



# **A Complete Guide to the Tarot**

**Eden Gray**

The origins of the Tarot are so veiled in the mists of time that it is only natural for myths and legends to surround it. Superstition, flights of fancy, and speculation have added their own patterns to the rich and colorful tapestry of Tarot lore and have only deepened its aura of magic and mystery. Cults have grown up around one or another historical theory, and sometimes their adherents have become fanatical in proclaiming the one and only “truth.” But the better-informed investigators retain a certain amount of flexibility—even skepticism—and make no ironclad assertions.

The truest claim we can make is that the Tarot is a symbolic record of human experience. Through deeply rooted mystic powers, the cards accomplish miracles of psychological insight, wise counsel and accurate divination.

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## THE TAROT DEFINED

The ancient and mystic pack of cards called the Tarot never fails to evoke the curiosity of the uninitiated. “What are the Tarot cards?” “What makes them so different from our own playing cards?” “Can they really foretell the future?” “Can anyone learn how to read them?”

This book is devoted to answering these and many other questions and to give the reader knowledge of the Tarot—its history, its links to other occult sciences, and the way it is used to shed light upon the past, the present, and the future.

Everyone agrees that modern playing cards are directly descended from one part of the Tarot—the resemblances between parent and child are too striking to be accidental. In both we find cards numbered one to ten, followed by pictures or “court” cards. And just as the Joker is unnumbered and has no assigned place in our deck, the Fool in the Tarot is also without a number of its own or a preordained position—yet both are ever present in their respective packs.

There are 78 cards in the Tarot, of which 56 (those most like modern cards) are equally divided among four suits—Wands, Cups, Swords, Pentacles—analogueous to our Clubs, Hearts, Spades, and Diamonds. These suit cards are known as the Minor Arcana (*arcana* is the Latin word for secrets). They are followed by 22 cards called the Major Arcana—cards that depict symbolic figures, elements in nature, the experiences of Man in his spiritual journey, his hopes and fears, his joys and sorrows.

The Major Arcana, as can be seen, bear little resemblance to modern cards. Their illustrations are drawn from the treasurehouse of universal symbols and images, from the legends, myths, philosophies, religions, and magic beliefs of the human race. Undoubtedly the wise men and seers through whom the Tarot is believed to have been transmitted over more than seven centuries were thoroughly versed in the astrological, numerological, and Kabalistic teachings of the ancients, and all these influences are reflected in the cards. The Tarot, nevertheless, remains a unique and independent discipline with its own divinatory powers and its own spiritual content.

Most of us are interested in character analysis, glimpses of the future, solutions to immediate dilemmas—all of which we can seek in the Tarot. But there are also those who will value the Tarot for help in meditation. The student of metaphysics gains remarkable insights into the inner meanings of the cards; the artist, constantly concerned with images and symbols, draws heightened creativity from contemplating the many-dimensional beauty of the cards; the Biblical student finds that the Tarot illuminates many passages in the Old and New Testaments. And since the Tarot is the key that unlocks the wisdom of the ancient philosophers, it reveals its most profound messages to the dedicated scholar and practitioner. (In this it is not unlike the ideographic writing of the Chinese, the hieroglyphics of the Egyptians, the picture writing of the Mayans.)

It is not necessary, however, to understand all the hidden secrets of the cards at first—or even second—glance. When the student is ready, the Tarot will begin to reveal its mysteries. And it is not imperative to “believe in the cards” for them to yield results—you don’t have to take them on blind faith. Eventually you will tap the occult powers of the Tarot, and you will turn to it when dilemmas beset you.

If you consult an experienced “Reader” for help, you become what is called the “Querent,” with an unspoken question you want answered. After laying out the cards in accordance with one of the



methods described in this book, the Reader will interpret what the cards are trying to tell you. But you yourself can learn the definitions of the symbols as given in the Glossary, as well as from the detailed descriptions and pictures of each of the cards in the body of the book. Then, after mastering one another of the techniques for laying the cards out, you can before long try to read them. At first, of course, you will be turning back to the definitions again and again, but with persistence you will be rewarded.

The first Tarot cards were painted on parchment or thin sheets of ivory, silver, or even gold. The design for each card had to be drawn anew and colored by hand. Therefore the cards became the playthings of the nobles, who could afford to assign an artist to paint their own individual sets. Often the aristocracy had the Court cards drawn to resemble members of their own family or court.

Eventually, handmade cardboard became available, and then the designs were traced and painted with watercolors. Later still, in Nuremberg (about 1430), block printing was done from hand-carved wooden blocks. Thus some of the early cards are crude in design, and their details are often indistinct.

To reduce the cost of a Tarot deck, or perhaps because the Major Arcana were not used in the game of Tarroc, these 21 cards were dropped from the pack, as were the four Queens. At a later date, the Queens were evidently restored to some decks, and the Knights eliminated. Decks in this latter form are to this day used in the Spanish and Italian game of Tarroc. The cards from southern Germany developed a somewhat different pattern—bells for Pentacles, acorns for Swords, leaves for Wands, and hearts for Cups.

The cards depicted in this book are only one set of the many that have appeared during the long history of the Tarot. They are those used by A. E. Waite in his book *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot* (1910), and they have become standard for most of the English-speaking world. First published by William Rider & Son, Ltd., they are called the Rider Pack.

When people ask you, “What is the Tarot?” you should know a good part of the answer after you have read the text and studied the strange and beautiful pictures. Those who are embarking on the quest for wisdom and guidance will find it an exciting and rewarding journey with the help of the Tarot—our priceless heritage from the ancients.

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## ***HISTORY OF THE TAROT***

The true Tarot is symbolism: it speaks a language that arises from the collective mind of Man. Given an understanding of the inner meaning of the symbols, the cards yield, on the highest plane, mystical powers and esoteric wisdom. And although there are various theories about the Tarot and many different versions of the cards, no one of them can claim final truth and any one of them may contribute some illumination.

As an analogy, consider the hundreds of paintings and statues of Venus that have been made through the centuries. The goddess appears in numerous varied guises, according to the artist's own conceptions and the time in which he lived. Yet the representations retain recognizable characteristics even though not only ideas but also styles and methods of drawing, painting, and sculpting are constantly changing.

So it has been with the Tarot. Occultists, historians, and artists have modified details as new researches present new evidence, but the best of these changes retain the basic symbolism.

The origins of the Tarot are so veiled in the mists of time that it is only natural for myths and legends to have grown up—particularly around the Major Arcana. Superstition, flights of fancy, and speculation have added their own patterns to the rich and colorful tapestry of Tarot lore and, curious enough, have only deepened its aura of magic and mystery. Cults have grown up around one or another historical theory, and sometimes their adherents have become fanatical in proclaiming the one as the only “truth.” But the better-informed investigators retain a certain amount of flexibility—even skepticism—and make no ironclad assertions.

The Gypsies say that the hidden knowledge of the Tarot was originally brought by their people from Chaldea and Egypt into Israel and thence to Greece. “Papus” (Dr. Gerard Encausse), a leading French occultist, is quoted as saying: “The Gypsy ... has given us the key which enables us to explain all the symbolism of the ages.... In it, where a man of the people sees only the key to an obscure tradition [are] discovered the mysterious links which unite God, the Universe and Man.”

It seems incontrovertible that there is some link between the Tarot and the Gypsies in their worldwide wanderings. The Gypsies did indeed roam through Europe at about the same time that the Tarot cards began to be used around the shores of the Mediterranean. They are heard of in Austria in the twelfth century and in Rumania in the fourteenth. (It is interesting to note that the Hungarian Gypsy's word for a pack of cards is “tar.”)

Legend has it that as pagan cults became the victims of Christian persecution, the Hierophants (priests of the Eleusinian Mysteries) handed down their ancestral lore to the Gypsies, who undertook to transmit it only to those deemed worthy. For who would suspect that a wandering Gypsy was the custodian of so precious a treasure? It is said that the Gypsy was also entrusted with the secrets of the Gnostics, the Montanists, and the Manichaeans, as well as the Albigenses. These last were one of the sects of the Cathari, whose headquarters were the town of Albi. They flourished in the twelfth century but were exterminated in the thirteenth by the Crusades and the Inquisition. The Albigenses accepted the belief in dualism, renouncing marriage and eating no animal food. The Gypsies claim they also guarded the mysteries that were later embodied in the Jewish Kabbalah, as well as those of the Masonic Order.

One of the most fascinating stories claiming that the Tarot originated in Egypt relates that after the great library at Alexandria was destroyed, the city of Fez (in what is now Morocco) became the intellectual capital of the world, to which wise men traveled from near and far. Needing to create a common tongue—for they spoke in many languages—they set about inventing a method of communication. To this end, they prepared a picture book abounding in mystic symbols. A key to the meanings of these signs was handed down by word of mouth from initiate to initiate. To preserve the secrecy of their messages, the symbols were later reproduced on seemingly innocuous cards that were used in games of chance by more frivolous men who could not possibly decipher their true significance.

Another hypothesis attributes the invention of the Tarot to Thoth, counselor to Osiris. He was the scribe of the Egyptian gods, measurer of time, inventor of numbers, and the god of wisdom and magic who is often depicted as having the head of the ibis. It has also been reported that interpretations of the 22 cards of the Major Arcana at one time formed part of the initiation ceremonies for the Egyptian priesthood. One thing is certain: many of the Tarot symbols are clearly derived from Egyptian mythology.

A study of the cards also discloses a close relationship to the Kabalistic lore of the ancient Hebrews. In short, there can be no doubt that whoever actually invented the Tarot knew ancient religions and philosophies and embodied many of their symbols in the cards. However, their deeper implications may have been lost or deliberately hidden during the time when the Gypsies of southern France, Spain, and Italy used them as their stock-in-trade in telling fortunes.

Granting these influences (as well as those of the Hebrew alphabet, color symbolism, Numerology, and Astrology), the truest claim we can make is that the Tarot is a symbolic record of human experience. Through deeply rooted mystic powers, the cards accomplish miracles of psychological insight, wise counsel, and accurate divination.

The earliest date attributed to the Tarot cards seen in European museums is 1390, though the actual origin of the cards is said to go back to the twelfth century. In the Museo Correr at Venice, there are some cards dating from around 1445; the so-called Minchiati set, of about the same period, is thought to be in private hands in Milan.

In the fourteenth century, Jacques Gringonneur, astrologer and Kabalist, is said to have invented playing cards for the amusement of Charles VI of France. There is some doubt that these were complete Tarot decks, but one suspects that they may well have been part of a deck with astrological and Kabalistic symbols that Gringonneur had been working on for years.

In England, the Tarot was known in the reign of Edward IV (fifteenth century). The king forbade the importation of the cards; nevertheless, the Tarot found its way from the caravans of the Gypsies into the homes of the nobles, where it was kept hidden for fear of reprisals. After the French Revolution, the new freedom swept Europe; esoteric sects and mystic lodges flourished once again.

In the eighteenth century, the illustrious French scholar Court de Gébelin, who was the first to suggest that the Tarot might be of Egyptian origin, unearthed the Tarot cards while doing research for his many-volumed works. Gébelin's rediscovery came at a time when people were interested in Rosicrucianism, Masonry, the Kabalah, and Astrology. The climate was propitious for the Tarot and its mysticism to reenter the occult thought of the day. The "Marseilles deck," the cards frequently used as a source today, stem from those depicted in Gébelin's book *Le Monde Primitif*, published in 1773.

Ten years later, a fashionable fortuneteller named Ettiela undertook to restore to their original form Court de Gébelin's version of the Tarot figures. In doing this he added some highly unorthodox

changes of his own, which later experts discarded. Ettiela was the first, however, to suggest a link between the Tarot and Astrology and the Kabbalah.

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After a long interval, in 1854 there was a revival of interest with the publication of Eliphas Levi's *Dogma and Ritual of Transcendental Magic*. This book, the first in a series of occult writings by Levi, names the Tarot as his prime source. He traces the connection between the 22 cards of the Tarot Major Arcana and the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In his book, he places the Fool, Key 0, between Keys 20 and 21, and this sequence has been followed by French occultists ever since.

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was founded in England in 1886 as a result of the discovery and deciphering of some ancient manuscripts on occult initiation. One of the interests of the members of the Order seems to have been the proper placing of the Fool in the pack. The leader of the Golden Dawn, S. L. MacGregor Mathers, author of *The Kabbalah Unveiled*, later wrote a small book called *The Tarot, Its Occult Signification, Use in Fortune-Telling, and Method of Play, Etc.* This book is now again in print.

In 1889, "Papus" (Dr. Gerard Encausse) published *The Tarot of the Bohemians*, using revised designs by a contemporary, Oswald Wirth, and attributing Levi's interpretations to them. A. E. Waite wrote the preface to Papus's book when it was republished in England about 1900; that book is also now available.

Of all the old sets of cards that had sprung up through the centuries, some containing as many as 140 cards, it was generally agreed among occultists that the set known as the Marseilles Tarot was the purest source. It had the correct number of 22 Major Trumps, and the designs had suffered less corruption and distortion in the course of time.

Another member of the Golden Dawn, Arthur Edward Waite, an English occultist to whom we have referred more than once in these pages, published his own book, *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot*, in 1910. At his direction a new set of cards (the pack used in this book) was drawn by the well-known English artist Pamela Colman Smith, after Waite's own conception of the symbolism of the cards. This was called the Rider Pack. Waite was able to restore in great part the original symbolic meanings that had been lost or changed in the passage of time. There are those who say that the symbols had been deliberately changed, in some cases to throw the Roman Church off the track and prevent the priests from appropriating the Tarot's verities for their own purposes.

Paul Foster Case, an American, has published an excellent book, *The Tarot, A Key to the Wisdom of the Ages*. He was one of the last members of the Golden Dawn, and had access to their records and notes. Case presents only the Major Arcana, and uses some of the modifications of the Rider Pack; as we understand it, these are similar to the unpublished ones of the Golden Dawn.

A new English writer, Gareth Knight, exhibits great understanding of the Tarot in his two-volume work *A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism* (1965).

The exact placement of the Fool has always caused much discussion and still does; the English books on the subject have tried various placements in order to bring the meanings of the Hebrew alphabet more in line with the meanings of the cards. (This subject will be discussed more fully in the section on the Tarot and the Kabbalah.)

Aleister Crowley, controversial English critic and devotee of Black Magic, became a member of the Order of the Golden Dawn, as did Israel Regardie, for some years Crowley's secretary. Both felt that the Fool should be placed before Key 1 in the Major Arcana, since zero precedes the number one. Crowley, in *The Book of Thoth* (1944), says that this is obviously the proper place and that any mathematician would agree.

Many other contemporary scholars, writers, and psychologists have been interested in, and inspired

by, the study of the Tarot. Psychoanalysts have looked with respect upon the symbols and the connection with the subconscious activities of the human psyche. Among those who have taken cognizance of the Tarot are T. S. Eliot, in *The Waste Land*; Charles Williams, in *The Greater Trumps*; William Lindsay Gresham, in *Nightmare Alley*; and P. D. Ouspensky, in *A New Model of the Universe*. A. E., the famous Irish poet, belonged to the Order of the Golden Dawn, and the poet W. B. Yeats was also a member of a secret order that dealt with the Tarot's occult traditions. The followers of the famous psychoanalyst C. G. Jung see symbols in the cards that relate to the archetypes of the collective unconscious. Albert Pike's *Morals and the Dogma of the Scottish Rites* makes reference to the cards; and Thomas Troward, a founder of New Thought and one of the clearest exponents of the Science of Mind, has devoted serious thought to the spiritual significance of this "oldest book known to man."

Thus, even though the precise time and place of the Tarot's genesis are not firmly established, and even though the Tarot has gone through many transmutations over the centuries (and the legends and myths still multiply), it survives serenely, elusive at times but inspiring, a living demonstration of the truth "that there are more things in heaven and earth ... than are dreamt of" in most people's philosophies.

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## ***THE MAJOR ARCANA***

The Major Arcana is comprised of 22 cards, ranging from Key 0, the Fool, to Key 21, the World. The illustrations are rich in symbolic and mythological figures, animals, natural phenomena and objects. The very names of the cards are suggestive of magic and mystery: The Wheel of Fortune, The Hierophant, The Hanged Man, for example. Unlike the Minor Arcana, they bear no relationship to modern playing cards.

The Major Arcana are, in all probability, linked with the mystical wisdom of the Greek god Hermes Trismegistus, identified with the Egyptian Thoth and supposed author of many writings on man's relationship to the world of the Spirit. Hermetic ideas reappear in the Kabalah, alchemy, magic, and Astrology, and their concentration on symbols can be regarded as a kind of private language for metaphysical and arcane concepts too subtle and elusive for words.

Symbolic keys, like material ones, are expected to fit locks and open doors. Systems like the Kabalah or the Tarot, however, do not accomplish this in a simple or direct manner. Here we find keys that fit more than one lock and locks that can receive more than one key. The correspondence between the 22 Major Arcana Keys and the 22 paths on the Tree of Life and the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, as well as astrological signs, evokes complex and subtle associations that can never be rigidly confined. Here there is no "final authority"—everything that is part of the living stream moves and changes, and the Tarot is indeed in this category.

It may be helpful to think of the Tarot as representing the spokes of a huge wheel upon which each of us travels during his life on earth, experiencing material and spiritual ups and downs. These are reflected in the cards when they are laid out by a Reader—their positions, juxtapositions, and combinations are all significant. The Fool, representing the Life-force before it comes into manifestation on the earth plane, is in the center of the wheel, moves to its outer edge through 21 phases of experience, and then returns to the center whence it came.

Thus, the designs illuminate the life of man, his joys and sorrows, his hopes and fears. Each of the Major Arcana represents a distinct principle, law, power, or element in Nature. These are drawn from a repository of symbols and images common to all men in all ages, from what has been called the "collective unconscious." They appear in our dreams, in the poet's flights of imagination, in the inspired work of artists, in the visions of saints and prophets; indeed, thinking in pictures is the universal heritage of man.

Many of these picture-symbols are defined in the Glossary of Symbolic Terms at the end of this book. When the meaning of the Minor and Major Arcana has been grasped, the additional information in the specimen layouts, the readings, and the Glossary should carry the reader well on the way to understanding some of the hidden wisdom of the Tarot. Personal experiences will take on deeper meanings as they are seen in the light of universal experience; the basic truths in other metaphysical realms—Astrology, Numerology, Religious Science—will also be illuminated.

When one reads the Tarot cards frequently, it is difficult not to become convinced that some power is present that directs their distribution. An extraphysical power (now studied in our universities as a "psychokinetic effect") affects the unconscious movements of the person shuffling, cutting, and laying out the cards, and when they are dealt they seem to fall into positions that inevitably relate to the

subject of the reading.

~~A word about Key 0, the Fool. Actually, it stands more or less alone, and there is no concrete evidence that it should be positioned as the first card of the Major Arcana. It is both before and after the 21 Keys—the sum total of all.~~





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## *The Major Arcan*

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## KEY 0

### THE FOOL

Here we have a youth about to step off the edge of a precipice. He symbolizes the Lifepower before he enters into manifestation. Therefore he represents inexperience—which certainly can be foolish. He faces northwest, the direction of the unknown. The sun behind him is still rising, for the spiritual sun never reaches its zenith; if it did, it would descend and decrease in power. The wand over the youth's shoulder is a symbol of the will, and tied to it is a wallet that is thought to carry universal memory and instinct. (Another possible interpretation is that the wallet carries the four magic symbols that he will have to learn to use.)

The sign of the eagle on the wallet betokens virile strength and is also associated with the zodiacal sign Scorpio. The youth also carries a white rose, indicating that he is still free from animal forms and desire. The little white dog at the young man's heels has many possible meanings: he has been evolved from the wolf, showing that lower forms of life can be elevated and improved by human companionship; he also shows us that Nature is glad to follow along in Man's wake. The snow-capped mountains in several cards indicate the cold, abstract principles of mathematics, which govern all earthly phenomena.

The Fool is about to pass into the cycle of life through which each soul must journey—stages symbolically described in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Think of the youth as Spirit facing unknown possibilities of self-expression as he enters the world, an ignorant babe. He stands on spiritual heights about to step down into manifestation.

Every man must journey forward and choose between good and evil. If he has no philosophy, he is the Fool.

**Divinatory Meaning:** The subject of the reading is a dreamer, a mystic. He has the desire to accomplish a great goal. He must be careful to make the right choice. If he thinks that "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise," then he is indeed the Fool.



**Reversed:** Folly, indiscretion, thoughtless action. The choice is likely to be faulty.

**KEY 1**  
**THE MAGICIAN**

The Magician stands before a table on which are laid a Wand, a Cup, a Sword, and a Pentacle representing the Minor Arcana and meaning Air, Fire, Water, and Earth. He is about to draw power from above to materialize his desires. Over his head is the cosmic lemniscate, shaped like a figure on its side—a symbol of eternal life and dominion, indicating the harmonious interaction of the conscious and subconscious, idea and feeling, desire and emotion.

About the Magician's waist we see the well-known symbol of eternity—a serpent devouring its tail. About his head is a rose vine with red roses, representing desire. In front of him are more red roses intertwined with the white lilies of abstract thought. His inner garment is the white of purity; his outer robe, the red of desire, activity, and passion.

The hand holding the magic wand is the ego-consciousness reaching up for power while the other hand points to earth, as if the Magician wills earth's forces to be subservient to him. Or, it might be said that with one hand he reaches up to take the hand of the Infinite for accomplishment in the higher realms, while he reaches down with the other to encourage the evolution of the lower kingdoms—the uniting Spirit and matter in eternity.

The Magician represents Man's will in union with the Divine achieving the knowledge and power to bring desired things into manifestation through conscious self-awareness.

**Divinatory Meaning:** Will, mastery, organizational skills, creative talents. The ability to take the

power from above and direct it through desire into manifestation.

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**Reversed:** Indecision, weak will, ineptitude. The use of power for destructive ends.



## **KEY 2** **THE HIGH PRIESTESS**

The High Priestess is seated between two pillars from the Temple of Solomon—the black pillar of Boaz representing the negative life force, and the white one, Jachin, the positive life force.

Thomas Troward, in his book *The Hidden Power*, has this to say about the two pillars before the temple: “They contain the key to the entire Bible and to the whole order of Nature, and as emblems of the two great principles that are the pillars of the universe, they fitly stood at the threshold of the temple which was designed to symbolise all the mysteries of Being...”

The High Priestess is protecting on her lap a scroll of esoteric wisdom inscribed with the word “Tora” (Divine Law), for it is not for all eyes to see. The solar cross on her breast, with arms of equal length, represents the balance of the positive and negative forces. (The upright is the positive, male element; the horizontal, the negative, female element.) The veil between the pillars is decorated with pomegranates (female) and palms (male)—symbols indicating that the subconscious is potentially reproductive. The edge of her gown, which balances the crescent moon at her feet, trails out of the picture, indicating the stream of consciousness, which flows into the background of Key 3, the Empress, and reappears in later cards.

The High Priestess is the virgin daughter of the moon, and wears on her head the symbol of a full moon, with a waxing and waning image of the moon on each side. She is the eternal feminine.

sometimes called Isis or Artemis. She corresponds to all the virgin goddesses of the ancient world, even to Eve before her union with Adam. She is spiritual enlightenment, inner illumination. Where the Fool and the Magician represent only the potentiality, the will, to create, the High Priestess has the latent power to manifest. She is the link between the seen and the unseen.

**Divinatory Meaning:** Unrevealed future, hidden influences at work. Of special value for artists, poets, composers, mystics. When this card appears in a man's reading, it represents the perfect woman all men dream of; in a woman's reading, it may indicate that she can find such virtues in herself or a friend.



**Reversed:** Conceit, sensual enjoyment. Accepting surface knowledge.

### **KEY 3** **THE EMPRESS**

The Empress is the Earth Mother, here seated in a blooming garden. A field of ripe wheat lies before her, sacred to the Egyptian goddess Isis; behind her is seen the stream of consciousness flowing between cypress trees, sacred to Venus. The heart-shaped shield is inscribed with the symbol of Venus. The Empress' hair is bound with a wreath of myrtle—again reminiscent of Venus, as are the seven pearls around her neck. She wears a crown of twelve stars, each with six points, denoting dominion over the macrocosm, as does her scepter surmounted by a globe.

The High Priestess symbolizes the virgin state of the cosmic subconscious, but the Empress typifies the productive, generative activities in the subconscious after it has been impregnated by seed ideas.

from the self-conscious. The subconscious has control over all the steps of development in the material world; therefore the Empress represents the multiplier of images.

She is the Goddess of Love, Venus, the symbol of universal fecundity. As the High Priestess is Isis veiled, the Empress is Isis unveiled.

**Divinatory Meaning:** Material wealth, marriage, fertility for would-be parents, for farmers, or for people in the creative arts. If its position is not in the best placement in relation to other cards, sometimes indicates luxury or dissipation.

**Reversed:** Infertility, loss of material possessions, inaction, frittering away of resources. Possibility of destruction by war and famine. Poverty may disrupt home. Psychological problems may cause instability.



**KEY 4**  
**THE EMPEROR**

The Emperor sits on his throne, commanding and stately. He is a solar figure, Martian in character—as testified by the rams' heads (emblems of Mars) that decorate his throne and appear on his left shoulder. In his right hand (the active, male side) he holds an Egyptian ankh (also called the Crucifix, Cross of Life). The ankh too is one of the symbols of Venus. In the Emperor's left hand (the passive, female side) is the globe of dominion, showing that only through the feminine power of love can he balance Spirit and matter and thus have the true power to rule. He is seated against a background of bare mountains.

His Key is No. 4, and this indicates all that is stable—four-square, broad-based, a foundation for the building of law and order. The number 4 also has this significance in Numerology. Four is the number of the elements: Air, Earth, Fire, and Water; there are four seasons in the year, four points to the compass, and four rivers in the garden of Eden. And there are four letters in the sacred name of God, IHVH, standing for Jehovah.

To recapitulate: Key 1, the Magician, is the active principle of life; Key 2, the High Priestess, the passive principle; Key 3, the Empress, is the “word made flesh and dwelling amongst us.” The Emperor is the *active* Father force contrasted with the active Mother force through whom his characteristics are brought forth. He is the Magician *after* his union with the High Priestess in that he changed her into the Empress and made him the father of her offspring.

The Emperor stands for domination of the material world, for authority, paternity, and the regulation of life by law.

Note that flesh is not the enemy of the Spirit but its vehicle; Spirit is not the enemy of the flesh but its driving force.

**Divinatory Meaning:** Leadership, mental activity, domination. War-making power, authority, paternity. The fruits of toil, the results of action. Controlled and directed sexual drive.



**Reversed:** Loss of control. Serious injury in battle. Emotional immaturity and bondage to parents. Possibility of being defrauded of one's inheritance.

**KEY 5**  
**THE HIEROPHANT**

Here again we have a figure seated between two pillars, repeating the theme of duality seen in the pillars behind the High Priestess. These are the pillars of the Tree of Life from the Kabbalah, one representing Mercy and the other Severity. Or it might be said that the one on the right hand is law and the left one liberty to obey or disobey. Both are necessary, for obedience through compulsion can never bring freedom—man must choose. The capitals of the pillars are decorated with mystic symbols of sexual union. The crossed keys at the feet of the Hierophant, one gold and one silver, are the solar and lunar currents of energy. The two tonsured priests kneeling before him wear Palliums which symbolize the yoke of union. The garment of one is decorated by the white lilies of thought; that of the other shows the roses of desire.

This master of the sacred mysteries wears the triple crown of a Pope, the lower design of trefle representing the lower material world, the middle one representing the formative world, and the top tier representing the creative world. The symbol of three is repeated in his staff, revealing the realms of spirit, soul, and body. The letter W at the very top is the Hebrew letter Vav, meaning nail, means union, link. Here it is used to suggest the linking of man to God through the inner voice.

It is of some significance that the number 5 is that of the planet Mercury, ruler of intelligence; 5 is also the number of Man or humanity.

The Hierophant represents traditional, orthodox teaching considered suitable to the masses. He is the ruling power of external religion, whereas the High Priestess teaches only in secret and to initiate.

**Divinatory Meaning:** Preference for the outer forms of religion, the ritual, the creed, the ceremony. The importance of social approval; the need to conform to society.

**Reversed:** Openness to new ideas, unconventionally. The card of the inventor as well as of the hippie. Take care that you do not become superstitious.



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