

TAROT INTERPRETATION

Lesson Three

After the stress and shock of sudden awakening to the error of separateness, after the lightning flash of true knowledge has toppled the crown from the tower of common sense as shown in Key 16, comes a period of calm, gradual growth. In the second stage of unfoldment, there is a sudden, painful overthrow of false wisdom of "this world," a momentary, yet unforgettable glimpse of reality, a quick insight into the absolute unity of life. In the third stage, this conception of the unity of ALL begins gradually to develop.

What occurs during this development we may discover from Key 17. You will remember that this Key is related to the esoteric meaning of the letter Tzaddi, the "fish-hook." To this letter is assigned the function of meditation. In astrology it corresponds to Aquarius, the sign of the Man, ruled by Saturn.

Let us begin with this last detail. In Tarot, Saturn is Key 21, the World, symbol of cosmic consciousness. In mythology, Saturn was fabled to devour his children. In occult psychology, we find cosmic consciousness swallowing up all its differentiations.

As Saturn was father of the gods, so is cosmic consciousness the source whence spring all states of personal consciousness. Cosmic consciousness is not something new, though it is something we look forward to experiencing. We really go **back** to it, though the time when we shall do so is in the future.

Persons familiar with conventional astrological interpretations of Saturn are puzzled to find this planet represented by the gay dancer of Key 21. They think of Saturn as being a malefic, as having a constricting, confining, limiting quality.

That it seems to have an unfortunate influence on worldly affairs must be admitted, but this is because ordinary worldly affairs are conducted from the point-of-view of limited, three-dimensional consciousness. The affairs of "this world," and the structures of politics and economics devised to take care of these affairs, are based on a fundamental delusion.

To one engaged in a vain endeavor to erect a house of life on the lonely peak of personal isolation, the influence of Saturn is truly inimical. Not so for one who has developed, and lives from, a consciousness of the unity of Being. Then the Saturnine force of restriction becomes a means for concentrating the Life-power into definitely desirable and beautiful forms of expression.

This aspect of Saturn's manifestation is depicted by Key 17. It is the basis for the growth in wisdom characterizing the third stage of spiritual unfoldment. For meditation, "an unbroken flow of knowledge in a particular object," begins with concentration, and the act of concentration is voluntary limitation of the field of consciousness. This limitation is Saturnine in quality.

Meditation is prolonged concentration. By associating it with Tzaddi, Qabalists liken meditation to a fish-hook. The analogy is good, even in its more obvious implications. Its deeper meanings are worthy of serious consideration.

A fundamental assumption of Ageless Wisdom is that every center of the Life-power is related to the **whole** Life-power. The Many are expressions of the One. In its perfect knowledge, the One unites past, present and future. It knows its whole self-expression and knows every part of the whole. Our personal consciousness is a specialization of this cosmic consciousness, and since the Life-power is omnipresent and omnipotent, nothing whatever can prevent it from communicating to any one of its personal centers any detail of the knowledge possessed by it.

While yet we are deluded by the illusion of separateness, it seems to us that we, as persons, think and feel, that we have personal states of self-consciousness and subconsciousness. Except for comparatively brief periods of ecstasy, even the greatest sages experience the same illusion. They, however, know it for what it is and ~~are not deceived~~ by it.

Apply this principle when you study. If you believe this is your personal work, if you regard the details of esoteric knowledge as being terribly difficult, so that you must get them into your head by dint of arduous personal exertion, you actually increase the difficulty.

Think of your study as being the work of the Life-power which already knows every one of these details. Remind yourself that the Life-power brings you what you can use at the moment you most need the knowledge. You will be amazed to see what a difference this will make.

To return to the connection between the letter Tzaddi, the fish-hook, and what goes on during meditation, let us remind you that the inner consciousness is often compared to a sea, and the various forms of knowledge to fishes swimming in it. When we select some particular object for concentration and focus the Life-power upon it in an act of attention, we are baiting a hook and dropping it into the sea of subconsciousness. As fish are attracted by bait, so are various forms of knowledge having an affinity for the object of concentration attracted to our mental fish-hook.

Suppose, for example, you concentrate on a Tarot Key. In the beginning you may not see very much, but the longer you watch, the nearer will you come to the time when some detail will be emphasized in your consciousness.

Then you will seem to sense the presence of a deeper meaning below the surface. This is the time to land your fish. Get out your notebook and put your impressions into words. The words will come—sometimes a few, and sometimes several paragraphs. Then cast your hook again and watch until another thought-form takes the bait.

Maintain the mood of expectancy. Your subconsciousness is like a bay, opening into the ocean of cosmic consciousness. Thought-forms from remote reaches of that great sea will be drawn to you by meditation.

The Life-power knows just what everything means. It has perfect memory of every thought that has ever taken form in the consciousness of every human being. “Nothing is hidden that shall not be revealed.” There are no lost arts, no impenetrable secrets.

Thus the Rosicrucian CONFESSIO says: “Were it not an excellent thing so to live . . . that neither the people which dwell beyond the Ganges, nor those which live in Peru might be able to keep their counsels from thee? So to read in one only book, as to discern, understand and remember whatsoever in all other books (which heretofore have been, are now, and hereafter shall come out) hath been, is and shall be learned out of them?” Meditation is the process whereby these wonders are accomplished.

But we have quoted from the CONFESSIO for another reason. It was published by the European branch of the world-wide occult society we call the Inner School. Note that it refers to “those beyond the Ganges,” and “those in Peru.” Here is a hint that the anonymous writers who published the CONFESSIO in 1616 were in communication with the Himalayan Brothers “beyond the Ganges,” and with the strong center, located in the Andes, which had been in touch with both the Asiatic and the European groups since long before Columbus sailed to find the Indies.

More than this, note that the passage begins by pointing out a way of life. He who lives according to this way does not break into the company of the adepts. He does not pilfer the secrets of occultism from them. He becomes the sort of person from whom they are unable to keep their counsels. His unfoldment is known to them, and they are eager to communicate to him what they know just as soon as he is ready to receive instruction.

The symbol of the fish-hook, again, is a clue to something else which occurs during meditation. Every kind of mental activity has its physical accompaniments, and physical changes caused by mental states are by no means limited to transformations of cells in the brain. To this fact the letter-name Tzaddi refers.

You have learned that in Hebrew the “fish” is Nun, and to that letter is assigned Scorpio, the zodiacal sign governing reproduction. As a fish-hook draws fish out of the water to be eaten,

so right practice of meditation lifts up the nerve-force energizing the organs governed by Scorpio. So lifted up, this energy becomes food for the growth of the spiritual man.

On this account, continence and chastity are insisted on in all books dealing with spiritual development. Many persons, however, are inclined to exaggerate these requirements. They who suppose that chastity is necessary to right meditation, or to occult development, are in error. On the contrary, the chaste life, because it is a life of repression, is a hindrance to spiritual unfoldment.

The Bible contains accounts of men who ripened into the higher consciousness, and says some of them were fathers of large families. Among our contemporaries are men and women of illumination who are by no means chaste. Clean living and control are indispensable. Control, however, implies right **use**, not suppression.

Until seekers for light come into possession of right knowledge concerning the functions of sex, there will continue to be more or less acceptance of false doctrines. This is not the place to elaborate on this theme. They who are ready for more light will find it if they but fix in mind two points: first, that the sex-force has other uses than reproduction; second, that its misuse may consist either in employing it for mere sense pleasure, or else in repressing it because it is supposed to be inimical to spiritual growth.

The third stage of unfoldment, though it makes use of, and modifies, the nerve-force ordinarily employed in the sex-function, has nothing to do with that function itself. Right meditation releases and lifts up the "serpent-power," *Kundalini*, stored in a center at the base of the spine.

This center corresponds to what yoga philosophy calls the *Muladhara chakra*, or basic lotus. Modern physiologists call it the sacral plexus. In our lessons it is the "interior star," Saturn, corresponding to alchemical lead.

Thus it is connected with the planet which rules Aquarius. Meditation makes the force stored in this center rise, so that it energizes, in succession, six other centers. Three are in the trunk, one in the throat, two in the head.

In Key 17, the seven centers are symbolized by eight-pointed white stars surrounding a larger yellow star. The latter indicates the source of the power modified in meditation. It is the cosmic energy, the "stellar radiance" or "astral light" mentioned by Eliphas Levi in the quotation you read in the first lesson of Seven Steps.

Remember this always. You are not trying to control some power which is your personal possession. You are simply learning how to obey certain laws of a universal energy which is the Limitless Light whence all things proceed. Because the primary activity of this Light is a

whirling motion, it is represented by an eight-pointed star whose rays are like the eight spokes of the Wheel of Fortune.

Persons of small understanding bring against this teaching the accusation that by it men seek to save themselves. It is, they say, like trying to lift oneself by one's own bootstraps.

This is untrue. Ageless Wisdom proclaims the folly of the man who thinks he can save himself. It tells us that, little by little, the Life-power ripens its personal centers to the point where they become able to understand and apply the perfect law of liberty. Each person's liberation is a particular fulfillment of cosmic law. It is also a true work of "grace" because its basis is the self-impartment of the One Life to one of that Life's personal manifestations.

The beginning of the way of meditation is concentration on things of the external world, on facts reported by the physical senses. The mood in which this concentration is undertaken is of great importance.

Whatever object you select, bear in mind the truth that the Life-power already knows all about it, perceives it just as it is, and sees its true relation to other objects. Make the mind receptive to an influx of this knowledge by holding your attention to the selected object. Let your mood be expectant, a confident belief that the Life-power will impart to you just exactly the kind and amount of knowledge you can grasp and apply.

As a result of this practice, you will begin to realize the unity behind the various appearances of the external world. The longer you meditate, the deeper and clearer will be your understanding of what the Wheel of Fortune symbolizes.

Nothing is better as an object of meditation than one of the Tarot Keys, or some combination of Keys. They speak a language already known to your subconsciousness, and their message teaches the unity of life.

Gradually, as you continue practicing, you will begin to identify your personal consciousness with the consciousness of nature, or the Natural Intelligence. You will begin to know that the operations of your mind are linked to the great system described by Ezekiel as being composed of wheels within wheels, that is, concentric circles of activity.

This realization is the beginning of your practical experience of the truth of non-separateness. Eventually, you will see that all your mental states are phases in the manifestation of the one consciousness which directs the growth of trees and grasses, the flight of insects and birds, the flow of streams and the sweep of ocean currents. You will actually **feel**, flowing through your mind and body, the power which holds the stars in their courses, the power which flames from countless suns. Then you will exchange mere intellectual assent for the true knowledge which has been called **the doctrine of the heart**.

With this experience comes a new understanding of Mother Nature, the feminine aspect of the Life-power. This is shown by all three Tarot Keys which relate to the third stage of unfoldment. In Keys 3 and 17, the central figure is a woman—the same woman. In Key 10, the title points to the working of the same feminine power. This is the turning wheel of Fortuna, the goddess whom the Greeks called *Panthea*, in whom all the feminine deities were synthesized. She it is who makes meditation possible. Using our mental activity, the Life-power manifests its ability to meditate, through the operation of the universal subconsciousness, the Eternal Feminine. In us She meditates **when we get out of Her way.**

The experience of the second stage of unfoldment, the sharp flash of perception, is called the Exciting Intelligence, because it sets up subconscious responses which take forms in meditation. In that moment, the spiritual man is conceived in the womb of subconsciousness, and the third and fourth stages of unfoldment correspond in many ways to the processes of physical gestation and birth. One need give no thought to the physiological processes in meditation other than to recognize what takes place. We warn you against trying to raise the serpent-power by concentration on any part of your physical body.

We do not mean that good results are not sometimes obtained by such practice, but no two persons need precisely the same regimen. To know what a student requires, his teacher must be able to exercise the clear vision whereby exact knowledge of the condition of the seven centers may be gained. The seven stages of unfoldment serve as a manual of technical instruction. They are meant to give you a bird's-eye view of the Path of Liberation, to prepare you for subsequent work which will take you over the Path itself.

Find the deeper truths for yourself by studying attentively the three Tarot Keys on which this lesson is based. They have a particular message for you. The Knower, seated in your heart, is aware of this special application, and can communicate it to you—**if you look, and then listen for the Voice of the Teacher within.**