

Et Custosi Tutelae™



Art of Memory

Essaier LXXXII

The Art of Memory

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These two essays serve as an introduction to my translation of 150 astrological images from "Umbris Idearum" by Giordano Bruno [1582]. As far as I know, these have never before been translated into English. We will look at these in our Astrology series' of knowledge papers within the correspondence course.

The first paper was written specifically in relation to the Images known as the Triumphs of the Tarocchi. However, its summary of the 'Ars Memoria' applies equally well to any set of images, such the Astrological Images of Giordano Bruno, or the set of fifty images known incorrectly as the Tarocchi of Mantegna. It originally was circulated as a knowledge paper among the magical apprentices of the author.

The second essay 'Techniques of Daimonic Magic' examines the Art of Memory from the point of view of the Hellenistic magic of Alexandria in Egypt in the first centuries of the Common Era. These two essays appear and are concluded in "The Tides of Time series of knowledge papers"

The Art of Memory and the Tarocchi

It is most unlikely that the game of Tarocchi or the Triumphs were invented by occultists. It is very likely that, shortly after the cards came into common use in Italy, during the second half of the 15th century, their potential for esoteric use was realised. Soon, at the level of Low Magic, both ordinary playing cards and the Tarocchi were used for fortune-telling. Among High Magicians, it was realised that they could be used for the Ars Memoria

or Art of Memory. This paper deals with the history and techniques of the Art of Memory and some of its later magical developments.

The art of Memory was originally a technique for memorising long poems or speeches, as well as lists of events, names and items of information. The technique was first used in Greece by actors and poets. It was invented by the poet Simonides of Ceos [556-486 Bce]. It was well known in Rome, being taught as part of the Art of Rhetoric or effective speech-making by such famous lawyers and orators as Cicero.

In his book on oratory, Cicero had told how "Simonides had inferred that persons desiring to train the Art of Memory must select places and form mental images of the things they wish to remember and store those images in the places, so that the order of the places will preserve the order of the things and the images of the things will denote the things themselves; and we shall employ the places and images as a wax writing tablet and the letters written on it."

Roman orators who used the Art of Memory would often use the rooms of their villas as the Places, and their contents as the Images. They would tag the introductory section of their speech to the portico and entrance hall of the villa and relate the various points made in the introduction to the statues and furnishings located there. A transitional section of the speech might be related to a passage-way and its picture, murals and busts, while the main sections of the speech would be allocated to the various principal rooms of the villa, and so on.

As they delivered their speeches in the Forum or Senate, they would mentally walk through their villa. As the various rooms their statues and furnishings came to mind, the various parts of their speech would also come to mind in proper order. Using the Art of Memory, they could make an elegantly constructed speech in the Senate or Forum for four or five hours, without referring to a manuscript or notes.

Traditionally, the Art of Memory was said to be ruled by the virtue Prudence. Cicero defined virtue as a "habit of mind in harmony with reason and the order of nature." He also said: "Virtue has four parts: Justice, Fortitude, Temperance and Prudence. Prudence is the knowledge of what is good and what is bad and what is neither good nor bad. Its parts are memory, intelligence and foresight. Memory is the faculty by which the mind recalls what has happened. Intelligence is the faculty by which it ascertains what is. Foresight is the faculty by which it is seen that something will occur before it does occur."

Because the works of Cicero were among the few that survived the fall of Rome, the Art of Memory, i.e., the use of Images in Places to facilitate learning, was known and taught by the Church's scholars for hundreds of years from the time of the revival of learning at the beginning of the 12th century. In the late renaissance era, the same techniques would be used by magicians, but with the intention of bringing things about, rather than merely remembering the past.

There is no obvious set of Places for the 78 Images of the Tarocchi. Esoteric scholars believe that the Places are to be found in the Qabalistic diagrams known as the Trees of Life, in which ten Sefiroth, drawn as circles, are linked by various arrangements of 22 connecting Paths.

There is a saying within the Guardian Order, "The Minors are more important than the Majors." This is because, among the Minors, the four court cards refer to the Four Worlds of the Qabalists, 'Atsiluth, Briyah, Yetsirah and Assiyah, and the ten numbered cards refer to the Ten Sefiroth of the Tree of Life. The 22 Majors or Triumphs refer only to the Paths linking the Sefiroth.

As it is written:

"The Minors refer to where we are going; the Majors to the ways to get there."

Because the 22 Paths of the Tree of Life are referred to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, the Triumphs can also be linked to Hebrew letters and through them to a wide variety of other esoteric lists of correspondences. The correspondences between Tarocchi and Qabalah are set out in the two Tables in this paper. Note that the magical number of each Triumph is the value of its corresponding Hebrew letter. The numbers before the Triumph merely show their order.

It is not appropriate, at this early stage, to discuss which Paths are referred to which Triumphs. While a few Paths are referred to the same Triumphs and Letters in all 35 of the Trees of Life in Weavers' Woods, most Triumphs are on Paths linking different Sefiroth in different Trees of Life.

Experienced magicians work with a variety of different Trees of Life. They study the shifts in significance of the Triumphs as they appear on different Paths in different Trees of Life.

The general rule for referring Letters to Paths in any of the Trees of Life is: To the right, to the left, to the centre; to the right, to the left, to the centre.

Since the days of ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, certain High Magicians have used the use the techniques of Daimonic Magic to draw down the planetary and other cosmic influences. These techniques are referred to, usually obliquely, in the Hermetica, which were ancient Graeco-Egyptian esoteric and magical writings, lost for centuries and rediscovered at the beginning of the Renaissance. One of them, 'The Perfect Word', describes the gods of the cosmos:

"There are certain gods apprehensible by thought alone, who rule over all departments of the universe. Subordinate to them are the gods or daimones. The daimones are the gods who make all things throughout the universe, working one through another, each pouring the light of life into those things they make. The Ruler of Heaven and of all things in the divine world is Zeus Hypatos (the Highest).

Pantomorphos (Every-Shape) is the Ruler of the Decans, the thirty-six stars called the horoscopi. Pantomorphos gives the individuals of each kind their diverse forms. The seven spheres or planets have as their Ruler the god Eimarmenen (Fortune), who changes everything all the time using the laws of natural growth. Spiritus is the organ through which gods work. To the Ruler of Air, Zeus Neatos (the Lowest), belongs the region between heaven and earth. Earth and sea are ruled by Zeus Chthonios (Earthly World), who supplies nutriment to all mortal beings that have soul. It is by this power that the fruits of the earth and sea are produced. There are other gods as well, whose powers and operations are spread through all things that exist."

The Decans refer to the division of the circle of the heavens into 36 ten-degree sections, three to each Sign of the Zodiac. The oldest surviving depiction of the Daimones or Gods of the Decans is in a zodiac painted on the ceiling of a chapel of Osiris within the Temple of Hathor at Dendera, built around 300 Bce. They are the standing figures arranged around the inside of the circumference of the inner circle in the Zodiac.

An important shift in the meaning of the word Daimon (pronounced dye-moan) has taken place. In classical Greece, a Daimon was a god, or one's own inner genius or guiding spirit. It was benevolent and inspiring. In modern esoteric language, this is the Holy Guardian Angel or Highest Self. During the early centuries of Ce, Christianity, the new state religion of the Roman Empire, had to fight to resist the return of the older religions of Greece, Rome, Egypt and Persia. It did its best to destroy all knowledge of one's own inner Daimon or god. God was to be sought only through the One Church.

In so doing, Christianity acted no worse than other religions. Every religion tends to exalt its own gods, and to regard the gods of other religions as evil demons.

When Renaissance scholars rediscovered the hermetic writings in the 15th century, most of them saw the Greek word Daimon used of the gods of the Cosmos by the ancients, but read it in the contemporary meaning of demon, a devil or evil spirit. As a result of this mistake, many avoided the hermetic writings as devil worship, while others grasped for the power and wealth which they thought the ability to control demons would give them.

From this error came the grimoires which saw the ancient magical and theurgic rituals to align with the Daimones or powers of the Cosmos as nothing more than spells to gain power over evil demons to force them to do the will of the magician.

In the Western world, immature people have from time to time taken up devil worship and have deliberately invoked powers of evil and destruction in order to gain the things which they feel they have been denied by their society, their families or their religion. Most such folk have had puritan or fundamentalist religious backgrounds. The grimoires of the 17th & 18th centuries largely come from those countries where Christianity was most repressive. They are a mixture of prayers to God and Jesus on the one hand, and to the Devil and legions of demons on the other. Their authors sought short cuts to power and luxury, as long as they could welsh on their pacts with the Devil at the last moment. It doesn't work like

that. Those who involve themselves with the destructive forces cannot help but destroy themselves.

Some modern occultists, usually those reacting against a childhood upbringing by rigid fundamentalist Christian parents, choose to worship the god whom those religions call Satan. It has been said, "You have to be a Christian, before you can become a Satanist." Few Satanists are any more evil or destructive than the average human being. Most of them actually worship the god Pan, even if they have got the name wrong. Life, especially in the world of the occult, is never simple; human beings and their beliefs are wondrously complicated and rarely consistent.

Some Renaissance scholars looked beyond the prejudices of their era and saw the eternal truths within the Hermetic wisdom. They revived Daimonic Magic as a healing art and as a means to alignment with the cosmic powers. The first was Marsilio Ficino, who translated the *Hermetica* for the Pope in 1463.

The most magical of these hermetic scholars was Giordano Bruno. In his "Concerning Shadows of Ideas", he set out 150 images, linked to various astrological symbols, planets, houses, signs and Decans. He possibly derided them from earlier sources. Accompanying the images are instructions how to use them in the Art of Memory.

Bruno's Art of Memory is far more than a system of mnemonics. They are designed to effect changes in both the magician and the world around him. Henry Cornelius Agrippa also offers images of a similar nature in his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*. By Bruno's time, there had been a reaction against the new learning. Bruno was burned as a heretic in 1600 a century after Ficino had died a natural death, loaded with ecclesiastical honours.

Daimonic magic was based on the principle of inducing an influx of *Spiritus Mundi* (Spirit of the world) which mediates between the Highest and its Body (the material sphere) and is diffused throughout the whole universe. It is through *Spiritus Mundi* that the Daimonic or magical influence comes down to humans, who absorb it in their inner spirit.

As it is written in Rabbi Abraham Dior' *Thirty Two Paths of Wisdom*, a renaissance Kabbalistic document: "The Tenth Path (the physical sphere) causes a copious influx from the Prince of the First Sphere (the Highest)."

To attract the *Spiritus* or Daimon of a Planet or Decan, a magician should set aside a special Sanctuary or Temple for the purpose and decorate it with pictures, statues, plants, scents, colours and so on associated with a particular Daimonic influence. Magic consists of guiding the *Spiritus* to flow into the material realm.

An important technique of Daimonic magic is the manufacture of Talismans. A Talisman is an artificially manufactured container for the Daimonic forces. Made of material appropriate to the Daimonic force sought, it should be the right shape and inscribed with diagrams, sigils and words of the Daimon. Each step of the process must be done when the Daimonic

influence or cosmic energy, to use a more modern term, is most powerful various systems were used to determine such times.

Astrology, and for those who did not have the wit nor enthusiasm to learn astrology, Books of Planetary Hours, or, in our day modern computer-driven astrological programmes which can determine precisely when the particular Daimonic influences are most powerful and also when they are propitious and easy to handle.

A talisman can also be any material object into which Spiritus or the Daimon of a cosmic power has become infused and which stores it, even if it has not been subjected to special magical procedures. There have been preserved many lists of things which, by natural correspondence, attract the Spiritus of the each of the planets and other cosmic powers.