

COMPLETE COURSE IN TAROT - THE MAJOR ARCANA PART 1

First, some scholarly research. This is very long... please read through it all when you have time. As you read, look at your own cards for each one. If the descriptions don't fit your cards, it's alright, we're going back to the beginnings. After this, we will look at some of the cards specifically in a modern setting.

The Major Arcana

This review of the historical sweep of Trump titles will help you better understand the roots of these archetypal Ideas despite the (in some cases) radical departures we are confronted with in the modern Tarots.

Fool

0 - The Fool

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

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

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

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

meant to represent already fallen humanity preparing to take the first step toward self knowledge, and eventually, The Gnosis.

Magus_waitel - The Magus

Earliest versions of the Magician can be seen in the Visconti-Sforza family of Tarots (mid-1400s). Named the Mountebank, he is seated on a cubic hassock, manipulating objects on the table before him. This image continues largely unchanged for centuries. Both hands are down close to the table, although the left hand holds a long, slender, upright wand. The d'Este Mountebank seems more active, leaning over his table, left hand reaching down, right hand raising his chalice (fifteenth century). Catelin Geoffrey's Tarot (1557) crowds the card with onlookers, and the Mountebank is clearly doing tricks with cups and dice, still with both hands down, again one holding a wand. In the Rosenwald images from the early sixteenth century, the interesting detail is the rabbit eared hat which we saw first in the 1470s on the Charles VI and d'Este Fool. (Waite Tarot is shown) Most Tarots of this century emphasize more or less the performance aspect of his workings by the presence or absence of an audience (anonymous Parisian Tarot, early seventeenth century, and later Piedmontese or Tarot of Venice, late seventeenth century). The anonymous Parisian Tarot shows a dog and a monkey at the feet of the Magus, another indication of his variety show. The Juggler card by Mitelli (1664) assumes an entirely different aspect, the magician dancing with a dog and a drum. However, this version was not taken up in the common Tarots. The ubiquitous eighteenth century Marseilles deck brings us back to the traditional image, with the suit symbols on the table before the stand-ing operator. Both the Marseilles and the contemporary de Geblin Arcana (1787) add the lemniscate hat, the "sideways 8" symbol of eternity crowning him. The Magus image from Etteilla (as in the Grande Oracle des Dames, 1890) continues the tradition of the prestidigitator working the crowd; he lacks the lemniscate and bears the dismal title Maladie. In the earlier versions of this Arcanum a much stronger emphasis is placed upon the performance aspect of the Magician than in twentieth century Tarots. Although this card is named for the Magus, a person who could calculate astrology charts and shamanically enact magical rituals for special spiritual effects, by the debut of Tarots in Europe, this sense of the word "magician" was lost. The presence on the table of suit symbols, however, implies that this person is adept at more than sleight of hand.

We are used to thinking of the Magus as one who can demonstrate change in the material plane -- as in healing, transformative rituals, alchemical transmutation, empowerment of magical tools and the like. A modern Magus is any person who completes the circuit between heaven and earth, one who seeks to bring forth the divine 'gold' within her or himself through new inventions, works of art, and all kinds of cultural improvements. We sometimes forget that at the birth of Tarot, even a gifted healer who was not an ordained clergyperson was considered to be in league with the Devil. For obvious reasons, the line between fooling the eye with sleight of hand, and charging the world with magical will was not clearly differentiated in the early Tarot cards. The image of the inspired and focused Magus as the solitary ritualist communing with the spirits of the elements -- with its formal arrangement of symbols and postures -- illustrates the freedom we have in modern times to enact our spiritual core beliefs without fear of reprisal. The Magus is one who calls forth the future through the use of Will. Therefore it's best to keep your mind open with this card. Visualize yourself manifesting something unique, guided by evolutionary forces that emerge spontaneously from within.

Priestess2_1II - The High Priestess

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

EmpressIII - The Empress

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

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

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

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

natural law. The second exception is the "Hermetic/ Alexandrian" stream of Tarots drawn from the Fratres Lucis document published by Paul Christian in 1870 (see "The Continental Tarots").

The Falconnier

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

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

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

EmperorIV - The Emperor

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

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

robe cocoons his slouched figure, but is pulled up to show his shins and feet crossed at the calf. One hand holds the crossed orb of sovereignty. An eagle stands at his feet. Elements of both these images have found their way to the Emperor Arcanum over time.

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

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

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

Etteilla, a contemporary of de Gebelin in the late 1700s, eliminated the human imagery completely from the Emperor, and promoted it as No. 1 in his amended order, representing the first day of the divine creation described in the Hermetic *Pymander*. Stuart Kaplan would disagree with me, but I feel *The Ideal* (aka *Chaos*) is Etteilla's Emperor card, and he means it to represent "everyman," the male querant. It is alternately pictured as either a radiant sun beaming between parted clouds (late 1700s) or the earth surrounded by the rings of the planets (1800s).

The latter variant is an image of great antiquity, used by early Kabbalists and later Gnostics (it also appears in the Mantegna cards) to represent the descent of the soul into matter. Later variations of Etteilla's Emperor call it "Enlightenment," as in the dawning of higher consciousness (nineteenth century Etteilla version, p. 142 of Kaplan's *Encyclopedia*, Volume 1). Because we now know that Etteilla was a Mason and studied the Hebrew and Greek creation myths, I am inclined to rename his Emperor "Adam Kadmon" (see "Gnostic Tarot").

The Waite-Smith Tarot returns the image to more familiar territory except for the addition of ram's heads prominently displayed to override more traditional associations of the Emperor with Jupiter (as

shown in the previous two century's Arcana from Etteilla, Levi, Papus and Wirth to the Falconnier family of decks). Variations in the intensely interesting Emperor from El Gran Tarot Esoterico (shown) include deer horns in a leather crown, a feathered cloak much like that of the Empress who preceded him, and a black bird sitting in a tree in the background. These trappings cast him into the deep prehistory of Christianity, as does the glyph of the sun hanging in the air (the earliest Hebrew correspondence to the number four and the letter Daleth). I see him as the Grain King who is sacrificed after a year of royal living, his limbs thrown into the fields in the fall fertility ritual.

In the development of this Arcanum, common themes of the historical stream of images are remarkably similar, with even the lone dissenter, Etteilla, opting for a more grandiose version of the same idea. The Emperor is the boss or leader, the head of state, the most exemplary and powerful person in the realm. His word is law, and the positive outcome in affairs of state is directly proportional to his well being and happiness. The more enlightenment and cosmic perspective he possesses, the better life is for all under his reign. He has mastered the realm of the Cube, the world of matter and of manifestation.

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5V - The Hierophant or Pope

This image has been subject to several modifications due to the political and religious climate of the times in which Tarot first appeared. In the Visconti-Sforza Tarot from Bembo, the Priestess is called Popess and is often dressed in ecclesiastical finery, undermining the exclusivity of the Pope's role and making both genders of equal rank. The male, bearded Pope is shown in triple crown making ecclesiastical gestures, but holds no tokens of his rank. The Von Bartsch Visconti-Sforza (date unknown) at least gives him a proper papal staff. Among the published versions of the Mantegna cards, the Pope is unambiguously female, although referred to by the encyclopedists as if male. Perhaps that is because Albrecht Durer's version of the Mantegna Pope (from the early 1500s) is so clearly masculine.

The Goldschmidt cards from the mid-fifteenth century show a more typical patriarchal Pope with the fascinating variants of a Catholic bishop's mitre, a mysterious anchor inlaid in the wall beside him, and a checkerboard black and white floor mosaic repeated in several cards from this deck (said to be from either Provence or Italy) and in the contemporary Guildhall cards (possibly German). One of the Visconti-Sforza tarocchi cards from the Victoria and Albert Museum also shows a checkerboard floor under the Death card. We notice that in the early 1400s, this checkered pattern shows up several times in relation to Tarot, still a rare subject in those days. The two examples given by Kaplan in Volume 2 of his Encyclopedia show large scenes of Tarot players, either sitting in a room with a checkerboard floor (a fresco now at the Sforza castle in Milan, circa 1450) or framed in the checkered arches of a fresco in one of the arcades at the Issogone Castle in Val D'Aosta, circa 1415-1450. Perhaps the checkers on those early decks show a relationship to the "scene" those fifteenth century frescos represent. (We notice that the checkered theme disappeared until it was recently revived on the Tarots of the French and English lodges of the late nineteenth century. I take it as a signal of their various Masonic affiliations, since their rituals were always played out on a floor similarly checkered in black and white.)

The Gringonneur Pope from the mid-fifteenth century is shown with cardinals flanking him. His profile is left-facing, and he holds the key to St. Peter's Cathedral in his right hand and the Gospel on

his lap with his left. The con-temporary Pope from the d'Este cards wears a more elaborate triple crown, holds up the two-fingered blessing with the right hand and grasps a chunky, gilt Grail Cup on his lap in his left hand. In the following century, the Rosenwald Tarot shows the Pope in face-front pose, with triple crown and scroll in right hand. Catelin Geoffrey's Tarot from 1557 gives us a triple-crowned Pope with the triple-crossed staff as well as the keys to St. Peter's Cathedral. The Mitelli Tarot from 1664 in- PAPA MONTEGNA THE POPE GOLDSCHMIDT TAROT 10 cludes two Popes as mentioned in the Priestess entry, both bearded, both wearing the triple crown; one Pope is seated on a throne with a paper in his right hand, while the other stands empty-handed.

A refreshing break from all this Catholic symbolism appears upon the French Revolutionary Tarot by L. Carey (1791). Due to anti-royalist politics of the time, the Priest-ess became Juno and the Heirophant became Jupiter. He is nude save for a strategically floating scarf, and he straddles the back of an eagle, holding thunderbolts in both hands. (His counterpart, Juno, is tastefully dressed but barefoot, and riding on a peacock.)

Notes from Fournier's Catalog of Playing Cards Volume 1 tell us that, in regard to the contemporary tarocchino from Bologne (No. 36 in Fournier's section on Italy), ". . . the Popes and Emperors are shown with heads and shoulders of Negroes and satraps accord-ing to the dictates of the Papal Authority." Perhaps the Pope didn't want these Arcana to be confused with any historical Europeans past or present!

In the eighteenth century Tarots, two pillars appear behind the Pope, perhaps another clue to the timing of the appearance of the Alexandrian/Fatidic Egyptian Tarot which places the Pope between them (though in those decks he was called the Master of the Arcanes). Contemporary decks by Jean Payen, the Marseilles, the N. Conver Tarot and the Lando all seem to have adopted this device. Court de Gebelin repeats the pillars, puts servants at his feet, and introduces the name The Heirophant. The same Tarots that replaced the Popess with the Spanish Capitano (the Vandendorre and the pack by Jean Galler) have replaced the Pope with Bacchus astride a wine keg, with a headdress and loincloth made of grapevines, swigging from his bottle with evident glee.

Etteilla, (shown) ever the iconoclast, replaces the personification entirely with "Secrets," show-ing the zodiac filled with the stars of day and night. I believe that this was his way of em-phasizing that the teacher of the Mysteries is not as important as the Sacred Sciences themselves. The Pope or Heirophant has from ancient times represented the head teacher in a sacred university, an institution that the Ro-man church had overtaken and co-opted to its curriculum by the fifteenth century. Etteilla chose to point to the university of Nature from which his students should seek initiation and where they would not be denied.

As this Arcanum developed into the twentieth century, we see the older debate over the gender of the Heirophant returning. Knapp-Hall and Papus make it unambiguously fe-male, while Waite-Smith and Wirth show him with full gray beard. In the end, there is no difference, really. The Heirophant teaches practical applications from the book of natural law, revealing those secrets hidden in every-day matter, the cycles of moons and tides, the links between the body and the cosmos. Because the monasteries were the only places a person could learn to read and write in the Middle Ages, the Heirophant is the one to whom a student would petition for entry, and NO. 5 SECRETS ETTEILLA TAROT 11 s/he sets the curriculum for the neophytes' course of study. With right raised hand in the attitude of blessing, s/he links herself with the ancient lineages of Melchezidek, first initiator of the

Hebrew priestly tradition, and passes on the lineage teachings. All self-generated shamans of any tradition inherently belong to this lineage.

Marseilles_loversVI - Lovers

The Pierpont-Morgan Bergamo tarocchi "Love" card (mid-1400s) shows a handsome young man advancing from the left and a beautiful woman standing to the right, both in medieval clothing reflecting royal status, as if they were reiterations of the Empress and Emperor. They are meeting and shaking hands below an upright, blindfolded Cupid who appears to be ready to drop an arrow onto the man's head. The contemporary Cary-Yale Visconti portrays the same couple but on opposite sides, in a manicured garden under a sumptuous canopy furnished with a bright red couch. A blindfolded cherub flying above is now about to drop the arrow on the woman. This image too was called Love. Kaplan, in Volume 2 of his Encyclopedia, likens these images to "betrothal portraits" popular in Germany and later in Italy. Such portraits typically show the couple linked by Cupid, who carries two arrows but no bow. The arrows are meant "that they might love each other equally" (p. 164).

The Charles VI Tarot from 1470-80 calls this Arcanum the Lovers, and shows several couples dancing and romancing; two cherubs are at the ready, bows drawn, to pierce some members of the crowd with their barbs of love. Kaplan, in Volume 1 of his Encyclopedia, says the Lovers card is represented in the Mantegna Tarocchi (1470) by cards No. 20, Apollo, and No. 43, Venus, suggesting the identities of the royal couple who come together under the auspices of this Arcanum.

The Rosenwald Tarot cards from the sixteenth century reveal a man on bended knee before a woman, while above them a blindfolded angel with female breasts and male genitals prepares to shoot the woman in the heart with an arrow of love. Note that this ambivalent gender association shows up a century later as one characteristic of the "new" Devil Arcanum influenced by the reforms of the 1660s. We know this angel is not meant to be a devil figure, however, because the wings are distinctly feathered rather than black and leathery as would be those of a demon.

In the mid-1600s we enter a time of mixed influences. This card tends to have a large numbers of variants through the years, giving us numerous subtle changes in interpretation from one pack to another. Several that might be especially interesting are mentioned below. But the image that eventually became standard, first on the Marseilles family of Tarots and later on Etteilla and all the French Esoteric cards, was the Two Paths, showing a young man at a fork in the road, standing between two women who represent different possible destinies for him. This image first shows up on the Jacques Vieville and Jean Noblet Tarots, both from the early 1660s in France.

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

He holds a flaming heart in his left hand. One Tarot from 1750 shows an interesting variation (Tarocco Siciliano cards). This pack presents the Arcana in a different numerical order than usual,

so the Lovers image is numbered 8 instead of 6. A woman and a man are in the open landscape, the requisite cherub on a cloud above them. The cherub's bow is drawn, ready to shoot the man. This man is caught in a moment of shock, recoiling at what the woman is presenting. She is holding up another arrow, which has apparently already been released into her. It seems the man is not as receptive and peaceful with the prospect of love as the woman!

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

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

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

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

The Lando Tarot is less specific about which version of the Lovers we are seeing, but in any case it includes the classic "Two Paths" silhouette. Even the Milanese Tarot by F. Gumpfenberg (late

eighteenth or early nineteenth century), which is the deck the individual members of the Golden Dawn school were instructed to work with before they each created their own personal decks, shows the Two Paths/Marriage formula.

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

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

7VII - Chariot

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

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

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

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

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

By the eighteenth century, the male charioteer clearly outnumbers versions where the rider is a woman or a goddess. Occasionally the image proceeds away from the viewer or is in profile (as in some of the Etteilla Tarots), but more often it comes straight out of the card toward the viewer. The sense of dynamic motion is always emphasized, often with oversized, studded wheels which, it is implied, are whirling the Chariot along the road. In the esoteric Tarots from the cusp of the twentieth century, for example the Oswald Wirth, Knapp-Hall, and the Waite Tarots, a lingam and yoni image, sometimes winged, appears on the front wall of the Chariot. This symbol often refers to the sexual mysteries of combining the opposites. But in this context, because only one person is riding the Chariot, the implication is that this one person is becoming androgynous. This approach is made distinct in a 1935 pack called the British Tarot, which shows a distinct pair of breasts on a seemingly male charioteer.

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

11VIII - Justice

In the Visconti-Sforza Tarot of 1450, the seated image of Justice, her sword held upright on her right and scales held up in the left, is vaulted over by a fully armored, beardless knight with chin-length blonde hair who sits astride a skirted horse, unsheathed sword in right hand. I think what we are seeing here is the two sides of Justice--the contemplative side and the active side. Alternately, the Charles VI pack depicts the Justice seated on a cubic throne, holding an upright sword in her right

hand and a hand-held scales in her left. Resemblance to the Justice Arcanum can be seen in the Mantegna card No. 37, *Justicia* (with both sword and scales, plus a leggy bird with a fruit held in one foot). The Rosenwald Tarot images present a version of the same thing (early sixteenth century).

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

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

One interesting image from the illustrious *El Gran Tarot Esoterico* (shown) shows Solomon as the figurehead instead of a female Justice. He is holding aloft a small infant by the feet. With a sword in his other hand, he prepares to cut the infant in half. This image represents a famous incident from the Bible in which Solomon was able to determine which of two women was the infant's real mother by their individual reactions to his proposal to divide the baby equally.

The standard meaning of this Arcanum is conscience, the moral sensitivity that is supposed to put us into others' shoes and evoke our compassion and sense of fairness. The great antiquity of this image has represented a standard for humane and equal treatment between humans of all kinds since the time of Solomon. By providing a fulcrum that helps balance competing needs against the greater good, and by using the two-edged sword to symbolize the exactitude necessary to make these adjudications, this Arcanum puts us all on notice that not one detail misses the inner eye of the conscience. The treatment we mete out to others will be received in our turn.

9IX - Hermit

The very oldest image we associate with the Hermit of Tarot is probably an illustration of the poem *I Triumphi* by Petrarch, composed during an 18-year period starting in 1356. Stuart Kaplan shows a set of fifteenth century illustrations of the Triumphs, and the Triumph of Time is a perfect prototype for the Hermit. He stands on his float or chariot on crutches, bald, bearded, robed and winged. Two stags pull him, and two hourglasses stand on either side of him. Stuart Kaplan tells us that "the hermit is well-known in medieval and Renaissance art as a man of great virtue and spiritual strength. Often in paintings his presence is a reprimand to sinners who are frolicking and carousing" (Encyclopedia, Volume 2, p. 167).

In the Visconti-Sforza Tarot (shown) of 1450, an old and bent but sumptuously dressed man with a tall staff carries before him an hourglass, contemplating the passage of time. The Charles VI version (mid 1400s) shows a similarly well dressed old man, lacking staff but still contemplating the hourglass, with cliffs rising beside him. The uncut sheet of Minchiate cards from the late fifteenth century (p. 128 of Kaplan's Encyclopedia, Volume 1) shows the well-dressed old man on crutches, backpack at his waist. A pair of transparent wings rises behind him and between them rises a six-

sided pillar along the line of his backbone. Another early sixteenth century image from the Rosenwald Tarot shows the bent old man on crutches, but it has left out the wings, hourglass, staff and/or pillar entirely.

In Catelin Geoffrey's Tarot (1557), the Hermit is shown as an older tonsured (or balding) monk with rosary in his belt, walking away from us. He is entering a curtained doorway with a lantern held low before him. It doesn't appear to be an hourglass. In the anonymous Parisian Tarot from the early seventeenth century, the Hermit is now emerging from the curtained archway, and he has a cane as well as his hand-held lamp. (The shape of whatever it is he is carrying is indistinct, but it seems to have a lampshade over it.) The secret door in both cases would most probably represent a portal to the Inner Sanctum where the ineffable mysteries can be contemplated without interruption.

Giuseppe Maria Mitelli (1664) evokes the classical image of Father Time, a naked old man with flowing beard and large gray wings. He shows no visible infirmities, but leans on crutches anyway, reminding us again of our original image from *I Triumphi*. As of 1750 and the publication of the Tarocco Siciliano cards, the essential details had been codified as a robed and hooded old monk with flowing white beard, a lamp held up on the right; a short crutch on the left supports him.

In the late sixteenth century decks from Jacques Vieville and Jean Noblet, a new detail enters the picture--the arrangement of his cloak partially covers his lantern. This detail, found in all the Falconnier Tarots modeled on the *Fratres Lucis* document, which I think has been circulating since the 1660s, also appears on the Jean Payne Tarot (1743), the Marseilles (1748) and the Court de Gebelin images (1787). A serpent at the feet of the Hermit is a feature of the Egyptian-style Tarots as well, but that doesn't appear until the F. Gumpfenberg Neoclassical Tarot from 1807.

Other contemporary decks followed the example of Etteilla, whose Hermit Arcanum reveals his light unshielded. The Tarocchini di Bologna cards (eighteenth century) sidesteps the issue by portraying the Hermit in his older form as a well-dressed old man on crutches, downcast but with large wings, standing in front of an unbroken, ornamented pillar. Another eighteenth century image from an uncut set of Minchiate cards (Kaplan's Encyclopedia, p. 52) reinstates the lame old man but adds an arrow piercing the hourglass and a stag resting beside him. We see the stag again in the Spanish *El Gran Tarot Esoterico*, which we are using in this CD Rom to represent the ancient Hebrew correspondences. This image, attributed to Eliphaz Levi, includes a serpent at the Hermit's feet leading him into hidden knowledge of the Kundalini.

Turn of the century Tarot "experts" differ as to which version they emulate. The Waite-Smith Tarot falls with Etteilla into the camp of the uncovered lantern, in a land where no serpent lurks. Both Oswald Wirth and Knapp-Hall show the occulted light of the Levi-inspired versions, complete with a stylized serpent at their feet. Few maintain loyalty to the oldest formulations, especially after the Marseilles became the prototypical "traditional Tarot."

Given the many parables to be found in spiritual literature about "entertaining angels unaware" (as implied by the Hermits with the angel wings), and considering also the interesting later variation of cloaking or uncloaking the light, it seems obvious that this Arcanum's major intergenerational theme reminds us that the most powerful and interesting souls will often appear unbidden in a "plain brown wrapper," wearing the simple garb of an anonymous monk, often appearing aged or infirm. The pillar or column behind him in some cards reminds us not to judge his power by his apparent fragility.

The challenge of The Hermit is to be able to recognize the Teacher in this humble disguise. He will not make it easy for the student to acquire his wisdom because it takes time and long contemplation to fathom what he is illuminating with the lantern. He often speaks wordlessly or in ancient and barbaric tongues, communicating with the elements, the animals, the laws of Nature. While the hourglass was an identifying feature of the earliest Hermit cards, the more modern ones have shifted the metaphor, showing more or less light released from his lantern. But every Hermit card reminds us of the value of time spent away from the everyday hubbub of community life in order to destimulate the soul and learn to join with the mind of Nature.

10X - Wheel

The Brambilla Tarot (1440-45) shows the classic blindfolded Dame Fortune at the center with four people around her on the stations of and Typhon in Coptic, is pictured with the qualities of a reptile, suggesting the unconscious, instinctive residue of our animal nature. So the visual formula is "change is certain; learn to control impulsiveness and embrace the law of cycle. Wisdom will grow through experience."

Mitelli (1664) changes the approach drastically, putting a wagon wheel under the seat of naked Lady Fortune. She is posing with it, holding up an open purse from which pour coins and jewelry. Her hair is blowing in the breeze. The logo for his card could be "easy come, easy go." This image was not taken to heart by the masses, and by 1750 and the Sicilian Tarocco, we have a fairly conventional image again.

Etteilla, on the other hand, uses the image of a crowned monkey on a tree branch, perhaps making a statement about inept leadership among the "royalist" lodges. A man, a serpent twined around him, is descending on the left while a little gray mouse is ascending on the right. The rolling hoop hovers mid-bounce above a rocky landscape. The angle at which the monkey holds the wand hints that it is he who is keeping the hoop rolling. When we think of the times in which Etteilla lived, a period that encompassed both the American and French democratic revolutions, one can imagine the poignancy Etteilla must have felt as he designed this card!

Etteilla's Tarots were the most popular of the end of the eighteenth century and the first part of the nineteenth, and a Catalan version was the first standard Tarot printed in Spain a century later. Because of this, variant images crept in, including a revival of blindfolded Lady Fortune, this time robed and standing on a wagon wheel (Delarue Etteilla, circa 1880- 90).

In the nineteenth century the images return again to a more traditional look, but the creature at the apex begins to mutate afresh, showing variations of a crowned woman resembling Justice, a little king, or an indeterminate "beastie" that could be a variation on the Sphinx. One "modern" concept of the Wheel has followed the Waite-Smith "wheel in the sky" image that includes the four creatures of the elements and quarters.

Others have followed the Oswald Wirth (shown) version which uses a very stylized Wheel on an elevated frame in a crescent moon boat, bobbing on choppy waters as the Wheel turns with the action of Azoth (the rising force) and Hyle (the falling force). This image is a near-exact copy of the Egyptian-style Arcana, which I see as the influence for all the Wheel cards with a sphinx at the top. El Gran Tarot Esoterico combines the crowned monkey of the Etteilla with the white bear of the late fifteenth century Minchiate, here seen rolling a great stone Wheel of Time. This is the plight of the

secret royalty of Europe, the clan of the Holy Blood, to patiently wait out the reign of the "crowned monkey"-the Church and its made-up royalty.

A simple explanation of this card from its t ancient form to the present is change; the Wheel will keep on rolling, churning events in a ceaseless progression of ups and downs. No one can escape its action, which feels good when we are rising and terrible when we are falling. The figure balanced on the top has a moment of eternal clarity, but the only unmoving part of the Wheel is the hub that pivots on the crossbar that holds it up. Whether it is moved by the action of the Angel of Time, a disembodied Hand of Fate turning a crank or the natural law of eternal return, we are each bound to occupy all the roles at one point or another in our life's journey. The predictability of the Wheel is its lesson, and that's something we can take comfort in. If you don't like the look of things right now, just wait a bit-- it's bound to change. Of course, if you do like the look of things right now, enjoy it while it lasts because it's bound to change!

By Christine Payne-Towler (with [Shannon Darque Raven](#))