the film or shoot it himself. The Moon is then in a state of acceptance and enters into action in Strength.

## THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF TAROT READING

To read the Tarot, it is necessary to be aware that everything in the universe is in movement. Consequently, the person receiving the reading is too. If we see the person facing us as dynamic, we will prevent ourselves from making predictions that will fix him or her in a set position. To the contrary, we shall be more prone to letting the individual orient his or her movement in the most helpful direction.

The aspects of past, present, and future are within us simultaneously. The education we received during childhood from our family continues to shape our behavior. This present, greatly influenced by our past, contains the future in the form of a seed. It is by changing the way we look at our current situation that we are able to direct ourselves to the goal we cherish most.



This grasp of awareness is just as valuable for Tarot readers personally, who, conscious of the power conferred upon them by the position of facing a person in search of help or advice, should consider the exercise of their art as an opportunity to identify their projections with increasing delicacy and deftness, and to be more and more simply in service to the individual.

## HELPING THE PERSON RECEIVING THE READING RESOLVE CONTRADICTIONS

Often the objectives that lead a person to consult a Tarot reader are made confusing by conflicting desires. We are not formed in a solid block: we want one thing and we want its opposite, a fear conceals a desire, we project on an outside element a solution that in reality is to be found inside ourselves. It is therefore helpful to work on the diversity of inner forces. We can have a “yes” and a “but” for the same situation, an acceptance and a refusal, an enthusiasm and a fear. Becoming aware of the presence of these forces helps the individual redefine his or her objective and clarify his or her path. When we collide with the outside world, it is often the expression of our own inner conflicts and contradictions. If we do not know what we are doing, we cannot do what we wish.

### *Strategy 1*

#### ■ **“Yes, But . . . Therefore!”**

This reading with three cards can be made with or without a question beforehand. A simple method, it can be applied to the domains of material, psychological, or spiritual life.

**A:** The *yes*. This is the person’s situation, his principal desire, his trump cards.

**B:** The *but* of the sentence. It is the obstacle, the difficulty, the unexpected, what he does not want to do or cannot do.

**C:** The *therefore*. This card provides clues for resolving the situation and finding a middle path. You can draw one or several more other cards to shed more light on the *therefore* (see the example that follows).





**Person receiving the reading has no question but simply wishes the Tarot to speak to her.**

**Drawing:** A: XIII Temperance, B: V The Pope, C: II The High Priestess

**Card A:** The *yes*. You are in a position of balance. You feel quite fine with the way you are and feel secure. However, we can note that the angel of Temperance is asexual and only communicates with himself. This indicates to us a more or less intentional situation of isolation. The Angel is looking toward the past, where there is perhaps an attachment or a memory remaining that draws you away from the present. Temperance can signify that healing is taking place. Perhaps you are still in the process of healing from a past emotional wound.

**Commentary of the person receiving the reading:** “It’s true, I am still mourning my father, who passed away.”

**Card B:** The *but*. You do not wish to remain in this position. The Pope indicates a new idea, a bridge that you can prepare to cross, a desire for union. Furthermore, this card is not looking toward the past but toward the future (toward the right). Finally, it represents a man animated by a spiritual ideal and/or a teaching mission.

**Commentary of the person receiving the reading:** “I do, in fact, want to meet a life companion.”

**Card C:** The *therefore*. To form a couple with The Pope, it is necessary to become The High Priestess, the most appropriate companion for him. This consists of accepting the man in his spiritual dimension: acknowledging his ability to be a guide, a teacher, a master . . . In a word, allow him to outshine the deceased father. This Tarot drawing commits you, in order to fulfill your desire, to accept crossing through a stage in the mourning process.



## Strategy 2

### ■ “Protagonist, Mediator, Antagonist”

When we find ourselves in conflict or when we feel an internal dilemma, we can decide that the three cards represent the protagonist (A), the mediator (B), and the antagonist (C) of a situation. These aspects symbolize individuals opposing each other in a given project or inner forces of the person receiving the reading. The mediator indicates a conciliatory position at the center of the conflict (see the example that follows).



***Going through a divorce, the person finds the attitude of his ex-wife with their children unacceptable and toxic. He is looking for a solution.***

**Drawing:** A: XIII The Nameless Arcanum, B: XIII Temperance, C: III The Emperor

**Reading:** Oddly enough, you have drawn the cards “backward”: the mother, perceived as toxic, should normally correspond with XIII, The Nameless Arcanum, and yourself with The Emperor (the stable father). However, it is in the place of the protagonist—in other words, your place—where you put Arcanum XIII, whereas your ex-wife, your antagonist, is represented by The Emperor. Temperance, in the middle, is meanwhile prompting communication, moderation, and the union of opposites.

The message the Tarot is sending you is quite subtle: to overcome your negative vision of this person, whether justified or not, you have to be capable of putting yourself in her place. Your ex-wife’s behavior reactivates an old anger: understand that you chose this woman to start a family with her. It is a certainty that she corresponded to a deeply anchored model in your subconscious. The power struggle leads nowhere, nor is this the appropriate time to try to find out who is right. The sole solution indicated by Arcanum XIII, Temperance, is to adopt a conciliatory and spiritual attitude, making a return to dialogue possible. However, this can only happen if you realize the true origin of your anger—directed against a castrating maternal archetype, or a sister perceived as an enemy.



## ■ Reading the Card at the Bottom of the Deck

We saw in part 1 how we can consider the Tarot to be a whole whose fragments, taken separately, put us back on the road to unity. When the person rearranges the order of the cards, he is creating his own chaos, his universe. In this universe we can establish the basis that the cards from the top half of the deck pertain to the spiritual aspiration of the consultant, and those from the lower half represent his darkest depths, the subconscious.

The card found on the bottom of the deck would therefore represent both the most profound and the most visible, just like a striking dream that you still remember on awakening. In many cases this card can helpfully orient the Tarot reading, furnishing a clue to the tone of the reading. The tarologist has the choice of stealing a glance at it while the individual is rearranging the cards and keeping this clue in mind during the reading, or he can decide to openly interpret this revealing card, which will provide an additional illumination of some kind to the cards that were drawn (see the example that follows).



**A young twenty-five-year-old woman whose parents are of two different nationalities asks: “What is my country?”**

**Card at the Bottom of the Deck:** VI The Lover

**Drawing:** XX Judgment, VIII Justice, VIII The Hermit

**Reading of the Card:** Here is how the card from the bottom of the deck allows us to color the individual’s question. The Lover reveals an emotional conflict and a desire for union. An individual in between two others wonders: “What is my country?” This figure is placed in the center, at the heart of the map. One first response would be: “Your country is in your heart.” We can also see that this central figure is wearing red shoes; we can then comment: “Your country is feeling ‘good inside your shoes.’ The Earth belongs



to you; you are a citizen of the planet. Wherever you feel good is where you may consider yourself to be in your country.”

**Reading of the Drawing:** While keeping in mind the trail suggested by The Lover, we can read the three cards this way: “You ask this question because you have a desire inside to unite your two parents (VIII and VIII), who are of different nationalities, without betraying either one. You experience yourself as the child in the middle of XX. But it is time to accept the death of this childish desire. You are not responsible for your parents’ union. Instead of placing yourself in the center of the family, it is time now to find your own center, like Justice (VIII): in full perfection of the feminine. You will cease asking your parents for a nationality; you will take one on your own initiative by choosing the place you like best. The way of The Lover, remember, is pleasure, the choice of doing what you like.”

### ■ **Choosing a Positive or Negative Reading**

In addition to the reading strategy and the work around the question, the reader’s attitude is essential. Just as in life, at every moment in a Tarot reading a choice is offered us: we can interpret the facts (the Arcana) in a positive or negative sense. We have seen that this choice is not predetermined, insofar as in the Tarot, no card is innately negative.

But what is certain, whatever direction we choose to carve out, it will lead us to infinite developments. In other words, there are no limits to ugliness, sorrow, and being cursed, just as there are no limits to beauty, joy, and trust.

It is not a question of turning the Tarot reading into a undertaking of systematic benediction: extravagant predictions can prove to be as disastrous as curses because the individual could have the tendency to stop living actively and simply wait for the announced miracle to take place. But we can choose to approach the reading, even when it presents obstacles and difficulties, as a path of growth and joyful acceptance of life.



The example that follows illustrates how we can interpret the same drawing in one direction or the other.

Remember, these readings can both be right. It is up to the tarologist to determine the orientation, in full consciousness, and toward which vision of the world he wishes it to be directed.

A person can, consciously or unconsciously, want a negative reading. This is often the case for depressed or pessimistic individuals. It will therefore serve no purpose to try from the onset to impose an overly optimistic reading on such a person. To the contrary, the tarologist would be well advised to first carefully present a rather negative reading. Then, with the individual's consent, this reading will be oriented step by step toward more fruitful perspectives that will become approachable because they are anchored in what the person considers as her reality. It can then be interesting to give her the two versions, and also clarify the way she chooses to look at her situation.



### **What will my new job be like?**

**Drawing:** A: X The Wheel of Fortune, B: I The Magician, C: XVI The Tower

**Negative Reading:** You are not advancing (X) because you are not working to open your mind (I). You keep staring at a block (I looking at X) and because of this, you do not take any joy in life. Your instability is destroying you; cycles follow one upon the other and repeat, and, because you live like an eternal beginner, you see your ideal collapsing (XVI).

**Positive Reading:** Your mind is ready to open (XVI). A cycle is ending (X); you have gone through a profound change, and you have drawn a valuable asset from it. The past is past. Henceforth you have everything you need to take action (on The Magician's table) and joyfully realize your most cherished plans (XVI). Your new job will allow you to open up and free your energy. You can finally discover the pleasure of playing and dancing, your gaze turned upon the fruits of the Earth.



## READING THREE CARDS WITH NO PREESTABLISHED STRUCTURE AND WITHOUT QUESTIONS

This final stage of the three-card reading is the true art of Tarot reading. All the strategies, although helpful for the beginner—and quite often for the confirmed tarologist as well—have their limitations. They are rigid, whereas the human mind has infinite plasticity.

Sometimes people interrogate the Tarot on one theme: emotional life, work, and so forth. But often out of shyness or indecision, people will have no question to pose. The tarologist should then be capable of helping the underlying question to emerge in order to answer it precisely without falling into long, vague speeches. Without a question, there is no answer possible.

Similarly, a time will come where we should be capable of reading three cards just as we understand any sentence spoken by someone in a language with which we are familiar. Sometimes, to perfect this understanding, we are right to request some additional information. In the same way, the three-card reading can then be enriched by new cards, and we thus move on in this way, easily and imperceptibly, to much larger readings, until we are able to read a drawing consisting of the twenty-two Major Arcana, truly all seventy-eight Arcana of the Tarot.

### *Strategy 1*

#### **The Tarot Asks the Question**

When someone asks for a Tarot reading but does not wish to ask a question—either because he or she does not have one or does not want to say it out loud—the danger for the tarologist then is to launch into a reading that deviates from the concerns of the person receiving the reading. We can go astray in psychological discourses when the individual really has material concerns, or into a spiritual reading when the person is concerned with emotional issues, or, conversely, give a very down-to-earth reading when the person really needs a deep realization. In a case like this, reading strategies allow us to frame the drawing and respond in the direction most likely to satisfy the individual.



When a person wishes to consult the Tarot without formulating a question, he or she can choose an Arcanum that symbolizes a question or concern. Here are some of the questions the Major Arcana can pose. Obviously this list is not exhaustive:



**The Fool:** What am I in the midst of (or what should I be) releasing? What is my path? How should I channel my energy?



**I The Magician:** What am I beginning? What am I in the midst of deciding? What are my possibilities in potential?



**II The High Priestess:** What am I accumulating? What in me remains untouched? What should I study? What kind of relationship do I have with my mother?



**III The Empress:** What am I creating? What is it that is flowering, bursting in me? What experiences am I in the midst of living?



**IIII The Emperor:** How is my work, my material life going? What am I in the midst of building? What kind of relationship do I have with my father? How do I relate with the notion of power?



**V The Pope:** What does tradition, the law say? What should I communicate, and with what? Am I in the midst of transmitting something, and to whom? Do I have an ideal?



**VI The Lover:** What pleases me? In what relationships am I currently involved? How is my life going emotionally?





**VII The Chariot:** Where am I going, and where do I come from? What is my vehicle? (For example, a mystical doctrine, mathematics, the Tarot, my body . . .) What is my action in the world?



**VIII Justice:** What should I balance or harmonize? What should I rid myself of that is useless in me? What is my notion of perfection? How do I face maternity?



**VIII The Hermit:** What does my wisdom say? What am I in the midst of distancing myself from? What should I renounce? What do I believe in?



**X The Wheel of Fortune:** What should be changed? What cycle has ended in my life? What are my opportunities? Who can help me? What am I in the midst of repeating?



**XI Strength:** What is my strength? Where is it situated? To what purpose do I employ my sexuality? What are my desires? What do I intend to tame? What is my creative project?



**XII The Hanged Man:** What should I sacrifice? What am I hiding? What should I stop? What should I listen to (the figure of The Hanged Man is the sole human figure in the Tarot with an ear)? Where should I direct my inner seeking?



**XIII The Nameless Arcanum:** What inside me should die? What is it that I should let go? What is in the process of transforming inside me? What is my anger?





**XIII Temperance:** What protects me? What kind of relationship should I establish with myself? What am I in the midst of healing? Whom should I bless?



**XV The Devil:** To what am I bound? What is my temptation? What is my creative ability? What are my negative values? What are my impulses? What frightens me?



**XVI The Tower:** With whom am I in the process of breaking up? What am I freeing myself from? What are the energies becoming unblocked within me? What is the feast that awaits me?



**XVII The Star:** What is my hope? What is my place? To what purpose should I employ my energy? What have I to give, to whom, and how?



**XVIII The Moon:** What is my receptive capacity? How is my femininity, my intuition going? How do I view my mother? What is my impossible ideal? What is in gestation inside of me?



**XVIII The Sun:** What gives me joy, energy, success? Am I loved? Am I building something new? What image do I have of my father?



**XX Judgment:** What is in the process of awakening inside me? What are my irresistible desires? What are we in the midst of creating together? What is my position toward starting a family?



**XXI The World:** What is the result of what I have done? Where is it leading? What imprisons me? Am I in the process of blossoming? What is my realization?



Reading the Tarot without a question being posed is a perilous undertaking. In a three-card reading, in any event, the simplicity of the sentence opens the field to far too many interpretations, and you can touch upon personal domains in a way that can strike the person negatively. The best strategy consists of accepting that the person has not formulated a question and to say to him: “If you really want it, we will see what the Tarot wishes to speak with you about.” You will then define the question by basing it on one card. You may either decide to use the card from the bottom of the deck, or you may ask the person to draw a card that symbolizes the question, then three for the response. It is a good idea to first find agreement on the orientation of the “question posed by the Tarot,” then answer it using the three other cards (see the example that follows).

In this example an actress without work chose to have the Tarot formulate her questions. We see how a three-card sentence can be interpreted quite differently depending upon the question.



**Question 1:** The person draws a card XXI The World. She accepts the question posed by this Arcanum: What is my path toward realization?



**Question 2:** The person pulls a card that will symbolize her second question: XI Strength. She accepts: What is my desire?

**Drawing:** A: VIII The Hermit, B: II The High Priestess, C: XX Judgment



**Reading 1:** XXI The World. You must accept the crisis (VIII) and use it to your advantage to reconsider your past. The High Priestess represents a period of fertile waiting: perhaps you are studying a role or a new technique for

your métier. Perhaps you are also in the midst of writing a play or screenplay in which you could act. This serene and fertile attitude will lead you to a new project, an irresistible call to realization (Judgment).

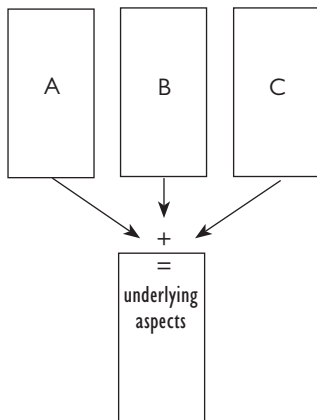


**Reading 2:** XI Strength. You are represented by The High Priestess, a pale white woman who seems to be waiting for someone to come warm her up. But the object of your desire, The Hermit, is in a state of solitude and not offering himself for the moment as a passionate lover. However, because he is walking backward, he is advancing toward you. An irresistible desire can be born out of this encounter . . . or the emergence of a new consciousness (XX). We should note that adding The Hermit (VIII) and The High Priestess (II) together gives us 11–XI, the very card that poses the question. We will therefore favor the idea that the man represented by The Hermit is the object of desire of the woman represented by The High Priestess.

### Strategy 2

#### ■ Reading Three Cards Based on Their Numerical Value

In the context of a drawing, you may also add up the numbers of the Arcana to obtain a new reading element: their sum provides a number corresponding to an Arcanum. In this technique known as “theosophical addition,” if the sum of the numbers is higher than 22, we add those numbers together to come up with a new figure that will correspond to the number of a Major Arcanum. In this strategy, The Fool, who has no number, is considered as the twenty-second Major Arcanum and thus corresponds to the figure 22.



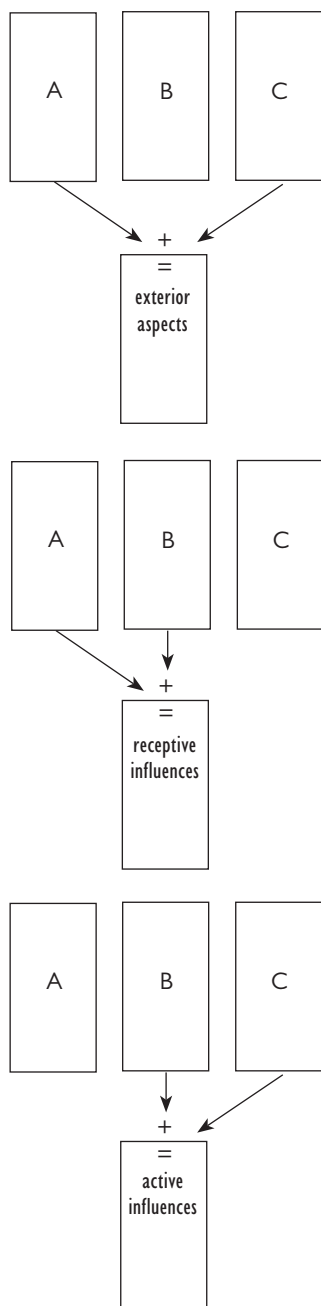
We can add the numerical value of each of the three cards of the sentence together:

- $A + B + C$  = the underlying aspects of the question

And the cards two by two:

- $A + C$  = the exterior aspects of the question
- $A + B$  = maternal or receptive influence, left side
- $B + C$  = the paternal or active influence, right side





In the strategy known as "theosophical addition," we can add the three cards together as well as adding them two by two.

### **Why can't my thirty-five-year-old son start the family he wants?**

(In talking with this individual, we learned that the father of this child was absent and that she raised him by herself.)

**Drawing:** A: VI The Lover, B: V The Pope, C: XVIII The Sun



### **Underlying Aspects of the Question (A + B + C)**

III The Empress

(6 + 5 + 19 = 30; 3 + 0 = 3)

The first element of the response could be: Your son is looking for the ideal woman, The Empress adorned by every seduction. But to seduce her, he needs to be The Emperor, which does not appear in this spread. It is The Pope who is in the center; he is a man who is spiritually strong but who corresponds with The High Priestess.



### **Exterior Aspects of the Question (A + C)**

VII The Chariot

(6 + 19 = 25; 2 + 5 = 7)

In appearance, your son is active in the world and sure of himself. He has no problem.





### Receptive or Maternal Influences (A + B)

XI Strength ( $6 + 5 = 11$ )

The mother is very strong in the psychological scheme of this young man. He might be afraid of finding a desire to flee toward the paternal archetype in every woman.



### Active or Paternal Influences (B + C)

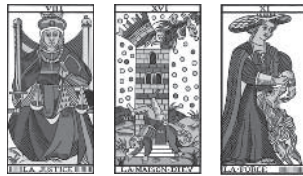
VI The Lover ( $19 + 5 = 24$ ;  $2 + 4 = 6$ )

But when we add together the right side, we find The Lover: there is no male reference point. The figure of The Lover is surrounded by two women: there where your son needs a masculine influence, we still find the mother.

**Synthesis:** To succeed in finding the woman that is right for him and to become the man who is right for her, your son needs a reference point, a teacher to play the role of paternal archetype and give him the missing information: the transmission of the masculine.

### Should I change jobs?

**Drawing:** A: VIII Justice, B: XVI The Tower, C: XI Strength



### Underlying Aspects of the Question (A + B + C)

VIII Justice ( $8 + 16 + 11 = 35$ ;  $3 + 5 = 8$ )

This Arcanum indicates that you have something to weigh, a balance to be found.



### Exterior Aspects of the Question (A + C)

XVIII The Sun ( $8 + 11 = 19$ )

In appearance, you are aspiring to build something new.



### Receptive or Maternal Influences (A + B)

VI The Lover ( $8 + 16 = 24$ ;  $2 + 4 = 6$ )

However, the job you currently hold pleases you; from a receptive viewpoint, you are rather tempted to remain in the same place.





### **Active or Paternal Influences (B + C)**

VIII The Hermit ( $6 + 11 = 27$ ;  $2 + 7 = 9$ )

On the other hand, from the active viewpoint, you feel in crisis, and you want to leave.

**Synthesis:** It would be preferable to announce the change quite cautiously, to balance (Justice) the desire to stay (The Lover) with that of wanting to leave (The Hermit). The internal conflict is too great to take the risk of throwing yourself into a new venture: the part of yourself that refuses to change could hold you back despite yourself.

### *Strategy 3*

#### **Following the Eyes, Gestures, and Clues Given by the Cards**

A decisive step in the development of your relationship with the Tarot, this stage consists of following the direction in which the card figures are looking, or the appeal of a symbol, and answering this question: “What is this person looking at?” Or even: “What aid is The Magician’s wand summoning? What is Arcanum XIII transforming? Who is turning the handle of The Wheel of Fortune?” The cards echo each other this way, creating a dynamic that makes it possible to read them without a preliminary structure or question, as we would decipher a rebus or a story told in pictures.

As the base, you draw three cards; if card A of the sentence opens a question toward the left, to answer it, it is appropriate to draw a new card for this side. The same is true if card C leaves an opening toward the right. We add cards this way until the sentence is finished and the interactions of the cards within it have been stabilized. Similarly, if the meaning of one of the cards is not clear, you can pull another card above it to make its message more precise.

#### ***A forty-year-old woman***

**Drawing:** A: X The Wheel of Fortune, B: VIII Justice, C: XXI The World

**Reading:** Here the sentence is closed and does not require another card to





Justice opposes her sword to the handle on The Wheel of Fortune.



The Devil is able to turn the handle of the Wheel of Fortune.

be pulled from the deck for the right or left. In fact, The Wheel of Fortune is followed by Justice, who shows herself capable of setting the new cycle in motion and orienting herself toward realization. Having reached the end of one period in her life, the person receiving the reading is taking a position in the present, recognizing her own qualities, and redirecting herself toward her realization. Only the sword of Justice can prevent this realization: from the design of the cards, we can see that the passage from the old cycle to the new cycle is made through a rift. Instead of moving the handle, Justice makes a clean cut from the past. We could say that she judges or detaches herself through strength instead of giving herself aid. Justice accepts her triumph (the scales are on the side of The World) but she will not accept helping herself: she opposes her sword to the handle.

**Drawing:** If the cards were arranged in the ascending order of VIII–X–XXI, this would mean that the person receiving the reading has cut with the past, finished a cycle, and that she is accepting the help of The World to achieve her realization. It is therefore helpful to clarify the position of Justice here. The individual draws another card to put on top of it: XV The Devil.

**Reading:** Two interpretations converge here. On the one hand, The Devil can signify a subconscious fear, a return to a childhood state. This psychological interpretation leads us to venture a guess that the person is afraid of her mother, which she confirms.



The education she received at her hands was marked by an ideal of intransigent perfection, which forbade her from winning if she was not beyond reproach—something that is impossible. She thus has a tendency to fall into a neurosis of failure. But The Devil is also a symbol of creativity. By going beyond perfectionism, by accepting that excellence consists of doing her best and knowing she can make mistakes, this individual can establish contact with her deepest creativity. This is when The Devil turns the handle of The Wheel of Fortune, permitting her to triumph.



### **A fifty-year-old bachelor**

**Drawing:** A: I The Magician, B: XIII Temperance, C: XI Strength

**Reading:** First observing the directions in which the figures are looking, we can unite The Magician and Temperance, who are looking left; Strength, meanwhile, is looking toward the right. Furthermore, Temperance

is acting between the two cards, blending the fluids from two vessels. We could say that the left vessel represents The Magician and the right vessel Strength. In this way, Temperance makes it possible to establish a new relationship between the two Arcana. But the angel's gaze is turned toward The Magician: this means that there is something to heal—a certain self-image, or a past beginning—to be able to start something new (Strength). It will therefore be necessary to pull a card to know where The Magician is looking and another to learn where Strength is looking.



**Drawing:** The drawing becomes XXI The World, I–XIII–XI, XX Judgment.

**Reading:** Temperance is in the process of healing The

Magician from a difficult birth or beginning, symbolized by The World in the first spot. Once this cure is underway, his forces will allow him to begin a new action (Strength) turned toward the future, perhaps toward the creation of his own family, or the discovery of his profound vocation.



Symbolically, Judgment indicates a rebirth and the emergence of an irresistible desire.



**A young man chooses three cards without posing any question.**

**Drawing:** A: XVI The Tower, B: VI The Lover, C: II The High Priestess

**Reading:** The first thing we note is that this sentence runs in descending numerical order, and it contains both Arcana of degree 6 (see p. 64). We could say that there is a movement here from a great love (XVI) to one that is less great (VI), culminating in an imprisonment (II).

**Person receiving the reading:** The Tarot seems to be directing us toward the emotional life of the person receiving the reading, who does not want us to address this theme. The tarologist should respect this sense of modesty. Finally, the individual chooses to ask a question: “Should I move from the house where I am living to live in another house that I own?”

**Reading:** The Tower does, in fact, indicate moving from a place and could put us on the scent of a move. But with The Lover, then the High Priestess, we could venture a guess that the consultant is returning to the maternal bosom. Symbolically, this is true because the house to which he is planning to move is located in his childhood town, two steps from his mother’s house.



**Drawing:** Here, although the sentence is closed, we can enrich the Tarot by drawing one more card for the extreme left to understand the origin of this desire to change houses, and another card for the extreme right to learn what this change will lead to. The sentence then becomes: XVII The Star, XVI–VI–II, XII The Hanged Man.

**Reading:** The move could have been triggered by a woman from his past (The Star, which depicts a woman and also symbolizes a place, spilling water from its jars toward the left). The person confirms this: his moving is connected to the end of an emotional relationship. Initially, as The



Hanged Man shows, this change will lead him to enclose himself in a period of solitude. He is passively waiting for a new impetus, a new relationship that can give him the desire to go out into the world.



**Drawing:** By adding another card after The Hanged Man, we can try to see what is possible

for the individual to do to get out of his imprisonment: XVIII The Sun.

**Reading:** By falling in love again, the person can recover the desire to build something new. This card indicates that the solitude and inactivity to which he is destined are necessary for him. He must accept going through a crisis, the task of mourning, to heal himself of the past relationship and return to himself. He will then discover again the ability to love and the joy of living symbolized by The Sun.

### ■ The Projective Reading: Two Ways of Looking at Something to Resolve a Question

We have seen that all Tarot readings are projective. There are no other means of interpreting the cards selected by the person receiving the reading than by making them resonate inside our own subconscious. With the cards he has chosen, the individual forms a “sentence” that the tarologist “translates” based on her own mental structure, life experience, the path she has traveled, and the knowledge she has of the Tarot.

This is the reason for which work on projection forms an integral part of the education of a good tarologist. This work is never done: the purpose is to arrive at a transpersonal reading, then, ideally, an impartial one. The ideal tarologist would then be a mirror that contains the entire universe.

As an exercise in this direction, we suggest a simple reading that consists of recognizing this projective dimension rather than masking it under some kind of alleged objectivity. We can then use it to enrich the tarologist-consulter relationship, by eliminating the grab for power that is assumed by the position of the all-seeing “clairvoyant.” This requires



a double effort on the tarologist's part: to confront her own limits so that she can continue to advance, and also to acknowledge in the other's presence that she can make mistakes.

For this reading, we use two decks, taking the 22 Major Arcana from each. The person receiving the reading and tarologist rearrange the cards of their respective decks at the same time, then each draws three cards. We can also take into account the card on the bottom of the deck, which provides the overall tone of the drawing.

The tarologist first examines her own projection concerning the individual's question. The three cards she has selected allow her to formulate her opinion, or her intuition, of the possible answer.

We next read, with the three cards drawn by the individual, the image that he has of the situation. This second reading is quite standard, like any other three-card reading.

Finally, as a third step, we create the synthesis of the two drawings. It is this encounter between the projection of the tarologist and that of the person receiving the reading that turns the direction to the resolution of the problem (see the example that follows).

The projective reading demands that the tarologist develop a true sense of dialogue. It is possible that the two drawings will prompt opposing responses—at least in appearance.

***Person receiving the reading asks,  
Where am I going?***

**Drawing by the tarologist:** Card at the bottom of the deck: VI The Lover. A: VIII Justice, B: X The Wheel of Fortune, C: XIII The Nameless Arcanum

**Drawing by the person receiving the reading:** Card at the bottom of the deck: V The Pope. A: XVI The Tower, B: XIII Temperance, C: XI Strength.

**Reading:** After examination of the card that remains at the bottom of the deck once the cards have been rearranged, the card that



The Projection of the tarologist





The Vision of the person  
receiving the reading

gives the tone of the reading, we see that the tarologist perceives the person receiving the reading as being in search of an emotional solution, but already in the process of heading toward what he loves (degree 6). The individual still envisions himself on the threshold of this realization, in the domain of the ideal (degree 5). (For more on this numerology, see p. 55.) The tarologist's projection, based on his drawing, is this: the person, who has long been confronted by his mother's demand for perfection (VIII), is in the midst of completing this past cycle (X). He is now heading

toward a revolution, perhaps driven by his anger at the maternal ideology (XIII). The individual's drawing evokes a shock, an expulsion (XVI) that could go back to the time of his birth, which was a traumatic experience, but could also mean a rupture. However, healing is in the central spot (XIII) followed by a new creative beginning (XI). Both readings reflect the fact of leaving an old oppressive situation by passing through a transformational healing in order to head toward what one truly loves.

**Analysis by the person receiving the reading:** "My underlying question was in fact knowing how I would be truly able to leave my mother. This reading makes clear to me that this process is actually central to my life; it is painful but necessary."



# Reading Four and More Cards

The reading of duets (or syllables) is preparation for approaching the basic grammar of the Tarot: the three-card “sentence.” Once you have mastered and integrated the basic elements, reading becomes easy, no matter how many cards are used. In fact, as we shall see, the reading strategies for more than four cards are simpler in a certain way than the variations on the reading of three cards.

We are presenting several structures here in which the placement of each card represents one aspect, one force acting within an entire group. Beyond three cards, Tarot reading is generally done within such a scheme or design, inside of which each level corresponds to an element of the response. With these strategies we are able to work without a question. Most importantly, they are expandable: starting from a five- or seven-card strategy, we can place three cards at each position instead of one and read a duet or a sentence instead of one Arcanum. This is how, little by little, we can become capable of reading increasingly complex drawings, but proceeding by simple units.

The reading strategies presented here are among our favorites, but there are many others. In fact, they can be invented in infinite number, as we shall try to show with the last example.

The reading examples we give are generally based on the Major Arcana, but we can indiscriminately apply these strategies by mixing



all the cards of the Tarot, or even using the fifty-six Minor Arcana by themselves.

## ■ The Tarot of Doubt

Once you have accepted that the Tarot is not used to read the future, you can use it as a tool for introspection.

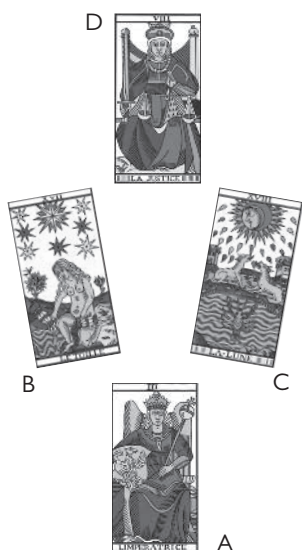
When a doubt of material, creative, emotional, or intellectual origin causes us anxiety and holds us back from taking action, the Tarot allows us to examine the problem by breaking it down.

This is what each of the cards in this four-card reading strategy corresponds to:

A: the person receiving the reading

B and C: the aspects of the person's doubt

D: This is the resolution, the guide that will allow the person to resolve the doubt.

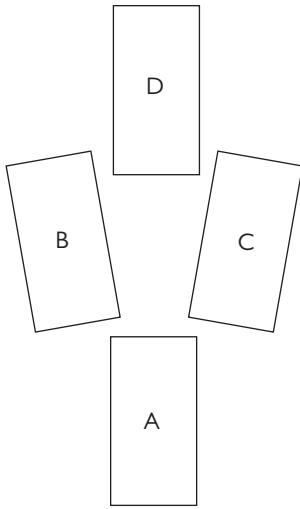


***A very young girl with a metaphysical doubt; she wonders if reincarnation exists.***

**Drawing:** A: III The Empress, B: XVII The Star, C: XVIII The Moon, D: VIII Justice

**Reading:** A: The person receiving the reading, represented by The Empress, displays herself in full juvenile enthusiasm. She does not know where she is going. She asks questions like an adolescent haunted by a romantic vision of death and would like to know all the answers right away. B and C: Her doubt is based on the following processes: The Star that receives influences from “on high” (the stars, the cosmos) gives what she receives to The Moon (maternal archetype of gestation and creation), through the metaphor of the two vessels pouring water. But then again, in



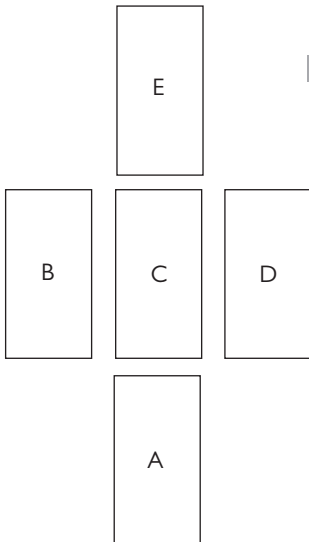


The Tarot of Doubt

- A. The person receiving the reading
- B–C. The aspects of the doubt
- D. The key for resolving the doubt

The Moon, the material word ascends (the crayfish rising toward the astral body). This is a cycle: what goes up comes back down and starts to go back up. Reincarnation is based on a cyclical concept of life. D: Justice looks straight ahead. She is situated in the complete present, weighing what is useful and cutting away what is not.

**Synthesis:** Inasmuch as time contains cyclical rhythms, why not think that reincarnation exists if this idea helps us? When a disciple posed the question, “What is there after death?” to a famous Zen master, he responded: “I don’t know, I’m not dead yet.” We can advise this young girl to wait until she has lived and place her trust in divine (or cosmic) justice.



The Tarot of Liberation

- A. Restraint, obstacle, blockage
- B. The means of liberation
- C. The action of undertaking
- D. Transformation
- E. Obstinacy, the destiny to achieve

### ■ The Tarot of Liberation

We can also call this reading grid with five elements “The Tarot of The Fool,” as this Arcanum symbolizes essential enthusiasm and freedom. Example:

A: What prevents me from being myself?

B: With what means can I free myself?

C: To undertake what action?

D: To lead into what transformation?

E: What is my purpose, my destiny to realize?

(See the example that follows.)





***A woman around thirty years old wishes to change her life.***

**Drawing:** A: XIII Temperance, B: III The Empress, C: XVIII The Sun, D: XII The Hanged Man, E: XVII The Star.

**Reading:** A: What prevents you from realizing yourself is perhaps an angelic and disembodied vision of yourself that leads you to accept every compromise and show evidence of an excessive indecisiveness. B: To free yourself, you need to go back to your creative forces and reconcile with your adolescent plans. What gives you enthusiasm? Where is your desire heading? Freedom begins with

this question. C: You can then envision building something new—a couple founded on mutual esteem and equality, a professional partnership with a colleague. D: Your transformation is that you have made contact with yourself, your true essence. You deepen your relationship with yourself. E: You can mount a successful action in the world. Generosity will be one of your guiding values. If you choose one place as a base for your activity, you will be able to radiate from there.

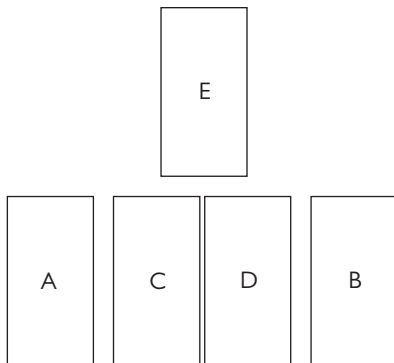
**Person's commentary:** "I've had difficulty embodying myself. I had a vocation as an actress, but received no encouragement for this; it is time to begin practicing theater, which will help me be in my body. I have been offered a job being in charge of public relations for a circus that has moved into my city. The Tarot confirms that I am on the right path."

## ■ The Hero's Journey

This five-card structure is inspired by the great mythological theme of the hero's quest popularized by the works of Joseph Campbell. In its most simple form it consists of five cards drawn by the individual: A represents his starting position, B corresponds to his objective or the object of his quest; between these two cards two more are placed close together: C and D represent the obstacles to be overcome to attain his objective. Finally, the individual draws a fifth card. E represents the key,



the ally, the forces he has at his disposal to attain his objective. This card will be read in two positions, before and after the obstacle. The reading is progressive, with each card turned over in the order indicated (A, B, C, D, and E).



The Hero's Journey  
 A. The situation  
 B. The objective  
 C—D. The obstacle  
 E. The key

**Person receiving the reading finds herself at a professional dead end and feels a strong need for change.**

**Drawing:** A (situation): VIII Justice; B (objective): XV The Devil; C—D (obstacle): V The Pope, VI The Lover; E (key): I The Magician.

**Reading:** Your initial position represents you seated in a balanced state (VIII) but also in the presence of a demand for perfection that paralyzes you. Your objective (XV) is to practice a creative trade that impassions you. But creativity is always imperfect! To create it, you must accept error. The obstacle that separates you from your goal is the regard of the father (V) that creates an emotional conflict in you and a difficulty in choosing your path (VI). The demand for perfection to which you are subjected was imposed upon you by your father and prevents you from realizing yourself creatively. The key to the problem (I) is simple. You must begin at once to do what you love without fear of being a beginner, but without quitting your job to do so (The Magician is holding a coin in his hand). The Magician



indicates an activity that is rather spiritual, or intellectual, like journalism. If you fear you don't know how to write well enough, ask for help from an editor for your first articles!

**Person's commentary:** "My situation has been depicted quite well. I do, in fact, want to start a career in journalism, but I don't dare believe I could make a living at it. The solution consists of starting while keeping my current work, which can help give me a sense of security."

We can enrich the Tarot of the Hero's Journey by placing an additional card at each position. Here is an intentionally very simple example.

**Drawing:** A: XVI The Tower, VIII The Hermit; B: IIII The Emperor, XVII The Star; C–D: V The Pope, II The High Priestess, X The Wheel of Fortune; E: VI The Lover, XX Judgment.



**Reading:** Evicted from his home (XVI), the individual does not know where to go (VIII). His objective: find a new stable (IIII) place (XVII). The obstacle: the means employed (V, rental agencies; and II, reading the classifieds) have turned up nothing (X).

**The key:** Discuss it with those around you (VI) because the solution (XX) can be by word of mouth.

## ■ The World Tarot

This reading, which requires no question, makes it easy to mix Minor Arcana with Major Arcana. The basic structure, modeled on the diagram of Arcanum XXI, is made up of five cards. Card A in the center represents the essence or Higher Self of the person receiving the reading. On the top right, the position of the eagle, card B represents the



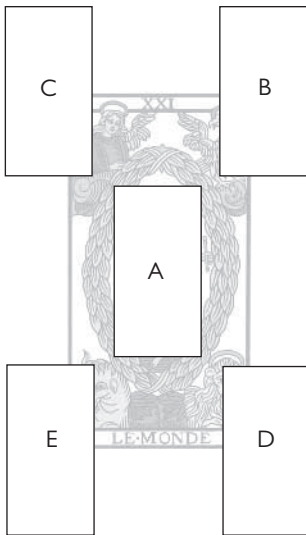


state of the individual's intellectual energy. In the angel's spot on the top left, card C represents his or her emotional energy. Card D in the lower right, the lion's spot, represents the state of the individual's creative and sexual energy. And in the spot of the flesh-colored animal in the lower left, card E represents the state of his or her material energy.

**A man in his forties draws five cards from the Major Arcana.**

**Drawing:** A (essence): VIII The Hermit, B (intellectual life): X The Wheel of Fortune, C (emotional life): XVI The Tower, D (creative and sexual life): XVIII The Moon, E (material life): VII The Chariot

**Reading:** A (essence). You currently find yourself in a time of crisis, which the cards in the four corners will clarify. In fact, The Hermit lights the receptive side (emotional energy and material life), but he has his back turned toward the active side (intellectual and creative life). The cards on the right express the fear these domains inspire in you because you do not yet know where you are going. C (emotional life) and D (material life). It may be that you are experiencing a rift or rupture, which has compelled you to move. (The person confirms this: recently separated from his wife, he has accepted a position abroad.) B (intellectual life) and D (creative-sexual life). For the moment it seems to you that you have reached a stopping point in your notion of the world (X). This calling into question



The World Tarot

A. Essence

B. Intellectual life

C. Emotional life

D. Sexual and creative life

E. Material life



is no doubt connected to the emotional ordeal you recently went through (the “sphinx” of The Wheel of Fortune often represents an emotional enigma). Your creative and sexual energy is for the moment absorbed in an interrogation about the feminine (XVIII), and about the image of the ideal mother. (The individual confirmed that he thought he had found the mother of his future children, and this new situation calls his notion of things back into question).

**Conclusion:** After a drawing like this, which provides a kind of general status report, it can be interesting to begin the reading over, for example by following the strategy below, by posing the question: what energies are at my disposal that I am not yet using?

We worked with the same individual following a slightly different strategy. The entire Tarot pack was brought into play, but divided into five decks. The person drew a Major Arcanum, which he placed in the center; this was the essential energy he had at his disposal. Then he drew a card from the Swords deck and placed it in the upper right. A card from Cups went on the upper left, a card from Wands on the lower right, and a card from Pentacles on the lower left.



C



B



A



E



D

**Drawing:** A: I The Magician, B: Queen of Swords, C: King of Cups, D: Knight of Wands, E: Five of Pentacles.

**Reading:** Essentially, you have the possibility of beginning a new stage of life connected with your new activity (The Magician). Your ability to love has not been damaged (King of Cups), and you bring about the emergence of a new ideal in your material life (Five of Pentacles). But your emotional wound makes you cautious in thought (Queen of Swords) and could perhaps be momentarily influencing your vision of women. Your creative and sexual energy is currently sublimated (Knight of Wands) to allow you to attain a new form of thought, a mental rebirth.



Initially with The World Tarot, it can be interesting to let the person receiving the reading choose the order in which he draws the cards, once you have indicated to him which center corresponds to each position. For example, if he decides to first place cards on the right side (intellect and sexual-creative center), this can indicate that action is more of a priority for him than reception.

## ■ The Tarot of the Two Projects

We choose three cards to learn what our utopian project is, in other words, the most remote horizon we offer for our personal realization. The purpose is not to learn if we can or should realize this project, but to become conscious of the fact that we live by projecting ourselves into the future. It is therefore essential to know what kind of future we envision for ourselves. We draw three more cards to place under these three. They represent the plan that has been imposed upon us, the one given us by our families, the task we have inherited from our family tree, which quite often restricts our personal development. For example: “You shall be a doctor, my son!” when the individual is dreaming of becoming a tennis player; or “You are going to stay an old maid,” a curse that can weigh heavily on the life of a woman. This reading can therefore offer an opportunity to gain awareness of those future perspectives that shape our daily lives.



The utopian project



The imposed project

**Utopian Project:** The Fool, XV The Devil, XVIII The Sun

**Imposed Project:** III The Empress, II The High Priestess, XI Strength

**Reading:** Your utopian project is the total realization of your creativity and ability to earn money (The Fool gives all his energy to The Devil), which will lead to a total success (The Sun). But the project that has been given to you is to always restrain your creativity and enthusiasm (The High Priestess imprisons and chills The Empress's desire);



you have thereby been condemned to eternal beginnings. (Strength represents a creative conflict here; she is closing the mouth of the animal.) How can this be resolved? By reorganizing the imposed project.



The imposed project repositioned

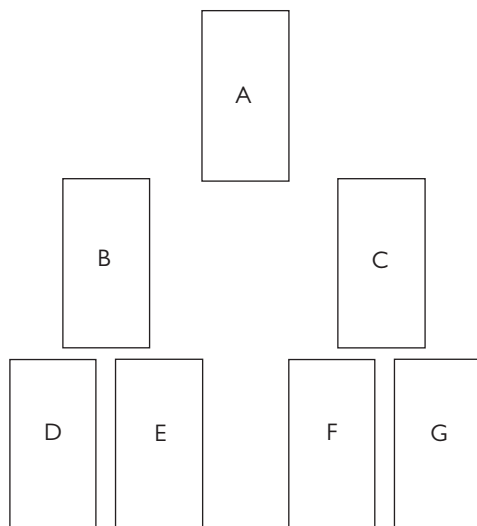
**Repositioning:** XI Strength, II The High Priestess, III The Empress

**Reading:** Strength becomes a creative project here that ripens with the gestational work of The High Priestess and finally sees the light of day with The Empress, who represents

self-expression, creativity, and self-realization. You have to rid yourself of a crazy idea: “To be wise and pure like The High Priestess, I must remain inactive.”

## ■ The Tarot of the Choice

This strategy is very helpful when a person is hesitating between two paths, as it serves to visualize the way she is imagining the situation. The tarologist’s role is obviously not to push the individual toward one



The Tarot of the Choice

A. The consultant

B—D—E. First possibility

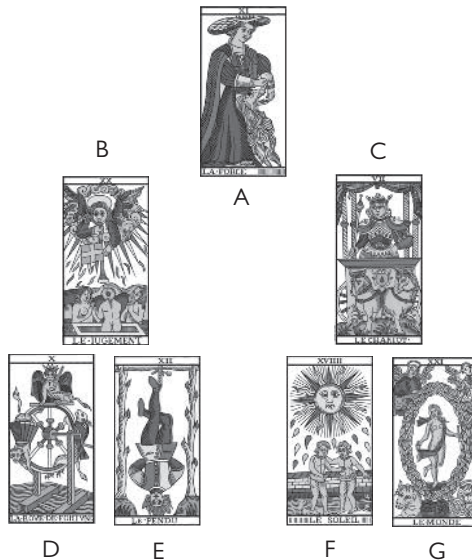
C—F—G. Second possibility



option but to shed light on the possibilities so that a conscious choice may be made. The person pulls one card to place in the center, which symbolizes her. She is then asked to visualize a path toward the left of this card and another to the right. A duet of cards is then added to each of these that will allow a more precise understanding of the possibilities offered by each of these paths.

**Person receiving the reading has a choice between two jobs.**

**Drawing:** A: XI Strength, B: XX Judgment, C: VII The Chariot, D: X The Wheel of Fortune, E: XII The Hanged Man, F: XVIII The Sun, G: XXI The World



**Reading:** Strength is looking at the second path; you seem more prone to decide in favor of that path. This is confirmed by the cards:

**Possibility 1:** The seductive call (XX) is blocked (X) to end in a waiting state (XII) that seems to go nowhere.

**Possibility 2:** This evokes a strong action in the world (VII) under the sign of a fertile association (XVIII) that leads to success (XXI).



# Reading Ten and More Cards

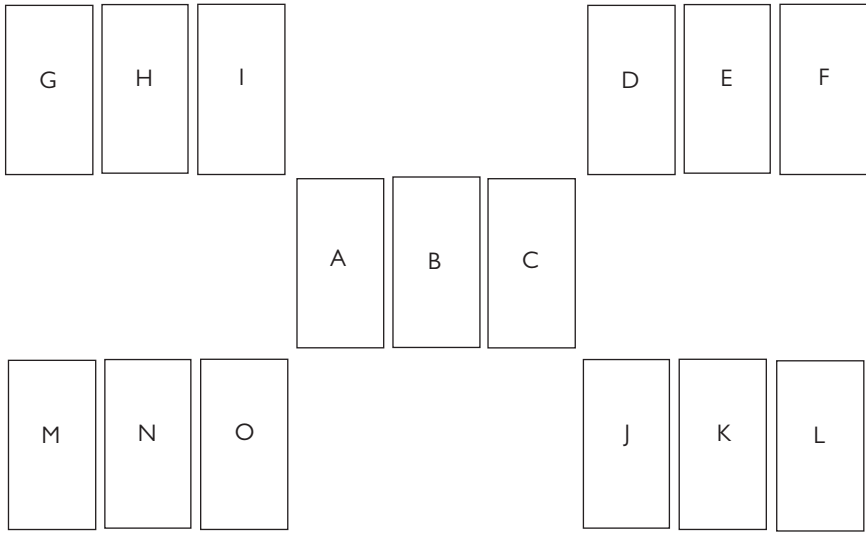
## ■ **Amplifying The World Tarot**

This is a reading with fifteen cards using the Major and Minor Arcana. We have already studied the structure of The World Tarot (see pp. 498–501). It is possible to make it more complex by placing a three-card sentence at every position. This can be done either by using the Major Arcana alone, or by using the Major Arcana for the central cards and the deck of fifty-six Minor Arcana mixed in random order for the other four placements.

This will give us the possibility of seeing cards of one Suit in an energy that does not correspond to them. If, for example, the upper-right position, which corresponds to the intellect, is filled with cards from the series of Pentacles, we could deduce that, for the moment, the individual's major preoccupation is money. Conversely, if the position corresponding to the emotional center is filled with Swords, we could see that the mind is having a chilling effect upon the heart.

To read the Tarot using this strategy, it is a good idea to be already extremely familiar with the Arcana. Moreover, it is essential to have a dialogue with the person to confirm or invalidate whatever has been grasped from this reading (see the following example).





**Amplifying The World Tarot**

A–B–C: Essence

D–E–F: Intellectual life

G–H–I: Emotional life

J–K–L: Sexual and creative energy

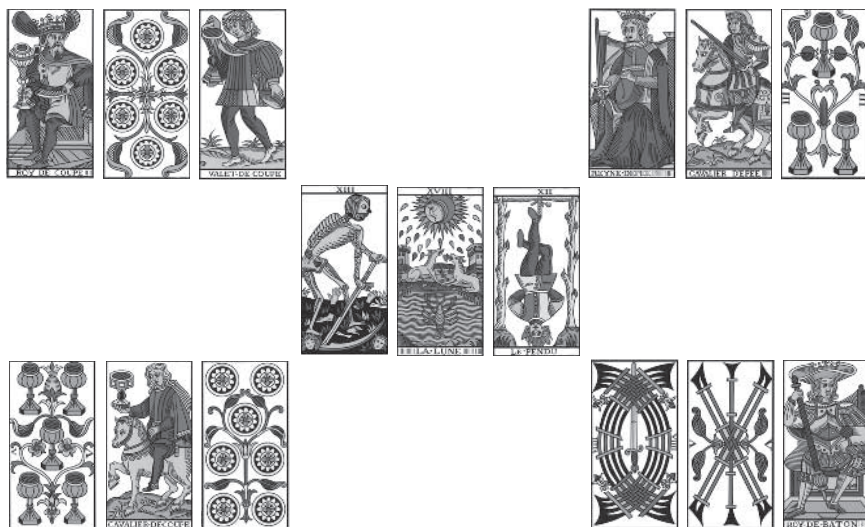
M–N–O: Material life

**Person receiving the reading is stricken by a serious illness that he regards as a stage of spiritual growth.**

**Drawing:** A–B–C: XIII The Nameless Arcanum, XVIII The Moon, XII The Hanged Man; D–E–F: Queen of Swords, Knight of Swords, Three of Cups; G–H–I: King of Cups, Six of Pentacles, Page of Cups; J–K–L: Nine of Swords, Five of Wands, King of Wands; M–N–O: Five of Cups, Knight of Cups, Seven of Pentacles.

**A–B–C (essence):** You are fully engaged in the task of transformation (XIII). Your essential activity consists of working on your cancer (represented by the crab present in The Moon) by practicing meditation and gaining a deeper understanding of the causes of the disease (XII). The sum of the cards (see pp. 483–84):  $13 + 18 + 12 = 43$ ;  $4 + 3 = 7$ , gives you VII The Chariot. This card represents the underlying state of your health and energy of this ordeal that you are going through. It is also the card of union between mind and matter.





**D–E–F (intellect):** The Knight of Swords represents a shift in your intellectual makeup: you are in the process of moving from a rational, scientific, and purely intellectual notion of thought (Queen of Swords) to the discovery of the love at work in intellectual energy (the Three of Cups gives the impetus to the Knight to make this leap).

**G–H–I (emotional center):** The Page of Cups perhaps represents a young family member, a son or daughter, who is shyly approaching you. You (King of Cups) are now ready to welcome this person, who will remind you of life's pleasures (Six of Pentacles).

**J–K–L (sexual-creative center):** The mental work you have performed through meditation has produced illumination (Nine of Swords), which permits you to embrace a new creative ideal (Five of Wands) and to finally fulfill your purpose (King of Wands) by producing a work. (The individual confirms this: his inner work, triggered by the illness, has led him to recognize his vocation as a painter.)

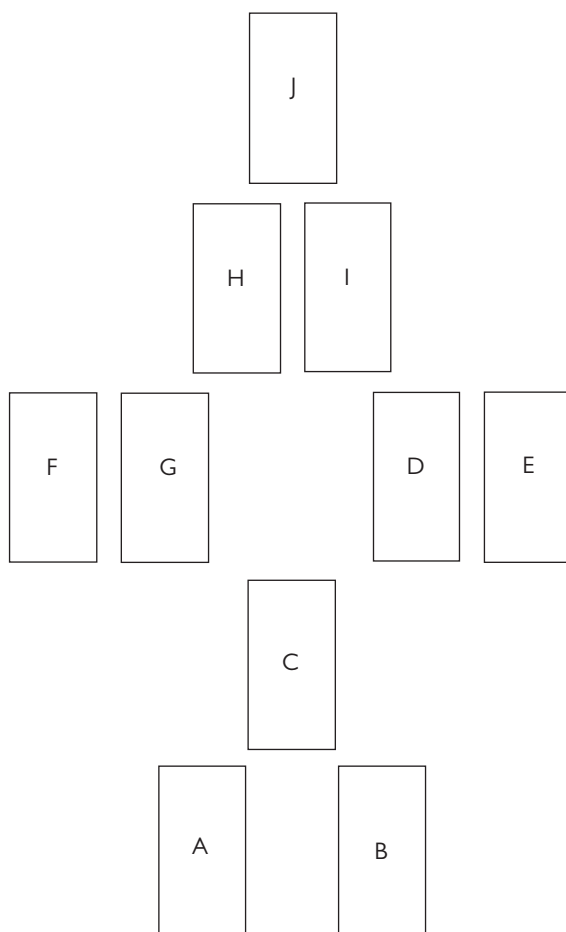
**M–N–O (material and corporeal center):** Here again, love is at work. Your new creative ideal (the Five of Wands of creative energy) creates a new idea of life, founded on your love for what you have done (Five of Cups). The force of this enthusiasm transforms matter (the Knight of Cups becomes the Ace of Pentacles) and redirects you toward healing and recuperation of physical energy: Consciousness penetrates even to the heart of the cells (Seven of Pentacles).



## ■ The Tarot of the Realized Self

This is a reading based on a draw of ten cards.

Each of us has a maximum potential. Just as, in the Major Arcana, realization is represented by the card of the value 21 (Arcanum XXI, The World), we can ask ourselves what the value of our realized self could be.



### Tarot of the Realized Self

A: Protagonist

B: Antagonist

C: Mediator

D—E: Comets

F—G: Asteroids

H—I: The Middle Way

J: The Secret



You will then suggest to the individual to step beyond his ordinary consideration and momentarily leave his limitations on the side.

When thoughts of the type “I am not worth much,” “I am good for nothing,” “Everything goes wrong,” “The world is a mess,” “I am not satisfied,” and so on are interrupted, it then becomes possible to interrogate ourselves this way: “And if everything went right, what would my perfection be? How much do I need to do to get there?”

This is what this reading proposes to explore. Essentially psychological, its tendency is to study the soul and not events.

Here is the structure of this reading:

**A:** Our protagonist, how we conceive of ourselves, the individual to whom things happen.

**B:** Our antagonist, the part of ourselves against which we struggle.

**C:** The mediator, the result of what takes place between the protagonist and the antagonist.

**D-E:** The “comets”—our protagonist leads us to positive encounters and individuals who do good things for us.

**F-G:** The “asteroids”—our antagonist brings us events that serve us poorly, we fall in love with someone who treats us badly or places us in a dubious business arrangement. We see where this, like a demon that tempts us, risks leading us.

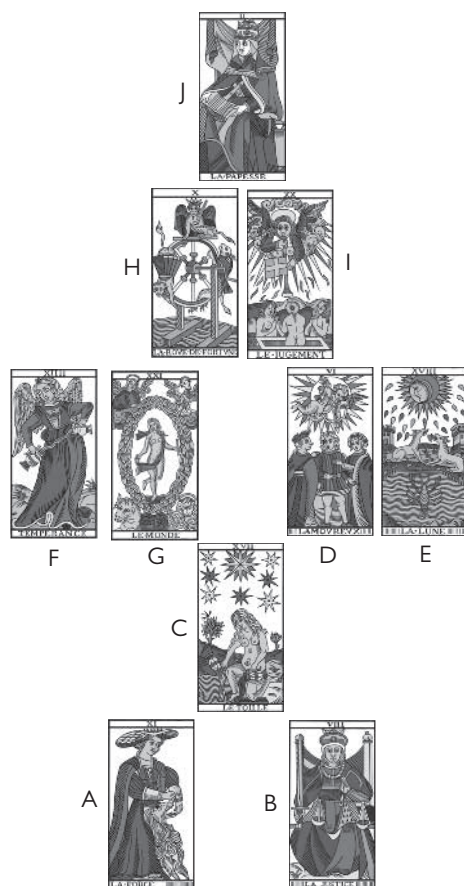
**H-I:** The protagonist and antagonist should produce a personality that is a result of both, who is neither exaggeratedly positive nor exaggeratedly negative, who advances as best he can with respect to the necessities of life. Too much of a positive attitude leads to laziness and softness, too much severity leads to destruction. It is necessary to find a middle path. This is the position that will ensure the two are not opposed but complementary.

**J:** The secret, the most intimate place within ourselves.

### **Reading Example**

**Drawing:** A: XI Strength, B: VIII Justice, C: XVII The Star, D: VI The Lover, E: XVIII The Moon, F: XIII Temperance, G: XXI The World, H: X The Wheel of Fortune, I: XX Judgment, J: II The High Priestess





**A (protagonist):** The person receiving the reading, represented by Strength, is in the process of beginning a new creative activity, anchored in her deep strengths. She confirms that she is in the midst of studying a method of dance therapy.

**B (antagonist):** This is the maternal image, with the requirement of perfection. One part of the subconscious has adopted the mother's position. The individual confirms: "I am cold and intransigent with myself; I am always asking myself to do better; I am led to doubt and devalue myself."

**C (mediator):** While Strength is an energy that emerges from an individual's core, and Justice is an impassible position, The Star chooses a place from

which to take action in the world. She lends Justice her thirst for truth and Strength her capacity for giving.

**D–E (comets):** Strength attracts love and warm social relationships, and allows feminine potential to deploy.

**F–G (asteroids):** Justice breeds imprisonment and a lack of communication with yourself, a rift between the high and the low: on the one side there is an opening (VI and VIII), with imprisonment on the other (XIII and XXI), hence conflict.

**H–I (the middle way):** When the two tendencies are combined, an opening of consciousness and the closing of an old emotional cycle is created. The cycle of imprisonment is over, and you can open yourself to a greater calling: the opening of consciousness or the desire for a child.



**J (secret):** The individual's secret resides in her spirituality. She confirms that her work on her spiritual quest has permitted her to become conscious of this inner rift and that her vocation is to be able one day to guide others.

## ■ **The Tarot of the Hero Applied to the Four Centers**

Our four centers (intellect, heart, creative-sexual center, material life) do not necessarily follow the same path. Where our hearts may carry us, reason can hold us back, and our desires are not necessarily in agreement with our material needs. It can prove useful to apply a reading strategy to the four centers and then create the synthesis that will permit the individual to unify his action (see the example below). The structure of the Tarot of the Hero, which we have already studied, can be deployed with the twenty-two Major Arcana following the structure on pages 32–33.

***A fifty-year-old-woman is wondering whether to continue working as her husband's assistant or to move into her own activity, in this instance Tarot reading.***

**Drawing:** See page 513 to view the cards selected in this reading.

**A:** Essential being. XXI The World, a complete woman, someone in full realization.

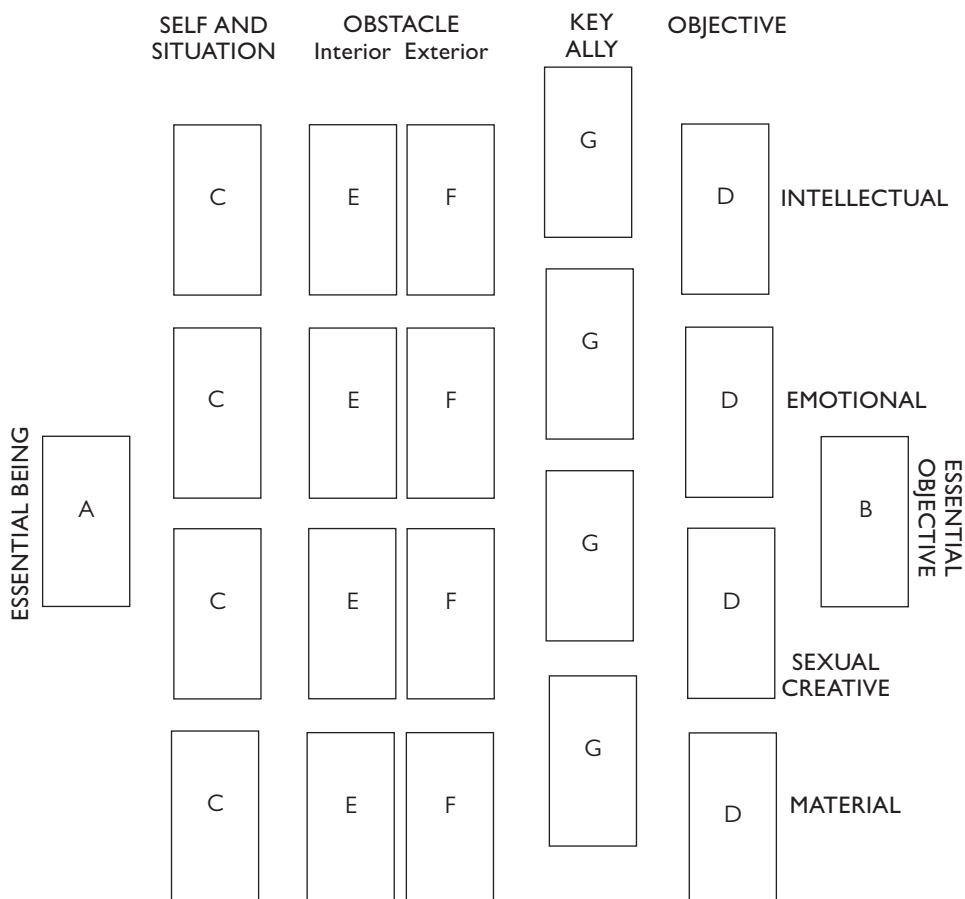
**B:** Essential objective. V The Pope. You wish to transmit, guide, teach. Your goal is to be a teacher. But the specific difficulty in attaining this goal resides in the fact that you visualize this function in the masculine, whereas you are a woman. Let's see how, by examining the four centers, you can resolve the obstacles that keep you from your objective.

### **Intellectual Center**

**C:** Self and situation. XI Strength: everything remains to be done. The situation looks good; it is a beginning.

**D:** Objective. III The Empress: your desire is to burst out, hatch, and create.





### THE TAROT OF THE HERO APPLIED TO THE FOUR CENTERS

A—B: The essential being of the individual (A) and his essential objective (B) frame the spread as The Fool and The World frame the other twenty Major Arcana (see pp. 32–33).

For each center (intellectual, emotional, creative-sexual, and material), draw the following cards:

C: The identity and the situation of the person in the four centers

D: The objective of the person in the four centers

E—F: The obstacles in each center. We consider card E, closer to the self card, as the personal inner obstacle of the individual, and card F will represent an outside obstacle, one connected to life's constraints.

G: The key for each center

Preferably, the cards will be placed with the intellect at the top, followed in descending order by the cards representing the emotional center, then those pertaining to the sexual-creative center, and then the material center at the very bottom.

In the body, each of the centers respectively corresponds to the head, the heart, the pelvis, and the feet.



**E:** Interior obstacle. IIII The Emperor: Paternal authority weighs on the opinion you have of yourself . . .

**F:** Exterior obstacle. XII The Hanged Man: . . . and leads you to inaction. Not taking any action has become a habit for you, and you do not know where to begin.

**G:** Key, ally. XVIII The Sun: It is a matter of assuming your full worth, but calmly, step by step, and without throwing everything into chaos between one day and the next. You can work half-time, gently investing more time in the activity that suits you best.

### **Emotional Center**

**C:** Self and situation. The Fool: You have a huge amount of energy, but it remains unchanneled. The need for freedom is making itself felt.

**D:** Objective. XIII Temperance: You want to work to heal others. Your vocation as a tarologist originates in your desire to help others.

**E:** Interior obstacle. XX Judgment: In the position of obstacle, this card can be interpreted as a repression of the vocation that leads to not realizing what one desires. We can also ask if at your birth your parents wanted a son rather than a daughter.

**F:** Exterior obstacle. XVI The Tower: As an obstacle, this card evokes imprisonment and the fear of expressing oneself.

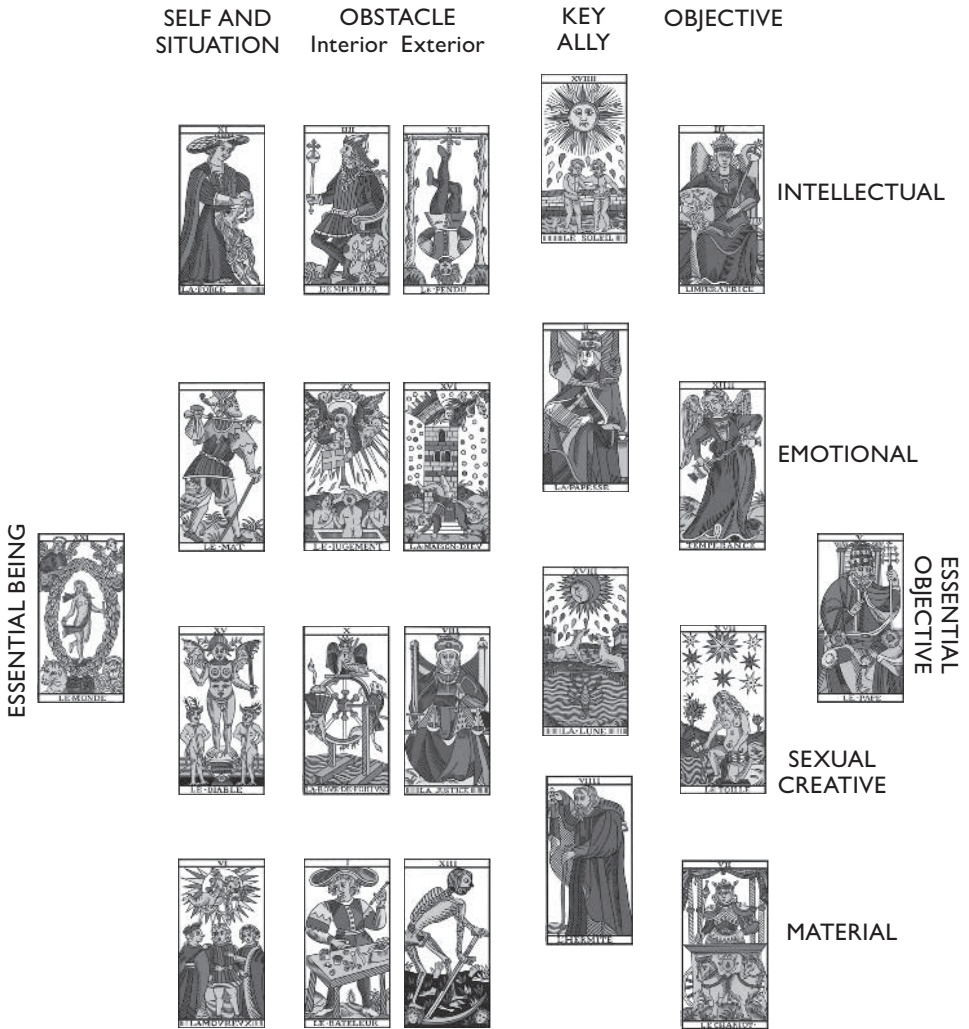
**G:** Key, ally. II The High Priestess: It is a question of becoming aware that you have something to say, to write, to pass on. The High Priestess is the female figure corresponding to The Pope, considered to be the preeminent teacher. The key consists of changing his image into the feminine, to accept feminine wisdom.

### **Sexual and Creative Center**

**C:** Self and situation. XV The Devil: Your energy is immense! The Devil is perfectly in his place in the sexual/creative domain. It is he who, in the form of a deep desire, inspires you to become aware of your true value.

**D:** Objective. XVII The Star: An action in the world that has two different aspects (the Star's two vessels). This could be your desire to continue collaborating with your husband, while beginning a personal activity.





The Tarot of the Hero Applied to the Four Centers

**E:** Interior obstacle. X The Wheel of Fortune: You find yourself at a standstill. Your creativity is blocked, perhaps by the fear of not being loved if you leave your traditional role.

**F:** Exterior obstacle. VIII Justice: The idea of perfection prevents you from doing the things you should. Creativity cannot be perfect.

**G:** Key, ally. XVIII The Moon: Dream! By plunging deeply into your intuition, you will be capable of getting past your creative block.



**Material Center**

**C:** Self and situation. VI The Lover: Your situation at home is pleasant. You work with your husband on the same wavelength. Each has his own domain and does not tread upon the other's.

**D:** Objective. VII The Chariot: You take a position based on your husband's work and find your form of action in the world as a tarologist because this is your desire.

**E:** Interior obstacle. I The Magician: You feel like a beginner, too much a student and too inexperienced to take action. Perhaps you are afraid of not being able to earn money (the little gold coin in The Magician's hand).

**F:** Exterior obstacle. XIII The Nameless Arcanum: The transformation appears revolutionary to you. You fear for your balance as a couple. Sometimes women are taught from infancy to be dependent, and the image of the father is slipped over that of the husband. This dependency then becomes a "proof of love"; there is fear of losing the person you love by leaving the material dependency.

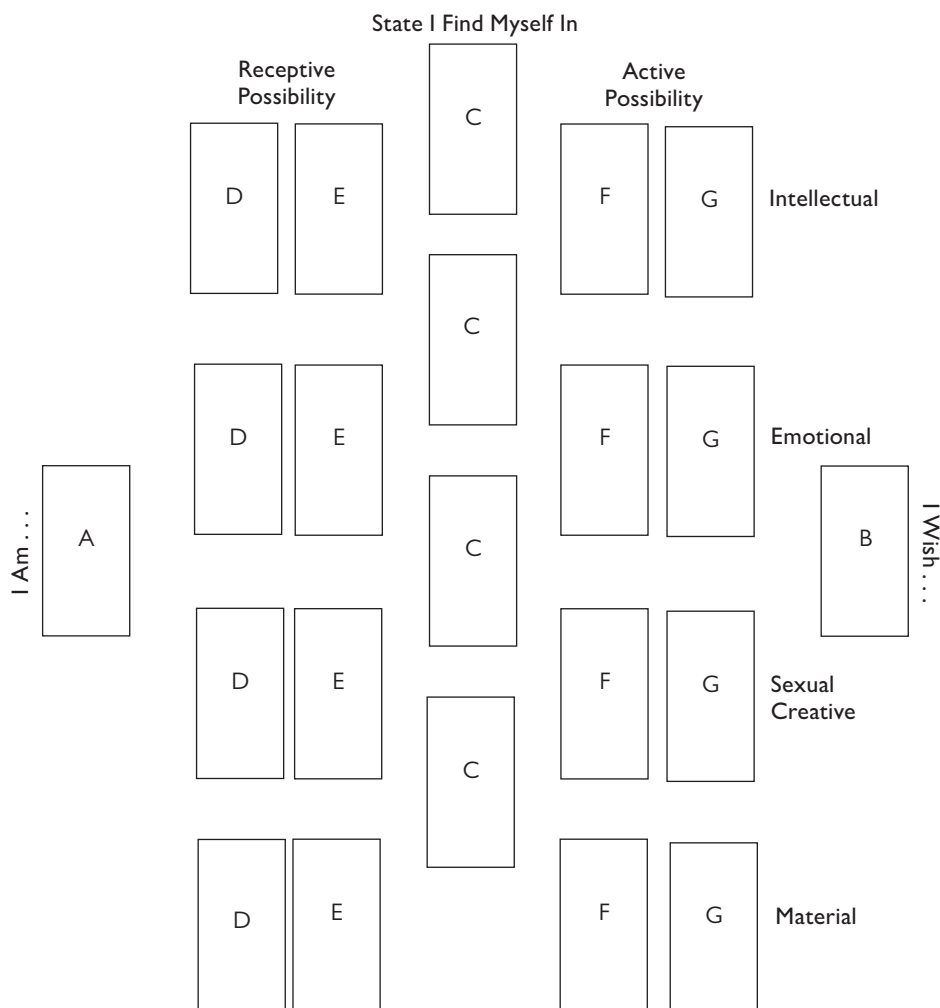
**G:** Key, ally. VIII The Hermit: By ridding yourself of the ideal of perfection of the VIII, by abandoning the status of beginner, The Hermit advances backward toward transformation. You must begin to have confidence in yourself and read the Tarot for strangers: The Hermit is heading into the unknown. You can just simply install yourself in a public place with your cards while taking notes, and wait for people to come ask you: "Do you read the Tarot?" The Hermit has no fear of poverty. Initially, you will be able to work for nothing.

## ■ **The Tarot of the Choice Applied to the Four Centers**

We can apply the Tarot of the Choice the same way to this 20 + 2 card structure (see pp. 502–3). We happen to have choices to make in all the centers.

As in the Tarot of the Hero applied to the four centers and to the image of the human body, the sets of cards corresponding to each center will be arranged from top to bottom in this order: intellectual center, emotional center, sexual-creative center, and material center (see the spread for this drawing on the facing page).





The two first cards frame the spread.

A: What I am essentially

B: What I essentially want

In each center, the choice will be represented by five cards, as follows:

C: This central card represents the state in which we find ourselves intellectually, emotionally, creatively (sexually), and materially.

On both sides of C, two duets of cards depict the two options that each center offers.

D—E: This duet, placed to the left, represents the most receptive possibility.

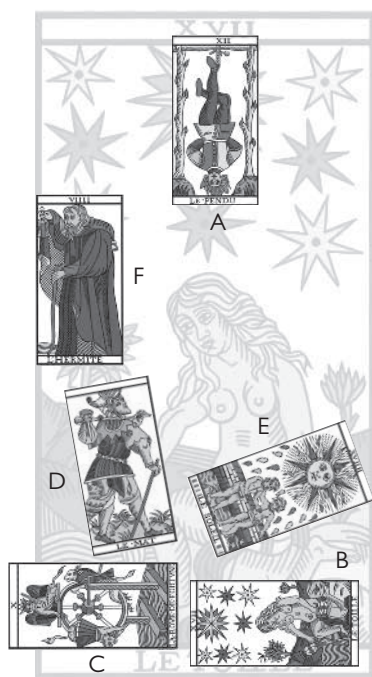
F—G: This duet, placed to the right, represents the most active possibility.

You can, before turning the cards over, assign a question or a possibility to each center.



## The Artistic Reading

This final strategy allows you to create all the spreads you want. It is particularly (but not solely) adapted to reading the Tarot for children. It consists of organizing the cards to form a design. As practice, you can begin by creating strategies inspired by one Arcanum, as we have done for the World Tarot. For example, we can invent a Tarot, based on the structure of The Star.



### ARTISTIC READING INSPIRED BY THE STAR

A depicts the star shining in the center of the sky of Arcanum XVII.

B depicts the place where the woman rests her knee.

C depicts the river.

D–E are the two vessels.

F depicts the black bird perched on the branch.

### Reading Example

**A:** From where do I receive my energy? XII The Hanged Man: from the depths of my being, or, more simply, I need rest to be in top form.

**B:** What is my concrete base? XVII The Star. The place I live; the landscape I love, there where I feel at home. You can also say it is my body (The Star is naked), and I should take care of my health and watch my diet.

**C:** To whom or what is my action devoted? X The Wheel of Fortune. It is devoted to completing a cycle, to terminating a work.

**D–E:** What are my means of action? The Fool, XVIII The Sun. My means to act are my great energy, the ability to travel, being a free spirit (The Fool), and my generous sense of collaboration and love of the Other (The Sun).

**F:** What has started singing, what is the consequence of my action in the world? VIII The Hermit. A greater wisdom, maturity, and a new way of looking at things.



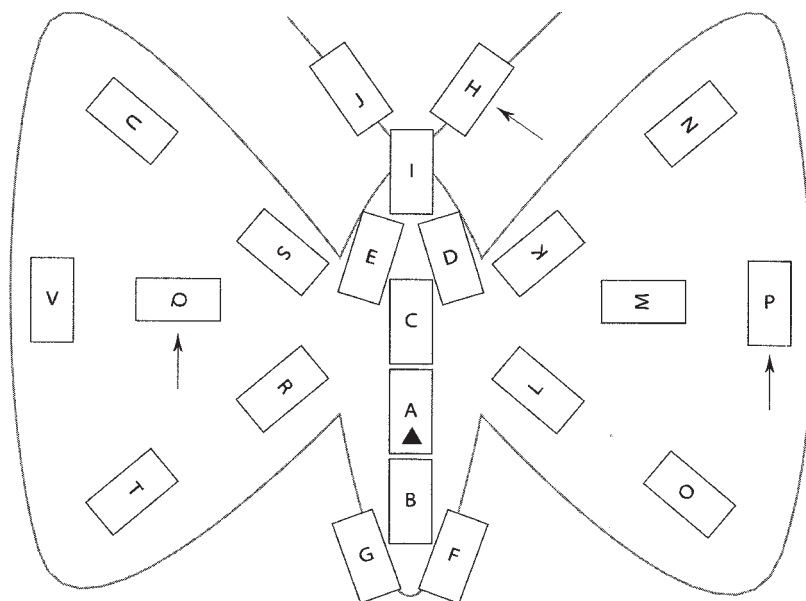
## ■ Principles and Development of an Artistic Reading

Once you have mastered this type of construction, you can move on to what an artistic reading can truly be.

- ♦ The tarologist asks the individual to imagine an object or an individual that can be represented by the drawing.
- ♦ Next the person rearranges the cards into a random order and gives them back to the tarologist, who should rely on his imagination to use the number of cards necessary, which he will place face down on the table to represent this object in a satisfactory manner. You can use the principle of the four elements (intellect, heart, sexual and creative energy, matter), particularly by setting up spreads in four stages. You will treat the diagram according to the orientation laws of the Tarot: the part that is on the right of the consultant represents action and the part to her left, reception.
- ♦ You ask the individual to pick which part of the design represents her. She places an object on the cards to give material expression to herself.
- ♦ The individual writes three questions on small strips of paper that she folds into fours, which you ask her to place in the drawing on the spot of her choice.
- ♦ To interpret this Tarot, you will start by seeing where the individual is located in the design and at what level in the design she has placed her questions. Then you will read the question and turn over the cards or groups of cards concerned.
- ♦ If you wish, you can read not only the card or group of cards on which the person has placed her questions, but also the surrounding cards, which form the entourage of the responses—the complementary aspects.

In the example that follows, the individual chose a butterfly as the shape of the design.





***A young nineteen-year-old woman wishes to take her entrance exam and begin literature studies in the university.***

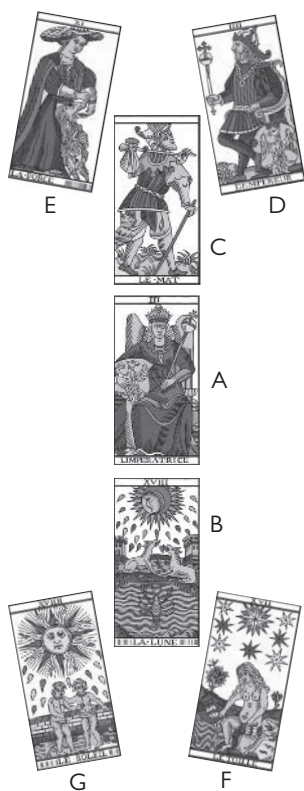
Symbolically, the butterfly represents a state of realization after the long gestation of the chrysalis. This corresponds to the position of this young woman who has changed cities, moved away from her family, and is living alone for the first time. We use the twenty-two Major Arcana here to schematically represent the butterfly. The triangle symbolizes the place where the person has placed her self. Her questions are indicated by the three arrows.

### **The Individual's Self**

**A:** III The Empress. You have placed your self at the center of the butterfly's body. This means that you are fully balanced and in accord with yourself in this new life. With The Empress, you could be said to be in full health and creativity.

Because the individual is placed at the center of the butterfly's body, we can read the cards surrounding it in the following manner: the card above her could be her higher self (C) and the card below it could be her subconscious self (B). The four cards around her would be, as in the World Tarot, her four energies: D, intellect; E, emotional energy; F,





The body of the butterfly

sexual and creative energy; and G, material energy.

**A:** III The Empress, which we have already interpreted, is a card of energy and enthusiasm.

**B:** XVIII The Moon. A vast but still unexpressed creativity has perhaps guided your decision to study literature. Your subconscious world is rich with dreams and intuition.

**C:** The Fool. Your spiritual energy is vast but still lacks purpose. You do not yet know what your ideal or what your mission in life is. With maturity, you will discover your spiritual orientation.

**D:** Intellectual energy. IIII The Emperor. Your mind is well organized and solid. You have the necessary foundations to be successful in your studies. But the somewhat “square” aspect of your intellect points out that you have not yet made contact with the more phantasmagorical world of The

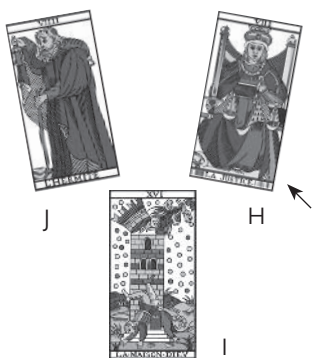
Moon. You still view yourself as a rational individual.

**E:** Emotional energy. XI Strength. You are ready to begin a new love relationship based on attraction.

**F:** Sexual and creative energy. XVII The Star. You are full of seduction and generosity, and your creative potential is quite vast. You have the means to realize yourself, on condition, again, that you reconcile the logical and poetic aspects of your personality.

**G:** Material energy. XVIII The Sun. You have total support for this new stage of your life, perhaps from your father. (The person receiving the reading confirmed that her parents let her rent a small studio in the city where she is studying and are actively looking after her well-being.)





The head of the butterfly

### The Individual's Questions

**H:** Am I capable of succeeding in my studies? The question is placed on the butterfly's right antenna (H), which is to say on the point of her activity. This is the highest goal, the one that engages her future life.

**Response:** VIII Justice. You have all it takes to succeed, inasmuch as Justice represents perfection. But you have doubts. We are therefore going to turn over the cards representing the head and left antenna of the butterfly to understand the reasons for this doubt.

Card H on the right antenna represents the question concerning your studies. In the head, on card I, we shall find the reason for the doubt. In card J, we shall get a deeper understanding of the past aspects of this doubt.

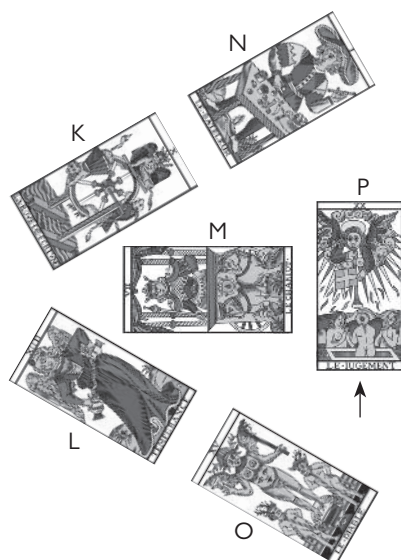
**I:** XVI The Tower. This Arcanum represents an outburst, an explosion. You have left the world you know for an unknown one. Some aspects of it are already familiar to you. (In The Tower, they correspond to the complete figure emerging from the tower.) These aspects make reference to your past, represented by the left antenna. To the contrary, the aspects presented by the right antenna are like the second individual of The Tower, still half-imprisoned in the building. You do not know what awaits you, hence your doubt.

**J:** VIII The Hermit. The high school years are over. Just like The Hermit who walks backward shedding light on the past, you know what you are leaving, but you do not yet know the world to which you are heading. The university offers new methods of working and a new form of life. You do not know yet if you will be able to adapt. But you have no reason to worry: as shown by Justice, you are well prepared and have what it takes to succeed.

**P:** Question 2. Are you going to fall in love? The question is placed at the very tip of the butterfly's right wing, where the motor force is most intense. Love gives wings!

**Response:** XX Judgment. There can be no doubt about it! It is highly





The right wing of the butterfly

likely that you will meet someone. We do not read the future, but rather we see what paths are there to lead to this meeting.

We have seen that the meeting takes place in P. It is framed by two paths that start in K and L and meet in M. Cards N and O represent the circumstances framing this encounter.

**K:** X The Wheel of Fortune. A cycle has ended; take the time to finish with the past and do not rush. You have changed cities and educational establishments. Followed by:

**N:** I The Magician. A meeting with a young man will trigger the new cycle.

**L:** XIII Temperance. Similar message: Temperance takes the time to establish balance to the situation. Followed by:

**O:** XV The Devil. With angelic Temperance comes a passionate attachment!

**M:** VII The Chariot. This is the central card. The prince emerges right in the middle of your life. There is nothing special to do, everything will happen naturally.

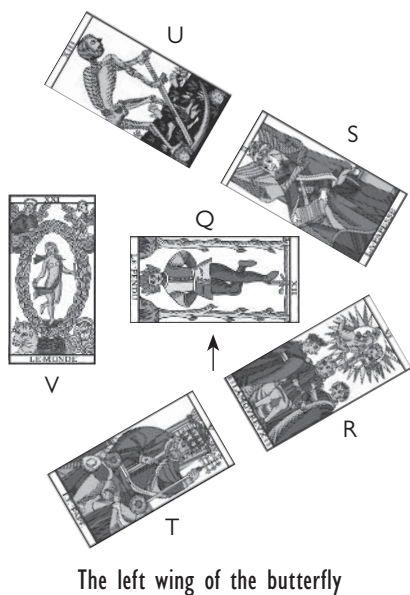
**Q:** Question 3. Am I talented?

This question is placed on the card located in the center of the butterfly's left wing: it is the most secret because it is enclosed inside the wing.

**Response:** XII The Hanged Man. He expresses both a situation in which no action is taken and a gestation. The consultant confirms this: she would love to write poems, but she cannot get down to it. "It is by painting that one becomes a painter," as the proverb says. Talent is expressed and developed through action. We do not know if we have talent before putting it into action. This idea can be developed by reading the cards surrounding The Hanged Man.

**Q:** XII The Hanged Man. Talent still in gestation, where no action takes place. The butterfly's wing is immobile.





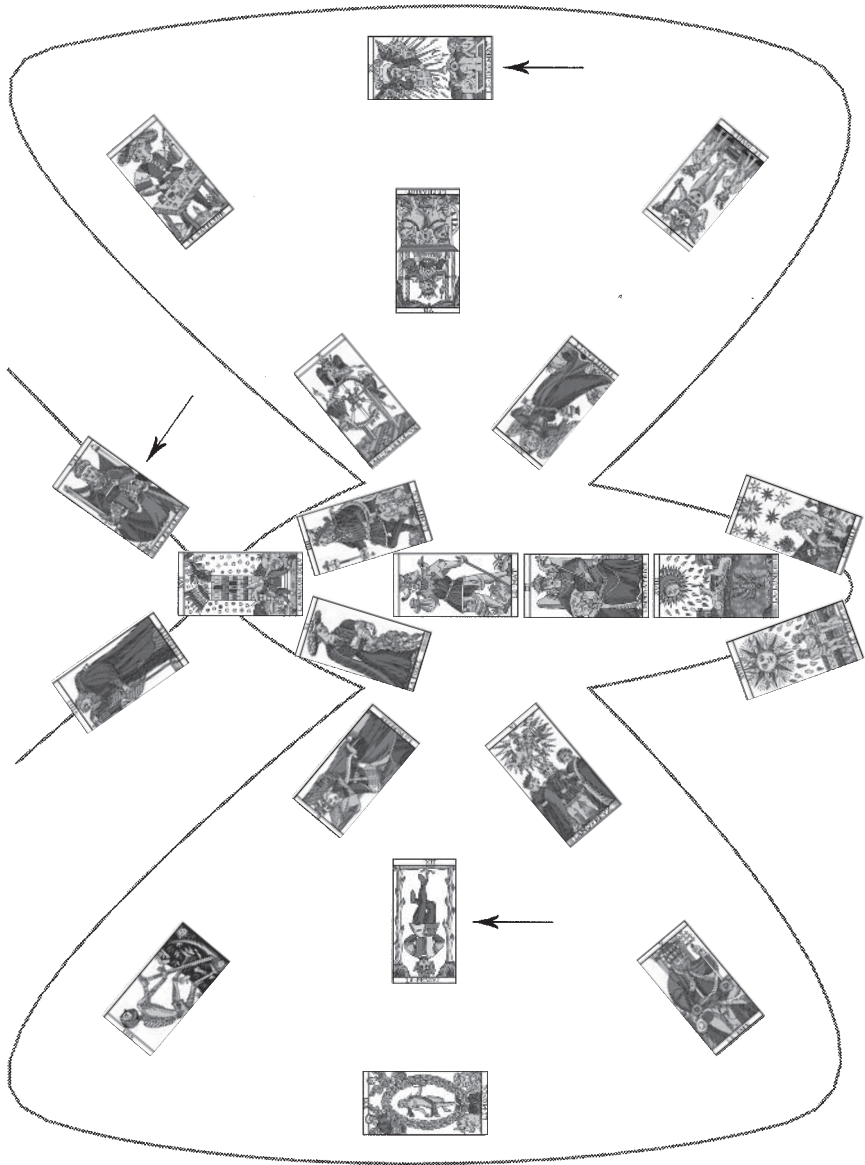
**R and S (the first efforts to take to put the wing in motion):** VI The Lover, II The High Priestess. The question is not: "Am I talented?" but "Do I love (VI) to write (II)?" To learn this, you must work on it every day; the sum of these cards ( $6 + 2$ ) is 8: VIII Justice, who flawlessly executes whatever she has to do.

**T and U (result of this action):** V The Pope, XIII The Nameless Arcanum. By being willing to express yourself and communicating what you have inside (V), you will transform yourself. The Hanged Man will hatch into the next degree, the XIII. The sum of the two cards ( $5$

$+ 13$ ) is 18: XVIII The Moon, which in your drawing would represent your subconscious self: the poetry that was latent inside of you manifests into reality.

**V (the actual talent of the individual, once manifested):** XXI The World. This is the card that brings this beautiful drawing to a close. Have no doubts, you have things to say and the ability to express them with much talent.







# Conclusion

## *The Tarotic Philosophy*

My long years of contact with the Tarot have given me new ways of understanding the world and others, by allowing intuition to dance with reason and to be combined into what I call “Tarotic philosophy.”\* Describing this Tarotic thought would be the subject of another book, so I will be content to simply offer a few examples.

*The Arcana have multiple meanings that go from the particular to the general, from the obvious to the extraordinary. Each Arcanum must be considered as a set of meanings. These meanings will acquire more or less importance depending on the cultural system of the person interpreting them.*

In reality, every human being is an Arcanum. We may well have spent our entire life close to someone; still we cannot say we truly know him or her completely. We are used to this person’s thoughts, feelings, desires, gestures, and routine activities, but all it takes is for some extraordinary event—an illness, a catastrophe, a defeat, or a triumph—for us to discover some exceptional aspects of this person, which can come to us as a happy or painful surprise. One part of reality is what we think is reality. One part of another person’s personality is what we project onto it. The defects or qualities we see in the Other are also our own. These

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\*In a philosophical-poetical fashion, without mentioning that I was referring to the Tarot, I did this in *La Escalera de los Angeles: Reflexiones sobre el arte del pensar* [The Angels’ Ladder: Thoughts on the Art of Thinking] (Barcelona: Obelisco, 2006).



unexpected forms of behavior of the world and others that surprise us prompt reactions that depend on our level of consciousness. On a level of consciousness that remains barely developed, all changes frighten us and make us distrustful. This can cause us to flee, paralyze us, enrage us, or prepare us to go on the attack. A more developed consciousness accepts constant change and moves ahead with confidence and without goals, enjoying the present life, building step by step a bridge that will span the abyss.

To reach these readings that heal, I first had to overcome my antipathies and sympathies. Every inhabitant of this world represents a new and distinct point of view that did not exist before his or her birth. Everyone represents something original and unique. When an individual dear to us leaves us, we have the impression that the entire universe is empty. Whoever he or she is, the person seeking consultation deserves to be respected as a divine work that will never again be repeated, one with the possibility of bringing seeds into the world that could offer an unknown benefit.

*There is no impartial tarologist. Every tarologist bears the stamp of an era, a territory, a language, a family, a society, and a culture.*

Just as in literature we no longer see novels narrated by an author-witness—regarded as a god—who lets the plot unfold without taking part in it or being affected by it, but are now accustomed to hearing the story told by a storyteller intimately connected to the events as just another actor, I was compelled to do the same in Tarot reading. There is no way that I could tolerate putting myself in the position of the seer who knows the present and future of the consultant, observing him or her from a magical, impersonal height, lending his or her voice to entities from another world . . . As the Arcana are projection screens, it was necessary for me to realize that everything I saw in the cards was saturated with my own personality. Not being able to free myself from myself, I asked myself: “Who am I when I read the Tarot? Is my thought male? Is it Latin American? European? Is it adolescent or mature? Is my morality Judeo-Christian? Am I a believer, an atheist, a communist, a servant of the establishment? Am I perceiving the characteristics of my era?”



To be able to give a reading that would be helpful, I had to realize that, being incapable of detaching myself from my personality, I would have to “work” on polishing it until I reached its essence. I promised myself I would not be a slave to fashion; I would not fall into the snare of any tradition or folklore. I attentively observed my image of the world and tried with all my might to alter my male mind and accept the feminine, to meld the two together to achieve androgynous thought. While I was born in Chile and educated in Mexico and France, inside of myself I stopped having any nationality. In all sincerity I can say I have succeeded in becoming a citizen of the cosmos. This led me to take stock of my limitations as a human being. My consciousness was no longer prisoner of a mineral, plant, or animal body; it was the essence of the entire universe. This allowed me to put myself not only in the place of other people, but also of objects. What is my cat feeling, what is that tree feeling, what is the watch I wear on my wrist, the sun, the cobblestones on which I walk, my organs, my guts, and so on, feeling?

In this work of detachment and refinement, I lost not only my nationality but also my age, my name, and the labels of “writer,” “filmmaker,” “therapist,” “mystic,” and so many others. I stopped defining myself: I was not fat or thin, not good or evil, not generous or egotistical, not a good father or a bad father: I was not this thing or that thing. I also stopped claiming to achieve ideal goals: I was neither champion, nor hero, nor saint, nor genius. With all my energy I tried to be what I was. I stopped clinging to one language alone and developed love and respect for all languages, while at the same time realizing that if words do not become poetry, they turn into traps. I believe that the root of every psychosomatic illness is an arrangement of words in the form of a taboo. Imposing one vision means forbidding others. The universe is limitless and functions with a set of laws that are different and sometimes contradictory, in each dimension.

The more I expand my own limitations, the more I see those of the Other. Today, when I read the Tarot and enter into a trance, my ego almost transformed into *you*. In the presence of the person seeking a reading I feel like a blue sky receiving a passing cloud. In reality, we are not reading to tell an individual who he is but to understand him. The



day when we fully understand ourselves is the day we disappear completely. I basically believe the real individual consulting us is death. Let's try to understand him. When we die, which is to say when we become death, we finally dissolve into the Truth.

*No tarologist can speak the truth. He can only speak his interpretation of the truth. When we read the Tarot, we do not know. Because he reads in order to understand, the tarologist should continue to read even if he does not understand what he is seeing. Just as every interpretation is fragmentary, the abundance of interpretations brings the consultant closer to knowledge. There are no meaningless questions. Superficial and profound, intelligent and stupid alike, all questions have the same importance: as the interpretations for each Arcanum are infinite in number, the value of the question will not depend on its quality but on the quality of the tarologist's response.*

I realized that understanding what I saw was an illusion. To truly understand something, it would be necessary to decode what the universe is. Without embracing the whole, it is impossible to know with certainty what one of its parts is. The person who wants a reading is not an isolated individual. To know who he is, the tarologist, in addition to his life since the time of his conception and birth, should know that of his siblings, his parents, his uncles and aunts, his grandparents, and, if possible, his great-grandparents. He needs to learn what kind of education he received, know the problems of the society in which he lived, as well as the archetypes and culture that shaped his mind . . .

*Given that it is impossible to capture the whole of the Other, it is, by the same token, impossible to judge him. The positive and negative aspects of an event are not intrinsic parts of it: they are only subjective interpretations. In deference to the individual, it is preferable always to look for the positive interpretation.*

At the same time it is lifting its branches to the sky, a tree is plunging its roots into the earth. Light is infinite; darkness is infinite. Rummaging through the suffering carried inside our subconscious leads us to saturate ourselves with the suffering of all humanity: the pain is infinite. Once



the tears and rages have been expressed, it is more helpful to look for the values hidden like treasure in our essential being. Peace is infinite.

*The tarologist should not compare the person seeking a reading to other people resembling him or her physically. Comparing, as a way of defining, is a lack of respect toward the essential difference of every individual.*

The individual seeking consultation does not truly know herself and most of the time overlooks the influences she has received from her family tree. If she only speaks one language; if she has not traveled in faraway lands; if she has not studied other cultures; if she has never held her body motionless to meditate; if, having a choice between doing or not doing, she chose not to do by fleeing all new experiences out of fear of failure, we can say that her subconscious presents itself to her not as it really is, which is to say an ally, but as an alarming mystery, an enemy. Never will she know what the true base is for what she thinks, feels, desires, or does . . . This is why, during the Tarot reading, her questions, as superficial as they may appear, conceal profound psychological processes. “Should I go to the beauty salon, dye my hair, and change my hairstyle?” An apparently very frivolous and simple question can receive a profound response. If it were only what the words said, what need would the person have of advice? It would be enough for her to make up her mind by herself. We can see in this dyeing and change of hairstyle the individual expressing her desire to change her life, to no longer be alone; or, to the contrary, to have done with the couple of which she forms half; or, beneath another aspect, to undertake new experiences, seek recognition—she could be expressing her dissatisfaction with herself or her discovery of new values that oblige her to detach from her former personality. The Tarot teaches us to respect all questions: each one is an opportunity to deepen the discovery of ourselves in order to live set like a precious stone in the jewel that is the present. The majority of individuals do not feel like something that is but as something that will be.

*Every generalization is illusory. Events are never alike. When we give someone else an example, the person citing it always produces his personal notion. The Other is different for every individual.*



Because the Other forms part of an infinite whole, it is impossible to imprison him inside one definition. When he is grasped and interpreted by us, he receives the limits corresponding to our level of consciousness. This Other is a blend of what he shows us and what we add to him by making him our own reflection. The qualities we see in him, as well as his flaws, form part of our own qualities and flaws. By judging, measuring others, by attributing labels to them—good, bad, handsome, ugly, egotistical, generous, intelligent, stupid, and so forth—we are lying to ourselves. Every judgment we express is always made in comparison with the limited, and thus artificial, image we have of ourselves.

*The real is neither good nor evil, nor beautiful nor ugly in itself, nor does it have any other quality. The divine unit cannot have any qualities or be defined by a tarologist who does not understand this, because he is incapable of containing it. The Whole is all its parts, but all its parts are not the Whole.*

At no time can the tarologist set himself up as judge of the person consulting him, or accept as real or correct the way he sees the members of this person's family or the individuals he mentions in the reading.

*In an infinite world, we cannot declare: "Everything is this way." The correct way to say it is "Almost everything is this way." If 99 percent are considered to be negative, we cannot exclude the positive nature of the 1 percent. This positive 1 percent is more worthy of defining the whole than the 99 percent negative. It is this small amount of the positive that redeems the great negativity.*

This is why it is wise not to state that the world is a violent place. We can admit that violence exists in the world, but we should not define the world with this error. The world is as perfect as the cosmos. So is the human being. We cannot declare that we are sick. As long as life gives it breath, the human body is a mysterious, complex organism endowed with health. To be alive is to be healthy, physically and mentally. We can have sicknesses or psychotic attitudes, but as serious as they may be, they do not make us a "sick person" or a "madman," they do not define our being but our present state. The infinite human spirit cannot



tolerate labels. The tarologist, rather than show an individual his many defects, should try to grasp his qualities, which, while they may be small in number, will give him more help to become who he truly is.

*We should not define the person receiving the reading by his actions but define the actions he has accomplished. He is not "stupid," he has done stupid things. She is not a "thief," she has appropriated something belonging to someone else. If we define the individual by his actions, we separate him from reality.*

*The value of a reading depends on the tarologist's level of consciousness. If she is wise, she can obtain valuable messages no matter how disconcerting the Arcana chosen by the person may be. The elevated consciousness of the tarologist grants wisdom or stupidity to the reading, but the Arcana are not innately wise or stupid: they have no qualities. It is the person who speaks them that possesses these qualities.*

*The readings, despite their importance, are always the personal interpretations of the tarologist, and for that very reason should never be accorded the quality of absolute truth. No reading can constitute the proof of a fact.*

*Exactitude and precision, in a constantly changing reality, are two obstacles to understanding.*

The desire for perfection, exactitude, precision, and repetition of what is known and established are the manifestations of a rigid mind that fears change, difference, error, and the permanent impermanence of the cosmos. This stubborn rationalist attitude is opposed to Tarotic thought, which is akin to poetry. We hear the poet Edmond Jabès say: "To be is to interrogate the labyrinth of a question that contains no answer."

*When you interpret an Arcanum, you can later modify that interpretation. The interpretations do not form an integral part of the Arcanum. The Arcanum cannot change; the tarologist, yes, he can change to the extent that he is an individual who transforms himself. Never to change an interpretation is simply stubbornness. Every message obtained by reading the cards can be contradicted by a second reading of the same cards.*



*The messages are not extracted from the cards but are the interpretations you give to these cards.*

*To respond to a statement with "No" is an error. Nothing can be denied in its entirety. It is better to say: "That is possible, but from another point of view we can say the opposite."*

*Illness is essentially separation, which is to say that it essentially stems from the belief that you are separate.*

Some authors of personal-development books advise that we should not think of ourselves as a body that has a spirit, but as a spirit that has a body. I initially adopted this point of view with fervor; subsequently, thinking that the correct solution to the problem would not create a winner and a loser but two winners, I accepted—in accord with the purpose of alchemy: spiritualization of matter and materialization of spirit—that I was both a body that had a spirit and a spirit that had a body. But if we examine the first statement, was I really a spirit, which is to say an individual entity different from all? Yes, I was a spirit, but at the same time I was a planet, a galaxy, a universe, and if I accepted a Creator principle, God. This obliged me to say: I am a body that has a god, I am a god that has a body . . . Could I, though, separate my body from other bodies, the Earth, the stars, universal matter?

*Health is divine Consciousness. The path that leads to it is information, on the condition that information is considered not as words but as experiences of a knowledge that, inscribed in the body, introduces itself as a demand for what is missing. And what is missing is the experience of union with the inner god. Suffering is ignorance. Illness is the absence of consciousness. The individual, being completely relational, to attain health needs to receive the essential information. To be able to get well, someone who is ill needs to be put into contact with his inner god.*

*If the world is infinite, no order is real. The only things that can be put in order are those with precise limits. We can look for the momentary utility of an order, but not its veracity. The world is a subjective representation that can organize itself in infinite ways. It is proper to look for the order that causes us the least suffering.*

The magic key that permits the consultant, just like the tarologist



who asks the question, to positively organize his or her passage through the world is: “Do I rejoice in my life?” Do these people, this job, this city, this house, or this piece of furniture, make my life happy? If they do not make my life happy, that implies that they do not suit me as company, as ambient milieu, as territory, as activity. This invites me not to chain myself to them.

*Every notion is dual, made up of a word that is spoken and an opposite word that is not. To assert something is also to assert its opposite. The tarologist should seek the relationship of a concept with its opposite. For example: ugly (in comparison with something beautiful); small (by comparison with something large); defect (by comparison with a good quality); and so forth. Out of relationship, the concept makes no sense.*

The person seeking consultation cannot figure out who he is without comparing. The acquired, not the essential, personality is formed based on comparison. A comparison is hiding at the root of every problem. From the time we are children, appearance is demanded of us, not being. If the child does not correspond to what the parents think she should be, she is made to feel guilty. Fashion magazines exhibit women who obey criteria of beauty that are far removed from human reality. The same is true in movies and television. When a person suffers from a complex of feeling ugly, it is of fundamental importance for the tarologist to discover to whom she is comparing herself. The way her parents and teachers look at her forms the child’s spirit. If no one looks at her for who she is—subjecting her to critical looks or comparing her to her brothers, sisters, or friends that are “better” than she is—the child grows up with the sensation that she is nobody. She has not been granted the right to realize her potential. The schools that establish canons of intelligence, with the thought that there is only one correct way to think, trigger tragic devaluations. The tarologist must dig like an archaeologist in the individual’s memory, looking for the “perfect examples” to which she compares herself to free her from envy. The person to whom she compares herself, the desire she has to possess what this other individual possesses and to be who she is, follows her like a bitter shadow. Some hurtful parents, at the same time they are demanding that their



offspring triumph, are tangibly forbidding them to realize what they themselves were incapable of achieving. The neurosis of failure ensures that many people hardly recognize themselves. The tarologist should start his reading by accepting the fact that he is addressing someone who is what her family, society, and culture wanted her to be, the reason why she believes she has goals that are not hers, with artificial obstacles and mirages in the guise of solutions. The Tarot will be able to indicate to her nature, her goals, her obstacles, and the true solutions by helping her see the mute region of her life.

*What he does not know forms just as much a part of an individual's life as what he knows. What he has not done is just as important as what he has done. What he will be able to do one day forms part of what he is in the midst of doing. What he has been and what he has not been, what he is and what he is not, what he will be and what he will not be all make up equal parts of his world.*

Some people, out of fear of losing what they believe to be their individuality, do not want to be healed but to have someone take an interest in them. Rather than obtain solutions, all they want is to be heard, to be pitied. When confronted by the revelations of the reading, they become defensive. Although they are suffering, they maintain that everything is going well in their families, that they were loved as children, that they were never affected by any abuse, and that they are leading a comfortable life. They do not regard anything that you can reveal to them to be true. Facing this attitude, the tarologist must have the patience of a saint. It is one thing to give; it is quite another to oblige someone to receive. By accepting these defenses, instead of attacking them directly, the tarologist needs to skirt the negations until she can find an opening through which she can introduce a tiny realization. Then she should invite the individual to meditate on this revelation, taking all the time he needs, and once he has thoroughly grasped it, to return so that they might continue to dig into his memory with the help of a new reading. "To advance one mile, you must take a single step" (Tao te Ching). However, the therapist should not try to create a clientele out of a personal desire for power. These would be "clients"



who would place a childlike dependency on her while paying a prostituted father-mother who was dispensing emotional aspirin to them. The Tarot does not cure; it helps detect the so-called illness. Once this has been revealed, it is up to a psychoanalyst, a psychiatrist, or a psychomagician to continue the work.

*The Arcana all belong to the Tarot. This is why two cards observed together, even if they appear to contain completely different meanings, possess details in common. No matter how many cards are in front of you, you must always look for the greatest number of details common to all of them.*

All human beings belong to the same species and live in the same territory, planet Earth. For this reason, two people together, although they may be of different race, culture, social status, or level of consciousness, possess common characteristics. The tarologist, by abandoning all vague impulses of feeling superior, should capture these resemblances and first center his reading on the experiences that unite him with the consultant. There is no better person for treating a "sick person" than a former sick person.

*The bad tarologist, who mistakes thinking for believing, delivers whimsical interpretations and then searches in the Arcana for those symbols that can confirm his conclusions. For him, truth is a priori, followed a posteriori by the quest for truth.*

*To adopt a conclusion, it is necessary to examine the Arcana under the greatest possible number of viewpoints. Then pick the viewpoints that best suit the individual's level of awareness. Next you draw the conclusions from comparing the interpretations you have selected over those you rejected. Every conclusion is provisional and only applies to a moment in the person's life, because it was drawn from interpretations that are limited, because they are the tarologist's points of view.*

*The testimonies, despite their importance, are always personal interpretations of a fact, and for this very reason, we do not grant them the quality of absolute proof. Nothing that the tarologist has read can constitute the proof of a fact.*



*Giving advice to an individual—"You should do this," "You should not do this"—is a power grab. The tarologist should offer possibilities of action, while letting the person make his own decision. Nor should the tarologist threaten—"If you do not do this, then this will happen"—because actions performed out of obligation, even if they are positive, have the effect of curses.*

If the reader is first and foremost her own "ego," being incapable of becoming the mirror that reflects the Other, in reality she is using the person consulting her to heal herself. Instead of seeing, she is looking at herself. Instead of understanding, she is imposing her own vision of the world. Instead of awakening the individual's self-worth, she is submerging him in a fascination in which she is the adult and he a child. The tarologist is not the door but the doorbell. She is not the path but the straw mat on which the person getting the reading cleans the mud off his shoes; she is not the light but the light switch.

*The tarologist should not make lyrical promises or give high praise: "You are a noble soul, you are good, everything will go well, God will reward you," and so on. These are so many useless words that prevent the grasp of awareness. To heal, the individual should not flee suffering but face it directly, assume it so that he may later free himself from it. A suffering identified is worth a hundred praises.*

When my son Teo died at the age of twenty-four in a brutal accident, an indescribable sorrow disintegrated my spirit. I attended his cremation like a plague victim. Just as I reached the point of thinking I could find no possible consolation, I saw my son Brontus approach his body and place a Tarot of Marseille in his hand. Accompanied by this Tarot, he was burned. I was given the ashes of these two sacred beings in an urn. This moment with the Arcana entwined with my son will forever, until the end of my life, occupy a throne in my memory. What we truly believe and what we truly love are one and the same thing . . . The huge loss of someone we love destroys the image we have of ourselves. If we have the courage to rebuild ourselves, we will make ourselves stronger and at the same time better understand the sorrow of others.



# Notes

## INTRODUCTION

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## OPENING: AN ARCHITECTURE OF THE SOUL

1. R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz, *The Temple of Man* (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 1998), 463.
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1. Quoted by André Paccard in *Boukhari, Le Maroc* (Paris: Ed. Atelier 74, 1979).

## THE DEGREES OF THE NUMEROLOGY

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Alejandro Jodorowsky's profound study of the Tarot, which began in the early 1950s, reveals it to be far more than a simple divination system. The Tarot is first and foremost a powerful instrument of self-knowledge and a representation of the structure of the soul.

*The Way of Tarot* shows that the entire deck is structured like a temple, or a mandala, which is both an image of the world and a representation of the divine. The authors use the sacred art of the original Marseille Tarot—created during a time of religious tolerance in the 11th century—to reconnect with the roots of the Tarot's Western esoteric wisdom. They explain that the Tarot is a "nomadic cathedral" whose parts—the 78 cards or "arcana"—should always be viewed with an awareness of the whole structure. This understanding is essential to fully grasp the Tarot's hermetic symbolism.

The authors explore the secret associations behind the hierarchy of the cards and the correspondences between the suits and energies within human beings. Each description of the Major Arcana includes key word summaries, symbolic meanings, traditional interpretations, and a section where the card speaks for itself. Jodorowsky and Costa then take the art of reading the Tarot to a depth never before possible. Using their work with Tarology, a new psychological approach that uses the symbolism and optical language of the Tarot to create a mirror image of the personality, they offer a powerful tool for self-realization, creativity, and healing.

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