

THE REVISED NEW ART TAROT

**Mysticism and Qabalah in
The Knapp-Hall Tarot**



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SPECIAL DECK OF TAROT CARDS

Tarot (playing) cards, introduced into Europe by the victorious Knights Templars who had been instructed in their mysteries by the Arabians, were a part of the Rosicrucian and Masonic symbolism of the Middle Ages.

In ancient times, books were not bound or sewed; they consisted merely of loose leaves confined by cover boards on top and bottom, and bound round with cords. Thus, the 78 cards of the Tarot deck represent the leaves of some sacred book of the ancient pagan world.

This special deck of Tarot cards, beautifully and artistically done in full colors by J. Augustus Knapp (who so ably illustrated Mr. Hall's monumental work on Symbolical Philosophy), contains not only the distinctive features of all preceding decks but additional material secured by Mr. Hall from an exhaustive research into the origin and purpose of the Tarot cards. For convenience the Tarot cards have been printed in the size and style of standard playing cards. A 48-page explanatory brochure by Mr. Hall accompanies each deck. Special Price only \$2.00.

Figure 1: *All Seeing Eye*, July 1931.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE 1985 EDITION

Many adequate methods for divination by tarot cards exist and are readily available. While the Knapp-Hall Tarot deck can be used in the familiar way, the potentials for interpretation are unlimited. The emphasis in our discussion is placed on presenting a system of deeper significances and implications on which interpretations of the cards can be based.

The foundation for this system is the mandala method of the Buddhist and other Eastern philosophies. These symbols have no meaning in themselves, or perhaps so many meanings that none is conclusive. The mandala wisdom does not unveil the mystery of itself. Persons of different beliefs or stages of integration interpret these sacred designs according to the inner resources of their personal degree of understanding and intuition.

The actual meanings of the mandala elements can never be given out, because they may mean something entirely different to each reader. In many countries, particularly in the Orient, playing cards are invested with sacred meanings. A Hindu deck sets forth the ten incarnations of Vishnu, and in Tibet there is a kind of lottery in which cards containing various grotesque figures are used to determine the proper course of human destiny. Students of cartomancy, geomancy, the I Ching, numerology, and graphology may find the Knapp-Hall Tarot deck especially interesting. It is now generally believed that divination is supported by the extrasensory perception band of the human mind. In many cases, however, the intuitive grasp of things has not been tutored by an appropriate discipline.

Of the two great mandalas of Shingon Buddhism, one represents the world of causes and the other the realm of effects. Likewise, in the tarot deck the major trumps can be equated with the unseen universal world of causes, and the minor arcana with the resulting realm of effects.

In the mandala system, the meditation designs are represented on four levels:

(1) The first and most elaborate depicts deities or circumstances in full detail and beautiful colors. The beholder must work to penetrate these complex appearances and transmute all personalisms in terms of principles.

(2) In the second degree, the mandala substitutes attributes of the deities for the beings themselves. For example, Quan Yin (the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara) is pictured as a lotus flower, and the Gautama Buddha by the eight-spoke wheel of the Law.

(3) In the third stage, a further refinement is attained. Each of the elements of the pattern is represented by a letter of the Sanskrit alphabet with some embellishments. This releases the mind, at least to a considerable degree, from all dependence on personal appearances or mortal factors.

(4) In the highest form there is no visible mandala. The design is moved into the heart of the disciple. He beholds it in everything and everywhere and it becomes the perfect key to the wondrous workings of divine and natural law. The moral lesson is that symbols of all kinds are visible shadows of invisible truths.

The four levels also equate with the four worlds of the Cabala, the four elements as symbols of creation, the four levels of the pagoda (which represent the four material elements from which rise the celestial rings of the heavenly regions), the four divisions of the tabernacle in the wilderness (from the Old Testament), and the four letters in the name of the Deity, which if placed one above the other create the symbol of the first man.

With these thoughts in mind, certain designs which invite meditation and contemplation have been incorporated into the deck. Each person must release some part of his inner consciousness in the interpretation. None of the special devices added has a single unchangeable explanation. To give a list of meanings would be to frustrate the entire purpose of the emblems depicted.

It will be noted that the symbols, which are to be experienced rather than interpreted, are of five different types, determined by the backgrounds upon which they are placed.

(1) Those on the major trumps are emblazoned on shields similar to heraldry. This tells a story, for it can be asked, "What does a shield mean to me, and what characteristics or qualities can protect me?"

(2) In the suit of swords, the added emblems have no borders, but are all based upon the Egyptian *crux ansata*, the key of life, which gradually merges with the caduceus.

(3) The suit of cups places the significant symbols in a *vesica piscis*, an aura often associated with the Virgin Mary, and in the East with Quan Yin, the Lady of Mercy.

(4) In the suit of batons, the meditation symbols are placed in triangles; and on the Ace an additional symbol is present which aids in the interpretation of all of the designs.

(5) In the suit of coins or pentacles, the symbols are within squares and include the pictograms of the planets. It would thus be proper to inquire

why the planets are associated with the emblems of coinage.

There is a difference of opinion as to the placement of *Le Fou*, the Fool. Placed according to the Pythagorean system, the zero comes before the one. The Cypher or zero is a circle, anciently associated with eternity, which comes before time and includes within itself all diversity. The figure itself obviously represents the "know nothing," a candidate seeking initiation into the mysterious labyrinth of the tarot deck. He faces *Le Bateleur*, the Juggler or Magician. If *Le Fou* is accepted according to this interpretation, he should always represent the querent seeking enlightenment by tarot divination. Keeping in mind the four divisions previously described, a reading can be understood in reference to physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual events.

The cards may be studied separately or in groups. To lay out the entire deck would result in bewilderment; but the zero card, symbolizing the querent, can be placed in the center, and designs of four, eight, or twelve other cards can be arranged around it. After following the generally accepted system of interpretation, the diviner can sit back quietly and allow his oversoul to release its own understanding through the creature it has fashioned. The Tarot should be approached as a sacred book, primarily intended to illumine the mind through the instrument of a mathematically ordered symbolism.

The four court cards in each suit of the minor arcana are introduced and explained in the major trump numbered twenty-one/ twenty-two, and entitled *Le Monde*, the World. Some may object to assigning two numbers to one card, but this actually signifies, as the design itself shows, that the number twenty-two covers the fifty-six cards of the minor arcana considered as one card. In this card, the four fixed signs of the zodiac are assigned to the four suits. The wreath containing the feminine figure suggests totality, and the major trumps move in sequence from nothing to all.

The major trumps are lettered in French as is customary. The court cards of the minor arcana are lettered in English. The letter "G" for Queen is archaic, but quite proper. In older times the "G" and the "Q" were similar in shape and, for that matter, still are. If these two letters are compared, there is an interesting detail for the consideration of numerologists.

Manly P. Hall
1985

PREFACE

(Some Observations Concerning this Edition)

It has been my intention to offer the reader a larger, more comprehensive version of the booklet (LWB)¹ that accompanied the 2013 publication of the iconic *Revised New Art Tarot*, originally published in 1929. This historic deck marked a period of significant collaboration between J. Augustus Knapp and Manly P. Hall, including Knapp's illustrations for Hall's 1928 encyclopedic master work, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*.

J. A. Knapp (1853-1938) was 48 years older than Manly P. Hall (1901-1990) and this age difference should be kept in mind when we try to define their extensive collaboration and mutual respect and admiration. Knapp was contemporaneous with William Wynn Westcott (1848-1926), Samuel L. MacGregor Mathers (1854-1918), Stanislas de Guaita (1861-1897), Gerard Encausse (Papus: 1865-1916), Oswald Wirth (1869-1943) and many others whose names represented the elite of the esoteric and Freemason schools of the late 19th century. Manly Hall was a child of a new century; a New Age. When Knapp and Hall met in California the concept of "Egyptian Tarot" was in flux, being embraced and rejected at the same time. The children of any new century abide by new paradigms but reluctantly let go of the old ones; if they ever do. Manly Hall was comfortable in both old and new structures and he would cling to the old as a way to understand humanity's place in the new and startling unfolding horizons.

There is no question that these were the times for esoteric traditions to claim their rightful place in the new century taking shape. But, what kind of place were these discordant traditions claiming? There was too much bickering going on among the various schools. It is sad to admit that so-called mystical and esoteric schools were at each other's throats claiming legitimacy over each other. Did it really matter? Does it matter today? I leave that up to you to decide. What we have emerging from these schools is a radical way of asserting that Mind and Consciousness rule over form and physical matter and that Spirit and Soul provide the mystical canvass over which we define the next transformation of humanity into *anthropos, androgynous, homo luminous*.

The use and placement of the Hebrew letters in esoteric decks was a topic of discussion and of strong opinion on both sides of the Atlantic. A. E. Waite

¹ "Little White Book."

(1847-1952) was writing about cartomancy and fortunetelling under the *nom de plume* “Grand Orient,” while criticizing many of his colleagues and forerunners for using Tarot in fortunetelling and for their lack of scholarly research. These were, indeed, quite interesting times.

The collaboration between Hall and Knapp for this deck encapsulates a very personal and eclectic approach to Tarot in general and its role in divination and fortunetelling. The cards are the product of changing trends in the 1920s and while continuing to show the traditional French RC connections the end result is a unique Hermetic text that goes beyond any specific school. There is a strong Eliphas Lévi, Papus, Wirth association; even Etteilla. The “Egyptian” tone is symbolically strong and seems derived, among others, from P. Christian’s and Edgar de Valcourt-Vermont’s writings. The latter personage, a Theosophist and friend of Mme. Blavatsky, wrote under the pseudonym *Comte C. de Saint-Germain*. His book *Practical Astrology*, 1901, borrowed extensively from P. Christian’s writings; the illustrations for the Major Arcana come directly from Falconnier’s and Wegener’s 1896 edition of *Les XXII Lames Hermetiques du Tarot Divinatoire*. I believe that part of Knapp’s inspiration for the Minor Arcana stems directly from Etteilla, Christian and St. Germain.

Knapp’s interpretation of the cards for divination, moreover, was rooted in fortunetelling and often follows Papus’ Qabalistic and numerological interpretations, similar to what we find, for example, in *The Tarot of the Bohemians*. Manly Hall’s approach was very different and yet they managed to produce such a unique, magical deck that can serve as a mystical tool for personal transformation. Hall’s suggestions to Knapp—the emblematic sigils or heraldic signs added to each card—resulted in a unique hermetic deck that made the *Revised New Art Tarot* a visual platform to expand on Hall’s erudition, his philosophy, and his deep understanding of esoteric traditions.

Manly P. Hall was a Renaissance man in the same vein as Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandolla, Henri Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, Eliphas Lévi, and A. E. Waite. Hall’s thirst for historical research and his passion to share his fountain of ancient wisdom was admirable. The more we read or listen to his work, the more fascinated we become with his ability to bring together and synthesize so much information and historical data in such a personal and passionate manner. Manly P. Hall’s legacy and the impact he has had in forming the esoteric thought of the past century should not be forgotten. Thanks to the Philosophical Research Society I gained access to Manly P. Hall’s original works, esoteric book collection and personal tarot and divination

decks, which proved an invaluable reference trove for my personal research into esoteric traditions as well as for the update of the 2013 Knapp-Hall deck, which was accomplished in collaboration with Ken Henson, Professor at the Art Academy of Cincinnati and expert on J.A. Knapp's work.

For this book I have relied to great extent on Manly P. Hall's writings and lectures to explain much of the core symbology and mythical allusions of the majors and minors alike. I realize that part of the material included with the original printing might be considered outdated today, but we must keep in mind the times that gave birth to this deck and not rush to quick dismissals. I have added information and interpretation of the cards to help the readers along the way, but I find most of Hall's comments still relevant today and they should be regarded as historical documents and treated accordingly.

For the Major Arcana, each Arcanum will be introduced with excerpts from Manly Hall's writings, followed by my observations and suggestions for divination that I hope will make the deck more accessible to today's readers. Nevertheless, the deck should be understood according to the philosophical and metaphysical trends of its time. For the Minor Arcana I relied on my personal research at the Philosophical Research Society and my background in esoteric traditions and the Qabalah. It would be virtually impossible to understand the nuances of the deck without alluding to its Rosicrucian, Hermetic and Qabalistic foundation. By Qabalah I mean Christian Cabala (Kabbalah), and by Hermetic I refer to the *Corpus Hermeticum* as well as to the Western Esoteric Tradition, including alchemy, astrology, magic, Pythagoreanism, Gnosticism, Theosophy, and other disciplines.

Esoteric decks are a rarity today, especially those using Hermeticism and Qabalah. *The Revised New Art Tarot* belongs to a bygone era. It is a magical deck that uses Qabalistic and Hermetic concepts to place us within a psychic field of potentialities that are ruled by the magic of archetypal energies and numbers, by the images and symbols on the cards, by the myths that are awakened in each of us; the way that images, colors and their vibrations relate to each other, and by the uncanny correspondences that we find in our personal alchemical laboratory of mind, soul, heart, and spirit.

Tarot is all about relationship: how we connect to the image-concepts, how the images relate and talk to each other, and to us. We also need to understand how the basics of *Christian Cabala*, or Qabalah, work with the cards and with the Tree of Life, the Hebrew letters, the ten Sephiroth, the Tetragrammaton, the four Cabalistic Worlds, the Four Primordial Elements—Air, Water, Fire, Earth—adding multiple layers of association

to a reading. Any time devoted to studying these connections will be well spent and, eventually, will take us to new revelations. The real Initiate is the one who seeks Truth and is willing to receive instruction from dimensions above and beyond our common fields of consciousness, no matter the school or tradition. Both Hall and Knapp believed in a School of Ancient Wisdom to which we all can gain access if we are willing and ready to do the work. *Know Thyself* is the process; *Regeneration* is the goal. Within this concept Tarot becomes a Book of Wisdom, a tool to receive instruction from those before us on the Path of Return.

The Rosicrucian movement gave birth to different and sometimes conflicting approaches to the use of Tarot with Qabalah and the Tree of Life. Even more challenging are the contradictory connections to alchemy and magic. The assignment of Hebrew letters to the twenty-two Majors, for example, became a controversial issue that is still debated today. Manly P. Hall was never convinced that a solid esoteric connection between letter and card had been fully established or revealed. When you read some of the descriptions of the Major Arcana made by Hall you will notice how he draws from different schools, mixes his own interpretations of the cards with useful mythologems, and never discusses directly the symbolic meanings of the Hebrew letter assigned to a card. While we follow in this book the assignment of the Hebrew letters according to the French tradition, I have added the Golden Dawn/BOTA assignments, and also noted Aleister Crowley's divergences for the readers to compare and draw their own conclusions. If you have your own deck with Qabalistic attributions I encourage you to use it and weigh the extracted meanings from one card and system to another. Nothing is ever set in stone. Be flexible and follow the cadences suggested by the spread you use, the placement of the cards, the question, and the psychic field created at the moment.

You will notice that the Minor Arcana appear to work in a rigid format according to specific Cabalistic structures using the Tetragrammaton and the Tree of Life to render the esoteric and exoteric meanings of the cards adapted by mystical Qabalah. While Knapp appeared to interpret the cards within the French R.C.² tradition, he emphasized the use of the cards for divination and fortunetelling, avoiding the Qabalistic implications. Manly Hall, on the other hand, would be the one giving priority to extracting the mystical and esoteric meanings from both the

² Rosicrucian.

majors and the minors. I would even dare say that Mr. Hall rescued the deck from cartomancy thanks to the heraldic shields that he suggested to Mr. Knapp. The heraldic shields and emblems added to all the cards (except to Key 0 the Fool) elevated the deck to a place all its own. The interpretive dimensions are deep and wide; the symbols and colors need to be experienced through the inner consciousness of the individual reader, not deciphered intellectually, but rather through meditation and contemplation. Keep in mind Manly Hall's suggestions and seek your own correspondences; rely on intuition and personal discernment; allow the cards to bring forth their own resonance and rhythm.

I advise those readers interested in working with the Hebrew letters to consult various books on the subject and slowly incorporate suggestive meanings that call your attention when working with the cards. Meditating with the letters is a highly spiritual practice but beyond the scope of this book. Once you start connecting with the letters you will find that they respond to different energies and that their meanings are extremely elusive and adaptable. The letter Yod, for example, is rooted in every single Hebrew letter; it is the tenth letter, assigned to Key 10, the Wheel of Fortune, in the French tradition, yet corresponds to Key 9, the Hermit in the GD³ tradition and, accordingly, to *The Twentieth Path of the Intelligence of Will* on the Tree of Life. As the first letter of the Tetragrammaton Yod becomes the first letter of Creation and symbolizes Primordial Fire in all RC schools, as well as the Atziluth World of Emanations. The Hebrew letters should be interpreted in amplitude of meanings because they all are mystically and physically connected. Their universe is our universe; what is in the One is in the All.

I have included in this book more examples of the Tree of Life to complement the Golden Dawn/BOTA⁴ Tree included in the LWB that accompanies the new deck edition. I invite you also to experiment with the cards, to connect directly with the Sephiroth and their thirty-two Paths or Intelligences, finding also the “invisible paths” and arriving at other levels of interpretation. You are, after all, building your own personal mandalas, as Manly P. Hall so wisely advises us all. The more receptive we are to the sacred wisdom imprinted on the cards the more the cards will open up to us. Trust your intuition; trust your guides and teachers.

³ Golden Dawn.

⁴ Builders of the Adytum.

Keep in mind that each of us responds to the astral world and to invisible energies differently. We need to learn how to navigate the deep waters of the subconscious (or the murky waters of the unconscious), allowing inner guidance and synchronicity to lead as we become empty vessels and, like the Fool, throw ourselves into the abyss with open arms, or step into the mouth of a crocodile, eyes shut, but trusting that regeneration and transformation are possible.

For the Major Arcana we have included Manly P. Hall's comments from *The All Seeing Eye Journal, 1930-31*, covering the numbers Zero through Ten of the Major Arcana. The rest of the majors—from 11 through 21/22—will open with an excerpt from Manly Hall's works, mainly from *Secret Teachings of All Ages*. Each introduction is followed by personal observations and some divinatory suggestions. There will be a few exercises along the way to help the reader reach deeper understanding of some Qabalistic and alchemical concepts.

The brief introductory material on Qabalah and Hermetic principles should help the reader navigate the territory of this rich cosmology. We have limited the number of notes, considering the complexity of the material here presented, and have included a succinct reference list at the end of the book, which can be expanded with material from my website in addition to the PRS library, and the PRS/UPR resources online. Manly P. Hall was a very prolific writer and public orator and I encourage you to discover this incredibly rich and exigent mind. Qabalistic decks should be first understood within their originating traditions. The more we understand the history, literature, art and other social currents of any era, the more we penetrate the intricate consciousnesses shaping, molding and forming the depth and breadth of our minds.

A. E. Waite, like Manly P. Hall, noted that many of the so-called connections between Cabala and Tarot were often speculative, fantasy and complete conjectures. Too much misinformation and wrong assumptions pass as historical data. Lack of serious scholarly research in the age of Internet and instant “wikiwisdom” has added more injury than needed, but this is a challenge that we need to acknowledge with any tradition, remembering the old adage that, we all live in myth. To “make conjecture certitude” is part of human nature. It is, nevertheless, my intention to bring some clarity to the themes and leitmotifs in this deck with personal research and studies that span over thirty years. Tarot deserves study time and serious consideration; its symbolism is so rich and elastic, like the

“Mother Sea of Creation” Binah, the third Sephirah, that it will always embrace new meanings, “even when illusory nonetheless.”⁵

Note: To simplify the various spellings of “Kabbalah” in English, unless using a direct quote from a source, I will use “Cabala” to designate the overall Hebrew concept and “Qabalah” for “Christian Cabala.” I will also be using “RC” to indicate Rosicrucian; “GD to indicate Golden Dawn; and “BOTA” to allude to Builders of the Adytum.

⁵ *Holy Kabbalah*, 556-7.

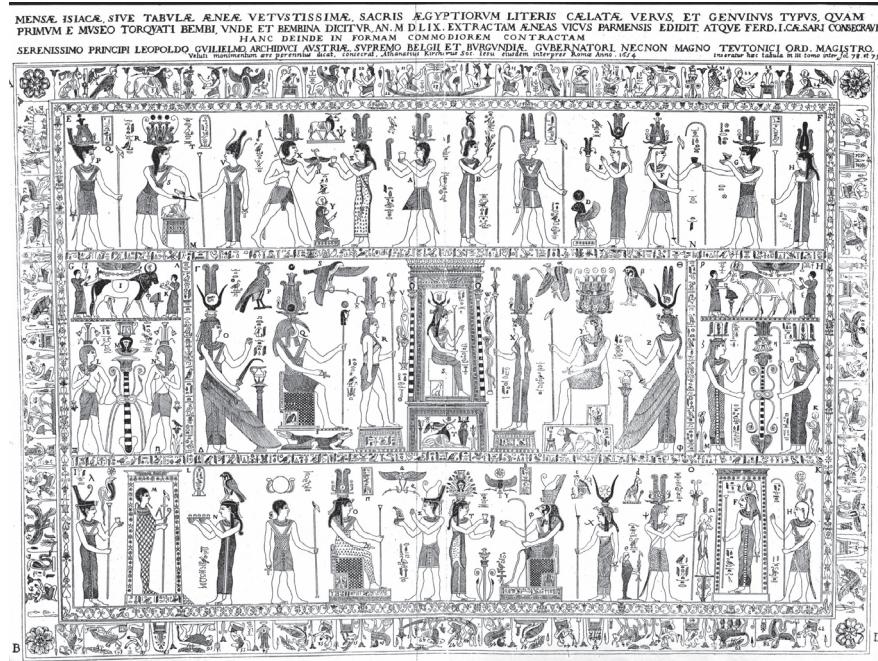


Figure 2: Mensa Isiaca.

Illustration depicting the *Mensa Isiaca*, also called the *Bembine Tablet*, named after Cardinal Pietro Bembo, who acquired it during the sixteenth century (c. 1527). The *Mensa* is an example of the *hieroglyphic art* that captivated the mind of the Renaissance and that from the sixteen century onwards was quickly transferred into the esoteric traditions that embraced Hermes Trismegistus and the Egyptian god Thoth as the emblematic “fathers” of Hermeticism. Athanasius Kircher “translated” the tablet in the seventeenth century and made it the center of his “Egyptology wisdom.” The Bembine Tablet enjoyed much prestige during the Egyptian Revival from late eighteenth to nineteenth centuries (and into the twentieth century). The Tablet was embraced by the Rosicrucians as one of the keys to interpreting the *Book of Thoth*—the name given to Tarot.

PART ONE



A BRIEF HERMETIC APPROACH TO THE REVISED NEW ART TAROT

A BRIEF HERMETIC APPROACH TO THE REVISED NEW ART TAROT

Esoteric decks, no matter their provenance, were meant to be used as mystical tools. Whether the first esoteric Tarot decks suddenly appeared in France in the 17th or 18th century, or were the inevitable consequence of using numbers and cards for gambling, and of imprinting card images with symbolic interpretations of society, which reflected the unfoldment of our collective unconscious since the beginning of time, will be left up to you to decide. This is an argument that will never be answered to everyone's satisfaction. When we have gaming and numbers we have gambling; when we have gambling, we have the goddess *Fortuna*, and with *Fortuna* we have games of life, divination, fortunetelling, rituals to appease or to invoke the gods, symbolic offerings, amulets, the power of nonsense and the magic of the Demiurge.

The Revised New Art Tarot is a magical deck. It uses Qabalistic and Hermetic concepts to place us within a psychic field of potentialities that are ruled mostly by the magic of numbers and the intuitive hits that we gather from the vibrations of the colors, plus the images and symbols on the cards. Learning to interpret esoteric decks that follow any mystery school is a slow and selfless process. We must trust our intuition and allow all the senses to participate in the challenging stages of self-recognition that these tools demand from us. We cannot speak about Hermeticism and Tarot without mentioning alchemy, astrology, magic, and Cabala. There is so much history, so many intricacies in each card, that our intention to be brief and succinct while presenting an overview of the deck might be construed by the advanced student as superficial summations. But this is a guide for general readers, not a treatise. Sometimes too much information can be as defeating as none at all.

The fertile Freemason currents that gave form to the *Revised New Art Tarot* emphasized the need for the Initiate to step beyond the veil, beyond fortunetelling, and to work within a system—most of the time within the Christian tradition—that would connect the student to physical, mental and spiritual transformation through practicing alchemy of the soul, performing attunement rituals, delving into mysticism, and specific ways of accessing higher levels of awareness.

Before turning to the seventy-eight cards individually, we will present some basic summaries to help the reader penetrate the esoteric mysteries of the Knapp-Hall deck. We are starting with The Emerald Tablet, the

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mythical tablet that encapsulates the philosophy of Hermeticism. Tarot is called the “Book of Hermes” or Thoth. Hermes-Thoth is never too far away from any card in an esoteric deck. In this deck, Hermes’ staff is placed in the Magician’s hand to let us know that he is no longer the “Bateleur” or “Juggler.” He is now Magician and presides over the universe that Key 0, The Fool, gives primal impulse out of chaos. After a brief summary of the Tree of Life, the Hebrew letters and the ten Sephiroth, we will start our journey with the Magician and the Fool working here in tandem guiding us through the world of Hermetic principles, of vices and virtues, of archetypal energies and the myths that give form to the world that we create every day.

THE EMERALD TABLET



Figure 3: Caduceus.

True, without falsehood, certain and most true:

What is above is as below, and what is below is as above, in order to bring forth the miracles of the One Thing.

And as all things are from One, by the self-reflection of One, so all things are birthed from the One by adaptation and modification.

The Sun is its father, the Moon its mother,
The Wind carries it in its belly, its nurse is the Earth.
Here is the Source of all perfection, or consummation of the whole World.
Its virtuous Force is integrating, if it be turned into Earth.

Separate Earth from Fire, subtle from gross, gently, and with great ingenuity.
It ascends from Earth to Heaven and descends again to Earth, receiving
the power of the Superiors and of the Inferiors.

Thus the Glory of the Universe is revealed to you; all obscurity is now lifted.
This is the strong Force of all forces, victorious over every subtle and
penetrating every solid thing.

So the World was created. Hence all wonderful adaptations came forth;
this is the Pattern.

Therefore, I am called Hermes Trismegistus, embracing the three parts
of the philosophy of the Whole World. I have therefore completed my
explanation concerning the Operation of the Sun.

THE SEVEN HERMETIC PRINCIPLES

The truly wise, knowing the nature of the Universe, use Law against laws; the higher against the lower; and by the Art of Alchemy transmute that which is undesirable into that which is worthy, and thus triumph.

Hermeticism has come to signify many things to many people through the centuries. For us today it represents an amalgamation of esoteric ideas and practices. Its core philosophy was embraced by the Italian Renaissance in the 15th Century as the *Corpus Hermeticum* was translated in Florence, including the *Asclepius*. The opening citation from *The Kybalion* reminds us that the word “trump,” as used in Tarot, also carries the idea of “triumph” and links us to the original use of *tarocchi* cards in the 15th century. We can use the Majors, and the Minors, to triumph over our vices, to help us see and understand the ways that we can apply alchemy of soul to our spiritual transmutation.

The principles of Hermeticism were adopted—and adapted—by the various mystery schools of the 19th century in very distinct ways. The seven axioms that are here presented reflect the RC philosophy found in the Knapp-Hall deck and will help us interpret the use of the cards in divination. The principles are the key to deciphering many of the symbols and emblems on the cards and to also understand the overall philosophy of the mystery schools using Tarot with Hermeticism. The seven Hermetic principles can be easily translated into the core of mystical laws that are found in many traditions. More importantly, they connect us to universal concepts and to physical laws such as the Law of Gravity and Attraction, the laws of motion, and the Theory of Relativity, without my even mentioning the many correspondences with Quantum Physics.

The main premise of the seven Hermetic Principles is that the Universe is mental and, as such, the Universal Mind, the Cosmic Mind, is ever-present in its infinitude in every impulse, desire, thought, word or deed. Energy never dies or disappears; it just transforms. Our thoughts are the foundation that solidifies energy in the physical world.

1. The Principle of Mentalism:

There is an all-encompassing Consciousness; the laws of creation and laws of the Universe exist within this Cosmic Consciousness. We operate and define our existence within this Cosmic Mind. When we attain the

“master-key” that unlocks the Wisdom of the Universe and brings with it Understanding, then we begin to open the many doors of The Temple and rend the veil of obscurity from our inner eye. Mental Transmutation is the most essential Hermetic teaching from these schools, and it refers to the *magic of Mental Alchemy* to transform anything by using the Force of Will and Power of Intention.

The All is Spirit, which is unknowable and undefinable. In this deck you will find that Wands or Scepters are usually reflections of The All - Spirit in the process of being and becoming. The eventual Form that we give to our innate impulses and desires will determine the quality of our thoughts and the density of the physical world that we create and manifest as reality.

2. The Principle of Correspondence:

As Above so Below; as Below so Above. Creation emanates from the same Source, the same laws, the same principles. It is all a matter of degrees of manifestation, be it physical, mental, or spiritual. The All creates at different levels of vibration. At any level, be it matter, mind, spirit, there is a correspondence that allows us to penetrate the mystery. Matter is energy; every manifestation is a specific condensation of energy. Keys 1 and 15 represent two important aspects of this axiom. The Magician points above and below and encapsulates this principle, which we also find in the Cabalistic axiom “Kether is in Malkuth and Malkuth is in Kether.” Key 15, The Devil, represents an important shadow aspect of this axiom and of The Magician.

3. The Principle of Vibration:

Light is vibration; we are all children of the Sun. Everything vibrates at its own corresponding plane or level, be it matter, mind, spirit. Nothing is, in reality, at rest. From Spirit to Matter, from the least to the most concentrated energy, everything vibrates at different levels of perception and condensation. Vibration is impermanent and impermanence is a quality of vibration. Every color carries a different vibration. Mystery schools use color to bring forth specific energies and that is why esoteric Tarot cards are colored according to the rituals and the vibrations needed to achieve alchemical transformation, specific healing or altered states of consciousness. Emotions, intentions, will, desires, thoughts, are manifested at different vibratory levels; not just in us but also in all of Nature and the world around us. We all vibrate, we all receive vibrations

and we all give out vibrations. Key 14, Temperance, is usually associated with this principle; the card is used in meditation techniques to bring balance and equilibration to situations or moods as needed.

4. The Principle of Polarity:

Thesis and antithesis are *identical* in nature but different in *degree*. Notice how all these principles that we are enumerating sound so much alike and yet allude to different qualities in nature. Be it polarity, vibration, correspondence, rhythm, gender, etc., there is a core theme running through all these principles. Everything carries polarity, its own shadow, its own contradiction. Notice also that the Pythagorean qualities of the number 2 are reflected in all these principles.

Every Arcanum in Tarot reacts to these laws. Polarity is an essential quality of all the cards and not necessarily when in reversed position. A reversed card in a spread does not have to carry an opposite meaning. We must always look at relationships and resonance between the cards to extract meaning. Archetypal energy is generic and constellates differently according to these laws or principles. The idea of a “good” or “bad” card does not really work with these traditions because the cards carry their own polarity and contradictions. *Antinomy* is an inherent quality of esoteric Tarot. When we realize that “all truths are half-truths” and that perfection is a process, not a goal, we stop mythologizing many aspects of our lives, and allow room for inconsistency and nonsense. This brings less rigidity and more fluidity to our creative impulses.

The marriage or reconciliation of opposites is an essential goal and component of alchemy. The concept of *synthesis* was added to divinatory techniques using numerology in these traditions in an effort to use variations of the “triad” to synthesize polarities or opposing vibratory qualities in a reading; most of the time you will find this system of divination too constrictive and even absurd.⁶ You will also find that the Law of Polarity, just like Correspondence, Gender, and Rhythm are useful to interpret the Tree of Life and its emanations into the world of creation, where the Middle Pillar of Mildness plays such a pivotal role in the equilibration of Force into Form.

5. The Principle of Rhythm:

⁶ See, for example, Papus’ *Tarot of the Bohemians*, or Knapp’s booklet on divinatory suggestions for this deck.

The pendulum swings, everything has its ups and downs; everything flows and there is constant flux; the measure of the swing to the right is the measure of the swing to the left. This is the perpetual flow of Becoming and Changing; this is the Law of Impermanence where nothing endures but Change. What remains is the Transcendent because The All is Unknowable, Undefinable and Immutable.

Here we have a perfect example of Key 10, the Wheel of Fortune. We must understand how the Principle of Rhythm affects our life. Another card that reflects this principle is Key 18, The Moon. The number 8 is usually symbolic of the sign of infinity, and also of the cycles of life. By learning to master our moods and feelings we balance the rhythm of our life, gain more control of the swings of our personal pendulum and use more effectively the principle of Cause and Effect.

6. The Principle of Cause and Effect:

This is the ruling principle of life. Everything happens according to Law. There is a cause for every effect and an effect for every cause. Hermeticism teaches us to use mental alchemy to rise above our present mental level and, by using Will and the Power of Choice through Intention, change our Fate into Destiny. The Law of Karma falls inside this principle. Many of the cards in this deck can be used to meditate and help us connect to higher healing frequencies and to gain access to higher laws than those available on the lower planes of our everyday existence. Justice, the Tower, the Lovers, are examples of this universal law. In fact, every card can reflect either a cause or an effect depending on our circumstances, and their placement in a spread. Our desires, thoughts, words, and deeds have an immediate effect somewhere—inside and outside of ourselves. There is no such thing as chance. Part of our responsibility while here on Earth is to learn how to manage our actions and reactions and to act in full conscience and awareness of the consequences of this principle.

7. The Principle of Gender:

The masculine-feminine principle manifests in all forms of life; this principle applies to the physical as well as the mental and the spiritual planes. Gender alludes to the overall law of Creation: to Generation and Regeneration. No creation is possible without this principle, which suggests that the inevitable *coniunctio*, which in alchemy is symbolized by the *androgynie*, becomes in the twentieth century a symbol of individuation,

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or marriage of opposites. The word *Hermaphrodite*—the *coniunctio* or *hierosgamos* of Hermes and Aphrodite—is another way to describe the androgynous concept of Creation. On the Tree of Life Venus is assigned to the 7th Sephirah, Netzach, and Hermes-Thoth to the 8th Sephirah, Hod. In order to bring forth—generate—the right “foundation” into the 9th Sephirah—Yesod—we will need to reconcile these two force-form energies in ourselves. Otherwise Malkuth, the Kingdom, as our personal egoic reflection of Yesod, would display the inevitable heavy lead that will require the magic of mental alchemy to bring forth balance and total equilibration through the Middle Pillar on the Tree of Life.

THE TREE OF LIFE

The Tree of Life is a glyph of both the involution and evolution of consciousness. It represents creation as a series of emanations: Primal Consciousness descending through 32 Paths of Wisdom in order to develop individualized consciousness. These 32 Paths consist of 10 Sephiroth or Cyphers—“vessels”—and 22 Hebrew letters. The Tree can serve as a map of our individual journeys toward self-realization. Each Path has its own Intelligence, and its own degree and attribute of consciousness.

Dion Fortune reminds of that, “...the Tree is a method of using the mind, not a system of knowledge.” The Tree is a process, an unfoldment of consciousnesses, emanations, and correspondences. And this method occurs at various levels at the same time because it is ruled by an Infinitude that, because of its own indescribable nature, cannot be confined to time or space. Ms. Fortune calls the Tree a “mighty, all-embracing glyph of the soul of man and of the universe.”

Manly P. Hall suggested to J. A. Knapp the addition of the emblematic shields and insignias that we find in the 1929 deck. These suggestions were also influenced by their mutual projects at the time, especially the encyclopedia that came to be known as *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*. The deck itself becomes an assemblage of secret teachings within the mystical structure of the Tree of Life; each emblem and heraldic shield brings forth a deeper understanding of the cards, connecting them to mythology, to esoteric interpretations of numbers, to Qabalistic worlds, to alchemical or Masonic allusions. The deck feels like a rich, intricate tapestry where Antiquity, Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, Hermeticism, the East, and the West meet. Hall advises to approach the cards in a reading as if we were viewing *mandalas*, a concept that today does not seem odd or unusual, thanks to the present influence of Eastern philosophy in the West and to the work of such significant figures of the last century as Carl G. Jung.

For Carl G. Jung mandalas are spontaneous products of the mind reflecting the egocentric nature of our consciousness. The central point of any mandala symbolizes the ultimate unity of all archetypes as well as the multiplicity of the phenomenal world. Jung equated the mandala with the *unus mundus*, a concept familiar to any student of Hermetic traditions and that we find reflected in Key 21 of the Major Arcana, The

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World. He also used the principles of alchemy in his psychological work and made them the main theme in his theory of Individuation, using many of the same references that you will find in Manly P. Hall's work.

Applying the mystical concept of a mandala when using the Knapp-Hall deck would facilitate gaining access to the numinous qualities of each Sephirah. We would be able to make meaningful connections between the four Qabalistic worlds and reach more tangible and self-explanatory conclusions. This is possible because mandalas represent psychic totalities that can produce a new center of awareness within a psychic process of transformation. Mandalas and Tarot serve as powerful meditation tools that help us achieve new levels of personal and cosmic relatedness. Even when both might appear to the non-adept as thoughtless structures, tarot and mandalas carry a very delicate and exact structure that reveals a qualitative universe. To paraphrase Manly Hall, speaking of mandalas, both mandala and Tarot give us a "new dimension of seeing and a kind of hearing through the eyes..."⁷

⁷ Hall, *Meditation Symbols*, 13.

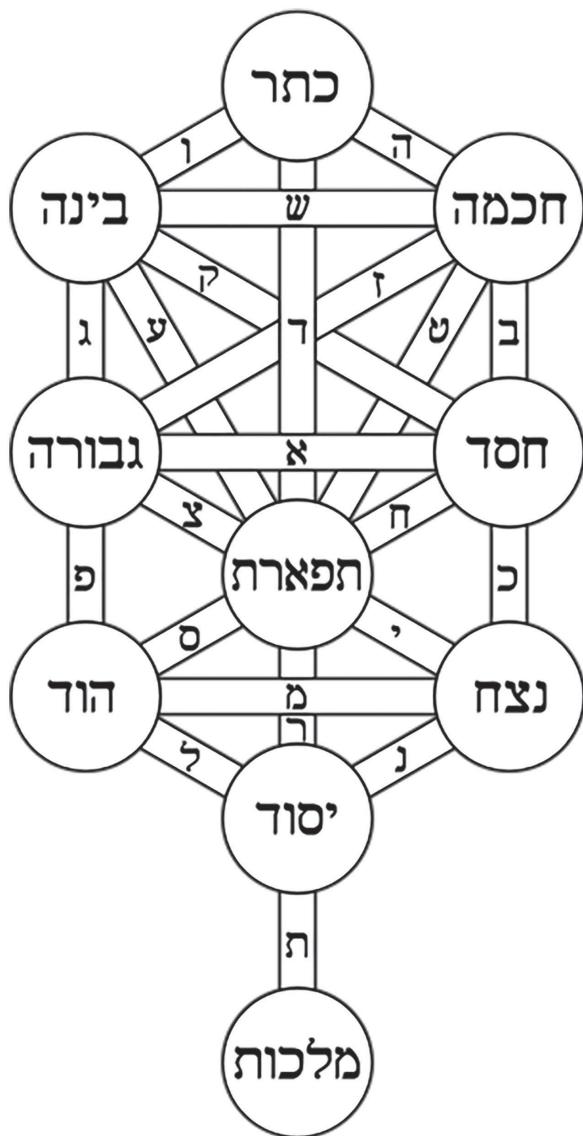


Figure 4

Tree of Life showing the three Mother Letters occupying the three horizontal visible Paths. This Hebrew version, from the Middles Ages, continues to be popular today, with variations on the placement of the rest of the Hebrew letters.

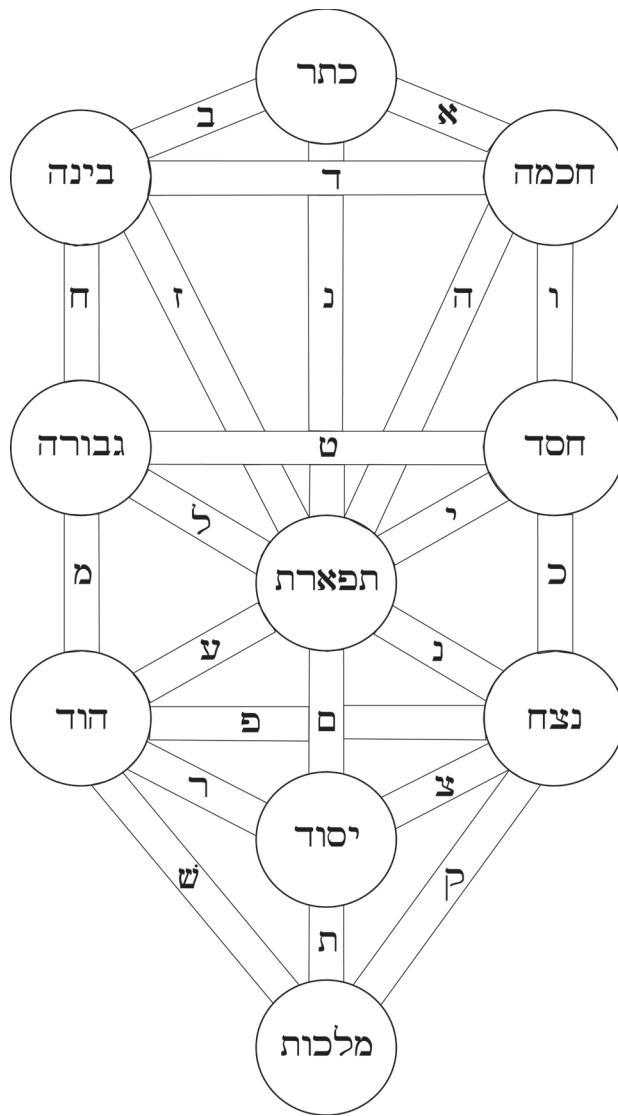


Figure 5: One of the versions of the Tree of Life
attributed to Athanasius Kircher (1601-1680).

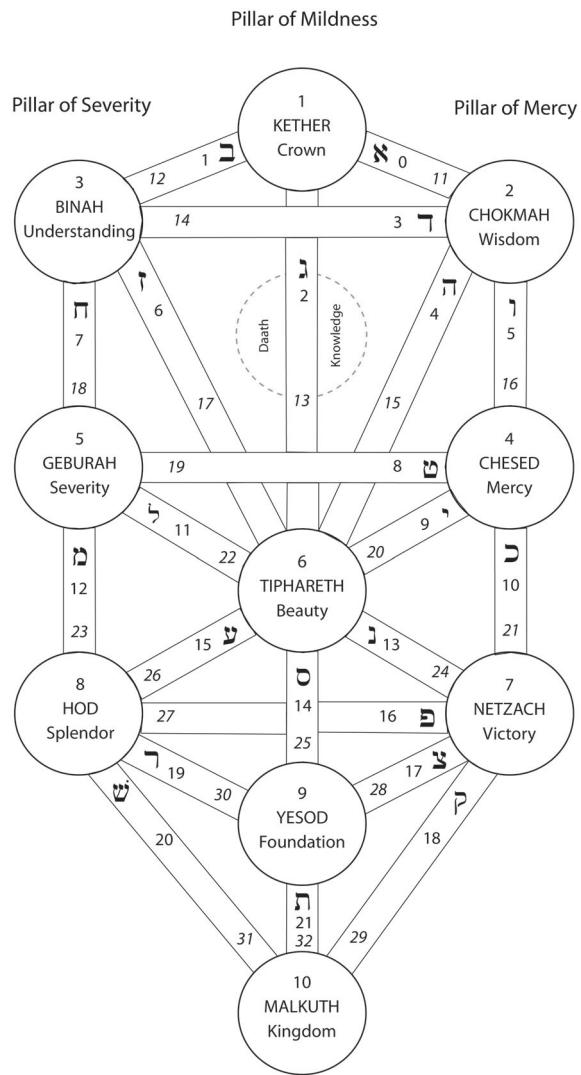


Figure 6: Tree of Life following BOTA and Golden Dawn

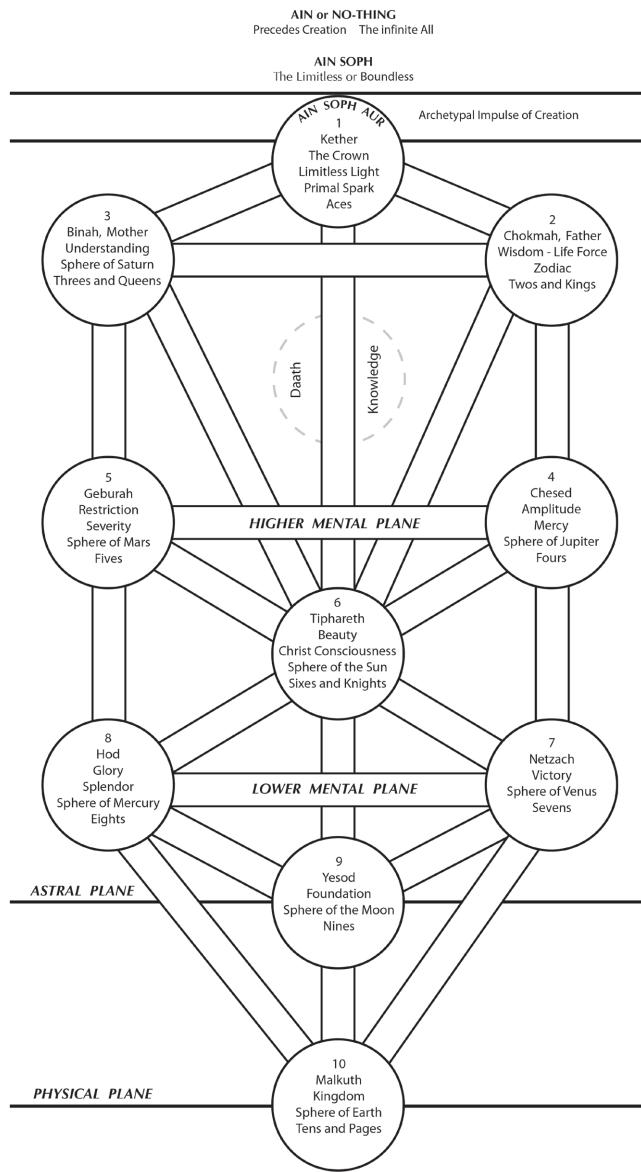


Figure 7: The Tree of Life with Planetary Spheres, Levels of Awareness, and Numbers.

As noted by Manly P. Hall, in Cabala we have a power, a Force, from which all substances arise. The Divine becomes the very material of creation and everything emanates from within its root and likeness. G-d becomes a concept that moves from transcendence into immanence and life is seen as a continual outpouring of the Divine Light. Humanity is an expression of deity and all things are unfolding their own deity of beingness.⁸

The *Revised New Art Tarot* comes to life when we apply simple, but essential, Qabalistic notions to the structure of Majors and Minors. The mystical meanings of each number must be extracted by the qualities of its Sephirah. As we enter the world of the seventy-eight Arcana, we should keep the Tree of Life and the four Cabalistic Worlds in mind, as well as connect number and card to the energies emanating from the Sephiroth.

The Tree of Life divides into three pillars: Pillar of Mercy (right), Pillar of Severity (left), and Pillar of Mildness, which occupies the center. The Pillar of Mildness equilibrates the other two and serves as the launching pad, the primal impulse, for the *Ain* or *No-Thing* unfolding out of Chaos into the Limitless and Boundless (*Ain-Soph*), and into Limitless Light (*Ain Soph Aur*).

Zero and One need to be understood within the concept of “the concealed of The Concealed” that makes itself manifest through the Emanations of the Sephiroth on the Tree of Life.

⁸ Hall, Lecture on “Mysteries of the Cabala.”

THE THREE SUPERNALS

KETHER-CHOKMAH-BINAH

1. Kether, *Crown*: This is the Source, the beginning of the whirlings of Creation. Placed at the head of the Pillar of Mildness and Equilibrium, Kether represents the Limitless Light and Primal Spark of the Unknown and Unknowable. This is the closest we could ever be to the No-thing, the No-where, the Non-existence. At the same time, Kether represents the One, the circle and the dot; the non-reflective that becomes a self-reflection, thus sharing with the Zero and the Number Two the mystery of Creation. If we could imagine a Pure Non-Consciousness without polarity, an unfathomable state of Non-Singularity without attributes of any kind, groundless, infinite, timeless, this would be the original concept of Kether, the Crown. In Hebrew tradition, Kether not only precedes the All, but the All was contained in Kether before Consciousness and Light.

2. Chokmah, *Wisdom*. This Sephirah is assigned to AB the Father and is considered the First Emanation of Kether as the Limitless Light. Chokmah represents the masculine principle that seeds Creation in Binah, the third Sephirah. It is the “Great Stimulator of the Universe,” and is assigned the Zodiac as its sphere of influence. The Hebrew letter Yod is placed on this Sephirah when we are working with the symbol of YHVH and the Tetragrammaton; but the tip of Yod is placed in Kether. Chokmah is at the head of the Pillar of Mercy, an essential quality of Creation stemming from Kether. The Life-Force concentrates here in the second Sephirah. At this level, Chokmah often appears as much “concealed” to us as Kether. The mystery of Key 2, the High Priestess, is accessed through the “Illuminating Intelligence” assigned to this Sephirah.

3. Binah, *Understanding*. This Sephirah is assigned to the Mother, the female energy, The Great Sea, the chaotic waters of Genesis that bring forth Creation and impulses the next seven spheres on the Tree, known as the Elohim. She is the seat of Neshamah, the Divine Soul, and represents the “Sanctifying Intelligence.” Binah symbolizes the faculty of the Universal Mind to distinguish and restrict. She “crowsns” the Pillar of Severity and transforms the abstract faculty of *wisdom* into *understanding*. This is also the *finitizing* quality of Saturn, the dark planet of restrictions, assigned to this sphere. In esoteric astrology Saturn is

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the power that condenses energy into specialized forms. Chokmah and Binah, like the Yin/Yang principle, are the two Eternals that generate life and that form the activity of the Cosmos.

The Three Supernals, or Supernal Triad, represent the divine superconsciousness, self-consciousness, and subconsciousness. The first two letters of YHVH are contained in this Triad: "...the crown of the letter Yod is the essence of Kether and the body of the letter Yod is the essence of Chokmah; the third Sphere unites with the two of them which is the essence of Binah, and that is included in the first Heh of the Name."⁹ This is the Act of Separation (*separateness*) that defines our existence and our longing to return to the One. The Triad is perceived oftentimes as inaccessible or just partially accessible through Binah.

An *Abyss* separates the Supernals from the rest of the Tree of Life. It is in this abyss that we find the mysterious Da'ath, *Knowledge*, sometimes called "the eleventh Sephirah," on the *invisible* Path formed by the crossing of Kether and Tiphareth – Chokmah and Binah. Da'ath is hidden everywhere, it is part of the *Mysterium* and of the essence of the numinous; the knowledge imparted comes directly from the Divine Soul.

⁹ Gikatilla, *Gates of Light*, Ch. XIX.

THE SELF TRIAD

CHESED-GBURAH-TIPHARETH

This triad is usually called the *Egoic Triad*, but because the concept of *ego* has been so distorted in our generation, perhaps a better designation would be the *Triad of the Self*. This is the triangle formed by Chesed, Geburah and Tiphareth (seat of the Self) and where we gain access to higher realms of consciousness. The tension between spheres 4 and 5 is essential for us to gain access to the appropriate discernment and be able to self-regulate our life. Tiphareth is also the “heart center” and thus serves as equilibrator of the various energies affecting the Sephiroth from 4 through 10.

4. Chesed, *Mercy*, is the “Receptive Intelligence.” All the spiritual virtues and their exalted essences emanating from Kether into Chokmah often end up at this level as limitless or exhaustless gifts from Above. Chesed receives from the Mother and the Father; it is often associated with kindness and beneficence and the loving reflection of the “limitless substance.” It is the source of unconditional Love and the sphere assigned to the planet Jupiter, the expansive and generous planet. Chesed and Jupiter display a tendency to be constantly pouring out their blessings, regardless of the consequences. You will notice how these attributes seem to contradict the Pythagorean qualities of the number four, until we delve deeper into the mystical meanings of the Tetractys and the Cube of Space. Chesed sits below the Abyss; it represents the Chokmah of the lower spheres and is the first Sephirah of the Microprosopos, emanated from Binah.

Creation is often interpreted as a *lightning flash* that zigzags along the Tree of Life. However, there are visible and invisible Paths; every Sephirah gives and receives endlessly from the Sephiroth above, below, diagonally and across; from one Qabalistic world into another. This is a holographic Tree in a holographic cosmos. As we descend the Tree, energy condenses gradually and each emanation brings forth more gravity, which often makes it difficult for us to apply the right judgment to any given situation.

5. Geburah, *Severity*, represents the “Path of Radical Intelligence.” Directly below Binah, on the “Pillar of Severity,” Geburah is the sphere of undeviating Justice, and is also assigned to Mars. The attributes of this Sephirah connect to the *Elohim*, to *Din* (judgment), to *Pachad* (fear, awe). Its corrective qualities align with many of the qualities of Mars

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and also serve to correct the expansive attributes of Chesed. As sphere of Mars, it is also the seat of Volition. How we utilize our Will is a good indicator of the way that we are progressing spiritually and learning to assimilate the lessons along our Path. Geburah represents divine regulation, containment and corrective measures. Because it receives directly from both Binah and Chokmah, Geburah rules with impartiality and conscious, even merciful, discrimination. Its corrective attributes are necessary at this level. In order to enjoy Chesed's gifts, we must build a solid foundation through Geburah. The Great Work that transforms heavy lead into gold is assigned to the number five, to the High Priest or Hierophant, and to Key 14, Temperance, in this deck.

6. Tiphareth, *Beauty*, “The Mediating Intelligence,” sits in the center of the Tree and represents the consciousness of the “Christos,” “the Anointed,” “the Buddha;” “Krishna.” The designation goes beyond Christianity to signify self-realization gained through spiritual transformation. Christ consciousness can be attained for humanity through the Path of Tiphareth because this Sephirah represents the reflected consciousness of the eternal Father-Mother. The sphere represents the seat of Adam, the generic humanity; of Ben, the Son; of Melek, the King. This is where higher self and the egoic, or *lower self*, meet. The Sephirah is the seat of the letter Vau of the Tetragrammaton and is also associated with the Yetziratic world of Formation and with the Sun. *Beauty* is the bridge between the finite and infinite; it holds harmony; it attracts balance. The Pillar of Mildness activates our higher consciousness through the energies of Yesod, Tiphareth, and Kether, as we ascend the Tree of Life from Malkuth.

THE PERSONALITY TRIAD

NETZACH-HOD-YESOD

7. Netzach, *Victory*, the “Path of the Occult Intelligence,” is assigned to Venus. This is the sphere of desire and “Eros,” where all expressions of our creative nature are given stimulus. This Sephirah reflects the “beauty” of Tiphareth, the radiance of the sun, which is a reflection of our own luminosity as well as Kether’s. The name “victory” was assigned to Netzach to represent the *YHVH Tzavaot*, alluding to the attribute needed for Israel to be victorious in battles. The Elohim assigned to Netzach can bring war and destruction to the enemy. In the older Hebrew traditions Hod and Netzach, the eighth and the seventh Sephiroth, were considered a pair. These two spheres are assigned by tradition to Mercury/Thoth/Hermes and Venus-Eros-Aphrodite; they represent the balancing energies of the “Personality Triad,” and need to be carefully calibrated and maintained in stable correspondence. Netzach can open, “when dressed with the right eye,” the doors to higher mysteries, which is a concept that we often find in Manly Hall’s writings, where Revelation comes through *the good eye*, the “*all seeing eye*.” But the Venusian qualities of Netzach could also result in unstable force; therefore, it needs to draw the right emanations and attributes from the Sephiroth nearby, especially from Mars(*via* Tiphareth) and directly from Chesed and Hod. There is a basic “orderness” and integrity between Netzach and Hod that requires constant maintenance from us. The reason being, that both Sephiroth “empty” themselves into Yesod, *Foundation*, carrying the qualities, propensities and “personalities” acquired from the rest of the emanations. As D. Fortune reminds us, “the lower Sephiroth of the Plane of Illusion are densely populated by thought-forms...”¹⁰ Illusion and fantasy are, unfortunately, part of our learning path.

8. Hod, *Splendor*, is the sphere of Mercury (Hermes-Thoth). This is the “Path of Absolute or Perfect Intelligence,” and the seat of the intellect of humanity; as such, it can teach us about the mind and its volatility, as well as become our source of creativity. Hod sits across Netzach, Venus; both Sephiroth are associated with revelation and prophecy. In fact, Hod represents the seat of the Magus, the source of our ability to work magic, and is supposed to draw its attributes directly from the astral world. We each gather and use the energies from these two Sephiroth according to our level of awareness and receptivity

¹⁰ *Mystical Qabalah*, 223.

to darkness and light. Remember that *darkness* is a state of unknowing that recognizes our inability to move beyond predetermined propensities and that, at the same time, is dying to come forth into full conscious recognition. The volatility and susceptibility of Netzach and Hod, and the fact that on the Tree they work as a pair —and symbolize the two pillars of the temple of Solomon (Joachim and Boaz) — must be kept in mind at all times when using these energies for personal attunement and transformational work. The dynamics between Hod and Netzach should not be ignored in divination. Netzach is force, desire, instincts, emotions; Hod is form, the concrete mind, the intellect. Because both spheres operate within the lower self, the magical operation of Hod could be affected by the illusory and emotional forces from Netzach, unless properly regulated from above through Geburah.

9. Yesod, *Foundation*, is the basis upon which we manifest on the Earth plane; this is the sphere of the activity of the Moon. Here is where we enter fully, and most often unawares, the astral world of dreams, imagination, fantasies, chimeras, and loose psychic energies that we just do not quite understand most of the time. And yet this is the seat of the soul as *Nephesh*, which takes us up and down the ladder of self-realization. Yesod provides the foundation for us to enter higher levels of awareness and serves as portal to the Path of Return on our search toward the One and away from separation. On the Tree, Adam Kadmon's reproductive organs symbolically rest on Yesod, reminding us that this is where the blueprint and patterns that form us define the world that we manifest in Malkuth. Because Yesod sits below Tiphareth, we can draw directly from one into the other when we learn to purify our vehicle of expression. When Eliphas Lévi talks about "the great Arcanum of Practical Magic," he is referring to Yesod. This is the realm of the "invisibles," of the dream body, of the discarnates; the natural habitat of the Vital Soul or Nephesh. Yesod is traditionally believed to contain three different foundations (upper-middle-lower) and be where Tzadik, the righteous one, resides. *Tzadik Yesod Olam*: the righteous one is the foundation of the world. Yesod may be carrying the seed of Good and Evil, but these two attributes derive from the Creator and are identical in the eyes of Creation. The last Elohim reside in this Sephirah. There is a strong Qabalistic connection between the third and the ninth Sephirah, through the mystical symbology of number seven.¹¹

¹¹ See Gikatilla, 285-6.

THE PHYSICAL PLANE

10. Malkuth, the Kingdom, ADONAY. The position of Malkuth on the Tree, on the Middle Pillar of Mildness, along with Yesod, Tiphareth, and Kether, gives us intimations about how the Great Work of alchemy needs to be processed in each one of us, paying attention to the ways that we use elemental Air, Water and Fire—Aleph - Mem- Shin—to transform heavy lead into gold. Adonay is the great provider of Creation; this is the essence of the last letter of YHVH. Our kingdom *in* Earth must be accessed in reverence, understanding how the kingdom of spirit is embodied in our flesh. Shekhinah, the Bride, resides in Malkuth and she will move up the Middle Pillar to meet the Groom in Tiphareth. This is the “Path of the Resplendent Intelligence,” and the end result of all the operations, permutations, and emanations originated in the fount of living waters from the Supernals, through the rest of the Tree, and funneled, eventually, into Malkuth through Yesod. The tenth Sephirah is “the mystical Kingdom of embodied spirit.”

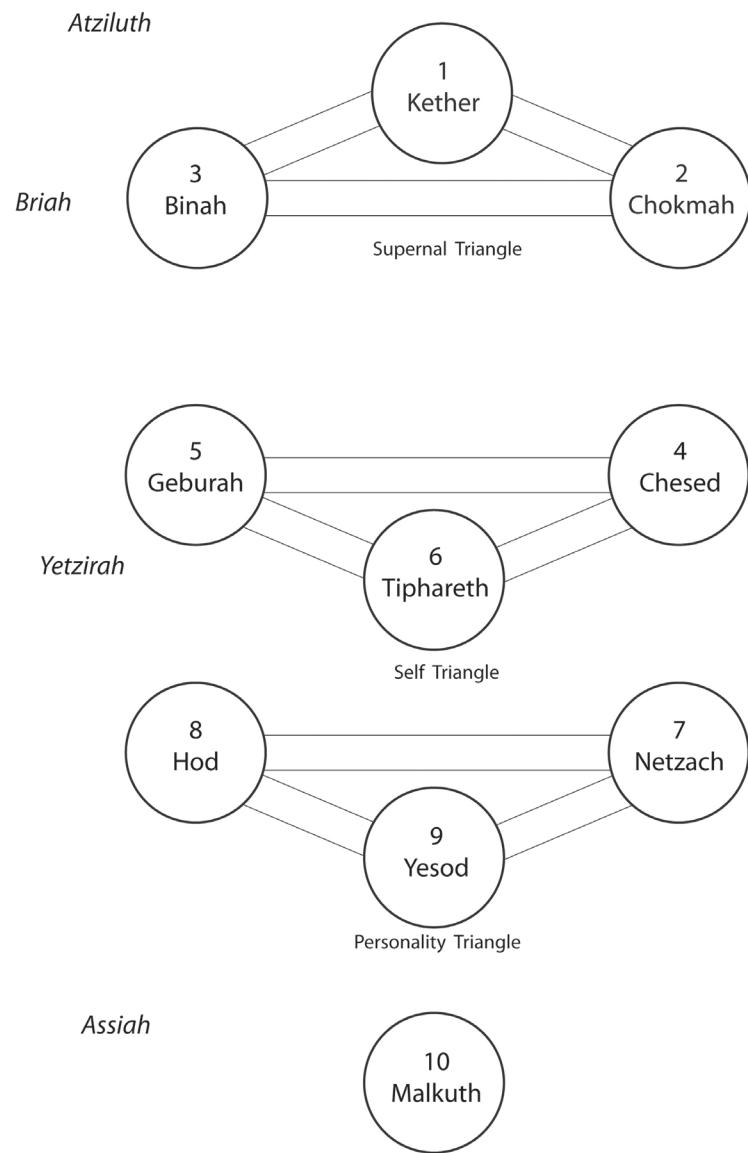


Figure 8: Tree of Life with Cabalistic Worlds and Main Triads.

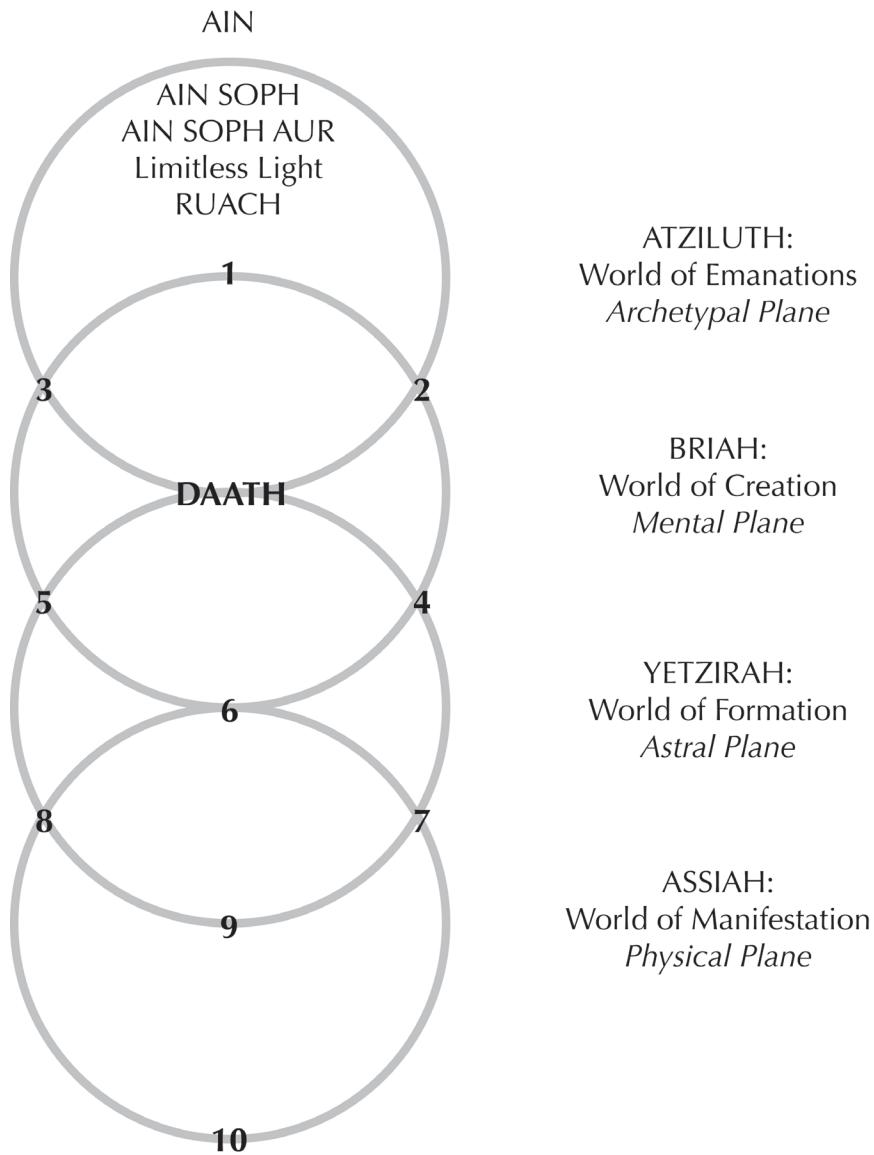


Figure 9: The Four Qabalistic Worlds as Concentric Spheres.

PART TWO



THE MAJOR ARCANA

THE MAJOR ARCANA



THE ALL SEEING EYE: TAROT SYMBOLISM

INTRODUCTION

Court de Gébelin, a high Mason and eminent scholar of his day, first set forth the symbolic possibilities of the Tarot cards. Since his time a number of other writers (who will be remembered chiefly for their enthusiasm) have submitted to, yes, even attempted to thrust upon the public mind more or less fantastic interpretations of these mysterious leaves. Most of these attempts to clarify the meaning of the Tarot have only muddled the issues involved. The original lack of information has been exchanged for a monumental structure of misinformation.

The difficulties may be classified under three headings:

1. The original number of cards is unknown but it is quite within the range of possibility that the modern deck lacks several vital (and, therefore, deleted) cards. The removal of even one or two symbols would destroy the sequence of the figures and thus hopelessly confuse the would-be interpreter.
2. It is quite probable that the order of the cards has been purposely changed. In fact, the unnumbered major trump—the Fool—is the chief stumbling-block confronting the student of Tarot. The problem, therefore, is naturally related to the science of cryptography.¹²

¹² Johannes Trithemius' seminal book on cryptography, *Steganographia*, exerted considerable influence in the Renaissance and beyond. This book captivated many and influenced the consciousness of the esoteric and mystical vein of Tarot and alchemy. Trithemius revived and popularized Hildegard von Bingen's work and was also a major influence in both Cornelius Agrippa and Paracelsus.

The cards become the elements of a secret writing; they are a definite philosophic cipher, and until the elements of this cryptic alphabet have been finally established, the subject must remain a debatable field of abstract speculation.

3. Most writings on the subject of the Tarot (prominent among them the treatises of Eliphas Levi and Papus) are questionably “blinds” published for the definite purpose of diverting public attention from the deeper issues involved. Whether bound or regarding themselves as bound by obligations of honor, these authors preserved inviolate whatever knowledge they actually possessed. For reasons somewhat obscure but which they evidently regarded as sufficient, they purposely deceived the public in their published descriptions of both the major and minor trumps.

Instead of being influenced too deeply by existing writings, the student obviously should sever his connections with these dubious text-books and reconstruct the entire system of Tarot symbolism from the secret doctrine of the ancients, scattered fragments of which have survived the persistent efforts in past ages to destroy learning.

If, as all indications point, the Tarot may be traced to the Arabian mystics, we can search for the true interpretation in those orders of learning which flourished in Arabia during the first ten centuries of the Christian Era. We have abundant evidence that the wise men among the Arabs—the astrologers and philosophers—drinking deeply at the fountain-head of Greek learning, became the ardent champions of academic philosophy. They also tasted of Egyptian lore, and even imbibed of the wisdom of Chaldea and Phoenicia.

Little is known of the religion which Mohammed destroyed, or at least believed he had destroyed. There is no question, however, that his own sect perpetuated this wisdom in the metaphysics or mysticism of the Dervishes. Though not the originators of this great system, the Arabians have earned for themselves a certain measure of immortality because they were the honest custodians of those older truths whose importance they grasped.

Having established this link, we may next disregard it and investigate the sources from which all subsequent philosophies derived their fundamental premises. Western metaphysics reached its flood-tide in the transcendental doctrines of the Greeks. To understand the Tarot, then, we shall disregard the scattered emblems momentarily, re-establish the ethical system which unquestionably they were devised to perpetuate, and, by so doing, render evident the inevitable interpretations of the cards.

We should first realize that Tarot cards have passed through many modifications both of color and design. It should be evident even to the uninformed that the symbols now upon the cards are of medieval origin, hence the student should not waste an unwarranted amount of energy in the effort to interpret the pictorial details which for the most part are accidental accumulations. If one studies the cards too intensely, he is likely to be diverted from the major issue and become lost in a maze of curious but not necessarily relevant speculation. It is more profitable to follow the Pythagorean premise of emphasizing the importance of the intervals existing between objects rather than the objects themselves.

The basic facts of Tarot symbolism are more likely to be discovered through grasping the whole panorama of the trumps and suits than through a microscopic analysis of any of the separate symbols. That which is true of life in general is true of the Tarot in particular. If we examine personalities too carefully, we are apt to forget those greater principles which circumscribe all personality and bind the universe into wholeness. A study of the individual cards, if divorced from an inclusive estimation of the deck as a whole, must inevitably lead to a host of glaring and discouraging errors. The cards must be regarded as elements and as such should be conscientiously examined, not, however, with the purpose of isolating the various elements but rather to grasp the chemistry of their combination. (*Manly P. Hall, ASE, Vol. 5 No. 1, October 1930.*)

KEY 0 - LE FOU - THE FOOL

HEBREW MOTHER LETTER SHIN: "TOOTH."

PRIMORDIAL ELEMENT OF FIRE.

GD, BOTA: FIRST MOTHER LETTER ALEPH, "OX OR BULL"



"Once we realize that we are no-thing, the Tarot will render its last secret." Oswald Wirth

The Zero, or unnumbered, card presents to us the figure of the Fool or Divine Idiot—the cosmic madman, the blindfolded buffoon. This card is the supreme mystery of the Tarot, for as the mind ponders the significance of the figure its philosophic possibilities are endless. This card of contradictions contains two widely diversified yet strangely related secrets. In the Hebrew Mysteries *Ain Soph*—the absolute, boundless, dimensionless abstractness which precedes all manifestation and is utter homogeneity—was symbolically represented by a closed eye. As most wise men have been called fools, why should not the madman be an appropriate figure for that wisdom which surpasses all understanding? Thus the Fool is the Infinite Itself, blind and hastening ever along the road to Nowhere.

It is from the zero assigned to the card rather than from the appearance of the figure itself that we secure the most important interpretation. If the deck represents in fact the pages of an ancient Mystery, recording the wanderings of the human soul in quest of light, then in the Fool

we behold the neophyte or the uninitiated blindly questioning Reality. Before him are the gates of the Mysteries in the yawning mouth of the crocodile; behind him are the limitations of the flesh in the false doctrines and the deceivers, the lynx, cat or the wild dog.¹³ In his pack, the neophyte carries experience and also that load of woes which ignorance must always bear. The night is dark about him; the way is obscure. The river of life flows at his feet, on its bank lies the broken pillar of ambition. It is in this living river that the crocodile of *Philosophic Death* awaits his victims for by devouring them he brings them back to life again, a mystery which is part of the ancient ritual of the second death and the new birth into immortality.

There is also another interpretation in this card, which has for the most part been strangely overlooked. The Fool is an appropriate figure of the human Ego—the vital impulse behind personality. The unnumbered card sets forth with philosophic accuracy the phenomenon of the soul entering into the body at birth. The Ego is blindfolded because the lesser, its personal self, can never know the greater and impersonal reality. Before it is the great sea of illusion into which it is soon to be plunged and where abides Typhon, the spirit of rebirth. The curious creature biting at the legs of the Fool in this interpretation becomes symbolic of the animal soul or sin body. The broken pillar represents the lapsed state of the Ego, whose path into generation resulted from the symbolic “Fall” by which man was banished from his primitive paradise and forced to wander in the dark abyss of matter. The scene is nocturnal for, as the Greeks knew, the soul entering generation finds night most congenial to this purpose.¹⁴

In some decks of the Tarot, the creature tearing at the legs of the Fool has so rent his garments as to reveal the buttocks. To the ancient symbolists, this signified the material universe whose mysteries were revealed by the cats or panthers—the priests of Osiris, who, rendering the garments of the Infinite made His inferior parts visible to the wise. A similar allegory is told concerning Moses, who was granted the right of beholding the nether parts of God. The animal tearing at the garments may in this case be interpreted as either the Dog of Hermes (the symbol of wisdom) or the Cat of Bubastes¹⁵ (the night-seer, or the Hierophant

¹³ The Fool is most often seen accompanied by one of these three animals.

¹⁴ The darkness is also suggestive of the alchemical state called *nigredo*. The journey of the Fool will take him from darkness (*nigredo*) into light (*albedo*).

¹⁵ The sacred mythological cat of the Temple of Bubastes, dedicated to Osiris.

whose inner vision is capable of penetrating the darkness of matter).¹⁶ (ASE, Vol. 5, No. 2, Nov. 1930, 48-50.)



The Fool as *Cipher Zero* leads the pack in our deck. In Qabalah the Three Veils of the Absolute (Ain - Ain Soph -Ain Soph Aur) represent the levels of Negative Existence usually identified as No-Thing; Limitlessness; Limitless Light. The *Ain Soph* signifies the source of creation and represents the Unknown, "the dot," the Absolute. The zero, circle, and oval (i.e. *ovum*) also translate, esoterically, into the concept of the *No-thing* (Ain) out of which the Ain Soph comes forth. In these traditions we will often find a circle with a dot in the center representing the Sun, or the Sixth Sephirah (Tiphareth, seat of the Sun); this glyph also alludes to the Supreme Divinity and encapsulates the first Emanation. In his writings on Qabalah, Manly P. Hall states:

*Manifesting out of the formless dot, the beginning of all things is a state of oneness which man calls unity. All things in the world today have one natural origin. All things began as one, which came forth out of No-thing, the Unmanifest, by the 'elongation of the dot.'*¹⁷

The "elongation of the dot" alludes to number 1, to generation and multiplicity. In Qabalah both Fool and Magician represent primordial energies of creation. Manly Hall suggests we place the Fool before the number One and the rest of the Majors in a horizontal line in sequence from left to right, and then visualize him walking through all these figures as a neophyte, spiritually hoodwinked and seeking Divine Wisdom. Imagine this Fool landing on each Arcanum with the tools from the Magician's table in his sack, going from one card to another collecting, recollecting; forming, transforming; giving and receiving. As Zero he remains receptive, allowing the Limitless Light to guide him along the way. Oswald Wirth and William Westcott, among others, placed The Fool at the end of the Major Arcana as card XXII, following Le Monde. The card, thought unnumbered, would display

¹⁶ The Arcana from 0 to 10 start with Hall's descriptions from the *All Seeing Eye*, 1930-31.

¹⁷ "Sacred Magic of the Qabbalah," 21.

KEY 0 - LE FOU - THE FOOL

the Hebrew letter *Shin* (Fire) on the bottom corner. In Wirth's version a lynx is biting the fool's leg; a broken pillar and a crocodile are seen at a distance; a wilted flower at his feet, following P. Christian's description. He is less than zero, and reminds us of the medieval, mythical wild man archetype. Wirth didn't really find redeeming qualities in his Fool; he is the wanderer or vagabond walking and unleashing his own fate. His displacement to the end of the Major Arcana does not serve the powerful Hermetic meaning attached to the Zero or to the Auric Egg of creation. The same alludes to its placement as the twenty-first letter. The Fool is really alpha and omega, the ouroboric Zero; he encapsulates not only the energies from the three Mother Letters, but of the whole Hebrew alphabet.

In the Knapp-Hall deck the Fool carries the Hebrew letter Shin according to the designation made by Eliphas Lévi and followed by Guaita, Papus, Wirth, and most of the Qabalists from the 19th century. However, the Fool here is, unequivocally, identified primarily with Zero and the Ain Soph. The letter Shin is assigned to the Primordial Fire and, as such, it is fitting for it to be part of a card that symbolizes the primordial impulses of Creation. It also makes sense to have Shin designating Key 20, *Judgement*, since the card alludes to rebirth and regeneration. This "letter dilemma" will never be resolved, but it is important to remember that the glyph of the letter Shin appears on the garment of Paul Case's Fool as well as in Waite's. Hall did not embrace either lettering system and this is one of the reasons why the deck is such an eclectic, esoteric treasure.

Paul Foster Case and the Golden Dawn assign Aleph to the Fool following a system of correspondences based on Cabala (Qabalah) and the Tree of Life which is the most widely used today. As noted in our Introduction, Manly Hall sometimes seems to be using this system instead of the French RC attributions depending on how he interprets a certain aspect of a card. Hall's approach becomes more obvious when we study the Minor Arcana, where the correspondences with the Golden Dawn and BOTA are quite palpable. As fellow Freemasons, Paul Case and Manly Hall had mutual respect for each other, as can be noted in their writings.¹⁸

Hall notes in "An Analysis of the Tarot Cards" that, "...both Court de Gébelin and Paul Foster Case place the unnumbered card before the

¹⁸ In 1948, for example, Manly Hall notes that, "One of the most sincere and first thoughtful modern investigators of Tarot symbolism is Mr. Paul Foster Case, whose writings deserve careful consideration." *Horizon*, winter, 33.

numbered card of the major trumps, for if the natural order of the numbers (according to either the Pythagoreans or Qabbalistic system) be adhered to, the zero card must naturally precede the number 1. This does not dispose of the problem however, for efforts to assign a Hebrew letter to each Tarot trump in sequence produce an effect far from convincing.”¹⁹

Aleph, the first Mother letter, represents the Primordial Air, the mysterious combination of Fire and Water into ether. Aleph is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The Golden Dawn and BOTA, among others, assign this letter to the Fool. Aleph is Breath, Air, *Ruach*.²⁰

It is also connected to the Holy Spirit and to Super-Consciousness. In Jewish mysticism Aleph is the impulse or thrust of creation, the silent seed that helps brings forth the rest of the alphabet. It is also the first letter of Ain Soph. Aleph’s mystery makes the letter soundless, quiet, still, like a zero or no-thing, while lending itself to the process of creation. Aleph represents the Breath of God bringing forth the Word out of its stillness and silence.

The Hebrew letters Mem and Shin are assigned to the second and third Mother Letters, respectively; Mem represents Primordial Water and Shin represents the archetypal Fire of Creation, the Force of the Lightning Flash that generates the Tree of Life. Shin is also associated with the Holy Spirit and with the fiery Life-Breath. It is hard sometimes to separate one Mother Letter from the other as these primordial forces are One and unfold simultaneously at different levels of awareness and manifestation.

The crocodile is always found in decks of Egyptian flavor. Here it does not lurk from afar but rather nearby and, yet, somehow not as menacing. The crocodile could insinuate the reptile brain of humanity; it also connects in Egyptian lore to Sebek, the ancient deity occasionally fused with Horus, son of Isis and Osiris, or with Ra, the sun god.²¹ The crocodile also connects to the myth of Typhon. We will find Typhon in this deck depicted as a jackal on Key 10, the Wheel of Fortune. In other decks Typhon will be assigned to Key 15, the Devil.

The eye is an important symbol in this deck; the Fool has no memory, no path. Like him, we start our journey of self-discovery always in the dark. The Ego or Higher Self is blindfolded because the lesser personal self has not gained access to higher Knowledge. The first

¹⁹ *Secret Teachings*, CXXIX.

²⁰ The word “Ruach” has many meanings in Hebrew and we will find it often used to designate breath; wind; and spirit. It also signifies Mind in the Hermetic traditions.

²¹ The connection to Sebek and Horus relates to the “fiery breath of creation.”

three cards of the Major Arcana, the Fool, the Magician and the High Priestess, often symbolize Superconsciousness, Self-Consciousness; and Subconsciousness, in this order. This emblematic connection is pivotal in understanding the esoteric meanings of these cards and why the High Priestess appears as the second numbered card.

Manly Hall leaves no doubt about the significance of the Fool. He not only represents the *Ain Soph* but is also the mystical and divine idiot who takes us back to the old folk tales of wandering fools or alienated seekers pretending to be what they are not, hiding in plain sight under false assumption of idiocy or foolery, yet much closer to the Divine than any of those around them. In a Renaissance context, this figure represents the unburdened idiot, untainted by society's misconceptions and stagnant values. In this framework, he becomes the shaker of the old structures and the initiate that seeks (and offers) redemption.

At the same time, the Fool is the aspect of Hermes that we have come to identify with the trickster and the clown; as well as the walker between heaven and earth. He could also represent the court jester, juggler and acrobat that we find in so many cultures. The Fool is the zero and the egg, carrying the number one into self-awareness because he is the seeker of illumination and the bringer of quantum change. The dog that accompanies the Fool could represent our animal nature and the basic instincts that we all need to acknowledge and, hopefully, overcome along the way.

In divination the Fool could signify new adventures, new beginnings; entering untapped territory; audacity or a foolish action. It could warn us about pitfalls in front of us or suggest for us to take off our blindfold and to really see what lies ahead. At times the card just dares us to move beyond our comfort zone and tackle a situation without any inhibitions. This is a leap of faith, a transformative transition. If the Fool appears in a question dealing with a key decision in your life, beware of risks around you but also be willing to change course if necessary, especially if placed next or near the Hanged Man or the Death card. Next to the Tower it could indicate an unexpected, chaotic situation lurking ahead. In reverse it is a card of foolish and disconcerting actions, eccentricity, going against common sense or prescribed norms; puerility or immaturity.

A card in reverse does not necessarily allude to negative meanings. Sometimes it implies to pay attention. Always rely on the energies between the cards to elicit the right meanings. Cards adapt to the energies

in a spread. If we give the Fool the role of Significator, then it serves as a compass in a reading, pointing to goals to attain, issues to avoid or move away from, what to trust ahead.

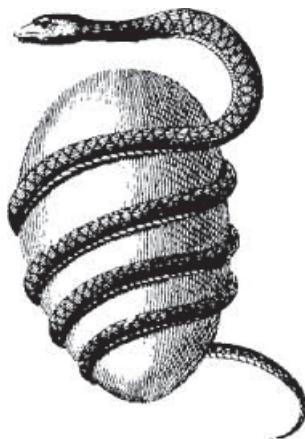


Figure 10: Orphic Egg.

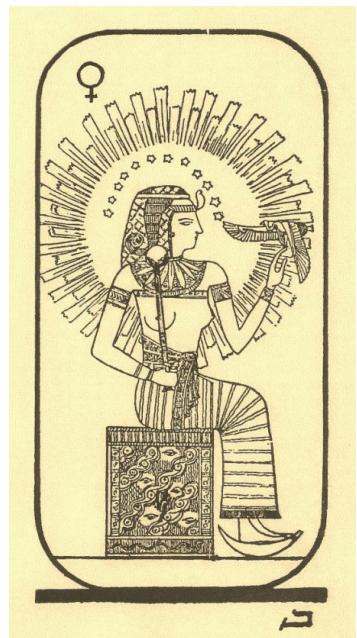


Figure 12: The Empress as Isis-Urania

This is the ancient idea of Nature. It is represented by a woman seated upon a cube covered with eyes, the emblem of the visions of the famous seer, Hermes. Her feet rest upon a crescent of the moon, the emblem of matter subjected to mind. She is crowned with twelve stars representing the twelve months and the Sun serves her as a Nimbus, thus symbolizing the creative power of intelligence. (C. de St. Germain, Astrology, 191.)

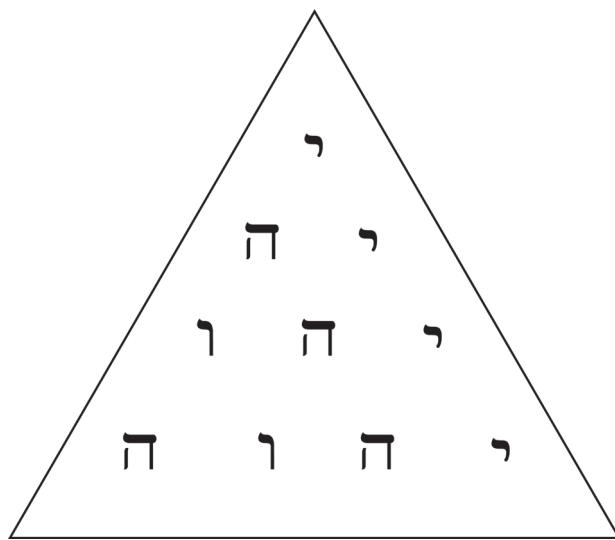


Figure 13: Tetragrammaton and Tetractys.

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