

FORTUNA'S WHEEL

THE MYSTERIES OF MEDIEVAL TAROT

WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY

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Renaissance Astrology

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To Patti

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FOREWORD

While the term "New Age" conjures up visions of chakra-cleansing, crystal healers channeling tips for personal prosperity, the surging popularity of sometimes shallow occult interests has deep and ancient roots. For all of the vapidness of the buffet style modern spirituality, its very existence shows a rejection of the atheistic materialism that has dominated Western thought for the past 300 years and a return to the authentic esoteric tradition Western tradition.

This makes it all the more appropriate that we can see the exact moment of gestation of Nigel's alluring Tarot images in an astrological election done for the patron of alchemy, astrology and magic, the fabled Thrice Great Hermes. The election comes from *the Discourse the Eighth and the Ninth*, a Hermetic text in the Nag Hammadi Library. *The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth* is an account of a Hermetic initiation. The initiate, having already attained to the wisdom of the first seven spheres, that of the planets, is instructed and then initiated by Hermes Trismegistus into the mysteries of the 8th sphere, that of the fixed stars or empyrean and finally into the 9th, the sphere of God. The initiate first learns intellectually, "I have understood, my father, each one of the books" *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*, at 323, and has purified himself, "We have already advanced to the seventh [sphere] since we are pious and walk in your law." *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*, at 324.

Next he receives a spiritual initiation from Hermes Trismegistus, an actual mystic experience that confirms the intellectual knowledge, encompasses it and then transcends it. "When he had finished praising, he shouted, 'Father Trismegistus! What shall I say? We have received this light. And I see myself this same vision in you. And I see the eighth and the souls that are in it and the angels singing a hymn to the ninth and its powers. And I see him who has the power of them all, creating those [that are] in the spirit.'" *Discourse* at 325.

So Nigel's tarot images arise from one of the great sources of magical and artistic inspiration, Hermes Trismegistus himself! It is both a great privilege and a pleasure for me to release this tribute, both artistic and esoteric, to our great patron under the Renaissance Astrology imprint.

“I come to the fields and spacious palaces of memory where are the treasures of innumerable images...”

St. Augustine *The Confessions*, Bk X.

I

INTRODUCTION

THE MIRRORS OF MERCURIUS

The symbolic world which a pack of tarot cards opens up and invites us to enter is a mysterious realm indeed. The tarot unseals the gates into a kingdom of curious images which provoke our visionary intuition and tease our faculty of symbolic perception into play. The quaint but strangely evocative emblems of the cards exemplify that singular genius for symbolic understanding via metaphor and allegory which the High Middle Ages and Renaissance cultivated to such a sophisticated level. In the tarot we see displayed an 'Imago Mundi', a visual map of the medieval world-view, a miniature universe, displaying the hierarchic levels of society and the Chain of Being. At the same time a pathway to the Supreme is revealed, a 'salvation cycle' which guides us up a ladder of metaphoric images from the world of humanity, through the realm of personified allegories and virtues to the mysteries of the spiritual kingdom and ultimately into the heaven-world of eternity sought by the medieval mystics in their quest for Divine Union.

Many interpretations of tarot have been created in the last hundred years, reflecting a diversity of points of view and personal philosophies. In this work it will be the main intention to explore the original and oldest traditions of tarot symbolism, an iconography predicated upon a distinctive blend of Biblical, Catholic, classical Stoic and Pythagorean-Platonic pictorial themes and rooted in the Northern Italian culture of the late Middle Ages. But we shall probe beneath the sometimes conventional exterior of the imagery to indicate the more mysterious meanings they can convey on an esoteric level of interpretation.

The search for tarot origins has elicited a plethora of fascinating, influential and often ingenious ideas, few of which seem to have possessed much in the way of factual substance. The very word 'tarot' itself presents one such riddle: the 16th century French word tarot is derived from the Old Italian *tarocchi* which has been thought to be descended from the Arabic *taraba* - "reject." This is said to be a reference to the discarding of cards which goes on during the game of trumps and is a possible indicator of the

roots of card-gaming in the Arab world of the Mamluk period. However whilst decks of four-suited playing cards called *Mulūk wa-Nunwāb* from 15th century Islamic civilization are documented and extant, the word tarot is actually used to denote the 22 symbolic triumphs (Italian - *trionfi*) or trump cards, also called *atutti*, which form a kind of fifth suit in addition to the four suits of the usual playing-card pack. They are called *atutti* or *atouts* ("to all") in French because in the game played with tarot cards they are superior in value to all the others. This wedding of the 22 *trionfi* with the four suits of playing cards seems to have occurred at some point during the 1400s in the region of Lombardy and Piedmont and this felicitous expansion or fusion brought into being the pack of cards which we today refer to as the tarot. Another etymology is that advanced by Francesco Berni in his work, *Capitolo del Gioco della Primiera*, in 1526 - according to Berni the word *Tarocco* means 'foolery'.

Some proposed etymologies are predicated upon the patterns of decorative indentations or hammered 'points' used to ornament early decks and in this light it is interesting that there is a strain of oranges with light golden pitted skin cultivated in Italy called *tarocco*. WH Willshire in his 1876 book, *A descriptive catalogue of playing and other cards in the British Museum*, says concerning the etymology of the word 'tarot':

The term tarotee...was applied to cards diapered or marked on the backs with lines crossing lozenge-wise, or dotted diagonally with small spots, such as cards often were...They were also occasionally bordered with a silver margin, on which was represented a spiral or tortuous band, formed by similar dots or points. This band being likened to a tare, an "espece de gaufrure produite par de petites trous piques et elignes en compartements", the cards possessing it were called 'tarots'. According to Menestrier "tare" signifies properly a hole - default, dechet, tache, trou - derived from the Greek 'terein', 'to bore'. The dots, points & c. in the ornamentation alluded to, simulating little hollows, the cards having them were called tarots, or were said to be tarotees.'

Yet other theorists speculate upon a connection with the river Taro, a tributary of the river Po in Northern Italy, the region in which the 'triumphs' seem to first appear. Furthermore the writer Idris Shah opined that the *tarocchi* pack was shaped by Sufic symbolic traditions and that the word *tarocco* came from Arabic *tariqa* meaning the 'way' or 'path'.

Controversy still rages unabated over the actual nature of the tarot and the import of its symbolism: for playing-card historians of a sceptical bent the pack was simply a collection of commonplace pictorial depictions and

was 'just a game', that's to say a trivial amusement or mundane diversion without any deeper implications. From this point of view the cards possessed no arcane or spiritual meaning until these were attached to them from the late 18th century onwards during the various 'occult revivals' of the modern era whose exponents manufactured a faux-historical background for the subject. This is undoubtedly true. The 'Kabbalistic' correspondences and other occultist accretions which have grown up around the tarot have no validated history preceding the 19th century.

Of course it's entirely true that we find no learned commentaries on tarot cards in the encyclopaedic works of the Hermeticists of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries such as we might expect if they were an acknowledged part of the esoteric culture of that period. However on the practical plane this in no way diminishes their value and power as a symbolic system for divination and meditation: nor does it affect the way in which a genuinely esoteric level of meaning can be seen to be inherent within the traditional emblems. In truth, we can not reliably say what the intentions of the original designer of the tarot cards really were one way or the other. In the field of tarology, for all the tantalizing hints and historical pointers, *omnia exeunt in mysterium* ("everything passes into mystery"). One might also opine that sometimes it is those secrets which are in plain view that remain truly hidden. There also remains the distinct possibility that the integrity of tarot designs were conserved and transmitted within the guild-system of the late medieval civilization, particularly the printers and engravers guilds of that epoch which developed from scribes guilds attached to various churches and monasteries. The transmission of traditional *tarocchi* designs amongst *Cartiers* (Card-makers) was in fact passed down from Master to Apprentice within this environment of craft guilds in unbroken lines until the middle of the 18th century.

Others, pointing to the documented pre-modern references to the use of cards in divination and sorcery in Europe, point out that both gaming and divination, founded as they are upon the imponderable mysteries of Fate and hidden tides of Fortune, may well have shared roots. The technique of games of chance and the methods of divination by sortilege are pretty much the same and probably evince a common ancestry in the casting or drawing of lots. Many games too have a clear cosmological structure and therefore a divinatory application is implicit within them. In the case of tarot which certainly embodies a medieval 'mirror of the universe' or 'cosmos in miniature' this could be said to underline its magical and divinatory usages.

Writing in 1599 the French theologian Pierre de la Primaudaye condemned cards on the grounds that they were the invention of the god Mercury: elaborating further on this assertion he described a ritual which he

says initiated card-play in his day which involved the player kissing the card depicting the god Mercury and then pouring a splash of wine as a libation to the god. In the 1651 English translation of Agrippa's classic compendium of Western magical lore, *De Occulta Philosophia*, we likewise encounter a description, sourced from Plato, of the daemon Theutus (Thoth) 'who taught cards and dice'. These interesting 16th and 17th century references to the association between cards and the god Mercury, Thoth or Theutus are thought-provoking. As well as being the divine trickster and messenger of the gods Mercury was also the guide of souls, the patron of all magical arts, astrology and alchemy and interpreter of secret lore. Ancient traditions preserved in the *Kore Kosmu* tractate of the *Corpus Hermeticum* describe how Hermes Trismegistos inscribed the Secret Wisdom upon tablets which he concealed before the Flood in the 'sanctuary of the everlasting zones', the Imaginal World, that it should be saved and discovered by the succeeding generations of the post-diluvian world.

It might be worthwhile to recall at the outset that quicksilver, the planetary metal of Mercury, is used to 'silver' the backs of mirrors and in a curious manner the tarot cards act in a similar way as mirrors of the world, the soul and its passage through life and the hereafter. Also like mirrors they may even be deceptive, in keeping with their inventor the trickster-god Mercury-Hermes, reflecting those things we wish to see in their depths and beguiling us like a hall of mirrors. Or such mirrors may in fact disclose a clear revelation of hitherto unseen truths and mysteries to those who look therein in accord with the nature of Hermes the Interpreter, the bearer of messages and signs between the worlds of gods and humans. And on that note we may begin our exploration of the symbolic world of the tarot cards.

A TAROT TIMELINE: CARDS IN PLAY & DIVINATION

To gain some idea of the historical developments in the use of cards in gaming and divination from their earliest documented appearance this chronological outline may be a useful aid to gain an initial overview.

1377: Johannes Teutonicus, a Dominican also called John of Rheidenfeld, in the treatise *De Moribus et Disciplina Humani Conversationis* describes the *ludus cartarum*, the 'game of cards' in which is depicted the 'state of the world' (status mundi).

1378: The game of cards banned at Regensburg.

1379: According to the Italian writer Giovanni Covelluzo this was the year that the game of cards called *naibi* was introduced into Italy, it's origins being Moorish. He says: 'the game of cards was brought into Viterbo from the country of the Saracens.' The term *naib* means either 'Viceroy' in Arabic which is one of the court cards or alternatively it is the Flemish word for paper, *knaep*.

1380: The game of cards is mentioned in the ordinance of Nuremburg.

1392: The court accounts of Charles VI record that the painter Jacques Gringonneur was paid 56 sols for painting three packs of cards.

1404: The Synod of Langres prohibits card-play.

1408: The court inventory of the Dukes of Orleans records the purchase of some packs of cards called *Quartes de Lombardie* (Cards of Lombardy) and *Quartes Sarraïnes* (Saracen cards).

1422: Record of the artist Bonifacio Bembo being commissioned by the Duke of Milan to create the pack now known as the Visconti-Sforza *tarocchi*.

1423: St Bernadino of Siena preaches at Bologna against games of chance which he ascribes to diabolical invention, including cards which are termed *charticellas seu naibos*.

1427: Guild registers at Brabant record the names of two Master Card-Makers.

1428: The so-called 'Cary-Yale' *tarocchi* pack commissioned for the wedding of Filippo Visconti and Maria of Savoy.

1430: Amadeus VIII of Savoy prohibits card-play.

1440: Duke Filippo Maria Visconti recorded commissioning *carte da triumphi*.

1441: A magistrate's decree issued at Venice prohibiting the import of foreign card packs, presumably to protect the making of card packs in the city by the fellowship of painters.

1442: The court ledgers of the Este family at Ferrara record the purchase of 'carticelles da trionfi'.

1450/70: The Steele sermon, a manuscript containing a denunciation by a friar in Northern Italy who condemns tarot cards as devilish and the trumps as 21 steps descending into hell. He gives a detailed rundown of the whole pack including the four suits of *denarii* (coins), *cuppe* (cups), *bastoni* (clubs) and *enses* (swords) as well as the 15th century Italian titles of the 22 *triumphorum* or trump cards. He describes the tarot cards as pictorial emblems of 'God, the angels, the planets and the cardinal virtues' as well as portraying the 'luminaries of the world' such as the Emperor and Pope.

1459: St Antoninus of Florence fulminates against game-play with the *chartis vel naibis*.

1463: Decree issued prohibiting cards into England to protect the English card-making trade.

1482: First mention in French of a card game called *Triumphe*.

1488: Prohibition of games excluding *ludis triumphorum* at Brescia in Italy.

1491: Prohibition of gaming at Bergamo in Italy exempts tarot cards from the ban.

1496: The Duke of Lorraine is recorded to have played *Triumphe*.

1499: French forces besiege Milan: returning troops bring back Tarocchi cards to France which form the Franco-Milanese/Marseilles pattern.

1507: Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola in his work *De Rerum Praenotione* dealing with methods of divination (which he opposed) mentions painted cards amongst the various methods of sortilege he describes. In the same years tarot cards are recorded as being manufactured at Lyons in France.

1519: The fourteenth century poem published under the title *Spagna istoriata* at Milan describes Roland performing a magical ritual to locate the foes of Charlemagne in which he arranges a pack of cards around a magical circle.

1527: The poem *Caos del Triperuno* by Teofilo Folengo (also known as Merlini Cocai) which describes the significance of the tarot cards which when drawn as *sortes* (lots) form the subject of sonnets.

1540 : Francesco Marcalino da Forlì's book on divination using cards called *Le Ingeniose Sorti Composte* or *Giardino di Pensieri* is published at Venice.

1575: John Northbrooke at Bristol in England writes a tractate in which he denounces cards as pagan images, "The playe at Cardes is an invention of the Deuill, which he founde out that he might the easier bring in Ydolatrie amongst men. For the Kings and Coate cardes that we use nowe were in olde time the ymages of Idols and false Gods: which since they that would seeme Christians have changed into Charlemane, Launcelot, Hector, and such like names, because they woule not seeme to imitate their ydolatrie herein, and yet maintaine the playe it self, the very inuention of Satan, the Deuill, and would disguise this mischief under the cloake of such gaye names."

1581: William Rowland in his book on judicial astrology published in 1652 describes how in the year 1581 the secretary to the Earl of Essex, Henry Cuffe (1563-1601) consulted with a diviner and three cards were drawn which predicted his death twenty years later on the gallows. The cards were knaves and it is conjectured that 'The Hanged Man' may have been among them.

1582, Jean Gosselin, an astrologer, mathematician and follower of the mystic Guillaume Postel, in his work, *La Signification de l'ancien jeu des Chartes Pythagorique*, describes the ancient game of the 'Pythagoric' cards and gives elemental ascriptions for the suits.

1589: The Venetian Inquisition seek a sorceress called Angela who, it is alleged, has counselled her client Corona to get hold of the tarot card 'The Devil' to use in a magical rite. In the same year another Venetian sorceress, Isabella Bellochio is accused of having a magical shrine in her house with a votive lamp (*cesendello*) burning before 'a devil and the tarots.'

1612: The canonist Pierre Gregoire at Lyon in his commentaries on early papal and ecclesiastical pronouncements writes on 'sortilege' condemning cards along with amulets and magical characters in his denunciation of those who visit diviners, fortune-tellers and soothsayers.

1619: William Maxwell authors a text on, *A Pythagorickall Play at Cardes, representing the Excellencie and Utilitie of Union, with the Ignobilitie and Incommodities of Division. So called in honour of James and Anne, our King and Queene of Union*, published in London.

1622: The demonologist Pierre de Lancre mentions cartomancy in one of his works dealing with sorcery.

1725: Pope Benedict XIII prohibits the subjects of the Pope and the Angel (the variant name for Judgement) in card packs. This leads to cards 2 and 5, the Popess and the Pope, being replaced by the classical emblems of Juno and Jupiter as can be seen in tarots of the Swiss and Besancon patterns.

1753 : The French writer Etteilla, by his own account drawing upon the oral information of some elderly Piedmontese card-readers, publishes his manual of card-divination, *l'Abrege de la Cartonomanie*.

1770: Etteilla publishes his book on divination with cards, *Etteilla ou Maniere de se recreer*.

1773: The Protestant theologian Court de Gebelin's monumental multi-volume work, *Le Monde primitif*, is published in volume 8 of which he makes the claim that Tarot is 'a work of the ancient Egyptians, one of the books saved from the flames that destroyed their superb libraries', the fabled 'Book of Thoth' no less. He incorporates the essay on tarot by the Comte de Mellet.

1788: Etteilla founds the '*Societe litteraire des associes libres des interpretes du livre de Thot*' to study the tarot cards which he asserts were originally inscribed upon golden plates in a temple near Memphis 171 years after the Flood. These developments pave the way for emergence of the occult tarot in the modern period.

ON WORLDVIEW & TAROT

It may be altogether too easy to assume from our modern perspective that what we may regard as merely conventional emblems or 'just a game' were somehow less than significant to the people of the medieval and renaissance world. In reality they saw the universe and experienced life in a way that was qualitatively different to we moderns, whose conceptual horizons are determined by secular and scientific conditioning based ultimately on rationalistic atheism and the mechanistic ideology of reductionist materialism. These premises are so ingrained in us that it is quite difficult for us to actually appreciate the world-view of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

H.T Hansen has written, "Since modern man is so slow to lay aside his belief in progress, which stamps his thought patterns and distorts his yardsticks - it seems to him almost monstrous that there also exist completely different ways of thinking."

This statement is very relevant to the problems surrounding tarot symbolism. By using Tarot as a hook to hang modernist theories of historical interpretation and logicians arguments upon we get no nearer the worldview that produced the tarots and we entirely fail to understand what such images connoted to the people of medieval and renaissance Europe. To do that actually requires a leap of imagination and a radical shift of paradigm.

To the inhabitants of that pre-modern age the whole visible universe was moved and ensouled by spiritual powers, visible effects whether good or evil were traced to 'occult' causes. Images such as the Pope, the Devil, the Last Judgement, Justice, Christ surrounded by the tetramorphs (the World) etc., were an index of the sphere of spiritual truths and faith in the invisible and unseen mysteries of the creation, the 'Occult', the realm of the soul and it's realities. They were deeply affective images which is why they were part of the cultural currency and mindset.

Compared to the somewhat etiolated world we live in the people of medieval and renaissance Europe experienced life in bold, primary hues, they were much closer to life and death and the caprices of Dame Fortuna than we are and their sensibility, centred on religious faith and awareness of the spiritual world, was one painted in strong colours and bold forms. The Tarot emblems are certainly a window upon that worldview and its ethos and values.

TRUMPS & MEDIEVAL SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Medieval society was founded on a tripartite ideal of social hierarchy which consisted of farmers, knights and ecclesiastics: the three estates of medieval society were in fact rooted in a very ancient model of trifunctionality which was rooted in the ancient Roman civilization (and common also to the ancient Greek, Celtic, Germanic, Persian and Indian cultures), the threefold 'divine society' of Indo-European and Indo-Iranian traditions. This is clearly seen in the pantheons of the classical world which were a heavenly archetype reflected in the human world. In the Roman world this was seen to be comprised by the gods of the pre-Capitoline pantheon of Jupiter, Mars and Quirinus or Venus, equating with the Jupiterian priesthood of the *flamens*, the warriors of Mars and the agriculturalists whose patron was Venus as goddess of fecundity. The ancient symbolism of the three estates of the 'Divine Society', Jupiter for holiness, sovereignty and divine wisdom, Mars for active power, strength and prowess in arms, Venus for riches, fertility and bounty formed a pervasive symbolic theme. For instance, Johannes Lydus tells us that the chariot races on the Campus Martius in ancient Rome featured three teams, the 'white' team called the *albatii* sacred to Jupiter, the red team called the *russati* for Mars and the *virides* or greens for Venus. These symbolic colours and divinities correspond to the canonical tripartite society. This archaic trifunctional pattern survived in the 'Three Estates' of the Church, the nobility and the farmers in the Middle Ages and in fact was only dismantled in France by the French Revolution in the 18th century. In the tarot trumps we can see this tripartite pattern of deities and levels of society embodied in the following sequence of three cards which clearly depict the hierarchic 'status mundi' of the Middle Ages:

Card	Estate	Office	Deity	Colour
V The Pope	priesthood (sacerdotes)	holiness, wisdom	Jupiter	purple/white
IV The Emperor	knights (milites)	power, rulership	Mars	red
III The Empress	farmers (agricolae)	fertility, bounty	Venus	green

As we shall see later the social structure of medieval civilization is also reflected in the symbolism of the four suits and court-cards of the pack.

STATIONS, VIRTUES & MYSTERIES: THE 3 SEPTENARIES OF THE TAROT

The structure of the tarot trumps contains a clear division into three septenaries. The world of humanity, social hierarchy and mortal affairs is described in cards 1-7. The world of allegorised moral virtues is delineated in cards 7-14 and finally cards 15-21 resume the spiritual mysteries, the realm of the soul and the afterlife with the eschatological symbolism of the Four Last Things in medieval Catholic spirituality. The world of man (cards 1 - 7) is seen in an ascending scale, not including the Fool who is a beggar and therefore outside the ranks of the societal order. The Juggler who is a wandering player from whom we proceed through the Popess to the Empress, Emperor and Pope who typify the three estates of farmers, nobles and priests; the Lovers represents Venus and the codes of courtly love and the Chariot symbolizes Mars and the arts of war. The world of moral allegories and cardinal virtues (cards 8 - 14) can be seen in the following septenary of cards beginning with the personified Justice, the Hermit who embodies the virtue of prudence, the Wheel of Fortune which is an emblem of the vicissitudes of fate, and the Platonic emblem of Fortitude, the Hanged Man who here stands for renunciation then Death, the first of the Four Last Things and finally the virtue of Temperance.

The spiritual world (cards 15 - 21) is summed up in the third septenary beginning with the Devil in Hell, then the Tower which shows the Castle of the Devil being struck by lightning, the Star symbolizing, along with the Moon and the Sun, the celestial spheres, the Day of Judgement with the resurrection of the dead and finally the World which is the celestial city, the New Jerusalem, in the realm of eternity, the Kingdom of Heaven. So the *atutti* of the tarot pack depict the hierarchy of the universe, the chain of being ascending from the terrestrial realm of human experience which is the world of man through the moral domain of the virtues which is the world of the soul and beyond death into the afterlife, the sphere of spiritual mysteries culminating in the heavenly vision.

The Four Last Things according medieval Catholic theology are Death, Judgement, Heaven and Hell and these are clearly visible in the tarot trumps as card 13 for Death, card 15 for Hell, card 20 for Judgement and card 20 for Heaven. These are based upon the apocalyptic vision of the Book of Revelation which clearly exerts an influence upon the latter trumps of the tarot sequence in relation to the Parousia, the final coming of the Lord at the end of time and the world and the ultimate vision of a 'New Heaven and the

New Earth'. These are religious themes which would have been very familiar to people in the late Middle Ages and are the subject of much of the art of that period. The tarot, properly considered as a unique document and beautifully composed work of medieval art, comprises a rich, striking and subtly constructed series of images which combines several themes very skilfully including the ranks of the world of humanity, the cosmic hierarchy of the great chain of being and the eschatological vision of final salvation in the apocalyptic mysticism of the Middle Ages. The tarot unfolds a foundational theme and pattern of the medieval spiritual imagination which can also be seen to run through alchemical expositions and the writings of Christian mystics as well as in works such as Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* which likewise describes a visionary ascent through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven culminating in the Beatific Vision.

In the 1527 *Caos del Triperuno* by Teofilo Folengo (also known as Merlini Cocai) we find the following allegorical sonnet which brings the mystical figures of all the trump cards into a dialogue between Love and Death:

Love (6), under whose Empery (4) many feats
 Time (9) makes vain and Fortune (10) melts away,
 Saw Death (13) on the Chariot (7), ghastly and dark,
 Turning between many folk captured from the World (21),

By what Justice (8), said he, have you never yielded
 To the Pope (5) or any Popess (2)?
 Death replied: He who made the Sun (19) and the Moon (18),
 Removed, against my Force (11), their defences.

You are a Fool (0), said Love, this Fire (16)
 Which may appear as Devil (15) or Angel (20)
 Can be Tempered (14) by those beneath my Star (17).

You are the Empress (3) of bodies, but you can only suspend (12)
 Not slay, the heart and in the sole name of lofty Fame (20)
 You are but a Mountebank (1).

ON GAMING & TAROT

The idea that Tarots originated exclusively from the gaming context and that this renders any esoteric and mantic usages less than credible or simply represents a late confabulation, if examined closely, does not really make much sense. One could just as well say that the use of dice in a mantic-esoteric context in Tibetan Palden Lhamo divination is suspect because dice 'originated for gaming purposes' though it is doubtful whether a practitioner of that art would consider such a statement as in any way meaningful. And whilst mentioning divinatory use of dice one may as well recall the Western practises, such as the method given in the Theban cache of the Greek Magical Papyri for using three dice whose score then indicates an oracular verse from Homer. Did the Greeks regard this as simply a tangential adaptation of gambling practises? Let us recall the myth told by the Divine Plato in *Phaedrus* 274c concerning the origin of dice:

The story is that in the region of Naucratis in Egypt there dwelt one of the old gods of the country, the god to whom the bird called Ibis is sacred, his own name being Theuth [Thoth]. He it was that invented number and calculation, geometry and astronomy, not to speak of draughts and dice, and above all writing.

There are some mysterious symbolic-thematic connections between dice and tarot - to mention one curious example; the number 6 is said by the Pythagoreans to 'be altogether applied to generation and marriage' according to Cornelius Agrippa in *De Occulta Philosophia* Bk II, ch. ix 'Of the number six and the scale thereof.' Also in chapter xxi he says "The number six, which consists of two threes, as a commixtion of both sexes, is by the Pythagoreans ascribed to generation and marriage and belongs to Venus..." Iamblichus in his *Life of Pythagoras* states that sacrifices to Venus should be made on the 6th day of the month. Theon of Smyrna explicitly calls the Hexad, the number 6, the 'number of wedlock', the number of marriage. Now in Roman dice-gaming the six of the dice was termed the 'Cast of Venus' or 'Venus Throw'. The poet Propertius humorously refers to his ill-luck in dice-play in his Elegies IV, vii: 45-46: "At dice I sought the Venus Throw. Instead, damned dogs - the lose-all low!" And last but not least we have Trump VI of the Tarots depicting winged Cupid shooting the burning arrow of infatuation and love at an amorous couple. The 6th card called *Gli Amanti*, *L'Amoureux*, *L'Amore*.. It is certain that through the ages games, magical practises and divination by sortilege have all overlapped to a considerable degree.

ON PYTHAGOREAN NUMEROLOGY & TAROT

There have been persistent speculations also on the extent to which medieval and renaissance numerology can be seen to have influenced tarot. Certainly at the time the tarot first crystallised in the latter part of the Middle Ages in Italy there was a strong interest in the symbolism of number which had been inherited from the classical world and the schools of the Pythagorean and Platonic tradition. For medieval man number was not simply a profane or quantitative factor but provided a gnostic key to the world of divine essences, the archetypal plan of creation in the Mind of God himself. Numbers were the ideas, the harmonics bringing all things into being, the paradigms or template of existence. This assumption underlay the philosophical, religious and esoteric world-conception of the age and formed the basis of what is termed *mathesis*, the mystical dimension of number. Cardinal Nicolaus of Cusa (1401-1464) was a proponent of the Pythagorean approach to mathematics and number-mysticism and in his work *De Docta Ignorantia* advanced the premise of Boethius that knowledge of the divine is not possible without mathematics. Likewise the great light of the Florentine renaissance, Pico Della Mirandola, stated as one of his 'Magical Conclusions' that 'By numbers, a way is had, to the searching out and understanding of every thing able to be known' Cornelius Agrippa emphasized the central importance of *mathesis* in the 16th century: "The Doctrines of Mathematicks are so necessary to, and have such an affinity with Magick, that they that do profess it without them, are quite out of the way, and labour in vain, and shall in no wise obtain their desired effect."

It is unlikely that in the 1400's the numerical ordering of the early decks of cards would have been an arbitrary affair and indeed we have seen that in the late 16th century Jean Gosselin described cards as 'Pythagoric', probably on the grounds that the cards 1 to 10 of the suits are predicated upon the 'decad' which is the foundational doctrine of Pythagorean number-mysticism as the epitome of the cycle of manifestation from the source and the return thereto. One can also trace certain mysterious but tangible congruencies between the old names and epithets given to the numbers in Pythagorean numerology as it was preserved into the medieval world and the images and titles of tarot trumps.

The writer on tarot Gertrude Moakley also noted that the structure of tarot might indeed reveal a mathematical structuring which belongs to the Pythagorean conception of number. The Pythagorean divine symbol called

the 'tetraktys', consists of ten points arranged in a descending order as a triangle. This Greek esoteric concept very likely formed the origin of the sephirothic 'Tree of Life' (Etz Chayyim) rooted in Hellenised Judaic philosophy and mystical speculation. The erudite proponent of Christianized Cabala, John Reuchlin (1455-1522) thought so - in his letter to Pope Leo X he states, "the philosophy of Pythagoras had its origins in the precepts of the Cabala, and when in the memory of our ancestors it disappeared from the Magna Graecia, it lived again in the volumes of the Cabalists."

Numbers which progress and form such triangular formations are termed 'Pythagorean numbers' and it is of note that the 21 trumps of the tarot form one such ordering.



And accordingly the entire deck of 78 cards also forms a triangular 'Pythagorean number' formation, symbolic of the plenary overflow of divine emanations from the One.

ON FOURFOLD EXEGESIS & TAROT

In the Middle Ages a text or scriptural metaphor could be interpreted on four deepening levels of meaning from the literal to the interior sense. The famous poet Dante Alighieri's specifically asserted that this process of elucidation could be applied to poetry and its metaphors and stated that his own works were written to be understood along such lines. Let us consider Dante's exposition of the subject of the fourfold interpretation of a text or a symbol as expounded in his *Convivium*:

... it is necessary to know that writings can be understood and ought to be expounded principally in four senses. The first is called the literal, and this is the sense that does not go beyond the surface of the letter, as in the fables of the poets. The next is called the allegorical, and this is the one that is hidden beneath the cloak of these fables, and is a truth hidden beneath a beautiful fiction.

The third sense is called moral, and this is the sense that teachers should intently seek to discover throughout the scriptures, for their own profit and that of their pupils

The fourth sense is called anagogical, that is to say, beyond the senses; and this occurs when a scripture is expounded in a spiritual sense which, although it is true also in the literal sense, signifies by means of the things signified a part of the supernal things of eternal glory.

The sense of this alchemical exegesis as a progressive 'unveiling' of the Light identical with the process called *Tawil* in mystical Islam and the esoteric hermeneutics expounded by Ibn Arabi and other sages in the Sufic tradition.

It is interesting that the originator of the idea of fourfold interpretation, the Christian writer Nesteros in 4th century Egypt specifically applies the fourfold exegetic key to 'Jerusalem' - as we shall see the card XXI of Tarot can be regarded as the 'Celestial Jerusalem', the 'New Heaven and New Earth' and it can be seen in the literature of classical alchemy that there are quite a few texts which interpret Jerusalem as the Philosophers Stone, *Elixir Vitae*, the Tincture of the Wise. George Ripley in the 15th century sees Jerusalem as symbolic of the Great Work and its 12 Gates are the 12 phases which must be undergone to realise the Stone of the Wise. In the *Nodus sophericus enodatus* published at Frankfurt in 1639: "The Celestial Jerusalem is an eternally clarified, subtle, penetrating fixed body which can penetrate and perfect all other bodies." Also Valentin Weigel in his work, *Fire & Azoth*: "The new

Jerusalem will forever remain a red-golden transparent antimony glass, like stone: this is the new heaven and the new earth..."

So we are dealing here with modes of knowledge which actually pertain to the anagogic level of apprehension. Of the 'knowledge of the symbol' as a means of supra-rational vision and power, of noetic ascent beyond the finite conditioned phenomena of the sensory world of space and time. This is the 'magic of the image', the faculty of 'symbolic perception' as the vehicle of theophany and mystical revelation. Trump XXI is perhaps the germane image to refer to here, the sphere of eternity, the spiritual world. Certainly the renaissance philosopher-magician Marsilio Ficino stated that the fourfold exegetic key should be applied to the innermost interpretation of Platonic images of the gods and their myths. Ficino says : "Just as the Christian theologians find 4 senses in the sacred word, the literal, the moral, the allegorical and the anagogical, and follow up the one in one passage, and the other mainly in another, so have the Platonists four modes of multiplying the Gods and spirits and apply a different mode of multiplication in different places as it is fitting." (cited in E.H. Gombrich's *Symbolic Images: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance*.)

The tarot cards of the Middle Ages, emblems loaded with religious and metaphoric significance, are most certainly susceptible to such a polysemous interpretation: it is the fourth or esoteric level of interpretation that we shall emphasize here.

II

THE TWENTY ONE TRIUMPHS

"This game is played, not in a childish way, but as the Holy Wisdom played it for God at the beginning of the world."

Cardinal Nicolas of Cusa, *De Ludo Globi*

"It must not be thought that in the Intelligible World the gods and the blessed see propositions: everything expressed there is a beautiful image."

Plotinus, Ennead V. 8

THE FOOL

In the figure of the Fool we encounter one of the most enduring and at the same time most ambivalent and paradoxical personages of the High Middle Ages in Europe: on one hand the puerile figure of satirical fun (as in Sebastian Brant's immensely popular poem *Narrenschiff* - 'The Ship of Fools' published in 1494) cutting capers and idiotic antics to elicit low laughter, on the other the jester whose jokes concealed a sardonic wisdom and truth untrammelled by the codes and conventions which governed courtly life. On the one hand the insensate dolt who, in the words of scripture, says in his heart 'there is no God', on the other the Holy Fool possessed of divine wisdom, inspiration and purity which appears as madness to worldlings. Dressed in his traditional motley, pointed headgear with bells and his ritual club or stave topped with the miniature fool's face or bauble (called the *marotte*) the paradoxical Fool dances and leaps through the art, literature and cultural life of medieval Europe with an irrepressible vigour and vitality.

The card of 'The Fool' in the old Tarot deck is either left unnumbered or ascribed to zero. Its names include *Il Matto* in old Italian packs (from Latin *mattus* - 'stupefied, senseless'), *Le Mat* or *Le Fol* in French decks and in a 17th century list of Latin titles the card is called *Stultus* also meaning 'Fool'. He is the archetypal medieval jester-fool, a



perrsonage who exists outside the laws and codes of normal life. In the most extreme sense he is a madman, a vagrant and an impoverished wanderer. His place in the tarot is paradoxical for the card can either stand at the beginning or end of the series. Likewise in the old game of 'Tarot he is called the 'Excuse' (in gaming the card is known as the 'Sckis' or 'Skus') and can be played instead of following suits or 'trumping', in defiance of the customary order of values. So he is definitely the 'wild card' in the pack, operating outside the usual rules of the game of life.

In the old Italian 'Commedia del Arte' tradition there features a white-garbed jester or clown called variously *Mattello*, *Mattaccino*, or *Matterello* who would seem to be strongly connected with *Il Matto*, the tarot fool. Likewise and similarly descended from the vivid world of medieval dramas, triumphs and pageants we find the masked fool character in the Carnival of Venice called *Il Mattaccino* who is garbed either in white costumery or in a multi-coloured tunic and disports himself in a most disrespectful manner, throwing eggs with his sling and generally behaving in a riotous way. The Fool of the tarot is an echo from the vivid world of medieval masked pageants, dramas and rituals which probably reach far back into the culture of ancient Rome and the masked actors and mimes of classical plays. As is customary with archaic traditional imagery we may contemplate the Mystery of the Fool via a deepening process of polysemous interpretation as an arcane symbol, from the literal, allegorical and moral modes and finally reaching the anagogic or truly esoteric level of significance.

The traditional ass-eared headdress of the Fool links him with Saturn as the ass is a beast traditionally sacred to that god - the midwinter sacrifice of an Ass to Kronos-Saturn in Rome comes to mind here. The classical philosopher Plotinus taught that Kronos-Saturn as lord of the Golden Age represented the infinite plenitude of eternal Ideas in the *Nous*, the mind of God (an esoteric interpretation of the name Kronos as *Koros-Nous*). But the Fool's traditional green garb reminds us of the 'greenness' of the first matter of the alchemists, a raw state of potential which must be steadily ripened and brought to maturity through the Great Work. Rather like the alchemical 'prima materia' our Fool is something which is thought to be nothing, which is everywhere but not seen of men and held to be of no account or is even despised and held in contempt. He is the lowly material which conceals within itself the pure gold and in that sense he is pure spiritual potential. This mystery is expressed in the statement of the 17th century mystic Jacob Boehme in his his work *De Signatura Rerum* that,

Paradise is still on this earth, but man is so far from it that he cannot regenerate it unless he can re-enter it through his own

reintegration and it is in there that the Gold is hidden in Saturn in despised shapes and colours and very different from its normal state.

The Italian esotericist Pietro Negri has drawn attention to the magical etymology shared by the name *Sat*-urnus and the Golden Age of Indo-European cosmology, the *Satya*-Yuga and in connection with this dual symbolism we can also note that Marsilio Ficino asserts that Lead and Gold are both planetary metals under the rulership of Saturn, respectively the timebound, fallen state, the corporeal black stone or Saturnine 'Night of Time' and the immortal timeless state that it obscures or conceals (Sanskrit *Sat* - 'Being') the paradisaical 'Age of Gold'. As Isaac the Hollander said, "From Saturn proceeds and from Saturn is made, the Philosophers Stone...in its interior, and in this all the Philosophers agree, it is a most excellent Sun." Basilus Valentinus likewise expounds in the 9th of his 'Twelve Keys' that Saturn is, "the chief Key of the whole Art, howbeit set in the lowest and meanest place."

The 'nought' or 'naught' which denotes the Fool in the Tarot resumes this alchemical symbolism of a ubiquitous matter generally deemed worthless and without value. In fact the Fool bears the name 'Nought' in certain morality plays of the 15th century and in a mediaeval poem called 'A Tale of Three Score Fools' a figure called Bishop Nullatensis is the tutelary patron of the Fools.

The *Asinus Aureus* ('The Golden Ass') as the Middle Platonist magus Lucius Apuleius titled his picaresque mystical novel in the 2nd century AD, aptly expresses this same cryptic symbolism of Saturn as the ass, the fallen or timebound state which through arcane exegesis and initiatory rectification, brought to perfection through the processes of the Great Work, is transmuted into the timeless Gold of eternal being. Thus in mediaeval Europe the Fool was sometimes closely associated with the midwinter revels as the 'Christmas Fool' or 'Lord of Misrule', for this was the old festival of Saturnalia, when profane time was dissolved and the Golden Age presided over by Kronos was recaptured for 12 Nights in rites and masques which liberated all from the usual constraints of everyday norms and conventions. The ancient *Festum Fatuorum* of the Middle Ages in which an ass was brought into the church at midnight amid antinomian revels at Yule or New Year attest to this archaic figure of misrule. In a society and world-view as hierarchical as that of medieval Europe such subversions of the symbolic order of things were all the more potent - Saturn is 'inverted gold' and the antinomian reversals of the midwinter carnival of the Twelve Nights are a mystical recovery of the 'Golden Age' at the liminal 'time between the times'.

Such carnivalesque riots and Christmas revelries including the investiture of the Fool-Bishop and the ancient 'Feast of the King of Fools' of which the Archbishop of York wrote disapprovingly in 1391, were sometimes organised by Fools' Companies; in Germany these were known as *Narrenzunft* - the 'Fools' Guild', whilst in medieval France we find the fools organised into 'Abbeys' of the *Societe Joyeuse*. The ears of the Saturnian ass symbolise the numinous wisdom of God which is accounted sheer foolishness among worldlings and the worldly-wise. For as the scriptures put it, "The foolishness of God is wiser than men." Just so was a figure such as St. Francis of Assisi termed a Fool of God in the Middle Ages.

In fact wandering Franciscan clerics in the Middle Ages were known, and sometimes condemned, as *Ioculari* (players) and *jongleurs* (jugglers) on account of their performances of songs and lays. *Ioculatori* implied a meaning which includes both 'jokers' and 'jugglers' as well as musical entertainers. This may well cast some interesting light on the first 2 cards of the trump series *Il Matto* and *Il Bagatto*. And these Franciscan 'spirituals' and wandering clerics were sometimes associated with mystical millenarian doctrines of a Joachite cast. The Majorcan mystic Ramon Lull, (himself greatly inspired by Franciscan Spirituals such as Arnold de Villanova, the famed alchemist) was the author of a work entitled, *The Book of the Lover and the Beloved*, which features the colloquy of the Lord and the 'Fool of Love', "Say, Fool" (says the Lord) "wherefore is thy love so great?" He (the Fool) answered: "Because far and perilous is the journey I must make seeking my Beloved."

In his mystical work, *the Libre de Blanquerna*, Lull characterises himself as 'Ramon the Fool' accompanied on his wandering quest by his companion dog. This clearly shows that the tarot iconography of this card draws upon a popular medieval archetype of the Holy Fool. The ears of the ass symbolize folly but in the highest sense can signify the wisdom of folly too and the apophatic pathway of mystical 'unknowing' which the 6th century Syrian mystic Pseudo-Dionysius summarizes in his dictum: "The most god-like knowledge of God is known by Unknowing (Agnosia)". In this transcendent context the card image might have conveyed the same ambivalent sense to medieval people as is alluded to in the scriptures where it is written: "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise."

Divinatory Meaning

Innocence of spirit. Ecstasy. Divine madness. The inexplicable. Anarchy. Wanderer-seeker: alternatively recklessness, stupidity, irresponsibility.

I THE JUGGLER

The first card of the tarot trumps is traditionally known as *Il Bagatto* or *Il Bagatello* in Italian and *Le Bateleur* in French, both of which denote a juggler, illusionist or conjuror. The term 'juggler' derives from Latin *Ioculator* meaning a player, jester or entertainer, basically the wandering player of the Middle Ages, the *Jongleur*. This is certainly appropriate for the card which depicts the front-man of the tarot who opens the magical show. In the Commedia Del'Arte tradition of Venice there features a red-garbed jester called *Il Bagatino* to whom the figure in this card is clearly related. As it happens *bagatino* is a Milanese colloquialism for a 'chatterbox' which applies well to the polished patter of this raconteur and mountebank who is a skilled practitioner of legerdemain. As the Bagatello his name relates to the old word meaning a game or trifle but it may also have a connection with the Latin word *baculum* signifying a stick or staff - in this case the conjuror's wand.

The Juggler of the tarot is a consummate trickster, silver-tongued and definitely something of a carnival huckster plying his thimble-rigging sleight-of-hand before the crowds at a medieval fair. He is one of that breed whom Shakespeare calls 'nimble jugglers that deceive the eye.' Another figure from the Commedia Del'Arte, with whom we might connect him is Harlequin, known in Italian as the extravagant trickster-jester *Arlecchino* who appears on the stage in his distinctive diamond-pattern tunic, black domino-mask and hat; He also carries a 'slapstick' called a *batocchio*. Harlequin is a witty, capricious and facile figure who seems to have a very old ancestry. He in fact seems to be a late version of the god Mercury and some old engravings even portray him bearing a serpent-twined caduceus wand. Another symbolic clue is the fox tail that Harlequin traditionally wears hanging from the back of his hat for the cunning fox is described as an animal sacred to Mercury by Cornelius Agrippa in the 16th century.

We might compare the image of the tarot juggler with images of the god such as the talismanic image of Mercury described by Cornelius Agrippa: "From the operations of *Mercury*, they made an Image at the hour of *Mercury*, *Mercury* ascending in *Gemini*, the form of which was an handsome young man, bearded, having in his left hand a rod in which a serpent is twyned about, in his right carrying a dart, having his feet winged." *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, Bk II, ch. xliii. Which, we are told, brings the bearer thereof, "knowledge, eloquence, diligence in merchandizing and gain", very much those mercurial qualities associated with this tarot card as it happens. On the plane of alchemical symbolism this card is an image of the 'Mercury of the Wise' who personifies the elusive agent and subtle process underlying the



transformations brought about in the Great Work of alchemy. The *Liber Introductorius* of Michael Scot from the latter half of the 1300's also shows a magical image of Mercury with clear similarities to this card with the god robed, wearing a hat and seated before a table on which various objects rest such as a cup and a flagon and he holds a flower in his hand.

A consideration of the number of the card of the juggler may be of significance because in medieval-renaissance numerology the number one, the monad, was ascribed to Eros who as well as being the love-god was also regarded by Platonists as the archetype of the divine magus, the 'great daemon' who unites heaven and earth by his compelling power. The number one also corresponded to Proteus, a classical supernatural wizard-figure renowned for his shape-shifting magical powers of transformation.

Divinatory Meaning

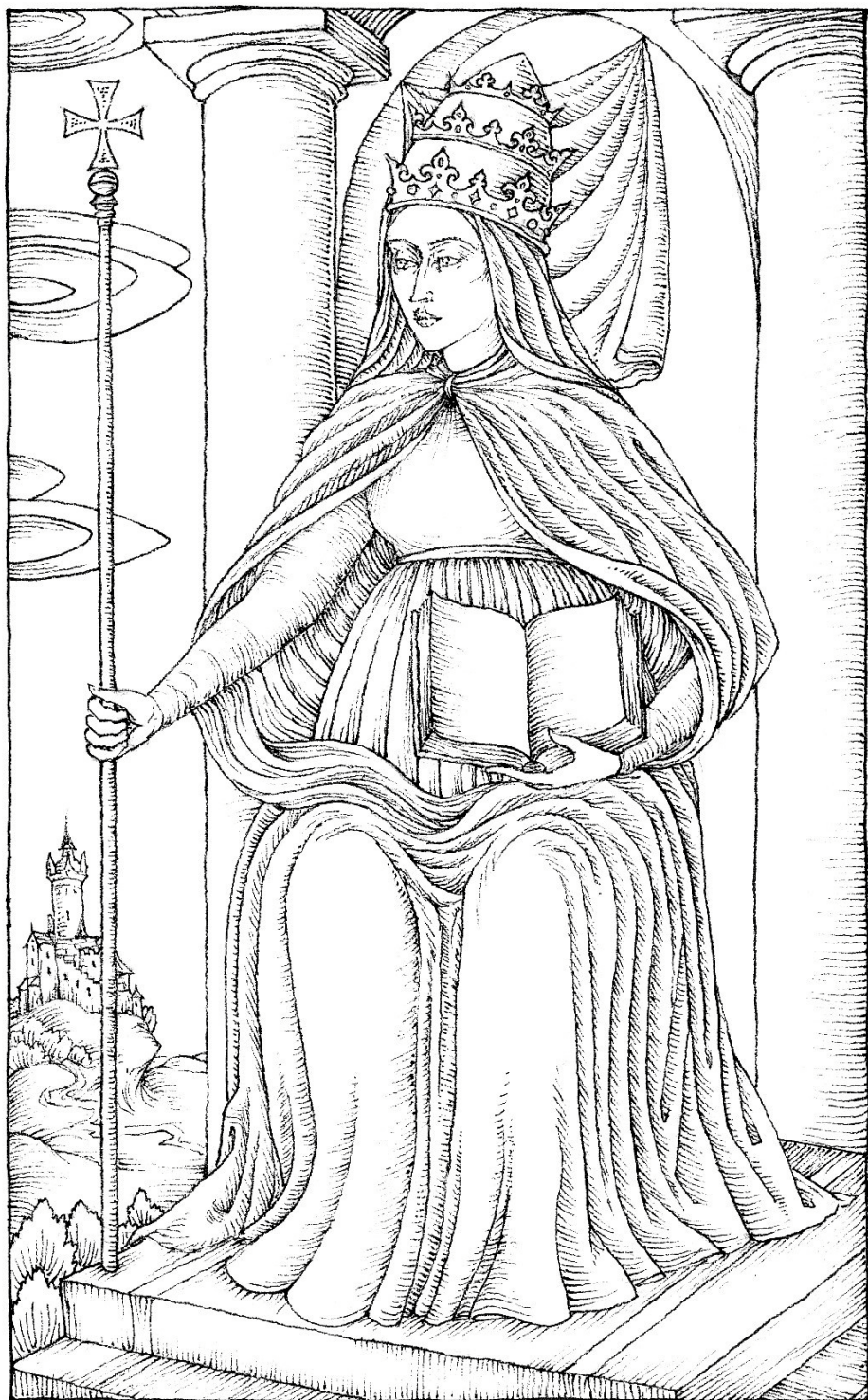
Eloquence. Skill. Subtlety. Quick-wittedness. Initiative. Dexterity. Ideas translated into activity. Occult power and practise. Legerdemain.

II THE POPESS

This card is called *La Papessa* in old Italian packs and depicts the image of the female pontiff of mediaeval myth, Pope Johanna. In fact the triple tiara-ed woman in late medieval iconography can represent either the feminine personification of the Papacy, Mother Church,, Saint Sophia or Papessa Johanna. She is customarily depicted holding an opened book in her lap, a staff surmounted by a cross and sometimes holds a key in her hand.

Popess Johanna was said to have been the daughter of an English missionary who, travelling with her father among the continental Saxons, proved herself an erudite scholar at an early age and deserting her parents disguised as a man entered the Abbey of Fulda in the Rhineland taking the vows of a monk. In this male guise she availed herself of the vast lore of the monastic library and furthermore travelled throughout England, France, Italy and Greece in pursuit of knowledge. Her repute was eventually so great that, according to the monkish chronicler Marius Scotus of Cologne, in the year 854 she was raised to the papal throne as 'John VIII'. However a cardinal whom she took into her confidence got her pregnant. It is said that during a solemn procession in Rome she went into labour and was delivered of a child in the view of the astonished crowds and prelates of the church. According to some anti-papal propagandists her child was the Antichrist himself who will appear in the last days. As the 12th century chronicler Sigebert de Gemblours wrote of her: 'The Pope, becoming pregnant, gave birth to a child, wherefore some do not number her among the Pontiffs.' Some accounts relate that Pope Joan was deeply learned in the occult sciences and arts.

Other important speculations concerning the imagery of this cryptic card centre on the possibility that it may depict the female pontiff of a millenarian 13th century Milanese sect called the Guglielmites founded by a woman, renowned as a miracle-working saint and healer, called Guglielma of Milan, originally a woman of royal birth, the Princess Blazena Vilemena, daughter of the king of Bohemia. After she died in 1281 her tomb became the focus of a saintly cult and her followers believed that at the feast of Pentecost in the year 1300 she would be resurrected to inaugurate a new era ruled by female pontiffs. The Guglielmites believed that Guglielma of Milan was in fact the female incarnation of the Holy Spirit, and with her predicted Second Coming there would arise a new church with female popes at its head which would replace the corrupt Catholic papacy. Accordingly they elected one of their number, Sister Maifreda de Pirovano, for this office and gave her the title *La Papessa*. The newly-enthroned popess of the Guglielmites was burned at the



stake as a heretic by the inquisition in 1300 but it is worth noting that her aristocratic family, the Viscontis, commissioned several early hand-painted tarot packs. The Guglielmites with their vision of a female pope ushering in the coming age of the Holy Spirit had followers amongst powerful families of Milanese nobility in the 13th-14th centuries.

Cornelius Agrippa says: 'The number two is ascribed to the Moon, which is the second great light, and figures out the Soul of the World, and is called Juno...'. As a variant image for card 2 in decks made at Besancon and in Switzerland during the 1700s is sometimes the classical goddess Juno or Hera with her sacred bird, the peacock, we might consider it significant that Agrippa calls the number 2 'Juno's Deuce'. Because the peacock's flesh was said to never decay it was a symbol of the imperishable, of immortality itself.

The Papessa symbolizes Holy Wisdom, Sophia, and embodies the timeless *Ecclesia Spiritualis*, the secret or spiritual church uniting all who dwell within the gnosis of divine mind. She is the interior mystery, the timeless esoteric truth which lies concealed beneath the robe of outer doctrine. Inner mystical and noetic apprehension of spiritual truth, spiritual regeneration. As it is written in Corpus Hermeticum Libellus XIII: "I know not, thrice-greatest one, from what womb a man can be born again, nor from what seed...- My son, the womb is Wisdom [Sophia], conceiving in silence, the seed is the true Good...The will of God, my son, is the begetter." The Papessa is the emblem of the eternal angelic wisdom; she is the wisdom of God and the mystical bride.

If we see this card as a symbol of secret wisdom, of the hidden church and the 'seat of wisdom' we might recall that in classical times the Middle Platonist writer Lucius Apuleius in his 'Apologia' termed Magic the, "high priestess of the powers of heaven."

Divinatory Meaning

Mystery. Intuition, Wisdom and occult knowledge. Spiritual protection. Unveiling of secrets. Inner life and enlightenment. Numinous guidance.

III THE EMPRESS

This card, traditionally titled *L'Imperatrice*, 'The Empress', is the lunar-venusian consort of the solar-martial emperor - they in fact seem to form a pair like the white queen and red king of alchemical symbolism - she is Queen Venus, more specifically the terrestrial Venus-Aphrodite. In medieval iconography the terrestrial Venus was depicted robed in rich dress as distinct from the celestial Venus who is always depicted nude as in card (XVII 'The Star') . Whether this card is based upon a historical figure such as the 6th century Empress Theodora of Byzantium or the Holy Roman Empress Beatrix who reigned in the 12th century is an open question.

Basil Valentine describes her as, "Lady Venus, who appeared in a crimson robe, inter-tissued with threads of green, and charmed all by the beauty of her countenance and the fragrance of the flowers which she bore in her hand." Her inner robe or dress can be the hue of green, specifically the colour of the alchemical 'Vitriol of Venus', the intense green of copper sulphate or of emeralds. This greenness is the hue of life-potential. The 17th century alchemist Eirenaeus Philalethes says of the 'Regimen of Venus' in the Great Work : "When you see the green colour, know that the substance now contains the germ of its highest life." In the alchemical and magical language of symbols the colours white and green are closely interlinked, in some ways interchangeable as the hue of the feminine, watery principle. Julius Evola says: "On occasion, instead of white we find green by chromatic analogy to the energies of vegetable life."

Perhaps we might relate this card image to medieval legends about Queen Venus or as she was sometimes called, Dame Habondia, the giver of all abundance and fruitfulness, with her retinue of 'Good Ladies'. The medieval Thuringian Chronicles tell of the mountain called the Hurselberg, also called the Venusberg or *Mons Veneris* which was the gateway to the magical subterranean palace of the goddess Venus. Likewise in the *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* the protagonist descends into the vaults of the castle and is vouchsafed a sight of the goddess Venus asleep in the deepest subterranean chamber. These might all be seen as images of the hidden forces of the terrestrial Venus, the divine embodiment of riches, life-energies and fertility. She might be equated with the maiden Columbine from the *Commedia Del'Arte* of Venice, who always wears a wreath of roses on her head and whose name denotes the dove, the sacred bird of Venus.

The Empress can be seen as the 3rd Divine Hypostasis of Neoplatonic philosophy, the 'all-soul' or soul of the universe which Plotinus identifies with the goddess Venus-Aphrodite. She is the principle of conception,



germination of seeds and fructification. She receives, bears and germinates the seeds which will yield fruit, so she is the beautiful and beneficent mistress of artistic and imaginative conception too, an elegant and bountiful power. She is the one who conceives those potentials which will unfold and fruit into manifestation, nurturing and gestating the seeds of activity.

Divinatory Meaning

Abundance. Fruitfulness. Fecundity. Artistic creativity. Beneficent influences. Beauty. Pleasure. Opulence. Harmony. Luxury and sensuality.

IV THE EMPEROR

The Emperor, to the mediaeval mind would be seen naturally as a depiction of Caesar, the Holy Roman Emperor with the imperial eagle emblazoned on his shield, the orb and sceptre in his strong and capable hands: his title in medieval times was *Imperator Augustus*, the 'august emperor'. In the age during which the tarot trumps were emerging this card would perhaps have been seen as a depiction of one of the German heads of the Holy Roman Empire such as the celebrated Frederick I Barbarossa, Charles IV of Luxembourg or Frederick III - whatever the historical questions surrounding this image we can certainly agree with the tarologist Oswald Wirth who said of this card: "What is incarnate in him is active power, represented by the inner fire, the sulphur of the alchemists," referring to the inner Vulcan described by Paracelsus and his school. So in this light we may equate this image with the symbolism of the Red King in the great work of alchemy, a solar-fiery sulphurous energy. Hence there is sometimes shown the sign of the golden fleece hanging around his neck, (the golden ram also standing for the ram-horned god Ammon who sired the world-emperor Alexander) and the Argonauts quest for the golden fleece is itself a mythic metaphor for the ultimate goal of the royal art, the golden stone or red powder. What the Empress conceived and gestated has become active in the Emperor, an extended power of assertive dominion and will, the archetype of temporal power in the Imperium.

Cornelius Agrippa describes a talismanic image for power, sovereignty and authority which is clearly based on the imagery of Alexander as the son of Jupiter-Ammon and the emperor of the world: "They made also another Image of Jupiter for a religious and glorious life, and advancement of fortune; whose figure was a man having the head of a Lyon, or a Ram, and Eagles feet, cloathed in Saffron coloured cloathes, and he was called the son of Jupiter."

The red tincture is the sulphur of the sages brought to it's final stage of fixed perfection. This is the secret of the Emperor and the mystery of the cubic stone upon which he is enthroned. The hermeticist Julius Evola says of these arcana of symbolism: "...when the red and fire take primacy, they are indications of the royal mystery and the magical tradition in the highest sense." So the robe of the Emperor should be coloured a rich fiery red in colour with gold trimmings and his golden crown inset with glowing rubies, likewise his orb and sceptre and the skies behind him should be shown lit up with the crimson-red light of dawn. As an early Greek alchemical text says, "It is from this which the red comes, called the colour of cinnabar: it is the



cinnabar of the philosophers." So this image of the Emperor symbolizes the active energy of the sacred flame, the golden dry path of the sovereign initiates, the awakening of the primal fire called UR by the Chaldaeans: the power of the Emperor is the royal secret of the red sulphur.

The number four is associated with the idea of the cubic stone, the manifest world of the elements over which the Emperor holds sway, the foursquare elemental kingdom over which he is enthroned. The number four is also said to correspond to Hercules and Pan, both exemplars of masculine force and energy.

Divinatory Meaning

Authority. Willpower. Executive ability. Governance. Active realization. Dominance. Leadership. Dynamism. Virile potency. Stability and achievement.

V THE POPE

The 5th trump of the tarot sequence depicts the head of the Church, *Il Papa*, the vicar of God on earth. The Pope inherited his title of Pontiff from the high priest of Jupiter in Roman antiquity who was the Pontifex Maximus, the great 'bridge-builder' between heaven and earth. So in medieval astrology we find that Popes, cardinals, prelates and priests were classified as the 'children of Jupiter'. Curiously later decks such as the Besancon tarot and Swiss packs substitute the figure of Jupiter for this card. In the *Liber Introductorius* of Michael Scot from the latter half of the 14th century there is a magical image of Jupiter as a churchman wearing robes and mitre, bearing a crozier in one hand and a book in the other.

Crowned with the triple-tiara and enrobed in the sacred purple of papal authority enthroned upon the seat of St Peter at Rome and the crossed keys of the Holy See are sometimes shown in this card or alternatively the Pope bears in his hand the key which unlocks the doors of the spiritual world. The triple tiara of the Pope signifies the threefold office of priest, prophet and king (and is thought to be descended from the *frigium*, the Phrygian cap worn by the high priest of Mithras in Greco-Roman times). Where the Emperor exercised temporal dominion the Pope stood for spiritual authority. However the relationship between the two institutions was not always free of antagonism. Long-standing contentions based upon the competing claims of primacy between the Papacy and the Imperium as represented by the Guelph and Ghibelline factions wracked medieval Italy for centuries.

During the period that cards became prevalent in Europe the Church was actually riven by the great schism from 1378 - 1417 which led to two rival popes reigning concurrently, namely Urban VI at Rome and Clement VII at Avignon in France. This religious and political division was only resolved by the election of Pope Martin V (1417-1431) as the rightful Pontiff and in all likelihood he would have been in people's minds when the tarot cards were becoming popular in 15th century Italy.

Behind the Catholic imagery of the Pontiff and the ecclesiastical office he embodies we can perhaps also see the mysterious archetype of the 'High Priest of God' from the Old Testament, Melchizedek. The mystical figure of Melchizedek, the 'King of Peace' at Jerusalem offered bread and wine to Abraham and was therefore seen as prefiguring the sacraments of the Christian Mass. In the Biblical account we read: "Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of God Most High". Mosaics portraying Melchizedek can be seen in the 6th century church of San Vitale at Ravenna; he is also depicted in a medieval statue in Notre Dame



Cathedral, bearing the wafer-host and chalice in his hands, whilst the carven stalls at Chartres and Rheims also show the 'High Priest of God'. To the medieval mind the city of Sion, Jerusalem, the seat of Melchizedek's royal priesthood, was the sacred centre of the world - in this light the traditionalist thinker Rene Guenon has emphasized the archetypal role Melchizedek fulfils as the immortal 'King of the World' in the Western tradition.

In numerology the number 5, according to Cornelius Agrippa, corresponds to 'the celestial world, which beyond the four elements is itself under another form, the fifth'. That is to say it is the fifth element of spirit which binds and governs the four elements and the five-pointed pentagram was called the 'Seal of the Holy Spirit'. The number 5 according to classical numerology was called *Athanaton* - 'the Immortal', an epithet of Jupiter.

Divinatory Meaning

Genius. Revelation. Traditional teaching. Occult inspiration. Religion. Sacerdotal power and authority. Inner magistry. Exposition. Spiritual doctrine.

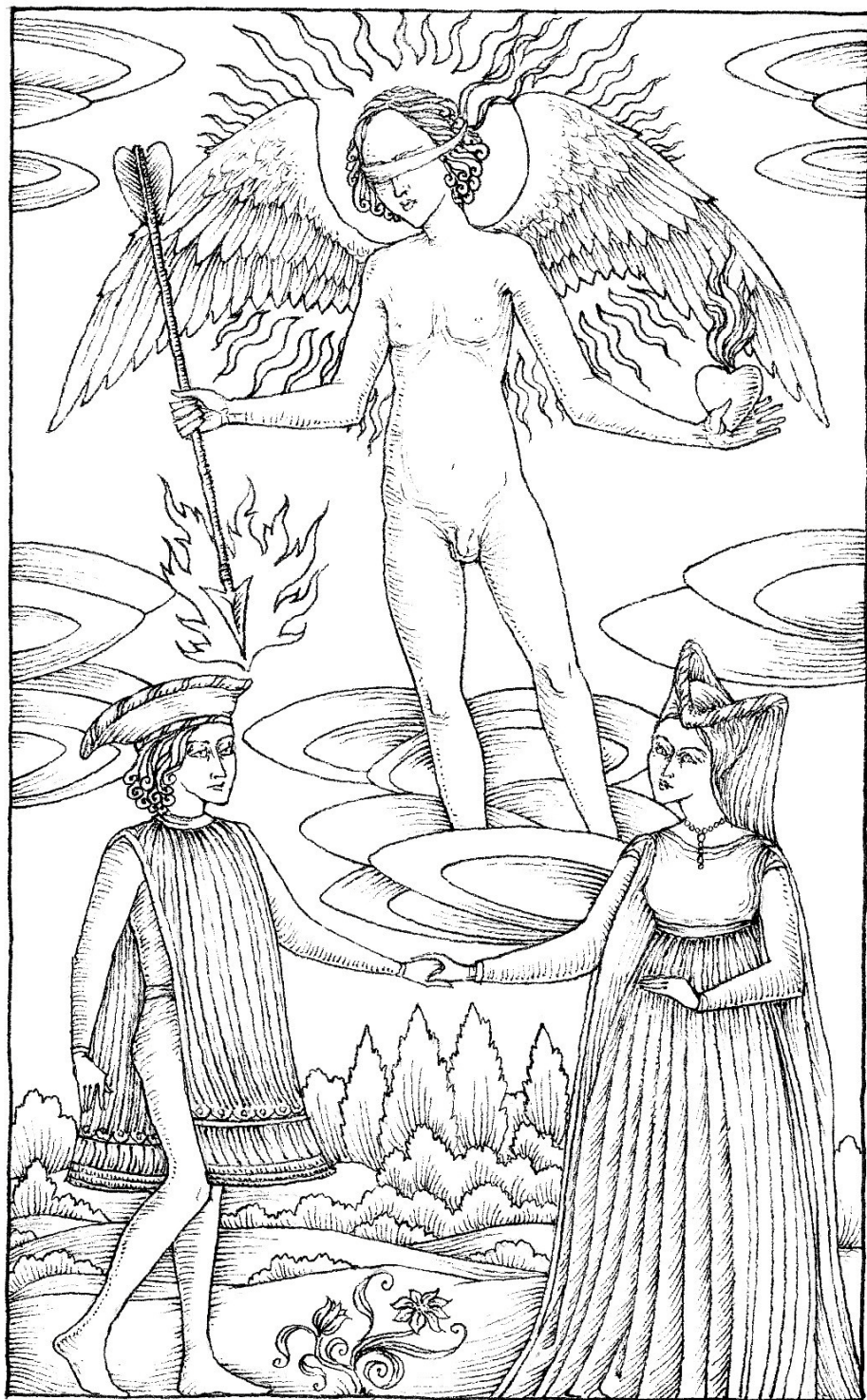
VI THE LOVERS

The classical love-god Cupid-Eros with his golden arrows of desire hovers over an infatuated couple in the 6th card of the tarot. The triumph of love is displayed and the appropriate motto here might well be 'Love conquers all' (*Amor Vincit Omnia*) from Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*. The card image shows a man and woman conjoined by the spell of the mischievous winged Cupid, son of the love-goddess Venus.

This card is an emblem of romance and amorous devotion, sacred and profane, licit and illicit alike, the mystery of the lover and the beloved. The image of love was favourite theme of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance and we see an emblem with close affinities to this card in a venusian love-talisman to be carved in lapis-lazuli which according to Cornelius Agrippa portrays: "...a naked maid with her hair spread abroad, having a looking-glass in her hand, and a chain tied about her neck, and nigh her a handsome young man, holding her with his left hand by the chain but with his right hand making up her hair, and they both look lovingly on one another, and about them is a little winged boy holding a sword or a dart."

In his great work *De Gli Eroici Furori* ('The Heroic Frenzies') published in 1585 the magus Giordano Bruno eulogizes the mystical power of love in magnificent sonnets following the Platonic doctrine in which Cupid is the divine love who gives the soul wings: "If my languishing is so sweet to me, it is because the heavenly face delights me so, and because the heavenly bow so sweetly wounds".

The Lovers might well be regarded as a symbolic summation of the chivalric cult of courtly love, the extraordinary culture of *L'Amour Courtois* which emerged in the Middle Ages, blending the erotic and the spiritual and exerting a powerful influence upon the arts in medieval civilization. This current was especially patronised and fostered in the 12th century by powerful nobles such as Eleanor of Aquitaine and her daughter Marie of Champagne. In the cult of *L'Amour Courtois* the poet-troubadour, a devotee of the winged Cupid, approached his lady-love with extravagant decorum as the sainted object of absolute adoration. Courtly love was tinged with Neoplatonic and heretical ideas and the *lais* of the Provencal troubadours or minnesingers (literally meaning 'lady-singers') were tinged with a religious and esoteric sensibility, a worship of the lady as the personification of divine beauty and wisdom. The troubadours of Provence who spread the cult of courtly love throughout Europe called it the *Gai Saber*, the 'happy wisdom' and its elegant rules were codified in works such as Andreas Capellanus' 12th century book, *The Art of Courtly Love*, and found expression in the poetry of



Guido Cavalcanti and Dante Alighieri.

This card stands for love on all levels of manifestation from the human realm of romance to the divine world and, "the Love which moves the sun and the other stars." (Dante, *Paradiso* Canto XXX).

As for the numerological significance there is a long-standing association between the number 6 and Venus in Pythagorean lore where it was termed the 'number of wedlock'. In his 1662 book, *The Holy Guide*, the English Hermeticist John Heydon says, "...for two into three is six; hence the Pythagoreans call this number 'Gamos', Matrimony..."

Divinatory Meaning

Attraction, Relationship and wedlock. Lover and beloved. Harmonious beauty. Desire. Union. Partnership. Romance and attachment.

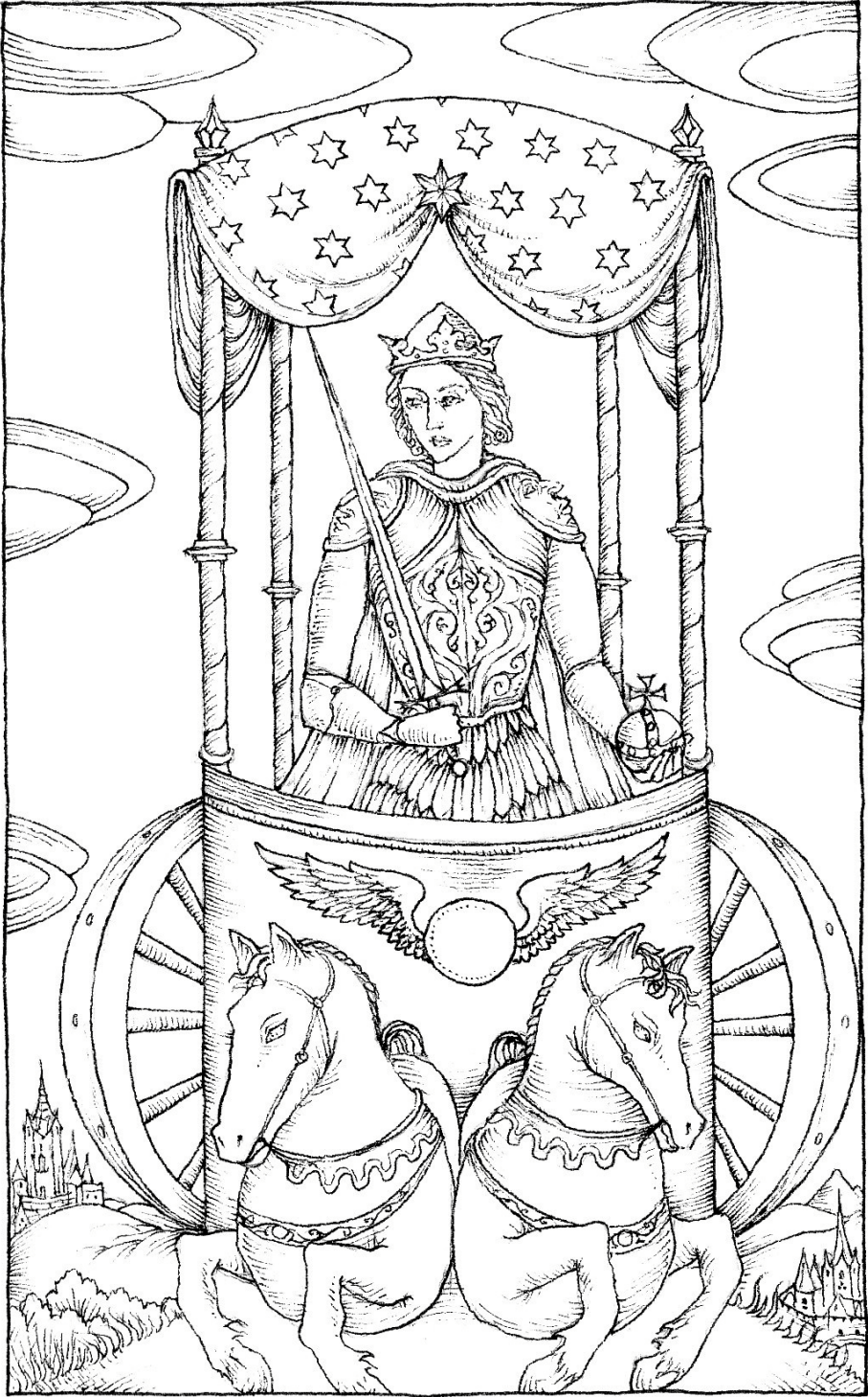
VII THE CHARIOT

The seventh trump of the tarot, *Il Carro* or 'The Chariot', brings together classical Platonic iconology, number symbolism and astronomical lore. The card is an image of the chariot of the soul described by Plato in the *Phaedrus*. In this text Plato teaches uses the metaphor of the chariot with it's driver and two horses, one light and one dark, to represent the soul,

Of the nature of the soul, though her true form be ever a theme of large and more than mortal discourse, let me speak briefly, and in a figure. And let the figure be composite-a pair of winged horses and a charioteer. Now the winged horses and the charioteers of the gods are all of them noble and of noble descent, but those of other races are mixed; the human charioteer drives his in a pair; and one of them is noble and of noble breed, and the other is ignoble and of ignoble breed...

So the chariot is driven by the reasoning soul who holds in rein and steers the light horse of the tractable spirit and the dark horse of the rebellious appetites. This ancient symbol of the *ochema*, the 'vehicle' or 'chariot' is an ancient convention of the Pythagorean and Platonic traditions and has a special connection with the number 7. The *ochema*/chariot is described in Olympiodorus' Platonic commentaries and the philosopher Damascius says of it: "The soul possesses a certain shining vehicle which is called "star-like" and is eternal." The chariot of the soul is the subtle vehicle, the aetherial body, the true astral body of pure pneuma. The Neoplatonist Proclus states the doctrine that the astral vehicle belongs to heaven whereas the physical vehicle is of the sub-lunar realm. This subtle vehicle is envisaged as the original spiritual body, translucent in its pristine heavenly state and of perfect spherical form, the *aethereum animae vehiculum* (the ethereal vehicle of the soul). Boethius refers to the *ochema* as the *leves currus* (the lifting chariot) in his *Consolations of Philosophy*, III.9. This classical concept of the Neoplatonic 'vehicle' emerges from antiquity again in the thought of such representatives of the Byzantine Renaissance as Michael Psellus and Nicephorus Gregoras. We encounter it in the *luminosi corporis amictus* (bright cloak of the body) described by Macrobius. The concept of the diaphanous subtle vehicle is also expounded by Dante in *Purgatorio* xxv. 88. As E.R. Dodds remarks in the notes to Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, the astral 'vehicle' 'remains a familiar idea throughout the Middle Ages.' Hence it is not too surprising to see it depicted on the 7th tarot trump in the Franco-Milanese order.

In classical numerology the number 7 was termed *telesphoros* - the 'far-



bearer' and Plutarch says that it was the number of Apollo who is customarily depicted steering the solar chariot. Cornelius Agrippa says this of the number 7:

And the Pythagorians call it the Vehiculum of mans life, which it doth not receive from its parts so, as it perfects by its proper right of its whole, for it contains body, and soul, for the body consists of four Elements, and is endowed with four qualities: Also the number three respects the soul, by reason of its threefold power, *viz.* rationally, irascible, and concupiscible.

The chariot card clearly presents us with an emblem of the Platonic *vehiculum animae* (vehicle of the soul) and Agrippa's description of the four elements of the body and three faculties of the soul in man chimes perfectly with a gloss on this card made by the 15th century Italian friar who wrote the *Steele Sermon* for he tells us that around the 1450's 'The Chariot' (*Lo caro triumphale*) was also known as *mundus parvus*, the 'little world' or 'world in miniature' - man the microcosm. Agrippa also mentions another *vehiculum* in relation to the number 7: "There are seven Stars about the Articke Pole, greater, and lesser, called Charls-Wain". 'Charles Wain' is the old medieval name for the circumpolar constellation of *Ursa Major*. Here we can trace another tarological parallel in Dante Alighieri's *Divine Commedia*. In cantos 29 and 30 of *Purgatorio* the poet beholds a vision of Beatrice in the heavenly triumphal chariot drawn by a winged griffin and surrounded by the six-winged 'Holy Living Creatures'. At the right wheel danced three maids in red, emerald-green and white robes who were the theological virtues Faith, Hope and Charity; at the left hand wheel four purple-robed maidens representing the cardinal virtues Justice, Prudence, Fortitude, Temperance. Dante uses the word *settentrion* for this heavenly chariot and makes a connection between this heavenly vehicle and the Septentrional stars, the 7 stars of *Ursa Major*. The translator Peter Dale suggests that by *settentrion* Dante Alighieri intended to convey the, "...idea of seven lights, which may allude to the seven gifts of the Spirit." No doubt it refers to the 7 Virtues too. The heavenly chariot of Dante's poetic vision represents the Church which was thought of as the Mystical Body of Christ in the Middle Ages.

Divinatory Meaning

Momentum. Success. Triumphant progress. Victory. Conquest. Motion. Vanquishing resistance. Efficiency and control. Overcoming. Greatness achieved.

VIII JUSTICE

Trumph VIII *La Giustizia* illustrates the words of Wisdom in Proverbs 8:15: "By me kings reign, and princes decree justice." At a literal level which as Dante says, "...does not go beyond the strict limits of the letter" this card images the legal codes and law tables decreed from on high which provide justice and equity throughout the kingdom, the scales of fair trial and the sword of punishment and expiation. At an allegorical level this card depicts the Stoic Virtue of Justice, the impartial embodiment of probity and lawfulness.

Justice in the moral sense is the lawful life and personal balance in accord with Justice which we should strive to cultivate, a life of ethical harmony and moral equilibrium. The qualities of Justice as defined by Cicero as 'a mental habit harmonious with reason and the natural order of things.' As Proverbs 8:20 puts it: "I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice." Or Deuteronomy 16:20: "Follow justice and justice alone..." The anagogic interpretation or "...intimation of higher matters belonging to the eternal glory" by which the VIIIth tarot trump denotes the Divine Wisdom whereby "...kings reign and princes decree Justice" is symbolic of the eternal and immutable order, the equilibrial balance of the creation which cannot be violated with impunity.

This is the Platonic Idea of Justice in the Divine Mind, the eternal archetype of Justice (*Dike*) in the *Nous*. This the 'Day of Justice' which Albertus Magnus associates with the mystic symbolism of the number 8: here we behold the cosmic balance and equilibrium governing the 8 spheres (7 planets and coelum stellatum) by the divine decree. John Heydon write in the late 17th century that: "The Rosie Crucians call eight the number of Justice and Fullnesse..." The paradigm as the immutable and archetypal principle in the spiritual world, Divine Justice. As Psalm 45:6 says: "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a sceptre of justice will be the sceptre of your kingdom."

Cornelius Agrippa says, "The Pythagoreans call eight the number of justice and fullness: first because it is first of all divided into numbers equally...and by reason of this equality of division, it took to itself the name of Justice." Elsewhere Agrippa says, "The number eight...contains the mystery of Justice." As such this tarot card depicts the cardinal virtue *Iusticia*, under the divine form of Themis, the Titaness of Law and Justice. It might be seen as an image of her immortal daughter by Jupiter, Astraea ('Star-Maiden'), who epitomized the sacral order which prevailed amongst the humanity of the golden age. The scales she bears are the balance in which



things are weighed and tested and the sword in her hand is the instrument by which the mandate of Justice is executed and by which wrongdoing is punished and expiated. She is the divine order manifested throughout the universe, the archetype of eternal equilibrium - this card symbolizes the divine law of heaven which cannot be violated without redress. The balance will always be righted and just deserts be dispensed. It is the sacred rule which stands behind all earthly law tables, all ethical codes...yet real justice must be always tempered by mercy and clemency.

This card introduces the first of the four cardinal virtues in the ordering of the trumps and we might consider what St Gregory the Great wrote, "If one loves justice, the fruits of her works are virtues; for she teaches temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude, and nothing in life is more profitable than these." Since justice is the eternal essence of the divine order we can see why the 'Angelical Doctor', St Thomas Aquinas defines religion to be, "...the most perfect part of justice".

Divinatory Meaning

Equilibrium. Impartiality. Trial and verdict. The righting of the Balance. Justice restored. Probity. Equity. Integrity, honesty and vindication.

IX THE HERMIT

The 9th trump of the tarot is called *L'Eremita*, the hooded hermit bearing his staff and lantern or hour-glass. Hermits and anchorites, dwelling in the wilderness or deep in the heart of the forests were an established convention of the Christian ascetic tradition in the High Middle Ages: these holy recluses feature in medieval art too and perhaps the most celebrated of such eremitical figures is St Anthony in the desert, immortalised by artists such as Matthias Grunewald. In some early versions of the card the hermit holds an hour-glass, perhaps symbolic of his deep contemplation upon the cosmic mysteries of time and eternity and over the centuries this metamorphosed into the lantern he bears in later decks. The hour-glass is of course the symbol of Saturn as Old Father Time and early versions of this card bear the Latin title denoting the 'Devourer of Things'. He is accompanied by a stag in some early Florentine versions of the card for the stag, a mediaeval allegorical emblem of prudent wisdom, is also a saturnian animal and sometimes planetary emblems of Saturn show the god enthroned in a chariot drawn by stags. In the Senfftleben tarot-names dating from about 1630 this card is titled *Senex* - the 'Ancient' or 'The Old Man'.

This card is the symbol of the cardinal virtue prudence - *prudentia* or *providentia* - fore-seeing wisdom and deep sagacity. So this card symbolizes the withdrawn sage or master of wisdom, detached from earthly matters in transcendence of the world. Concealed within his hooded robe of invisibility and supported by his staff he is the pilgrim of wisdom in the high and lonely places and epitomizes discretion, detachment and secret inspiration. The 17th century astrologer William Ramesey says of Saturn, he is the: "...author of solitariness". As Apollonius of Tyana taught: "Loquacity has many pitfalls, but silence none."

The Pythagoreans called the number 9 'Prometheus' and this name means 'foreseeing' just as Prudence or *Providentia* means 'seeing ahead'. As St Augustine says: "Prudence is the knowledge of what to seek and what to avoid." This is symbolized in some depictions where the hermit is anticipating a serpent which lies in his path. And St Thomas Aquinas states that: "...to obtain knowledge of the future from knowledge of the present or past... pertains to prudence." Accordingly we see that some allegorical emblems of prudence, such as the image of *Prudentia* in the Mantegna *tarocchi* designs, show this virtue as a janiform figure with an aged man's face looking backwards and a young woman's countenance to the fore gazing into a mirror which she holds. Titian's painting the Allegory of Prudence bears the legend, "*Ex Praeterito; Praesens Prvdenter Agit; Ni Futvra Actione Detvrrpet*" ('From



the past, the present acts prudently, lest it spoil future action').

In connection with the number symbolism of 9 the Neoplatonist Porphyry cites one of the Chaldaean Oracles which runs thus: "The number nine is divine, receives its completion from three triads, and attains the summits of theology." The secret wisdom of the hermit consists in the virtue of prudence as defined by Cicero: "...knowledge of things to be sought, and those to be shunned," memory of the past, intelligence about the present, and foresight concerning the future. Also Cicero says: "I prefer silent prudence to loquacious folly," for this card stands for the silent wisdom of the hermit pursuing his solitary quest for divine truth from above. The voice of the inner sage which is heard only in the silence, in withdrawal from the outer world, in seclusion and secrecy, the hermitage of the contemplative life. Isidore of Seville sums up this virtue in his teaching: "A prudent man is one who sees as it were from afar, for his sight is keen, and he foresees the event of uncertainties."

Divinatory Meaning

Prudence. Detachment. Deliberation and caution. Foresight. Contemplation. Silent counsel. Independence. Withdrawal and solitude. Slowdown. Sagacity.

X THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE

This card the *Ruota Della Fortuna* or *Rota Fortunae* as the 1630 Senftleben card titles name it, depicts the classic image of *Fortuna Imperatrix Mundi* - 'Fortune, the Empress of the World' as the medieval lyric calls her. Very much a symbol of the cycles of fate, time, causality the turnings of Lady Luck's wheel signal the ascendancy or waning of worldly fortunes, as fickle and transient as the moon's phases. Will we enjoy good luck? Or will ill fortune be our lot? Whose star is in the ascendant? Whose fortunes are on the wane? These are the questions people have asked throughout the ages and it has seemed that luck, that most uncertain of quantities, rather than genuine merit or talent, often seems to rule the day and that her decisions are, to say the least of it, inexplicable, hence she is shown blindfolded and bestowing her gifts and punishments at random. The mottos for each figure mean 'I will rule', 'I rule', 'I have ruled' and the final mournful complaint 'I am without rule'.

As Christopher Marlowe wrote in his tragedy *Edward II*:

Base Fortune, now I see, that in thy wheel
There is a point, to which when men aspire,
They tumble headlong down: that point I touched.

One emblem of blindfolded Fortune with a crowned ape dressed in finery at her side depicted in Otto van Veen's, *Emblemata Horatiana*, published at Antwerp in 1612 certainly seems to underline the view that earthly fortune often seems to favour the fool! This is also emphasized by some cards which show the figures on Fortune's wheel with asses ears on their heads - a reflection on the vainglorious folly of those whose ambitions lead them to seek worldly position.

The Spanish poet Luis De Gongora writing in 1581 best sums up our feelings about the mysterious vicissitudes and accidents of fortune:

Fortune presents gifts not according to the book...When you expect whistles it's flutes. When you expect flutes it's whistles. What various paths are followed in distributing honours and possessions. She gives awards to some and penitent's cloaks to others...Sometimes she robs the chief goatherd of his cottage and goat-pen And to whomever she fancies the lamest goat has born two kids...Because in a village a poorlad has stolen one egg he swings in the sun and another gets away with a thousand crimes.



The ancient view of the Stoics that the ups and downs of life are to be withstood with a truly serene impassivity, an attitude of philosophic *contemptu mundi* - calm disdain for the world and the changeable ways of earthly fortune is definitely part of the moral lesson which this card is intended to teach. The 6th century philosopher Boethius wrote his *Consolations of Philosophy* whilst imprisoned and awaiting execution under charges of treason and his meditations upon the turnings of the Wheel of Fortune were immensely influential during the Middle Ages. His philosophical dialogues express the view that man's true happiness cannot be found by seeking ascendancy via the unstable vagaries of Dame Fortune but only by attaining to freedom through aspiration to wisdom by seeking God. A ruinous fortune can sometimes be better for men because it leads us away from putting our trust in worldly vanities and toward the realisation that Divine Providence is greater than the mutations of Fortune.

As for the number 10, Cornelius Agrippa says "...the number 10 is circular." and in Pythagorean lore it is called Fate, Anangke, the Goddess of Necessity. It is the Circle of Necessity as the Orphics call it the *Kuklos Anangke*, the wheel of cyclical fate and fortune upon which we revolve through our lives.

Divinatory Meaning

Revolution. New cycle. Mutation. A turn of luck. Elevation. Good fortune. Coming beneficial changes. Alternatively worldly transience, vanity of ambition.

XI FORTITUDE

To subdue a lion is a demonstration of the greatest mastery and strength and this provides the symbolic theme of the 11th trump of the tarot sequence. The cardinal virtue of Fortitude was often represented by this Platonic emblem of the overcoming and taming of the lion as a sign of the spirit's mastery of the bestial passions of man's lower nature. Some depictions of the card show the classical hero Hercules, club in hand, engaging the Nemean lion - the first of his twelve heroic labours. A card-picture of this kind constitutes a kind of emblematic tribute in the pack created for the Duke of Ferrara from 1471 to 1505, Ercole d'Este, who had acquired a reputation for bravery and deeds of daring in his youth. Other depictions portray the allegorical figure of Fortitude as a woman breaking a column with her hands. As well as Hercules the imagery of this card has been linked with the classical figure of Cyrene, the nymph of the goddess Artemis, whom Apollo espied one day wrestling with a lion on Mount Pelion. Falling in love with her he carried her away in his solar chariot to Libya.

Within the specific context of Christian iconology this card image might also have reference to St Thekla, an early martyr of the city of Iconium, much venerated within the Eastern Church. For her insistence upon preserving her maidenly chastity she was cast into the arena and when a great lioness was released to attack her the crowds were astonished to see it lie at her feet completely tamed by the force of her sanctity. And this chimes with the inner meanings of Fortitude as essentially embodying moral or spiritual strength which overcomes the animal passions of our lower nature. In fact in this context the lion could be a symbol of evil and this can be traced right back into ancient Persian dualism where representations of the leontocephalic (lion headed) Ahriman, malefic lord of darkness, passed down into Gnostic traditions where the demiurge Ialdabaoth, tyrannical creator and archon of the fallen material realm, was conceived of as having the face of a lion. The Christian gospel preserves this symbolism in the words of the First Epistle of Peter: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Fortitude here takes on a high spiritual significance as mystical mastery of the ferocious powers of evil by the force of purity, the malefic energies being overcome, tamed and sublimated by spiritual strength. In terms of number-symbolism Cornelius Agrippa says that 11 is the "...number of sins, and the penitent".

The female figure with the subdued lion can be seen in many works of art such as Marco Dente's *Allegory of Strength* engraved around 1527 and



which shows the female figure leading the beast toward a fire. The same device occurs on a 16th century wedding medal by Christian Weiditz which bears the motto, *Femino imperio masscult effera corda*, 'Under the rule of a woman even the fiercest spirit yields.' A talismanic image from medieval magic bearing affinities with this card image is described in the treatise called *Secretum Secretorum*: "...a naked girl, tall and strong, riding on a lion, and six men worshipping her" which is carved into a red jacinth mounted in a ring of gold in the planetary hour of the Sun on the day of the sun with the sun in Leo and the moon on the mid-heaven. This magical ring bestowed an irresistible power of dominion upon the wearer.

St. Thomas Aquinas defines this cardinal virtue thus: "...it belongs to fortitude to strengthen man in the good of virtue, especially against dangers, and chiefly against dangers of death ." This card-image is therefore a medieval allegory of spiritual courage and moral strength which enable us to stand firm against the dangers of the world and overcome them.

Divinatory Meaning

Discipline. Courage. Moral fortitude. Spiritual strength. Self-mastery. Domination over passions. Gentleness taming fierceness. Sublimation and purity.

XII THE HANGED MAN

The 12th trump called *Il Traditore* is really one of the most mysterious images of the tarot. Its early Italian name 'The Traitor' (*Il Traditore*, *L'Impiccato*) and the two bags of coins he is shown holding in early examples bring to mind the faithless treachery of Judas Iscariot. The method of hanging a traitor by the heel is called 'baffling' - Sandro Botticelli was commissioned to thus portray members of the Pazzi family of bankers on the wall of the Borgello in Florence after a bloody coup against the Medici in 1478. The image is a *pittura infamante* ('shame painting') used to humiliate malfactors and traitors.

But going beyond the exoteric literal, moral and allegorical senses to the esoteric or anagogic meaning of the image the Traitor may have a deeper significance.

Another level of interpretation is perhaps conveyed by Plato's description in the *Timaues* of the incarnate soul, entangled in the material life of the sensory world as being *anatrope* - 'upside down'. The myth of the headlong descent of the Anthropos from the realms Above into the materially-embodied state Below might be inferred. (The stream symbolizes the hylic waters of nature in whose material depth the *anthropos* beheld his reflection and descended into incarnation as described in *Poimandres*). Likewise in Jewish apocryphal legend the leader of the fallen angels was condemned by the heavenly hosts to hang suspended upside-down in the constellation of Orion for his treachery against heaven and descent to earth to mingle with material humanity - another mythos of the 'fall', the headlong descent of spirit becoming enmeshed in matter and the timebound world of generation. Also medieval depictions of Lucifer being cast down headlong into hell are brought to mind.

In Persian Islamic tradition the two Angels Harut and Marut, who came down to earth and revealed the secrets of sorcery and the Divine Name to the maiden Zohra (who God took up into heaven to become the planet Venus), were punished by being chained by the ankles and suspended upside down within a well at Babylon; the Sufi sage Jallaludin Rumi expounded that the angels hung upside-down in the Babylonian well was a symbol of the spirit and mind confined within the mortal clay of physical incarnation.

But in the 'Apocryphal Acts of Peter' the saint requests that he be crucified upside down to signify this descent of the Anthropos:

Learn ye the mystery of all nature, and the beginning of all things...
For the first man fell head downwards and showed forth a manner



of birth such as was not heretofore; for it was dead, having no motion. He, then, being pulled down...established this whole disposition of all things, being hanged up an image of the creation wherein he made the things of the right hand into left hand and the left hand in the right hand, and changed about all the marks of their nature, so that he thought those things that were not fair to be fair, and those that were in truth evil, to be good. Concerning which the Lord saith in a mystery: Unless you make the things of the right hand as those of the left, and those of the left as those of the right, and those that are above as those below and those that are behind as those that are before, ye shall not have knowledge of the kingdom.

As man's worldly state is one of oppositional inversion to his original perfect state of being so perhaps apprehension of spiritual truth is to be attained via just such a complete reversal, turning conventional perceptions on their head and turning the profane world upside down. Such a reversal of values is intrinsic to the mystical vision. This paradoxical image of 'The Hanged Man' is extremely suggestive and seems to comport a complex of themes on various levels involving treachery, reversal of values, metanoia, change of allegiances, ordeal, self-sacrifice, trials and martyrdom. In that sense the card is an adumbration of eventual redemption too...

Divinatory Meaning

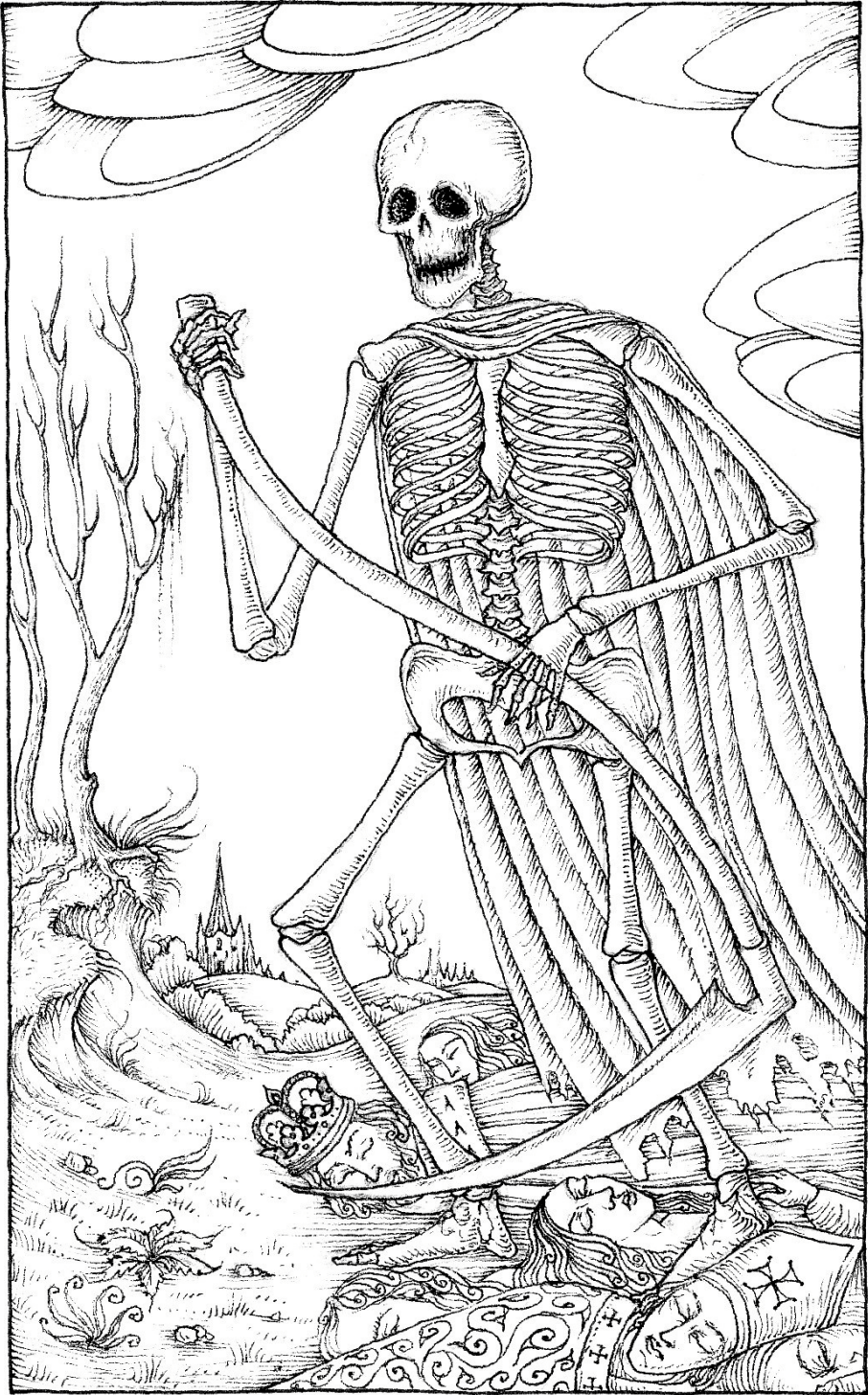
Reversal of allegiances. Change of heart. Renunciation. Trial. Treachery. Suspension between states. Sacrifice and ordeal. Infamy, humiliation and martyrdom.

XIII DEATH

The ever-ominous 13 is, appropriately, the number of the card *La Morte*, depicting the 'Triumph of Death', never far from the thoughts of medieval man when the Black Death was ravaging Europe in the middle 1400's and leaving desolation in its wake. The card is in the conventional sense a *Memento Mori* - it admonishes us to bring to mind the transience of our earthly state: "Remember that you too will die." It also reveals the figures of the tarot to be participants in the classic medieval device of the 'Dance of Death', called the *Danse Macabre* or *Totentanz* in which humans of all the social stations from the lowest to the highest are shown in alternating procession with skeletons, symbolizing the omnipresence and victory of death against which nothing, neither rank, wealth, pomp, power or beauty, can avail or grant immunity. Hans Holbein's immortal set of 41 exquisite woodcut designs published in 1538 show Death surprising men and women, high and low, with a leering skeletal grin of ghastly solicitude that none seem able to resist.

The Dance of Death motif originates in France, apparently originating from the wall-paintings in the Cimetiere des Innocents in Paris in 1424: and from there the symbolism spread across Europe as a popular art-form in Germany, Switzerland, Spain and Italy. The grim Dance was painted on the walls of burial grounds and cemeteries in the Middle Ages and inside cloisters and churches, as an aid to meditation upon the evanescent nature of worldly life and the need to spiritually prepare for the afterlife. Other notable 'Dance of Death' artworks include the Lubeck paintings in Germany, executed by Bernt Notke in 1463, which depicts 24 figures. There was a 'Dance of Death' in St. Paul's churchyard in London in the 1430's. Other notable artworks in this great macabre tradition include such masterpieces as Hieronymus Bosch's 'Death and the Miser' and Hans Baldung Grien's 1517 work 'Death and the Maiden'. In all these Death's message is unvarying and ever the same - as the skeletons in the 13th century poem of Baudoin de Conde say to the living: "Such as I was you are, and such as I am you will be. Wealth, honour and power are of no value at the hour of your death."

The tarot card shows Death as *falcifer* - the 'scythe-bearer', an epithet of Saturn, portrayed mowing a crop of human limbs and heads with the blade, the true image of the 'grim reaper' and of course Saturn was an ancient Latin deity of agriculture. In the Middle Ages the short sickle used by gardeners was called a *curvus saturnus* and many planetary images of Saturn from the medieval-renaissance period show him bearing his scythe. The clear affinities with the alchemical symbols of the Deaths-head (*Caput Mortuum*) and the



scythe-wielding skeleton and black crow in the Great Work are very clear, symbols of the Blackening (Nigredo) or stage of Mortification also called the 'reign of Saturn'. Likewise magical images from the medieval period resume the same symbolic themes such as the talisman of Saturn preserved in Arab astrological magic and transmitted through Cornelius Agrippa in the 16th century: "...the Image of a man, having the countenance of an Hart and Camels feet and sitting upon a Chayr or Dragon, holding in his right hand, a scythe." In *the Picatrix* this figure is described as having the head of a crow. The magico-alchemical resonances of this image are summed up in the *Open Entrance to the Closed Palace of the King* of Eirenaeus Philalethes where he asserts: "The Tomb in which our King is buried, is that which we call Saturn, and it is the key of the work of transmutation."

In some medieval depictions Death is shown grasping an arrow or dart in his hand. Here the iconography identifies him as Azrael, the 'Angel of Extinctions' in Judaic and Islamic tradition (in Islamic angelology he is one of the four archangels.): regarding the 'Angel of Death' Arab tradition avers that Azrael bears two lances, a luminous lance of God's light and mercy with which he separates the souls of the just from their bodies and dispatches them to the seventh heaven. His other lance is forged of wrath and with this weapon he draws out the soul of the malefactor and thrusts it down into hell.

Divinatory Meaning

Termination, death and transformation. Mortality. Death of kings. Spiritual transmutation and regeneration. Ending. Destruction before renewal.

XIV TEMPERANCE

This card *La Temperanza*, presents us with the allegorical emblem of the cardinal virtue of temperance. The Latin *temperare* signifies 'to mingle in due proportions' and this mitigating, moderating quality is what this card essentially represents. As Jan Comenius comments on the allegorical image of Temperance in his 17th century emblem-book *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*: "Temperance prescribeth a mean to meat and drink and restraineth the desire as with a bridle and so moderateth all things lest any thing too much be done." For St Thomas Aquinas the virtue of Temperance moderates and 'appoints the mean' and therefore according to the Angelical Doctor is a 'principal virtue'. As he says: "Temperance is simply a disposition of the mind which binds the passion."

A beautiful example of a painting of 'Temperantia' from 1470 by Piero del Pollaiuolo shows her enthroned and mixing wine with water, one of the cycle of seven theological virtues completed by Sandro Botticelli, which graced a Florentine merchants tribunal room.

In this trump a winged female figure is shown tempering wine with water. It's essential to appreciate the symbolism by which the unawakened profane existence of man is perceived to be a state of intoxication, of drunkenness and nescience, of the sensory life as a deluded state of bewrayment under the influence of the lower passions and ego-attachments. 'Intoxication', 'sleep', 'drunkenness' - all express the impure state of passivity and ignorance in which the profane humanity is sunk under the sway of the bodily life, immersed and enmeshed in the material world. Such deluded 'intoxication' characterizes the existential plight of 'fallen' man.

In the Corpus Hermeticum, Liber VII, it is written:

Whither are you carried, O Men, drunken with drinking up the strong Wine of Ignorance? Which seeing you cannot bear: Why do you not vomit it up again? Stand, and be sober, and look up again with the eyes of your heart; and if you cannot all do so, yet do as many as you can. For the malice of Ignorance surroundeth all the Earth, and corrupteth the Soul, shut up in the Body not suffering it to arrive at the Havens of Salvation. Suffer not yourselves to be carried with the great stream, but stem the tide, you that can lay hold of the Haven of Safety, and make your full course towards it. Seek one that may lead you by the hand, and conduct you to the door of Truth and Knowledge, where the clear Light is that is pure from Darkness, where there is not one drunken, but all are sober and in their heart look up to him, whose pleasure it is to be seen.



The winged figure tempers the wine from her cup of the clear waters of spiritual truth and noetic awakening: she brings the 'sobriety that surpasses intoxication'.

Divinatory Meaning

Moderation, careful management. Tempering and mitigating. Sobriety and spiritual lucidity. Adaptation and synthesis. Skilful combination.

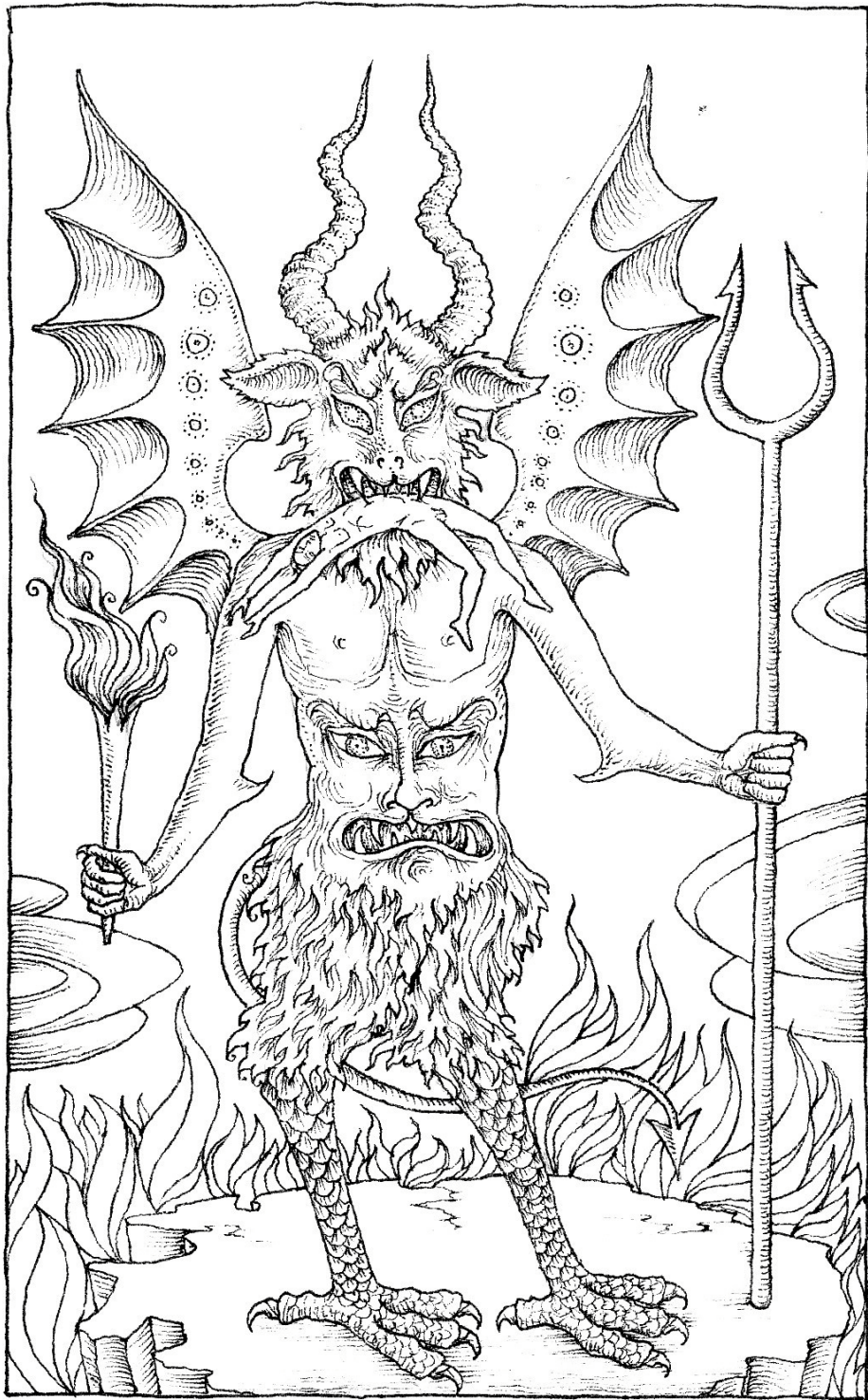
XV THE DEVIL

The fifteenth card depicts the fallen Lucifer, the figure of Satan as he was regarded in the Middle Ages, the dark lord of hell, the failed angels and damned souls within his dolorous infernal empire. This card was sometime titled *Raptor Perditorum* - the 'Captor of the Lost'. Descended from the ancient Persian Ahriman the Devil of the High Middle Ages, Lucifer, was a once shining angel, now fallen from the divine presence through the corrupting sin of ego-pride to become the *rex mundi*, the lord of the world, its sins, vanities and iniquities. Accordingly the medieval Lucifer is shown as a grotesque and bestial being, horned and bearded, shaggy, fanged and bat-winged, with grimacing faces on his belly and knees and taloned claws - at his fall the once beautiful angel plunged headlong into the darkness of the material world, becoming foul and hideous of form. In him we see the tempter and enemy of mankind, an image of the self-grasping ego itself. He embodies what the scripture calls the 'deep secrets of Satan', the metaphysical problem of evil. We might well see him as the power of ignorance and spiritual blindness, the delusions which bind the captive soul, like William Blake's 'Satan the Selfhood', the fallen ego and its tyrannous dominion of compulsion and suffering. He is the 'carnal mind' which is 'emnyty against God'.

From the medieval Neoplatonic perspective evil is a privative condition - the absence of the supreme Good, the Devil is a negation and hell itself signifies the state of suffering experienced by the soul alienated from the knowledge and bliss of Divine Being. Lucifer in the traditional medieval view, is the tempter, the deceiver, the 'father of lies' seducing the soul from attaining to Divine Truth via a myriad of deceits and falsehoods.

The imagery of Satan from the 14th century onward becomes increasingly monstrous in detail. One important influence was that recounted in the 11th century work called 'The Vision of Tundale' with its description of the anguish souls in torment amid the sulphurous flames of hell and, "...a beast of unbelievable size and inexpressible horror...His eyes were shining like burning coals, his mouth yawned wide and an unquenchable flame beamed from his face." This was Lucifer, "...the prince of darkness, the enemy of mankind."

Perhaps the greatest description of the Devil in medieval culture is that recounted by Dante Alighieri in Canto XXXIV his *Inferno*. Passing through the gate inscribed *Pape Satan, Pape Satan, Allepe* (unknown words) and descending through the ever-decreasing circles of hell, symbolizing the stifling narrowness of the delusory realm of the fallen selfhood we eventually arrive at the lowermost circle of Hell, the City of Dis, as if drawn down to



the dead centre beneath the earth by the inverse centrifugal gravity of sin and ignorance. In the cavernous darkness of Judecca, the pit of traitors, named after the arch-betrayer Judas, Dante beholds the horrific and repugnant vision of Lucifer embedded immobile in ice up to his waist, locked in the icy misery of a deathly selfishness and sterile egoism. The shaggy Devil has six bat-like wings as he was once a seraph in the world of light, he has three faces, the right-hand one white-yellow, the central one red and the left-hand visage black. From his six eyes run goutts of blood and between his fangs he gnaws a trio of traitors, Cassius, Judas and Brutus. Dante's incredible depiction of Lucifer, embedded in ice from his headlong fall into the earth's centre is a powerful portrayal of the blind hatred, despair and futility of the Devil, imprisoned in the depths of hell. The dark epitome of that constricting stasis, meaninglessness and non-being which are the true essence of evil.

However we might also recall the heretical doctrine of 'universal restitution' (*apocatastasis*) expounded by Origen and others which taught that ultimately even Satan and the fallen angels will be redeemed and restored to their original estate in a return to the Divine Unity.

Divinatory Meaning

'Pride comes before a fall'. Egoism and arrogance. Malice and tyranny. Temptation, deception, obsession. Evil influence. Bondage, compulsion. Slavery.

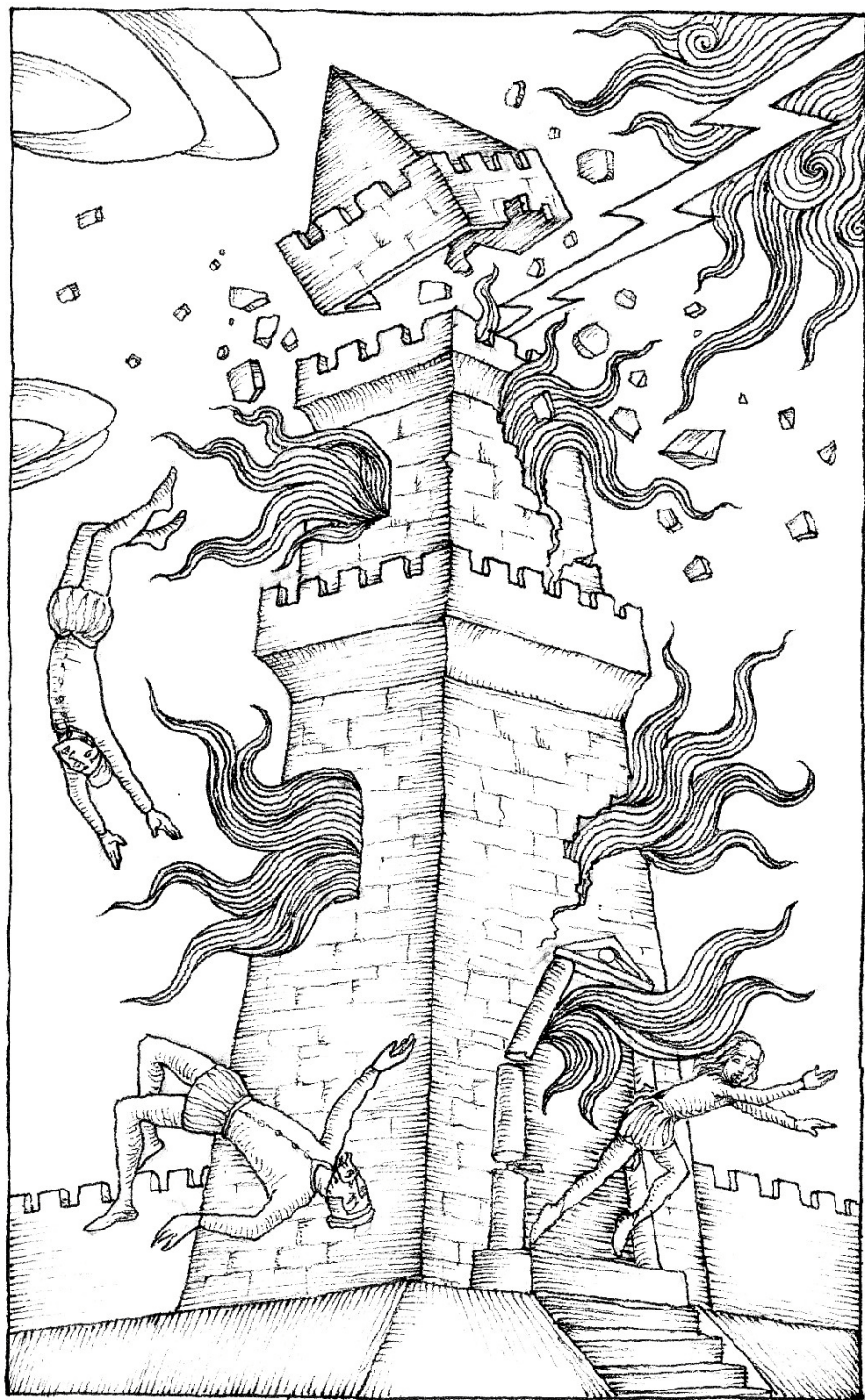
XVI THE TOWER

The 16th trump shows how, according to Boethius in *the Consolation of Philosophy*, Book I: IV (trans. Sanderson Beck) 'to strike the eminent towers of custom the way of the burning thunderbolt was moving.' The castellated tower blasted by the heavenly lightning-flash and depicted with its collapsing masonry brings to mind various medieval images of the humbling of the proud and of the divine wrath visited upon hubris. The key image here would appear to be the Tower of Babel, built by Nimrod who was of the race of the giants and whose transgressions and excesses provoked the retribution of heaven.

Dante Alighieri in Canto XII of *Purgatorio* is shown various examples of pride brought low and as well as the Titans struck by the thunderbolt of Jove and the, "...scattered limbs of the giants," he sees, "...at foot of his great labour, Nimrod / As if bewildered, looking at the people/ Who had been proud with him in Sennaar." Sandro Botticelli's drawings for these verses of Dante depict Nimrod's tower crashing down with human bodies caught falling in mid-air, virtually identical to the tarot card. Other medieval renderings such as a miniature in a 14th century bible from Ravenna show an angel attacking the tower, sword in hand and emanating flames. Likewise an engraving by Philipp Gall (1537-1612) shows the scene of devastation as heavenly flame blasts apart the crown of the Tower of Babel and Carel van Mander's 16th century engraving shows the tower's summit being assaulted by tongues of flame flashing from dark storm clouds.

During the great mystery-cycles and popular ecclesiastical dramas of the Middle-Ages the narrative of the Tower of Babel featured as one of the plays and was usually put on by the stonemasons' guild

Babylon's role in the apocalyptic vision of St. John the Divine, as the corrupt capital of worldly pomp, luxurious wealth, materialism and tyranny resumes a similar imagery: in the Tapestries of the Apocalypse kept in the Chateau of Angers which were created for Louis I d'Anjou between 1375 and 1382 by Nicolas Bataille and Robert Poinçon, after designs by Hennequin de Bruges, there feature several images of the turrets and castellated towers of Babylon collapsing; a significant motif in the context of this card. The old Italian name for this card 'Casa del Diavolo', recalls the words of Revelation: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils." The prison-house of the Devil is being shown assaulted and cast down. Like the classical motif of Jove's thunderbolt blasting the titans the tower struck by lightning is a harbinger of release, liberation and the downfall of tyrants, a destruction which also brings illumination, freedom



and regeneration.

Another medieval motif found carved in cathedrals which might relate to the iconology of this card is the Christian legend that during the flight of the Holy family from Herod, wherever they went pagan temples, altars and statues fell down, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah: 'Behold the Lord is sitting on a light cloud and is coming to Egypt. The idols of Egypt will be shaken by his presence and will fall on the ground.' A carving in Reims cathedral depicts collapsing towers and human figures falling through the air.

On a deepening level of esoteric meaning one could perhaps identify the flaming thunderbolt or lightning-flash striking the tower with the violent and swift fiery energy of the *Via Sicca Brevis*, the perilous 'Dry Short Path' of the alchemists by which one attains to the goal of the Great Work in a very short period: this is the *Schrack*, the sudden 'Lightning Flash' or 'Salnitric fire-crack' which the 17th century alchemical mystic Jacob Boehme depicts as a crackling bolt of lightning.

Divinatory Meaning

Liberation and release. Catastrophic downfall of tyranny and delusion. Pride levelled and brought down. A 'bolt from the blue'. Shock, illumination and freedom.

XVII THE STAR

The 17th trump is the emblem of the Star - in this context the luminary in question is very likely to be Venus, more specifically as the Morning and Evening Star, Phosphorus and Hesperus. In the sequence of the trumps it would make sense to have the Evening Star glimmering at the onset of night. The female image depicted upon the card is Venus Coelestis or Aphrodite Urania, the nude 'celestial Venus' as contrasted with the richly robed 'terrestrial Venus' (trump III). The 15th century iconography derives from the Platonic doctrine of the 'two Venuses' symbolizing respectively the earthly and the spiritual modes of love and desire, the material mirroring the numinous archetype in the Neoplatonic world-view. The divine beauty of the Celestial Venus leads one into a mystical initiatory death and regeneration via gnostic ascent to Divine Union.

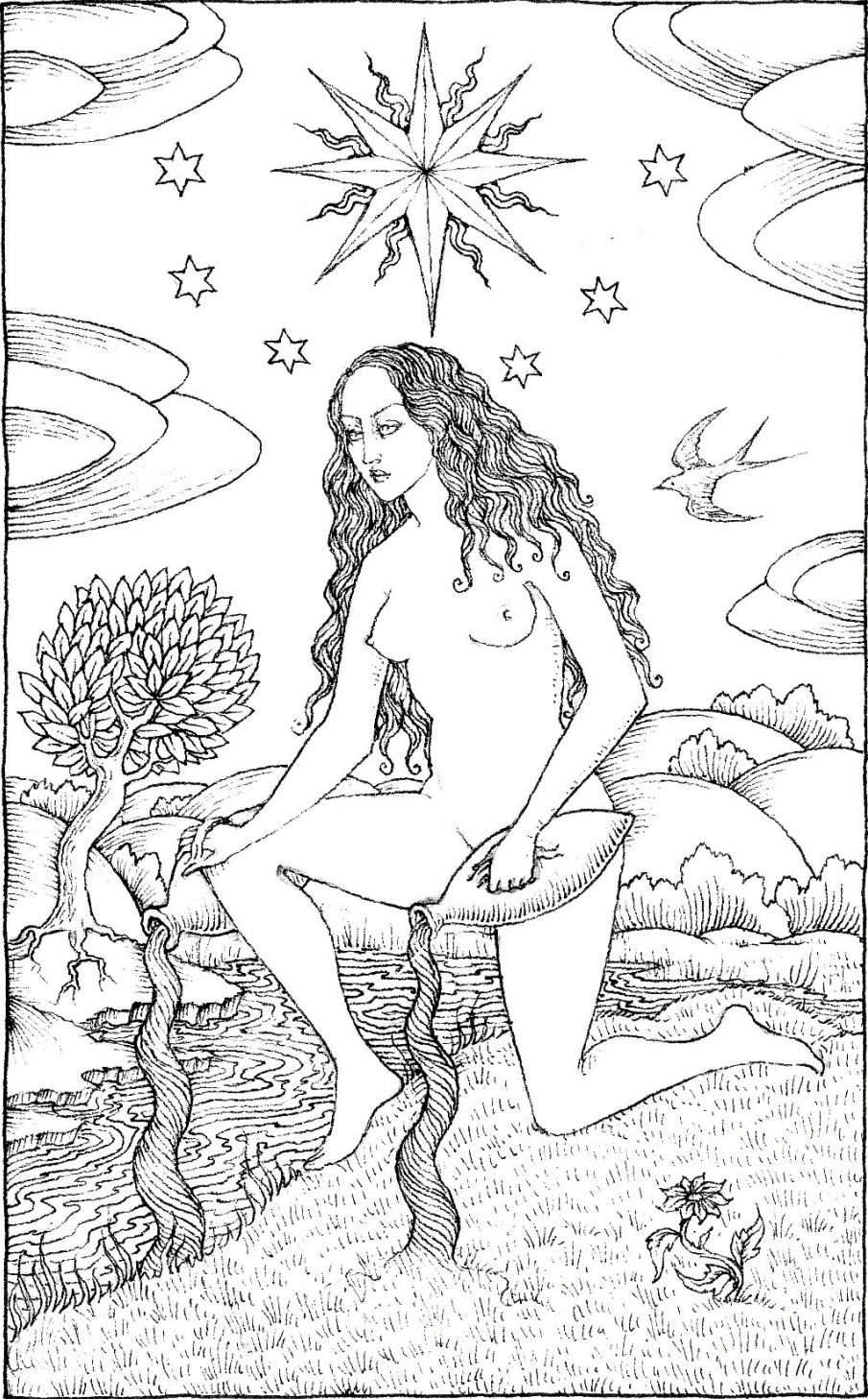
Pico Della Mirandola expounds these mysteries thus:

The lover may see the beloved Celestial Venus...and by reflecting on her divine image, nourish his purified eyes with joy; but if he would possess her more closely, he must die the second death by which he is completely severed from the body... And observe that the most perfect and intimate union the lover can have with the celestial beloved is called the union of the kiss.

Cornelius Agrippa describes the mystical trance-ecstasy or *furor* which, "...proceeds from Venus, and it doth by a fervent love convert, and transmute the mind to God, and makes it altogether like to God..." The figure of this card has also been interpreted as a classical Naiad, a river-nymph and the outpouring of her waters perceived as the stream of souls entering into incarnate existence, following the philosopher Porphyry's *De Antro Nympharum* ('On the Cave of the Nymphs'), a mystical reading of the 'cavern of the nymphs' in the land of Ithaca described in chapter 13 of Homer's *Odyssey*:

...a cavern that offers welcome shade and is sacred to the Nymphs we call Naiads. This cave contains a number of stone basins and two-handled jars...and there are springs whose water never fails. It has two mouths. The one that looks north is the way down for men. The other, facing south, is meant for the gods.

(*The Odyssey*, trans. E.V. Rieu)



Porphry presents this mythos as an allegory of the passage of the soul into incarnation and mortality and its journey to liberation. Souls enter into the realm of generation via the northern Gate of the Moon, Cancer; they discarnate via the southern Gate of the Sun, Capricorn, which opens onto transcendence and the path to 'bright Olympus'. The nude Naiad is the 'Nymph of the Springs' pouring a stream of glittering waters onto the earth, symbolic of the souls entering into the mortal state through the Gate of Man.

The eighth heaven was regarded by the mediaeval cosmologists as the realm of the fixed stars, according to Platonist teaching the sphere of Divine Mind (*Nous*), the Mind of God which as Cornelius Agrippa correlates with the, "...starry heaven, where he fabricateth so many figures as he hath Ideas in himself." This is mirrored in the microcosm and the alchemist Martin Rulandus states that, "Imagination is the star in man."

Regarding the numerological symbolism here we might note that John Heydon in his book, *The Holy Guide* (1662) says: "The number Seventeen is called of R. Lully, a Number of Victory..." Victory here perhaps implying and auguring the fulfilment of one's hope.

Divinatory Meaning

Hope, revitalization and optimism. Healing. Glittering prospects. Aspiration. Renewal and refreshment. Insight, love and bright expectation. Idealism.

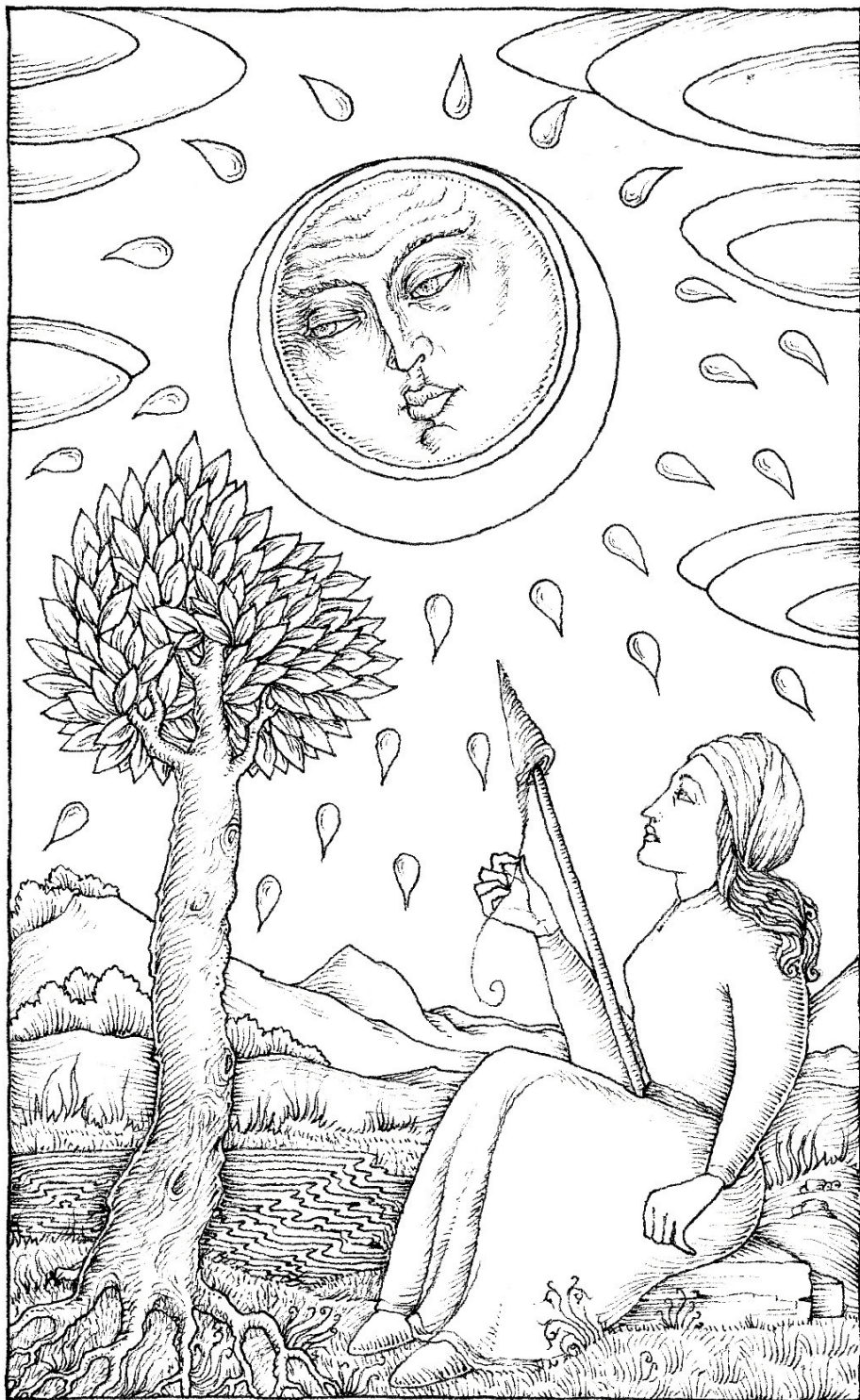
XVIII THE MOON

The Moon is one of the few Tarot cards which can be seen to possess an explicitly astrological symbolism. The Moon shines between two towers above a pool from which a crustacean, a crayfish representing the zodiacal sign of Cancer, emerges. On each side of the scene are two dogs. If we consider that the mysterious emblem of this card is an overt image of the Moon and the sign of its astrological rulership, Cancer, then the two dogs may be regarded as the 'Greater Dog Star' (Sirius) and the 'Lesser Dog Star' (Procyon) which are both stars in the constellation of Cancer. Dogs were said to be under the rulership of the moon in the medieval system of correspondences, as Cornelius Agrippa says in the 16th century: "Lunary animals are such as delight to be in man's company, and such as do naturally excel in love or hatred, as all kinds of dogs." The hounds that accompany the goddess Diana are an example of this symbolism. Crabs, crayfish and shellfish are traditionally ascribed to the moon and in Renaissance magic we find magical images of the goddess Luna riding upon a crab. As the 17th century astrologer William Ramesey says in his *Astrologia Restaurata*, the moon has rulership of the, "...Crab, Oister, Lobster, Cockle, Muscle, and all shellfish." According to the same author the kind of places under the lunar influence would include such locales as, "...fountains...fields...pools, fishponds, bogs, brooks... common-shores."

A curious variant version of the Moon card appears in some 17th century Tarots of France and Belgium, including the design of Jacques Vieville and the Rouen Tarot of Adam de Hautot: this shows a female figure sat beneath the moon with her distaff, spinning. Possibly a folkloric motif this image of the Moon has some parallels in European traditions such as those described by the scholar Ion Otescu in his *Beliefs of the Romanian Peasants Concerning the Sky and Stars* (Romanian Academy Annals, 1907) which recounts lunar myths prevalent in old Transylvania:

...Varcolaci (vampires) originate from the air of heaven, when women spin at night, especially at midnight without a candle, particularly if they cast spells with the thread they spin. Hence it is never good to spin by moonlight, for vampires and Varcolaci get up to the sky by the thread and eat the sun and moon (i.e cause eclipses.)

In Transylvanian folk-tradition, inherited from the Roman culture of Dacia, the coppery red appearance of the moon during a lunar eclipse is



caused by vampiric beings in the shape of dragons or ghostly dogs attacking and biting the lunar disc when the 'blood of the moon' spreads over its surface.

Old European folk-traditions here seem to link the moon with spinning, perhaps a symbol of the power of fate and destiny in the sublunary world. As in Dante's *Commedia* we also find an old association of the silvery lunar orb with its shifting cycles and phases, with inconstancy, fluctuation and mutability. And of course there is the long-established connection of the moon with lunacy. The moon is the ruler of the tides, of dreams and of madness.

The ancient Orphic name for the face of the moon is the *Gorgoneion*, the face of the gorgon Medusa guarding the gates of the underworld and warding away the profane from the realm of the mysteries and the nocturnal gates of Hades. The metal under the planetary rulership of the moon is silver and this card might also denote the stage of 'whitening' in the alchemical Opus, the manifestation of the lunar White Tincture.

Divinatory Meaning

Fluctuations, instability, inconstancy. 'Crisis of confidence'. Hidden spite, enemies and secret envy. Hallucinations and deceptive appearances. Half-light. Fear.

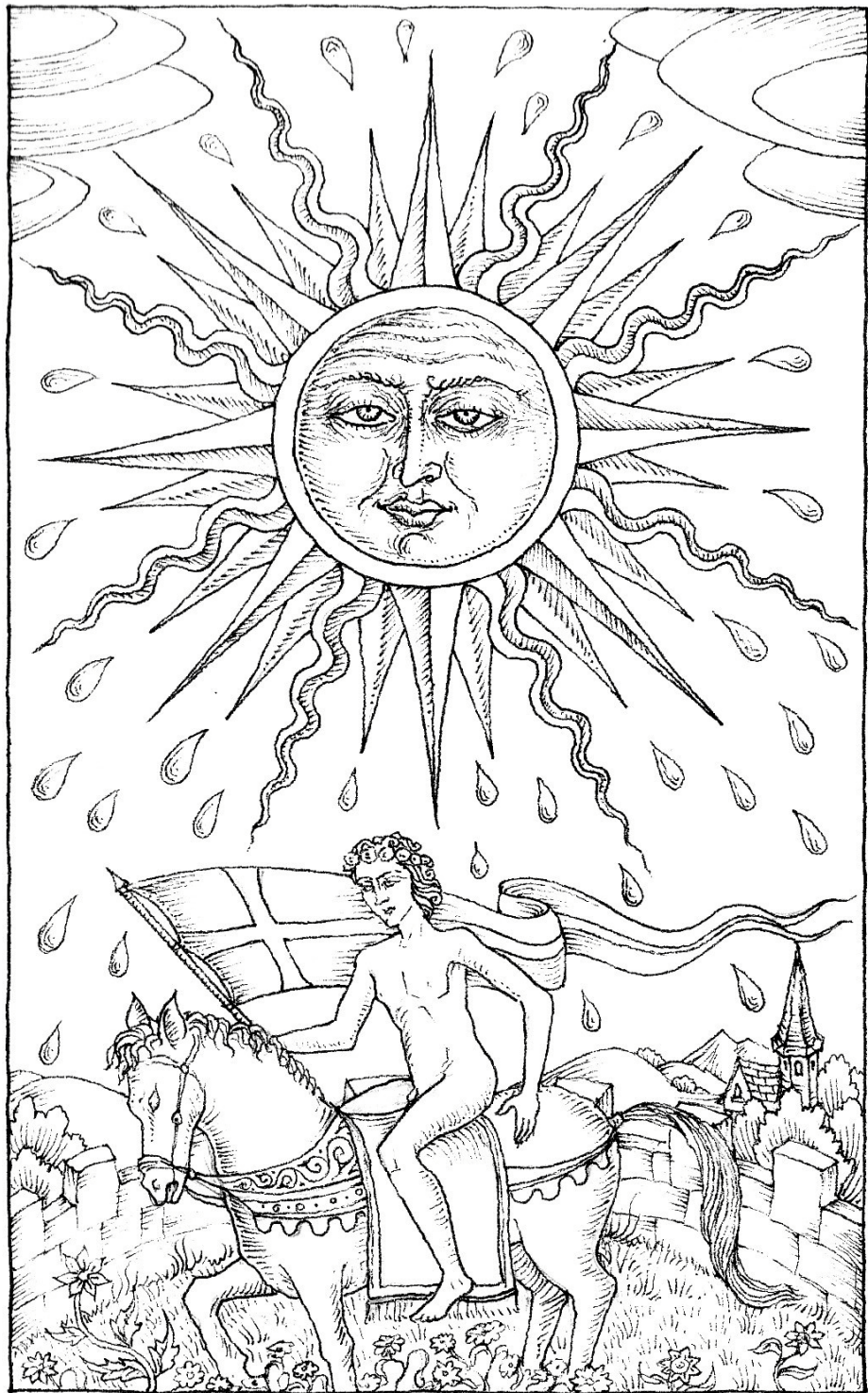
XIX THE SUN

The emblem of the Sun in the Tarot, the blazing light of the solar orb, resumes the Christian symbolic cycle, the Redeemer whose coming was prophesied in scripture referring to the time when, "...shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings..." As St Clement of Alexandria put it: "Christ shines. He shines more brightly than the sun. Night flees before him...death departs. O true sacred mystery! O clear pure light." The sun is thus the living symbol of radiance, illumination, glory, life and spiritual light, the deathless gold of regeneration and the central tabernacle of the Divine. In Dante's *Commedia* the sphere of the sun is emblematic of wisdom and understanding and guided upward by Beatrice into that sphere of heaven, the poet encounters the luminous souls of the great sages and doctors of medieval theology.

The Renaissance witnesses a great revival of the Hermetic and Platonist cult of the spiritual Sun, the very lamp of God set in the midst. In the 17th century we find Robert Fludd writing of the ancient mystery-teachings which expounded that, "...there is an archetypal Sun through which all is adorned with beauty and harmony. They attribute the mystery of the visible, created Sun to this divine Sun, Apollo, who carries life, grace and health in his right hand..." This was a revival of the Neoplatonic symbolism such as the vision described by Proclus as beholding, "...the sun of the light of the intelligible gods." The Middle Platonist writer Lucius Apuleius in his novel *The Golden Ass*, widely regarded as a compendium of Platonic-Pythagorean symbolism in the Italian Renaissance, spoke of the culmination of spiritual initiation into the Mysteries as the vision of the 'sun at midnight'.

The number 19 may convey an obscure reference to classical Graeco-Roman lore concerning Hyperborean Apollo. Hyperborea is the mystical 'Land beyond the North Wind', the otherworldly region beyond the circumpolar stars, a blissful realm of happy inhabitants which Apollo, in his chariot drawn by swans, visited every nineteen years according to the accounts of Pytheas and Diodorus Siculus. Hyperborea is the spiritual pole, in an esoteric sense it symbolizes the world of light illuminated by the archetypal 'Sun at Midnight', source of all illumination.

The Marseilles deck and others of that pattern depict the golden sun radiating flames and before a low wall two children which one might surmise are the children of Helios-Apollo. The boy may be Aeetes, whom he sired upon Perse, and the girl may be Circe, his daughter. Giordano Bruno's 1582 work 'Cantus Circaeus' describes the enchantress Circe performing magical rites to invoke the power of the sun, her father.



The famous 15th century deck created for Charles VI depicts upon this card the blazing sun over a golden-haired maiden spinning thread upon a distaff, curiously echoing the Besancon and Belgian forms of 'The Moon' card which also depict a female figure spinning thread. The Belgian versions of 'The Sun' portray a nude youth upon horseback holding an unfurled banner emblazoned with a cross.

We can be certain that the place of this card in the sequence of trumps is intended to symbolize the triumph of the light, the dawn of the divine radiance, victory and heavenly glory. We might also see it as denoting the stage of 'reddening' or the manifestation of the solar Red Tincture in alchemical symbolism, which transmutes all base metals to gold. In the context of medieval apocalyptic vision we can also interpret it as setting the scene for the next card in the great drama of the Last Days at the end of time. In the words of *Revelation*: "And I saw an angel standing in the Sun..."

Divinatory Meaning

Happiness, geniality, joy. Brilliance and acclaim. Enlightenment, triumph, success. Good health and gratitude. Creativity. Truth, realization, regeneration.

XX JUDGEMENT

The 20th trump of the tarot called 'Judgement' or 'The Angel' depicts the resurrection of the dead on the last day. The card is very much a visual depiction of the scriptural teaching of *Corinthians* 15:52: "Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed." Amid a blaze of radiance the great archangel Michael, the 'Arch-Priest of Heaven', sounds his trumpet, waking the dead who rise naked from their tombs, as it is written: "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." The motif of the resurrection of the dead is also found in Islam where the Archangel Israfil blows the horn which awakens the dead from their resting places. This eschatological scene may be ultimately rooted in the Zoroastrian religion of Persia where at the end of time the saviour Soshyans or Saoshyant presides over the final resurrection and raising of the dead, as the *Greater Bundahishn* states: "For fifty-seven years will Soshyans raise the dead and all men will be resurrected, both those who were saved and those who were damned. And each man will arise in the place where his spirit left him or where he first fell to the ground." (trans. R.C Zaehner, *The Teachings of the Magi*, London 1956). The ancient Egyptian post-mortem judgement of the soul, presided over by Thoth, also comes to mind and it is perhaps significant that in Coptic Christian angelology the figure of Thoth-Hermes was assimilated to the Archangel Michael.

The imagery of the card resumes the mystery of the 'Resurrection Body', the spiritual body or radiant 'Body of Glory' as the medieval alchemists called it, realised through the high transmutations of the Royal Art. Basil Valentine in the fourth of his *Twelve Keys* says:

At the end of the world, the world shall be judged by fire, and all those things that God has made of nothing shall by fire be reduced to ashes, from which ashes the Phoenix is to produce her young...After the conflagration, there shall be formed a new heaven and a new earth, and the new man will be more noble in his glorified state than he was before.

Valentine goes on to use the simile of glass being produced by great heat from sand and ashes, 'ripened by fire', to allude to the 'great mystery' of the immortal 'glorified body' which 'resembles a crystal stone'.



Writing in 1336 Petrus Bonus of Ferrara in his work 'Pretiosa Margarita Novella' states that;

The ancient alchemists knew through their art about the approaching end of the world and the resurrection of the dead...The body becomes totally glorified and incorruptible, incredibly subtle, penetrating every density. Its nature will be both spiritual and bodily. Ancient philosophers have seen the Last Judgement in this Art...

The Christian iconography of the last trump and resurrection and judgement, at its most esoteric level of meaning, was used to convey profound arcane teachings concerning the complete transfiguration of being attained at the culmination of the Great Work of spiritual regeneration.

The awe-inspiring scene of the Last Judgement was an enduring motif of Christian art and sculpture in the Middle Ages, depicted in the stone-carvings and stained-glass which adorn the great Gothic cathedrals of Europe from York Minster to St Lazare at Autun to Chartres. A scene instantly comprehensible to medieval men and women, peasant, merchant, knight, monk and alchemist alike.

Divinatory Meaning

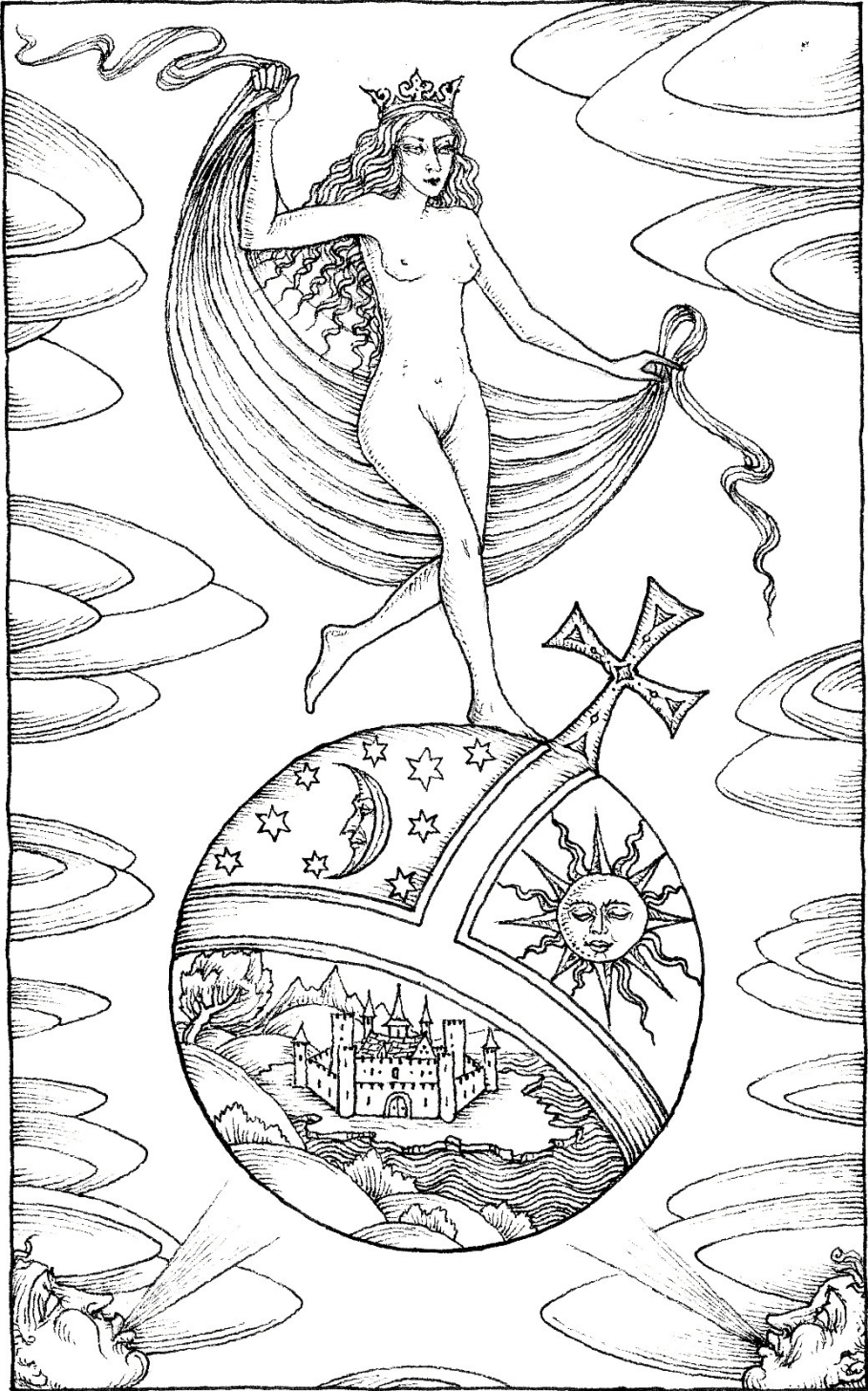
Renovation, rising phoenix-like from the ashes. Cleansing. Awakening. Reckoning and culmination. Summoning to new life and complete change. Resurrection.

XXI THE WORLD

In the final card of the trumps sequence we behold 'The World' or 'The Angel': the eschatological cycle of the 'Last Things' has reached its culmination in a great vision of cosmic *renovatio*. In the mysteries of the Apocalypse this is the unveiling of the spiritual world, the heavenly Sion, the City of God: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth...the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." In the Marseilles pattern we see the four evangelical beasts in the corners of the card, the *Chaioth-ha-Qadosh* or 'Life-forms of the Sanctity' as the Christian Cabala of the Renaissance knew them. These are the great Angelic beings who stand about the Divine Throne in the Heavenly World. As they also correlate with the zodiacal signs with the Bull for Taurus, the Lion for Leo, the Eagle for Scorpio and the Human for Aquarius they also symbolize the elements and the archetypal stellar pattern in the Mind of God, the ground plan of the Heavenly City with its twelve gates. In the Visconti-Sforza tarocchi the card shows the walled city within a starry sphere held by two winged angels.

The Steele sermon *Sermo Perutilis de Ludo* from mid 15th century Italy glosses this card with the words 'God the Father'. The early woodcuts of this card actually depict the image of 'Christ in Glory' surrounded by the four evangelical beasts. In the Cary-Yale Visconti tarocchi an arched scene of the world is presided over by a richly dressed female figure in heavenly clouds bearing a trumpet in one hand and a crown in the other, with a great crown shown at the summit of the triumphal arch. The circular or mandorla-like wreath shown in the French designs of this card is probably also a crown of victory, a chaplet. This is entirely appropriate for an emblem signifying the 'Triumph of Eternity'.

A significant variant of the crown and victory chaplet is the version of this card shown in the Besancon pattern of French and Belgian tarots. A naked crowned female figure is shown holding a great banner which billows sail-like behind her. She is standing or dancing gracefully atop a royal orb, a sphere surmounted by a cross, in which are depicted the sun, moon, stars and a walled city, hills, seas - the cosmos itself, made new and perfect. Interestingly this same symbol or hieroglyph, the circle O surmounted by the cross +, according to medieval Hermetic lore represents the Tincture or *Lapis Philosophorum*, the Hidden Stone of the Wise, attained at the culmination of the Great Work. The card can clearly connote the successful conclusion and completion of the alchemists quest, the crowning of the work in the achievement of the Tincture which 'turneth all to gold' and grants



regeneration and immortality.

The Tarot historian John Shephard proposed that in some rare variants this card was sometimes depicted as the Grail and refers to hand-painted cards from the Guildhall and Goldschmit decks which show the grail-like vessel with an arrow and a double fountain perhaps representing the lance and the holy blood, flanked by two winged angels. In the mediaeval romances such as Wolfram Von Eschenbach's 13th century epic *Parzival* the Grail is referred to explicitly as a stone which is the 'crown of all earthly wishes', a 'fair blossom of Paradise garden' borne by angels and hidden within the mystical castle of Munsalvaesche. It is presented in an ambience of alchemical associations, "By virtue of this Stone the Phoenix is burned to ashes in which he is reborn." Von Eschenbach goes on to tell us that the Grail-Stone is, "...the consummation of the heart's desire, its root and its blossoming - a thing called 'The Grail', paradisaical, transcending all earthly perfection...it scarcely fell short of what they tell us of the Heavenly Kingdom." (*Parzival*, trans. A.T. Hatto, London 1980).

The 21st trump of the tarot cards as the emblem of the 'new heaven and new earth' and the Triumph of Eternity naturally brings to mind the transfiguring culmination of that other great flight of visionary mysticism of the Middle Ages, the final cantos of the *Paradiso* section of Dante Alighieri's 'Divine Comedy'. Beatrice guides the poet into the supreme heaven of light and love, the sacred centre of divine being, the supernal unity and harmony of the spiritual world. Here Dante beholds the vast vision of the mystic rose, its myriad radiating petals of pure white occupied by the saintly souls of the elect ministered to by flights of golden-winged angels with faces of flame.

Divinatory Meaning

Perfect realization. Happy conclusion and celebration. Reaching the height. Glorious attainment. Sublime success. Completion. Reward of questing. End of desire.

III

THE FOUR SUITS OF VIRTUE

The four suits of the tarot pack correspond with the symbols of the Saracenic cards from the Mamluk period. Some theorists such as Samuel Singer in the 19th century had previously opined that cards were an importation from the medieval Arab world and the writer Giovanni Covelluzzo had many centuries earlier written that: "In the year 1379 was brought into Viterbo the game of cards, which comes from the country of the Saracens, and is with them called Naib." This refers to the Saracen mercenaries who were employed in the armies of Pope Urban VII who are here held to have introduced either the cards themselves or a specific form of play. And yet we find accounts of card-play already being proscribed in Switzerland in 1377 which predates Covelluzzo's note. Professor L.A. Mayer in his 1971 book *Mamluk Playing Cards* discusses the beautiful designs of a 15th century Islamic deck and states regarding the theories of Islamic origin: "In view of the connection of Venice with the Near East during the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods the opinion of Willshire that the Tarots of Venice and Lombardy are the parent game is worthy of consideration."

What seems certain is that the four emblems of the suits in the Mamluk designs, name the *Tuman* - cups, *Darabim* - Coins, *Suyuf* - swords and *Jawkan* - polo-sticks, all seem to have a classical Greek derivation which might support L.A Mayer's remark. Just as the four cardinal virtues from Stoic and Platonist philosophy are found in the trumps just so do these symbols resume those virtues as suit signs: swords for justice, cups for temperance, staves or batons for fortitude, coins or mirrors for prudence.

Cornelius Agrippa in the early 16th century gives esoteric correspondences for the four cardinal virtues - Justice (equating with our tarot suit of swords) would correlate with the quality of heat, the planetary rulership of Mars and the Sun and the eastern direction. Temperance, (equating with the tarot suit of cups) possesses the quality of moisture, lies under the planetary rulership of Jupiter and Venus and corresponds to the western direction. Prudence, (the suit of coins), links with the quality of cold, the planetary influence of Saturn and Mercury and the northern direction. Finally Fortitude (for the staves or batons) links with the quality of dryness, the influence of the fixed stars and the Moon and the southern direction.

In Plato's 'Alcibiades' the four virtues are associated with the spiritual

education of the Magian kings of Persia. The future monarch, at the age of 14, becomes the ward of four priestly tutors or Magi of whom it is said, "...one of them is the wisest, another the justest, a third the most temperate, and a fourth the most valiant." The first instructed the fledgling king in the service of the gods and duties of the sovereign, the second inculcated justice and truthfulness, the third trained him in the virtue of temperance so that he would never, "...allow any pleasure to be lord over him," and so remain, "...lord of himself first, and not a slave." The fourth sage educated him in the ways of fortitude so that he grew bold, fearless and courageous as befitted a true monarch.

Did the Mamluk decks import these symbols into Europe as playing-card historians have asserted or were they rather evidence of an Islamic derivation from Platonist and Stoic philosophy, a preservation and development of classical Greek knowledge in the Arab world? Greek legacies which were forgotten in early medieval Europe were transmitted into the Islamic civilization of that period and eventually re-introduced. Might philosophic card-emblems be a case in question alongside Arab developments of classical mathematics and astrology? The chicken-and-egg puzzle posed here is difficult to answer in a conclusive way.

Unsurprisingly our Northern Italian friar of the 1450s in the Steele sermon preaches fiercely against cards and subjects the suits to his critical moralistic blasting, condemning the *Denarii* as a cause of impoverishment and loss of money, *Cuppe* as the cause of loss and drunkenness, *Bastoni* with the dry wood which represents spiritual aridity in those who spend their time playing cards and the *Enses* or swords with brevity of life brought about by arguing gamesters!

The significant layers of meaning probably lie in the internal reference to castes or classes emblemised by the suits as a picture of medieval society. The cups have been seen as communion chalices, referring to the ecclesiastics and the priestly rule of the Church in the Middle Ages. The swords naturally enough stand for the knightly authority of the royalty and barons, the coins for the merchant class, equivalent to the diamonds of playing-cards which are said to represent the diamond-shaped floor-tiles of mercantile exchequers in the medieval age where the 'coin of the realm' was exchanged. Finally the staves for the agricultural class of peasant-farmers and cultivators. The suit symbols of the tarot cards are the Italian *Coppe* (cups), *Spade* (swords), *Bastoni* (batons) and *Danari* (coins) and these symbols form the convention throughout southern Europe, throughout Italy, Spain and Portugal. In some old decks such as the Cary-Yale Visconti the suit of batons or staves is illustrated with arrows as a variant emblem.

In early 15th century France, according to some accounts, the knight

Etienne de Vignoles adapted the suit symbols for playing the chivalric game of Piquet. Accordingly in France and England we see that the Italian suits metamorphosed: Cups become *Cœurs* - hearts, Swords become *Piques* or spades (from the Italian for sword) and in this case representing the head of a pike, Batons/staves become *Trefles* or clubs and Coins become *Carreaux*, diamonds.

This historical correlation between the suits is borne out by card-games such as *Hombre* in Spain and the French versions called *Quadrille* and *Mediateur* where the suits are divided into two groups, a red and a black group. In the suits of cups and coins the value of the pips is inverse to the number of the pips and in France these suits are hearts and diamonds. The black suits have values proportionate to the pips - the swords and batons in Spain, the spades and clubs in France.

In old Germany and Switzerland the suits entered into another variation in the early packs, namely *Herzen* for hearts or cups, *Schellen* or falconry bells instead of swords, *Laub* or leaves instead of coins or diamonds and *Eicheln* or acorns for staves and clubs. We might note that in medieval heraldry the hawk-bell stood for the nobility and princes who pursued the aristocratic sport of falconry, thus they were an insignia of knightly status.

The 19th century card-historian W.H. Willshire summed up the societal symbolism of the emblems in southern, middle and western Europe as follows:

...in the suits..*herzen* and *coeurs*, may be found the analogues of the vase or “cup”, the emblem of the sacerdotal rank or clergy, with its irreproachable, unworldly heart. *Laub* or *grün* and *carreaux* are modifications of the “circle” or money typical of commerce and wealth; in *schellen* (bells) and *piques* (spades) may be found the spade or swords of the nobles and military; whilst in the suits *eicheln* (glands) and *trefles* (clubs) is signified the agricultural status.

THE SUIT OF SWORDS

Ace of Swords - Sword of King David, Fiery Revolving Sword of the Cherub at the Gates of Paradise; victory, breakthrough, conquest, just triumph..

2 of Swords - Equilibrium restored, truce, treaty, compromise, friendship in adversity, trust.

3 of Swords - Dispute, quarrel, sadness and sorrow, conflict, needful separation and severing of ties.

4 of Swords - Quiet time out, withdrawal from the fray, meditation, recuperation, recovery, peace after stress and struggle.

5 of Swords - Defeat, humiliation, mourning, acceptance of limitations, losing the battle.

6 of Swords - Ferryman, easy passage, flight, travel, the way to success, smooth journey.

7 of Swords - Wariness, cunning, subtlety and evasion, perseverance toward a goal, circumspection.

8 of Swords - Restriction, fated circumstances, being 'between a rock and a hard place', isolation and constraint prior to release.

9 of Swords - Debilitating fear, morbidity, nightmare, anxiety and unease, an ill omen of deception, failure, disappointment.

10 of Swords - Ruination, grief, desolation and laying waste, affliction, dolour, lamentation.

Page of Swords - Ogier the Dane, a spy, rival, tale-bearer, enmity, secret observation, conflict.

Knight of Swords - Mischief, impending struggle, enemy, courageous engagement, defense.

Queen of Swords - Pallas, widow, spiritual struggle over material odds,

meticulousness.

King of Swords - David, powerful friend, counselor, man of law, authority, stern judge.

THE SUIT OF CUPS

Ace of Cups - The Cup of the Last Supper, Chalice of Communion, altar table, holy house of the heart, fertility, abundance, love, nourishment, joy.

2 of Cups - Affinity, union, reconciliation of opposites, relationship, sympathy, attraction.

3 of Cups - Graces, success, felicitous issue, growth coming to fruition, rejoicing and merriment, happy conclusion.

4 of Cups - Malaise at any level, ennui, discontent, worry, contentment gives way to complacency and dissatisfaction.

5 of Cups - Regret, jealousy, frustration in relationship, disturbance, disappointment, a legacy of failed expectations.

6 of Cups - Influences from the past, nostalgia, realisation of a long-held dream, sometimes denotes living in the past.

7 of Cups - Consideration and choice, seeing through appearances, phantasy, deliberation.

8 of Cups - Crossing a bridge, leaving the past behind, transition and readjustment, disillusionment then renewal.

9 of Cups - Felicity, the wish card, attainment of a desire, realisation, happiness, success, achievement.

10 of Cups - Great affection, homeland and country, contentment, habitation, virtue, esteem and emotional fulfilment.

King of Cups - Charles the Great, a fair friendly man, of good heart, generosity and sympathy, negotiation in ones favour.

Queen of Cups - Judith, affectionate faithful wife, marital devotion,

aesthetic and clairvoyant, marriage, advantage and pleasure.

Knight of Cups - Pleasant invitation, message, proposition, approach and arrival, settlement.

Page of Cups - La Hire, A messenger, news, innovative methods, a helpful youth, study, meditative reflection.

THE SUIT OF STAVES

Ace of Staves - Spear of Longinus, Golden Arrow of Abaris, sceptre-wand, creative inception, swift initiative, active targetted force.

2 of Staves - authority, conviction, courageous authenticity, power and its exercise, influence, projection and success.

3 of Staves - Embarkation, a promising new enterprise, a venture undertaken, reward of effort and endeavour.

4 of Staves - Pleasure in the completion of a matter, a work-project perfected, closure and harvest, satisfaction, concord, a job well done.

5 of Staves - Strife, competition and struggle against much opposition, contest, obstacles at length overcome and eventual gain.

6 of Staves - Wreath of victory, worthy achievement, fulfilment, success through activity, gain via skillful diplomacy, pleasing news.

7 of Staves - Best outcome won by sustained effort, opposition defeated, valour, debate and negotiation, positive changes, knowledge.

8 of Staves - Acceleration, swiftness, things gather pace, increased momentum, sports, help and activity, optimistic communications.

9 of Staves - Unassailable strength in reserve, position of security, power in opposition, suspension, delay and adjournment, integrity.

10 of Staves - Triumphant consolidation, a problem solved, sure success, established power sometimes growing intolerant and oppressive.

King of Staves - Alexander, impartial counsel, unforeseen legacy, honesty,

uprightness, successful business dealings.

Queen of Staves - Argine, chatelaine, mistress of the household, countrywoman, independance, economy, successful new project.

Knight of Staves - Departure from the norm, intuition, change of residence, emigration, stable financial sense.

Page of Staves - Lancelot, bearer of pleasing tidings, postman, good news, stranger, honours, surprise.

SUIT OF COINS

Ace of Coins - Golden coin, denier, graal-dish, paten, mirror, gold, wealth, a coming gift, felicity, material wealth, substance, comfort, endurance.

2 of Coins - Adroit management of change, fortunes fluctuate, economic juggling, skilful manipulation amid alternations.

3 of Coins - Craft, conscientious work whether mental or physical, ability earns esteem and honours, zealous application, trade.

4 of Coins - Consolidation, material establishment, power, possessions, gain, acquisition, stability.

5 of Coins - Economic insecurity, material difficulties require clarity, poverty, loss and restrictions, adversity precedes real betterment.

6 of Coins - Timely assistance, help from above, patronage, gifts, generosity and empathy, the present time, hope.

7 of Coins - A gift or opportunity for gain to be seized, beware of procrastination or laziness, delays, setbacks, calumny.

8 of Coins - Prudence and equilibrium in material matters, skill and talent generate wealth, commission, just rewards.

9 of Coins - Solution, comfort, sound management of resources, income, unexpectedly good business, accomplishment.

10 of Coins - Prosperity, benign wealth, secure home life, inheritance and

family, settled ways, riches, house, property.

King of Coins - Caesar, a master or merchant, courageous and instinctual, stoicism and patience, a wise and faithful man, aptitude for business.

Queen of Coins - Rachel, truthful and practical, confidence, a woman of wealth and responsibility, liberality, generosity.

Knight of Coins - Patience and laboriousness, perseverance, advantageous circumstance, utility and reliability.

Page of Coins - Hector, a messenger or letter with money enclosed, new study, scholarly learning, diligence, good news.

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