

The Tarot Trumps
By G.H. Soror, Q.L.

The cards of the Lesser Arcana present to us the vibrations of Number, Color, and Element. – that is, the plane on which number and color function. Thus, in the Ten of Pentacles we have the number Ten tertiary colors, citrine, olive, and russet, working in Malkuth, the material plane. Whereas in the Ten of Wands we have the number Ten and the tertiaries working in pure energy. In these cards, the Sephirah is indicated by the coloring of the clouds; the plane by the coloring of the symbols.

The four honors of each suit taken in their most abstract sense may be interpreted as:

Potential Power – The King
Brooding Power – The Queen
Power in Action – The Prince
Reception and Transmission – The Princess.

All these cards are colored according to their elements plus the Sephirah to which they are attributed. With the Greater Arcana, the Trumps, however, we are given the Keys to divine manifestation, each one an individual force to be considered independently. It must never be forgotten that the Trumps are intrinsically, glyphs of cosmic not human force.

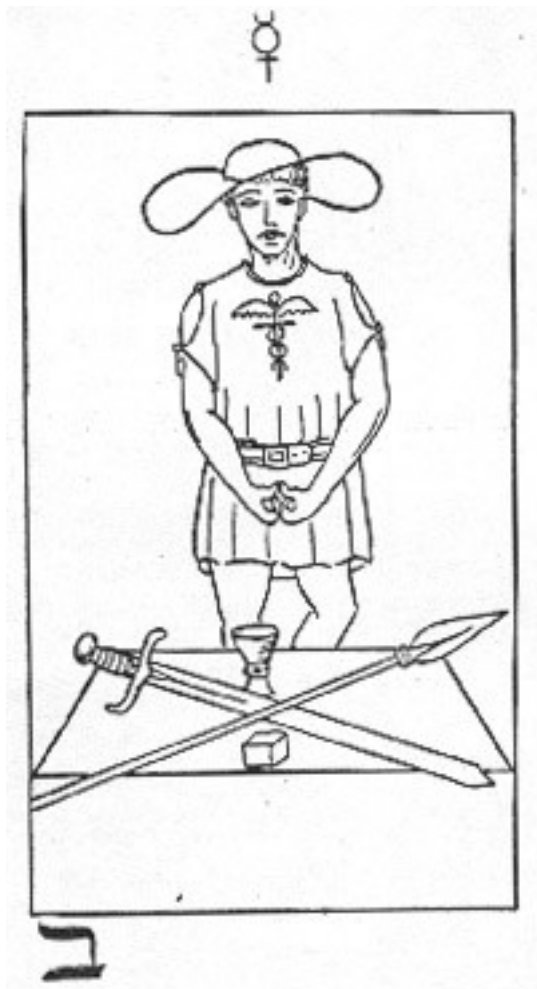
0. THE FOOLISH MAN

This card as usually presented shows a man in motley striding along, heedless of the dog which tears his garments and threatens to attack him. In this is seen only the lower aspect of the card, giving no hint to the Divine Folly of which St. Paul speaks. But in the Order pack, an effort is made to reveal the deeper meaning. A naked child stands beneath a rose-tree bearing yellow roses – the golden Rose of Joy as well as the Rose of Silence. While reaching up to the Roses, he yet holds in leash a gray wolf, worldly wisdom held in check by perfect innocence. The colors are pale yellow, pale blue, greenish yellow – suggestive of the early dawn of a spring day.



I. THE MAGICIAN

It represents the union and balance of the elemental powers controlled by mind. The Adept dedicating the minor implements on the Altar. The paths of Beth and Mercury link Kether to Crown with Binah, the Aimah Elohim. The Magician, therefore, is reflected in the Intellect which stores and gathers up knowledge and pours it into the House of Life, Binah. The number of the Path, 12, suggests the synthesis of the Zodiac, as Mercury is the synthesis of the planets. The colors yellow, violet, gray, and indigo, point to the mysterious astral light surrounding the great Adept. It is a card linked with the name Tahuti and Hermes as the previous one is with Krishna and Harpokrat or Dionysius.



II. THE HIGH PRIESTESS

The High Priestess rules the long path uniting Kether to Tiphareth, crossing the reciprocal Paths of Venus and Leo. She is the great feminine force controlling the very source of life, gathering into herself all the energizing forces and holding them in solution until the time of release. Her colors, pale blue, deepening into sky blue, silvery white, and silver, relieved by touches of orange and flame, carry out these ideas.



III. THE EMPRESS

She is an aspect of Isis; the creative and positive side of Nature is suggested here. The Egyptian trilogy, Isis, Hathor and Nephthys, symbolized by the crescent, full moon, and gibbous moon are represented in the Tarot by the High Priestess, Hathor. The Empress, Isis, takes either the crescent moon or Venus as her symbol. Justice, Nephthys, takes the gibbous moon.

Isis and Venus gives the aspect of Love, while Hathor is rather the Mystic, the full moon reflecting the Sun of Tiphareth while in Yesod, transmitting the rays of the Sun in her path Gimel. In interpreting a practical Tarot it is often admissible to regard the Empress as standing for Occultism. The High Priestess for religion, the Church as distinguished from the Order.

The Empress, whose letter is Daleth, is the Door of the inner mysteries, as Venus is the door of the Vault. Her colors are emerald, sky-blue, blue-green, and cerise or rose-pink.



IV. THE EMPEROR

Here we have the great energizing forces as indicated by the varying shades of red. It may be noted here that the red paths remain red in all planes, varying only in shade. Thus Aries, the Emperor, the Pioneer, the General, is blood and deep crimson, red, pure vermillion or flowing fiery red. He is Ho Nike, the Conqueror, hot, passionate, impetuous, the apotheosis of Mars, whether in love or in war. He is the positive masculine as the Empress is the positive feminine.



V. THE HIEROPHANT

The High Priest is the counterpart of the High Priestess. As Aries is the house of Mars and the exaltation of the Sun, so Taurus is the house of Venus and the exaltation of the Moon. He is the reflective or mystical aspect of the masculine. He is the thinker as the Emperor is the doer.

His colors unlike those of the Emperor, vary considerably. Red, orange, maroon, deep brown, and chestnut brown, suggest veiled thought, interior power, endurance, contemplation and reconciliation. This card frequently indicates the hidden guardianship of the Masters.



VI. THE LOVERS

The impact of inspiration on intuition, resulting in illumination and liberation – the sword striking off the fetters of habit and materialism, Perseus rescuing Andromeda from the Dragon of fear and the waters of stagnation. (*Note: Incidentally note that this is the design of the Order card. Andromeda is shown manacled to a rock, the dragon rising from the waters at her feet. Perseus is depicted flying through the air to her assistance, with unsheathed sword. The design is wholly different from that of the Waite pack. – I.R. [Israel Regardie]*)

The colors are orange, violet, purplish gray and pearl gray. The flashing color of orange gives deep vivid blue while the flashing color for violet is golden yellow. The flashing colors may always be introduced if they bring out the essential color meaning more clearly. In practice this card usually signifies sympathetic understanding.



VII. THE CHARIOT

Here we have a symbol of the spirit of man controlling the lower principles, soul and body, and thus passing triumphantly through the astral plane, rising above the clouds of illusion and penetrating to the higher spheres.

The colors amber, silver-gray, blue-gray, and the deep blue violet of the night sky elucidate this symbol. It is the sublimation of the Psyche.



VIII. STRENGTH

This also represents the mastery of the lower by the higher. But in this case it is the soul which holds in check the passions, although her feet are still planted on earth, and the dark veil still floats about her head and clings around her. The colors, pale greenish yellow, black, yellowish gray, and reddish amber, suggest the steadfast endurance and fortitude required, but the deep red rose which is the flashing color to the greenish yellow, gives the motive power.



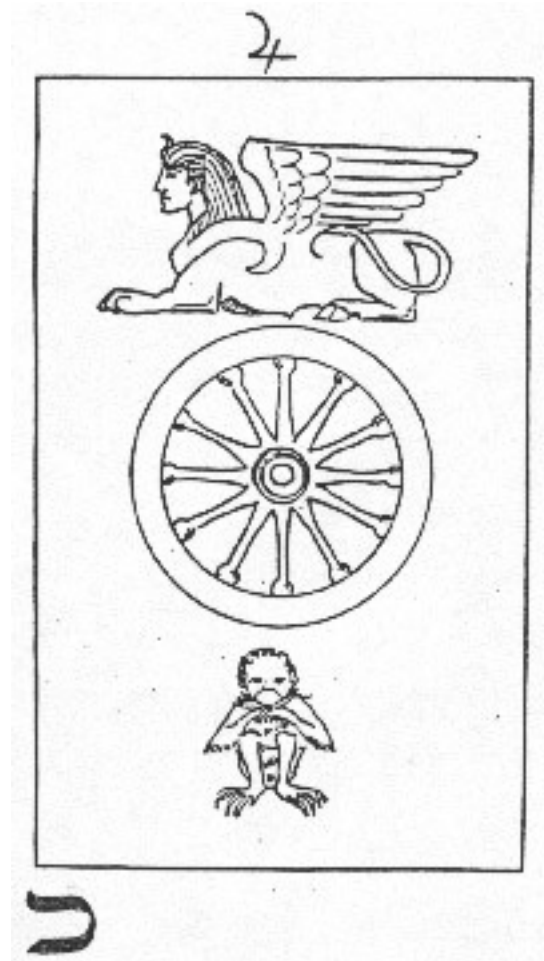
IX. THE HERMIT

Prudence. These three trumps should be collated in studying them for they represent the three stages of initiation. The man wrapped in hood and mantle, and carrying a lantern to illuminate the Path and a staff to support his footsteps, He is the eternal seeker, the Pilgrim soul. His hood and mantle are the brown of earth, and above him is the night-sky. But the delicate yellow-greens and bluish greens of spring are about him, and spring is in his heart.



X. WHEEL OF FORTUNE

In the Etz Chayim, or the Tree of Life, the Wheel is placed on the Pillar of Mercy, where it forms the principal column linking Netzach to Chesed, Victory to Mercy. It is the revolution of experience and progress, the steps of the Zodiac, the revolving staircase, held in place by the counterchanging influence of Light and Darkness, Time and Eternity – presided over by the Plutonian cynocephalus below, and the Sphinx of Egypt above, the eternal Riddle which can only be solved when we attain liberation. The basic colors of this Trump are blue, violet, deep purple, and blue irradiated by yellow. But the zodiacal spokes of the wheel should be in the colors of the spectrum, while the Ape is in those of Malkuth, and the Sphinx in the primary colors and black.



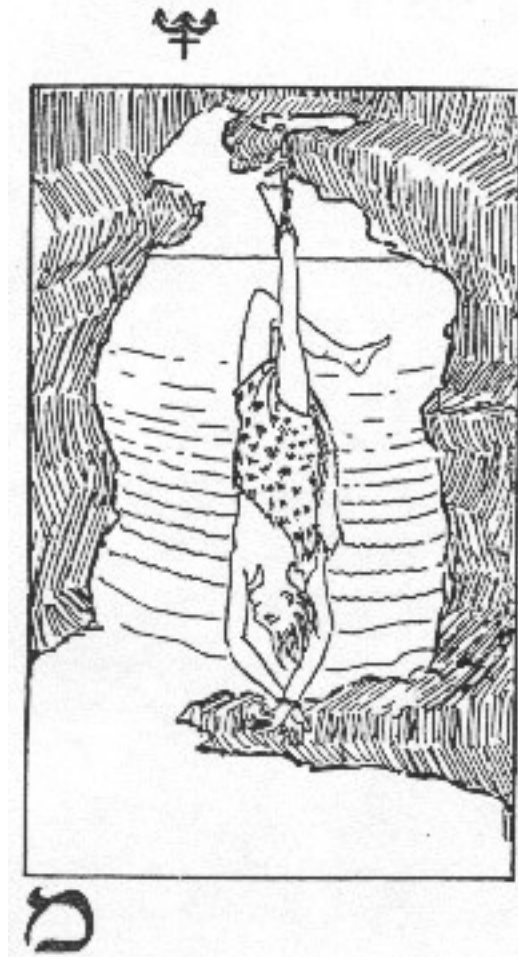
XI. JUSTICE

Nephthys, the third aspect of Luna, the twin sister of Isis. Justice as distinguished from love. Her emblems are the Sword and the Scales. Like her sister, she is clothed in green, but in a sharper colder green than the pure emerald of Isis. Her subsidiary colors are blue, blue-green, pale green. It is only by utilizing the flashing colors that we can find the hidden warmth and steadfastness.



XII. THE HANGED MAN

An elusive, because a profoundly significant symbol. It is sacrifice – the submergence of the higher in the lower in order to sublimate the lower. It is the descent of the Spirit into Matter, the incarnation of God in man, the submission to the nods of matter that the material may be transcended and transmuted. The colors are deep blue, white, and black intermingled but not merged, olive, green, and greenish fawn.



XIII. DEATH

The sign of transmutation and disintegration. The skeleton which alone survives the destructive power of time, may be regarded as the foundation upon which the structure is built, the type which persists through the permutations of Time and Space, adaptable to the requirements of evolution and yet radically unchanged; the transmuting power of Nature working from below upwards, as the Hanged Man is the transmuting power of the spirit working from above downwards. The colors are blue-green, both dark and pale, the two dominant colors of the visible world, and the flashing colors of orange and orange-red.



XIV. TEMPERANCE

This is the equilibrium not of the balance of Libra, but of the impetus of the Arrow, Sagittarius, which cleaves its way through the air by the force imparted to it by the taut string of the Bow. It requires the counterchanged forces of Fire and Water, Shin and Qoph, held by the restraining power of Saturn, and concentrated by the energies of Mars to initiate this impetus. All these are summed up in the symbolism of the figure standing between Earth and Water, holding two amphorae with their streams of living water, and with the volcano in the background. The colors are bright blue, blue-gray, slate-blue, and lilac-gray.



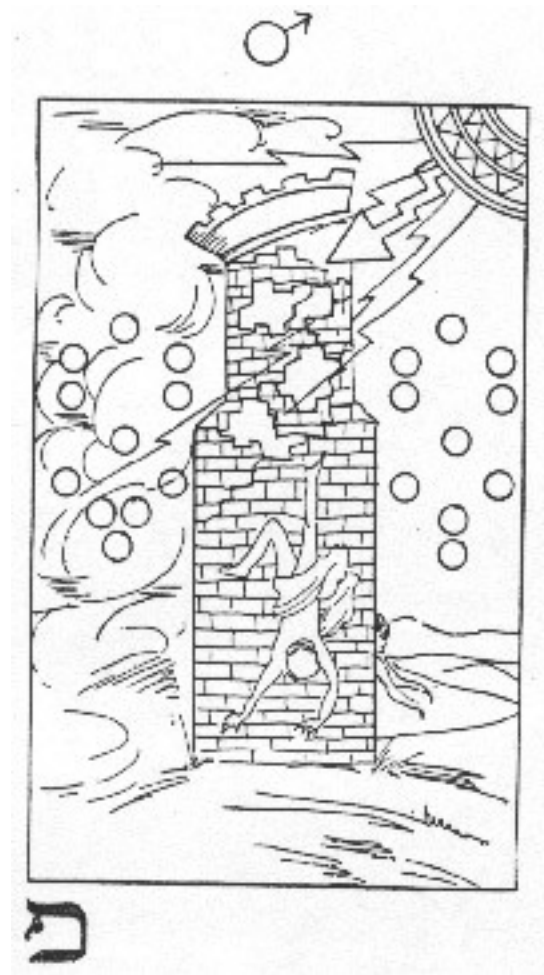
XV. THE DEVIL

This card should be studied in conjunction with No. 13. They are the two great controlling forces of the Universe, the centrifugal and the centripetal, destructive and reproductive, dynamic and static. The lower nature of man fears and hates the transmuting process; hence the chains binding the lesser figures and the bestial forms of their lower limbs. Yet this very fear of change and disintegration is necessary to stabilize the life-force and preserve continuity. The colors are indigo, livid brown, golden brown and gray.



XVI. THE TOWER

As always red remains persistent throughout the four planes, although modified in tone. Thus we find vivid scarlet shading into deep somber red and vermillion shot with amber. The contrasting shades of green serve to throw the red into relief. The tremendous destructive influence of the lightning, rending asunder established forms to make way for new forms to emerge, revolution as distinguished from transmutation or sublimation, the destructive as opposed to the conservative, energy attacking inertia, the impetuous ejection of those who would enclose themselves in the walls of ease and tradition.



XVII. THE STAR

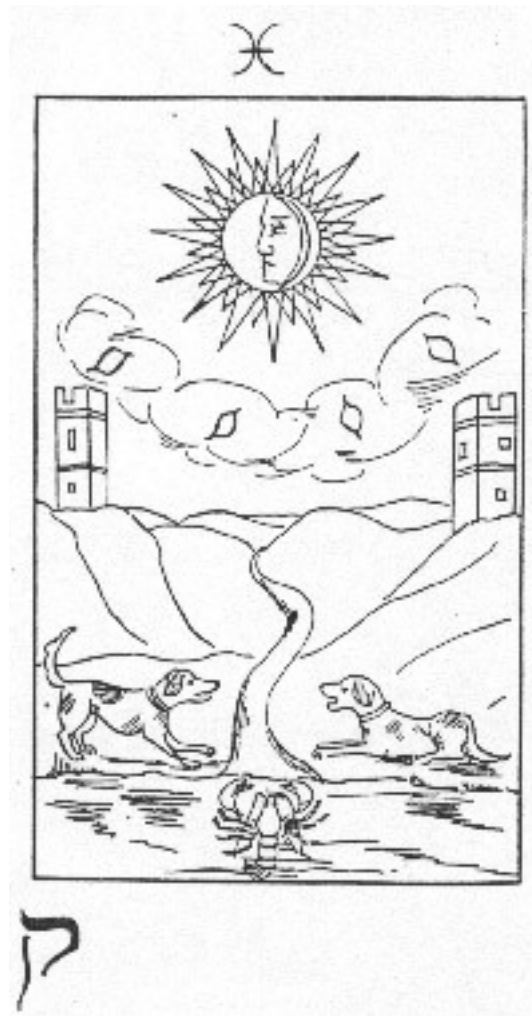
This shows the seven-pointed Star of Venus shining above the Waters of Aquarius, the guiding force of love in all its forms and aspects, illuminates the soul during her immersion in Humanity, so that the bonds of Saturn are dissolved in the purified Waters of Baptism. The dove of the Spirit hovers above the Tree of Knowledge giving the promise of ultimate attainment – and on the other side gleams of the Tree of Life.

Pale colors suggest dawn and the morning Star – amethyst, pale gray, fawn, dove color and white, with the pale yellow of the Star.



XVIII. THE MOON

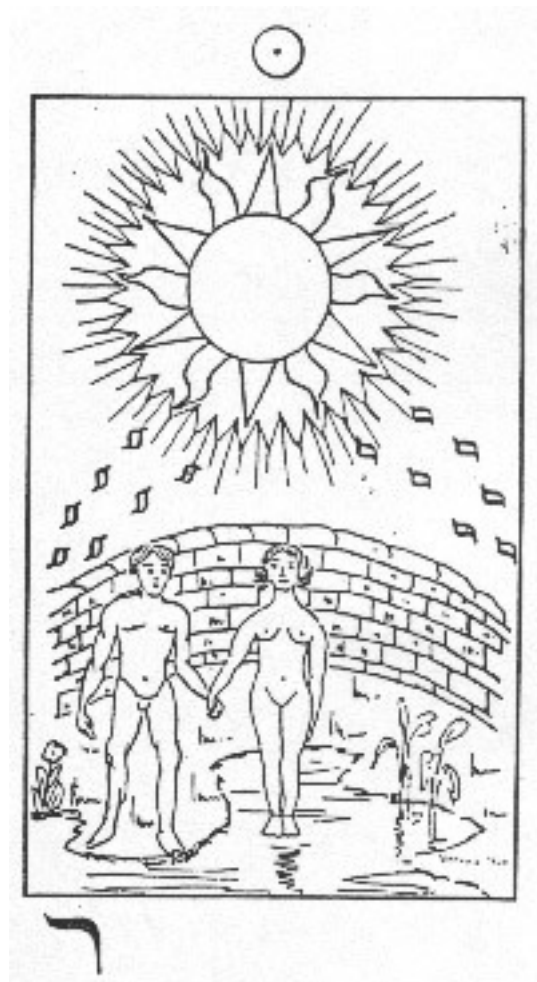
Here also is a river but it is the troubled waters of Night, wherein is to be described a crayfish, counterpart of the Scarabeus. It is guarded by the threatening watchgods, seeking to intimidate the wayfarers, while in the distance the barren hills are surmounted by the frowning fortresses still further guarding the way to attainment. It is the path of blood and tears in which fear, weakness, and fluctuation must be overcome. The colors are dark crimson, reddish brown, brownish crimson and plum colors – but their somber hues are lightened by the translucent faint greens and yellows to be found in their counterparts.



XIX. THE SUN

The Watery Paths of trial and probation are counterbalanced by the fiery paths of Temptation, Judgment, and Decision. In violent contrast to the somber coloring of Aquarius and Pisces, we are confronted by the flaring hues of the Sun and Fire. The too-aspiring Icarus may find his waxen wings of Ambition and Curiosity shriveled and melted by the fiery rays of the Sun and the heat of Fire, but approached with approached with humility and reverence, the Sun becomes the beneficent source of life.

Protected by an enclosing wall, standing by the Waters of repentance, the Pilgrim may submit himself humbly but without fear to the searching Light and absorb warmth and vitality from it for the struggle before him. The colors are clear-orange, golden-yellow, amber shot with red, and the contrasting blue and purple.



XX. THE LAST JUDGEMENT

The three trumps attributed to the Elemental Paths are perhaps the most difficult to understand. They represent the action of forces exterior to the experience of humanity, not the influence of environment but the impact of the Supernals upon the sublunary.

In the Air we have pure spirit holding in leash the lust of the flesh. In water, the sublimating power of sacrifice. Here in Fire, we are shown the cosmic forces concentrating on the pilgrim from all sides. Judgment is pronounced upon him. He is not the judge nor does decision rest in his hands. Lazarus cannot emerge from the Sepulcher until the voice cries out, "Come forth!" Nor can he cast aside the conflicting grave-clothes until the command, "Loose him!" is given. Man of himself is helpless. The impulse to ascend must come from above, but by its power he may transcend the sepulcher of environment and cast aside the trammels of desire. Here once more, the fiery energy of red burns through the planes. Fiery scarlet, glowing crimson, burning red are emphasized by the passive greens.

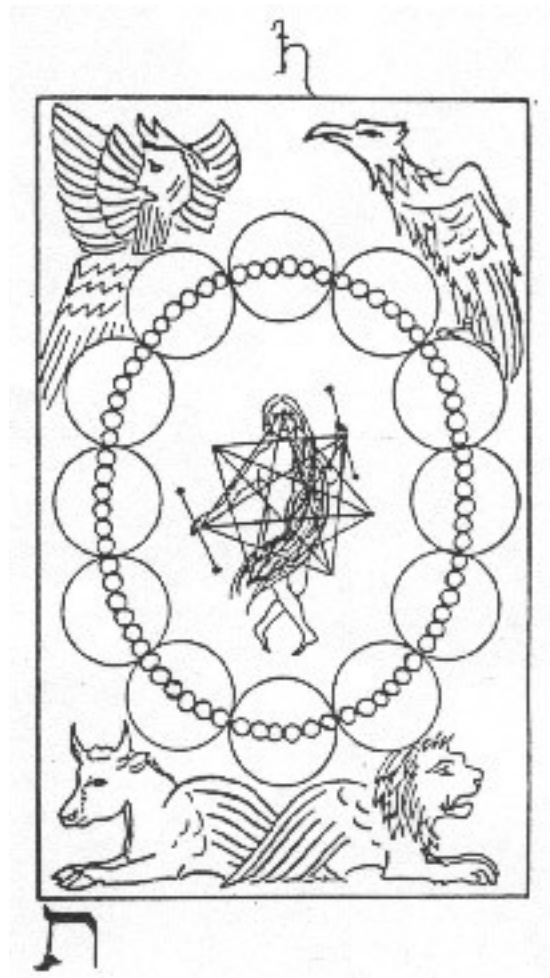


XXI. THE UNIVERSE

Observe that this represents not the World but the Universe. It should be remembered that to the ancients, Saturn represented the confines of the Solar system. They had no means of measuring either Uranus or Neptune. To them, therefore, Saturn passing through the spiral path of the Zodiac, marked at its cardinal points by the symbols of the Kerubim forming the Cross, was a comprehensive glyph of the whole.

Thus, in this card, we find a synthesis of the whole Taro or Rota. The central figure should be taken as Hathor, Athor, or Ator, rather than Isis, thus indicating the hidden anagram which may perhaps be translated thus: ORAT – man prays, ATOR – to the Great Mother, TARO – who turns, ROTA – the wheel of Life and Death.

The colors like those of the Wheel of Fortune include the colors of the Spectrum and those of the elements, but they are placed against the indigo and black of a Saturn, with the white gleam of the Stars shining in the darkness and the misty figure of the Aimah Elohim in the midst. In the practical Tarot, this card is taken to signify the matter in hand, that is the subject of any question that has been asked.



Having now revised the 22 Atous or Trumps in succession, it will be wise for the student to reverse the process and seek to follow the Path of the Pilgrim from below upwards, thus seeking to comprehend the interior process of Initiation and Illumination. It is a process in which the whole Universe does not disdain to take part, for Man is himself the Microcosm of the Macrocosm, and the Child of the Gods. And again, the Macrocosm must itself undergo a corresponding process in which the experience not only of humanity but of each individual must be an integral part. The fragments are gathered up into the baskets, that nothing may be lost; and from the feeding of the multitude there remains not less but more than the unbroken bread and fish – fit emblems of Earth and Water.

Cease not to seek day and night the Purifying Mysteries.