

The Tarot Deck

As The Initiate's Working Tools

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Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

Introduction

The first thought that comes to mind when the Tarot is mentioned is of the telling of fortunes. While this is indeed true, it is much more diverse a tool to the studious initiate of the mysteries. The Tarot is a complete system of initiation in its own right, designed as a pictorial representation of the Universe, the Earth and of the Individual and as such contains methods of application both specific and universal from multiple perspectives including past, present, future, reflective, descriptive and collaborative. In the following sections some of these diverse uses will be covered, particularly in the usage as temple tools and as a map of the evolution of the initiate. Before we begin, however, covering the basics and a bit of the History of the Tarot is beneficial, if not essential, to the work at hand.

The evolving system of the Tarot has been based upon the complex summaries of wisdom gleaned through observation and application of universal principles and their interactions with each other, wisdom that can be traced back at least as far as the ancient Egyptians. Its structure is formed upon that of the Hebrew Tree of Life. The various names for the cards have their origins with those gods of applied wisdom, or fate, such as Tahuti, Thoth, Hermes, Mercury, even as Runes and I Ching are attributed to similar Norse and Chinese deities and forces respectively. Over the centuries modified and revised versions of the 'Book of Wisdom', one name for the cards, have been constructed and used, added insight and information or a change in the dominating universal currents making it necessary to adjust the system.

The most recent updates to the System of the Taro were made in advent and after the coming of the new Age (or Æon), that of Aquarius (Horus). Eliphas Levi switched the placements of ATU's VIII and XI, and Aleister Crowley corrected the attributes of ATU's IV and XVII in his Thoth Deck. Thus the new age reflects the shift of power from that of the father figure of the previous one to the children

seeking their own way and their own wisdom, even as the paternal influence followed that of the mother in the age that gave birth to agriculture and community.

The Thoth Deck, which is the deck referred to herein, differs in another way as well. In past ages, where the focus was not upon the individual self, the cards were depicted in a fashion not conducive to personal reflection, and also were traditionally gifted to the student by the instructor, passing knowledge and tradition down the line. The Thoth Deck, however, was designed specifically for personal use, its imagery reconstituted for study and reflection, its symbolism expanded to include elements not heretofore available. Even its colours reflect the essential composition of each card.

So with that, let us begin expanding our understanding of the Tarot. Let it be said here, that the most useful physical quality of the Tarot deck is that it's compact and portable. Having a complete arsenal, from temple to tools, that can fit into one's pocket is a handy thing indeed.

Section One

The Unicursal Tarot Circle¹:

A Tarot deck is a talisman, infused with the energy of its symbolism and that of its handler, and is strengthened with each use, diversified in its potential in proportion to that of its owner. The magick circle is a boundary between the universe of the magickian and the universe outside of the magickian. That the Tarot is a representation of both universes it is therefore natural that in forming a circle it acts as a bridge and/or boundary between the two.

To begin construction of the circle, separate the Tarot deck into its various components. Take the 56 cards of the Minor Arcana, those of the four suits numbered Ace through Knight (with the Knight as the foundation and the Ace as the Pure essence of the element on the top) and place them in their respective cardinal quarters: Disks in the North, Swords in the East, Wands in the South and Cups in the West. Next take the Major Arcana, being the Trumps numbered from 0 (The Fool) through XXI (The Universe) and place them between the quarters to form the circle. ATU 0 is placed to the left of the stack in the East, ATU's I through VI between the East and the South, ATU's VII through XI between the South and the West, ATU's XII through XVII between the West and the North,

¹ The Unicursal Circle was designed and formulated in 1985_{ev} by F. Hexas.

and the remaining four joining ATU 0 between the North and the East. Thus there should be an alternating six-five ratio between the quarters.

Study of this construction reveals its symbolic perfection from formula to design. But understanding is not requisite to its function. Even a virgin deck, being a talisman on its own, holds power enough to maintain a strong and protective circle that can be carried by the initiate wherever s/he must travel.

The Tarot Temple:

In constructing temple boundaries, remove the Minor Arcana from 2 through 10 from the design of the Tarot Circle and place them outside the circle in an encompassing square, again in their respective quarters, from 2 through 10. This formulates one of many possible magick squares useful in ritual work and meditation. Removing some of the cards does not detract from the power of the circle in any way for two reasons. Firstly, the Aces that remain in the circle are more than adequate to fulfil the role as watchtowers, and secondly, the walls of the constructed temple are themselves able to act as the elemental watchtowers.

Other Temple Tools and Weapons:

The Court Cards of the deck are more often than not influences upon the querent in a divinatory reading and maintain this general role as tools. The Knights represent an onrush of influence, quick and energetic, but usually short-lived. The Queens are generally receptive and transmutative, enduring and steady, unshakable, shaping the energy until it's suitable to be transmitted down the line. The Princes are active forces that move with purpose and direction, received from the Queens, and put the plan into motion, their influence upon things progressive and lasting. They often exhibit an inner change or turmoil, the results of their efforts imminent but not yet realised. The Princesses are that which is made outwardly manifest, the effect of the original energy realised upon the Earth. Without a sense of direction of their own, they often cause external change or conflict.

With these qualities understood it is a relatively simple process to determine with certainty which cards can be used to represent:

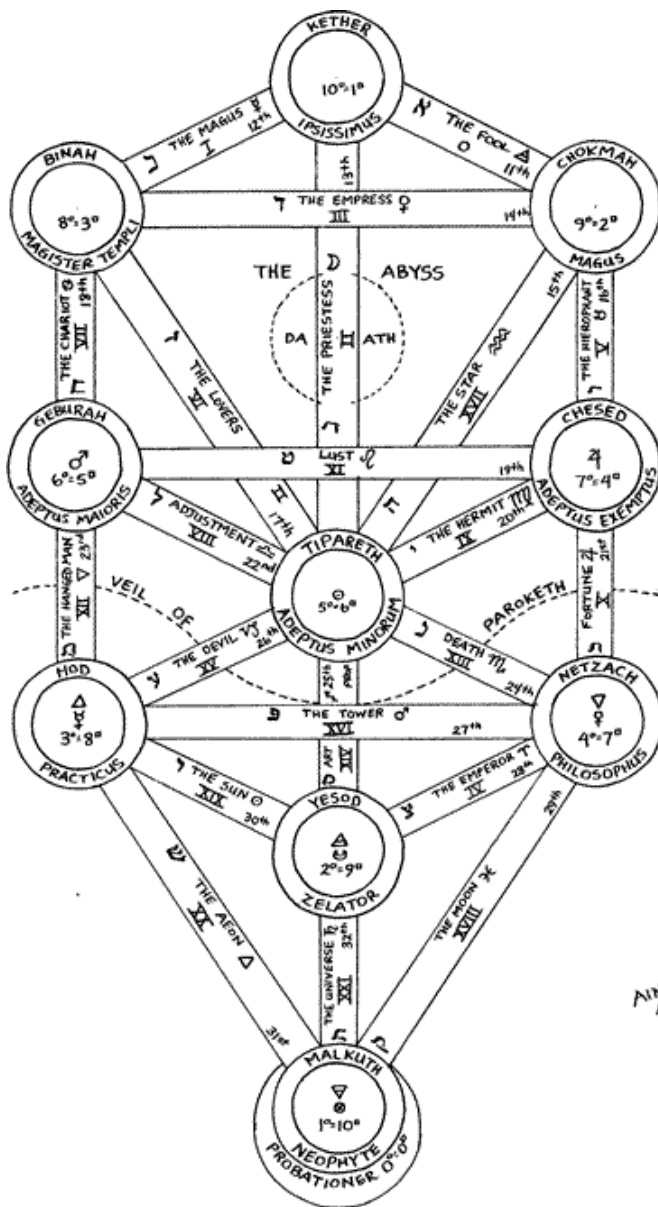
- | | | |
|---------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| - the wand | - the sword | - the daggers |
| - the chalice | - the censor | - the incense |
| - the bell | - the altar candle | - the eucharist |
| - the scourge | | |

and so on...

Thus the initiate has every conceivable tool s/he might require for use on the road without having to pack an extra suitcase.

Section Two

The Tree of Life, as formulated by the Hebrew Qabalists is a representation of the Universe that correlates perfectly with the Tarot. Its construction is said to be perfect in that every conceivable idea or object can be attributed to and placed upon a corresponding location within the structure of the Tree.



The Tree of Life is a construct of ten Emanations that in effect are marker points, states of perspective, and these Emanations, often depicted as spheres, are inter-connected by twenty-two paths. The spheres are correctly regarded as levels of attainment for the initiate, providing a map to determine where s/he has been, is and is heading or striving for. They can also represent the current state of being on a lesser scale. The paths represent the journey from one place to another (both there and back again). Each sphere also connects, through similarities of function and attribution, the attitudes and influences of planetary deities, scents, animals, etc.. The paths also show the connecting commonality between the

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Emanations it links.

The Major Arcana, when regarded together, tell the stories of creation and enlightenment both, in various ways that interconnect the systems included within the symbolism. Individually, they represent events and situations present and pertinent. In a divinatory reading they often refer to things already set in motion, tasks and ordeals that must be dealt with. Upon the Tree of Life they are the paths.

The Minor Arcana, particularly the four suits numbered Ace to 10, represent the states or stages at various levels of both the existence of things and the evolution of the initiate. These, consolidated by numerical value are placed upon the Tree and represent the Emanations. Each of the four suits implies multiple levels within the Emanations, such as the states of the elemental qualities of an initiate while inhabiting a particular sphere. (The Court Cards represent the four levels of existence, the formula of which is alluded to in the previous section and fit within the Tree rather than upon it. Further discussion of the Court Cards in this section however will not be useful.)

By looking at a larger picture of the scheme of things, i.e the Tarot cards superimposed upon the Tree of Life, an observant initiate will be able to determine his or her progression — where they are, what their state of mind should be, comparable to what it is, where they are going, what they need to do and what they should be expecting and keeping an eye open for — based upon and confirmed by what they ascertain to have recently experienced².

Exploration and experiment on the interplay of the Tarot cards, what they mean in various contexts will increase a practical understanding of the cards when readings are spread (for the initiate or for someone else), will provide a deeper and deeper insight into the initiate's inner nature and function in harmonised relation to the same aspects of the surrounding world and universe. This will, in turn, strengthen the confidence and potency of the magickian.

Love is the Law, love under will.

Frater Valak, (Adept)
Invisible House Society

NOTE:

² Keep in mind that there are levels within levels, and a complete Tree within each sphere.

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May you seek, find and walk your path upon the Earth,

Valak.